



Language as Cultural Capital: A Narrative Review of Local Wisdom (Kearifan Lokal) in Indonesian Community-Based Tourism Development

Darmayasa^{1*}, Arwin Tannuary², STIE Tunas Nusantara³

¹ Politeknik Pariwisata Makassar, Indonesia

² Universitas Murni Teguh, Indonesia

³ STIE Tunas Nusantara, Indonesia

Email : man.darmayasa@gmail.com¹

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Abstract

This study examines how regional languages and local-wisdom vocabulary function as linguistic and cultural capital within Indonesian community-based tourism. Using a conceptual narrative literature review, the study synthesizes Indonesian and comparative scholarship on language, cultural identity, local wisdom, tourism governance, and linguistic capital. The findings show that local expressions perform three major functions: signaling authenticity, maintaining collective identity, and generating symbolic, social, or economic value. Their conversion into tourism value depends on institutional support, language training, literacy, community participation, market recognition, infrastructure, and the strength of customary governance. The review also demonstrates that tourism may support language revitalization when communities retain control over representation, transmission, and commercialization. Conversely, weak governance, excessive commodification, and the dominance of global languages can reduce regional-language visibility and detach cultural expressions from their original social meanings. The study concludes that sustainable community-based tourism requires language to be treated not merely as a promotional tool but as a governed cultural resource whose ownership, transmission, and value remain anchored in the community. These findings extend linguistic-capital analysis by highlighting governance as the central condition shaping sustainable outcomes.

Keywords: community-based tourism, cultural capital, Indonesia, linguistic capital, local wisdom.



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INTRODUCTION

Tourism represents a social and economic domain in which language functions not only as a means of communication but also as an integral component of cultural experience. Linguistic expressions, greetings, place names, oral narratives, and culturally embedded terminology contribute to how destinations communicate identity and authenticity to visitors. From a Bourdieusian perspective, linguistic resources can function as forms of cultural capital whose value depends on the social and economic fields in which they are recognized and exchanged (Bourdieu, 1986). This perspective has subsequently informed sociolinguistic research showing that languages may simultaneously represent cultural pride and become resources capable of generating symbolic and economic value within tourism markets (Heller, 2003; Duchêne & Heller, 2012).

Growing international scholarship demonstrates that the economic and symbolic value attached to language varies significantly across tourism environments and linguistic markets. Research among Hani communities in China indicates that minority-language resources can acquire economic value within tourism-related sectors even when their value remains limited within broader economic structures (Li et al., 2020). Comparable tensions between cultural authenticity and commercialization have also been identified among Bai communities in China and Tatar-speaking communities in Russia, where heritage languages serve both identity-preserving and tourism-oriented functions (Yang et al., 2022; Tuktamyshova et al., 2022). Studies of multilingual tourism landscapes further demonstrate that the dominance of globally prestigious languages can marginalize regional linguistic resources, as illustrated by the reduced visibility of Cebuano in Northern Mindanao tourism spaces (Sieras, 2025).

Indonesia provides an especially significant setting for examining these dynamics because its tourism sector operates within exceptional linguistic and cultural diversity. Numerous regional

communities maintain distinctive languages, customary practices, ecological knowledge, and social values that are frequently conceptualized through the term *kearifan lokal*, or local wisdom. Local-wisdom-based tourism has consequently become an important strategy for sustainable and community-based development in destinations such as Penglipuran and Tenganan in Bali, Raja Ampat in West Papua, Pentingsari in Yogyakarta, and Poto Village in Sumbawa (Pratiwi et al., 2022; Mentansan et al., 2023; Surpa et al., 2023; Pattaray, 2022). These developments indicate that local cultural resources are increasingly positioned not merely as inherited traditions but also as strategic assets through which communities construct distinctive tourism identities.

Language occupies a particularly important position within Indonesian local wisdom because many cultural values are encoded, transmitted, and reproduced through specific regional expressions. Examples include the Sundanese courtesy expression *punten*, the hospitality principle *someah ka semah*, Bugis-Makassar expressions such as *tabe*, *siri na pacce*, and *sipakatau*, and the customary terms associated with the *sasi* conservation system in Raja Ampat (Nofiyanti et al., 2021; Ginting et al., 2025; Arafah et al., 2026; Mentansan et al., 2023). These expressions do more than communicate literal meanings because they convey historically embedded norms concerning respect, solidarity, hospitality, environmental governance, and collective identity. Their continued use in tourism therefore provides an opportunity to investigate how linguistic forms can become socially recognized cultural resources within community-based tourism.

Despite this importance, much Indonesian tourism research continues to position language primarily as a supporting element of cultural heritage rather than as an analytical object in its own right. Studies of local wisdom frequently emphasize sustainability, community participation, cultural preservation, resilience, or destination governance while linguistic expressions are mentioned mainly as examples of broader traditions (Zaini et al., 2024; Husen et al., 2025; Sumarmi et al., 2026). Conversely, linguistic-landscape research in tourism areas has often concentrated on the increasing visibility of English and other globally dominant languages rather than examining how Indonesian regional languages themselves accumulate cultural, symbolic, or economic value (Budiarsa et al., 2018; Khazanah et al., 2021). This separation between tourism studies and sociolinguistic analysis leaves the role of regional-language resources within community-based tourism insufficiently theorized.

The concept of linguistic capital offers a useful theoretical foundation for addressing this limitation because it explains how language acquires different values across particular social fields. Bourdieu (1986) argues that cultural and linguistic resources become meaningful forms of capital when they are socially recognized and capable of producing symbolic, social, or economic returns. Heller (2003) subsequently demonstrated that processes of globalization increasingly transform language into a commodity that can be marketed alongside identity, authenticity, and cultural difference. The distinction between linguistic “pride” and “profit” further illustrates how communities may simultaneously seek to preserve language as a marker of belonging while mobilizing it as an economic resource in tourism and other cultural industries (Duchêne & Heller, 2012).

Applying this framework to Indonesia is particularly important because regional languages operate within a complex linguistic hierarchy involving local languages, Indonesian as the national language, and English as an influential global tourism language. Evidence from Bali demonstrates that English frequently dominates commercial tourism signage because business actors associate it with economic opportunity and international accessibility, potentially reducing the visibility of local linguistic resources (Budiarsa et al., 2018; Khazanah et al., 2021). In contrast, studies from South Sulawesi, West Java, and Raja Ampat indicate that regional expressions and culturally specific terminology can strengthen authenticity, reinforce community identity, and support culturally grounded tourism experiences (Arafah et al., 2026; Ginting et al., 2025; Mentansan et al., 2023). These contrasting patterns suggest that the conversion of linguistic resources into tourism value depends substantially on community governance, market conditions, institutional support, and control over cultural representation.

A conceptual gap therefore remains concerning how Indonesian regional languages and local-wisdom vocabularies function systematically as forms of linguistic and cultural capital within community-based tourism. Existing evidence is distributed across tourism management, sociolinguistics, heritage studies, community development, and cultural research, yet it has rarely been synthesized with language positioned as the central unit of analysis. This study addresses that

gap through a narrative literature review that reinterprets Indonesian community-based tourism research using Bourdieu's concept of linguistic and cultural capital and the subsequent pride-and-profit framework developed in sociolinguistic scholarship (Bourdieu, 1986; Duchêne & Heller, 2012). Specifically, the review examines the functions performed by regional-language and local-wisdom vocabulary, the conditions enabling their conversion into economic, social, or symbolic value, and the governance mechanisms that determine whether tourism contributes to linguistic revitalization or increases the risk of commodification and displacement.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a conceptual narrative literature review to examine how regional language and local-wisdom vocabulary function as forms of linguistic and cultural capital within Indonesian community-based tourism. The narrative review design was selected because the relevant literature spans multiple disciplinary fields, including sociolinguistics, tourism studies, cultural studies, community development, and heritage research, making a rigid single-method systematic review framework less appropriate for the study objective. Sources were identified through international academic databases and scholarly search platforms, including Scopus-indexed literature, Semantic Scholar, PubMed, and general academic search engines, together with Indonesian research databases such as Garuda and SINTA. The search strategy combined keywords related to *language*, *linguistic capital*, *cultural capital*, *local wisdom*, *kearifan lokal*, *community-based tourism*, *heritage tourism*, and *Indonesia*, while additional region-specific terms such as *Bugis-Makassar*, *Osing*, *sasi*, and *gotong royong* were used to identify relevant empirical cases.

The selection process prioritized peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2011 and 2026 that discussed language, local wisdom, tourism, cultural identity, or community-based development, with particular emphasis on Indonesian cases and selected comparative studies from other multilingual tourism settings. Foundational theoretical works, particularly those of Bourdieu, Heller, and Duchêne and Heller, were retained regardless of publication year because of their central role in conceptualizing linguistic and cultural capital. The selected literature was analyzed through thematic synthesis by organizing findings according to three analytical dimensions: the functions of regional-language and local-wisdom vocabulary in tourism, the conditions under which linguistic and cultural capital is converted into economic, symbolic, or social value, and the governance factors associated with language revitalization or erosion. Rather than aggregating quantitative effects, the analysis compared recurring patterns across cases and interpreted them through the theoretical lens of linguistic capital, allowing the study to develop an integrative conceptual account of how language operates within Indonesian community-based tourism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regional Language and Local-Wisdom Vocabulary as Authenticity and Cultural Capital

Regional languages and local-wisdom vocabulary emerge as important cultural resources in Indonesian community-based tourism because they communicate meanings that cannot always be reproduced through standardized national or international languages. Tourism experiences are frequently constructed through locally specific greetings, expressions, ritual terms, and culturally embedded concepts that connect visitors with the social identity of a destination. From the perspective of linguistic capital, these expressions acquire value when communities and visitors recognize them as legitimate representations of local culture rather than as ordinary communication devices (Bourdieu, 1986). This finding supports the broader argument that language becomes economically and symbolically significant when particular social fields assign value to its distinctiveness and authenticity (Heller, 2003).

The clearest illustration can be observed in South Sulawesi, where Bugis-Makassar expressions such as *tabe*, *siri na pacce*, and *sipakatau* operate simultaneously as linguistic practices and representations of social values. These expressions communicate respect, solidarity, dignity, and mutual recognition, making their tourism function inseparable from the cultural meanings embedded within them (Arafah et al., 2026). Their use in tourism communication therefore provides visitors with access to cultural meanings that would be weakened if replaced entirely by generic Indonesian or English equivalents. The case demonstrates how linguistic resources can be converted into symbolic

capital when distinctive local expressions are recognized as evidence of culturally authentic interaction.

Comparable patterns appear in West Java, where linguistic expressions associated with hospitality function as recognizable signs of local identity. The Sundanese term *punten* in North Tugu Village reflects norms of courtesy and respectful interaction, while *someah ka semah* in Pangandaran expresses an established cultural principle of hospitality toward guests (Nofiyanti et al., 2021; Ginting et al., 2025). Such expressions contribute to tourism not merely because they convey practical messages but because they signal that visitor-host interactions remain connected to locally grounded ethical norms. Their continued performance illustrates how language can transform everyday social values into tourism resources without necessarily separating those values from the communities that originally sustain them.

The role of language as cultural capital is also visible where terminology is closely connected to ecological governance and customary institutions. In Raja Ampat, the *sasi* system includes locally recognized terms such as *kalad*, *kabus*, and *samson*, which are associated with traditional mechanisms for managing marine and coastal resources (Mentansan et al., 2023). These terms carry practical regulatory meanings while simultaneously functioning as markers of cultural ownership and community authority. Tourism therefore encounters not only an environmental conservation practice but also a linguistic system through which local governance and ecological knowledge are organized and legitimized.

The distribution of these functions across Indonesian tourism cases demonstrates that linguistic capital appears in several distinct but overlapping forms. Certain expressions operate primarily as authenticity signals, others reinforce social boundaries and collective identity, while some function as part of community governance or tourism-related economic activity. These differences are summarized in Table 1, which reorganizes the cases contained in the reviewed literature according to their linguistic resources and dominant tourism functions. The comparative pattern indicates that the tourism value of language depends less on the number of speakers than on the cultural meanings and institutional functions attached to particular linguistic forms.

Table 1. Regional-Language and Local-Wisdom Resources in Selected Community-Based Tourism Cases

Location / Community	Linguistic or Local-Wisdom Resource	Main Cultural Function	Tourism Relevance	Source
South Sulawesi	<i>tabe, siri na pacce, sipakatau</i>	Respect, solidarity, social identity	Authenticity and cultural communication	Arafah et al. (2026)
North Tugu, West Java	<i>punten</i>	Courtesy and interpersonal respect	Authentic visitor-host interaction	Nofiyanti et al. (2021)
Pangandaran, West Java	<i>someah ka semah</i>	Hospitality norm	Destination identity and visitor reception	Ginting et al. (2025)
Raja Ampat	<i>sasi, kalad, kabus, samson</i>	Ecological governance	Cultural and environmental tourism capital	Mentansan et al. (2023)
Pentingsari, Yogyakarta	<i>gotong royong</i>	Collective cooperation	Community resilience and tourism governance	Husen et al. (2025)
Poto Village, Sumbawa	Ponan tradition vocabulary	Cultural continuity	Social capital and tourism attraction	Pattaray (2022)
Kemiren, Banyuwangi	Osing ritual language and cultural practices	Collective identity	Heritage authenticity	Sumarmi et al. (2026)

The Pentingsari case further illustrates that linguistic capital may be inseparable from broader systems of collective practice. The vocabulary and cultural principle of *gotong royong* remain closely associated with cooperation, mutual assistance, and community resilience, particularly during periods of social and environmental disruption (Husen et al., 2025). The tourism relevance of this expression therefore rests not simply on its translation but on its continued realization through collective community behavior. Language becomes meaningful tourism capital when the practice represented by the term remains socially active rather than being reduced to promotional vocabulary.

A similar relationship between terminology and collective identity can be observed in Poto Village and the Osing community of Kemiren. The Ponan tradition in Sumbawa functions as social and cultural capital whose economic potential depends on infrastructure, promotion, and community participation, while Osing ritual practices in Kemiren continue to support community identity within tourism development (Pattaray, 2022; Sumarmi et al., 2026). These cases indicate that linguistic and cultural resources become most persuasive as tourism assets when visitors encounter them as part of active community life. Cultural vocabulary therefore derives authenticity not only from historical origin but also from its continuous social reproduction.

This interpretation is consistent with the broader distinction between cultural pride and economic profit established in sociolinguistic scholarship. Heritage languages and culturally specific expressions may serve as symbols of dignity and group membership while simultaneously becoming resources that generate tourism value (Duchêne & Heller, 2012). Evidence from Tatar-speaking tourism contexts similarly demonstrates that minority-language use can generate symbolic pride and commercial benefit at the same time, suggesting that identity preservation and economic utilization are not inherently incompatible (Tuktamyshova et al., 2022). The Indonesian cases reveal a comparable pattern in which local expressions retain internal social meanings even when they are also presented to outsiders.

However, the value of local-language resources cannot be understood independently from competing linguistic markets. Studies of tourism environments in Bali show that English often receives greater visibility because tourism actors associate international languages with accessibility, prestige, and economic advantage (Budiarsa et al., 2018; Khazanah et al., 2021). A comparable tendency has been observed in Northern Mindanao, where English dominates tourist-facing signage and reduces the visibility of Cebuano despite its significance to local communication and identity (Sieras, 2025). These findings illustrate Bourdieu's relational understanding of linguistic capital, in which the value of one language is shaped by its position relative to other languages within the same social and economic field (Bourdieu, 1986).

The synthesis therefore indicates that regional-language and local-wisdom vocabulary performs at least three interconnected functions in community-based tourism: signaling authenticity, maintaining collective identity, and generating symbolic or economic value. These functions depend on the continued recognition of language by local communities and on the capacity of tourism institutions to present cultural expressions without removing them from their original social contexts. Recent research on linguistic landscapes similarly shows that the visibility and legitimacy granted to particular languages are shaped by institutional and commercial decisions rather than by linguistic characteristics alone (Wang et al., 2026; Robinson-Jones, 2026). Consequently, the tourism potential of Indonesian regional languages should be understood as a socially negotiated form of capital whose value is produced through relationships among communities, institutions, tourists, and competing language markets.

Conditions for Converting Linguistic and Cultural Capital into Tourism Value

The conversion of linguistic and cultural capital into tourism value does not occur automatically merely because a community possesses distinctive language, traditions, or local knowledge. The reviewed literature indicates that conversion depends on a combination of institutional support, community participation, market recognition, and the ability to translate cultural resources into forms that remain meaningful to both residents and visitors. From a Bourdieusian perspective, a linguistic resource only becomes capital when a particular social field recognizes its legitimacy and provides opportunities for it to generate symbolic, social, or economic returns (Bourdieu, 1986). This relational principle explains why similar cultural resources can produce

different outcomes across tourism destinations depending on the structures through which they are promoted and governed.

Formalization through training and capacity building is one of the most visible mechanisms that enable linguistic resources to acquire practical tourism value. In South Sulawesi, local expressions such as *tabe*, *siri na pacce*, and *sipakatau* were identified as resources that could be strengthened through structured promotional and communication training for tourism actors (Arafah et al., 2026). Comparable evidence from the Yogyakarta Royal Palace shows that foreign-language capacity building improved the ability of heritage guides to communicate cultural narratives while simultaneously strengthening their professional role as cultural mediators (Artanti et al., 2024). A subsequent study further demonstrated that structured language training can contribute to community empowerment and sustainable heritage tourism when linguistic competence is integrated with cultural interpretation rather than treated as an isolated technical skill (Artanti et al., 2025).

Literacy and narrative competence constitute a second important condition in the conversion process. Tourism communities require more than familiarity with local traditions because cultural resources must be articulated, interpreted, and communicated in ways that visitors can understand without reducing their contextual meaning. Yunus et al. (2024) found that language competence, literacy, local wisdom, and multimedia capacity were closely associated with the development of tourism potential in Pematang Serai Village. This relationship suggests that the economic value of local knowledge increases when communities possess the communicative capacity to transform traditional narratives into accessible tourism experiences while maintaining cultural ownership.

Educational strategies also offer a pathway through which linguistic and cultural capital can be reproduced and expanded beyond immediate tourism transactions. Zainudin (2025) proposed a contextual model of Indonesian-language learning based on tourism literature, demonstrating that regional history, local wisdom, and destination narratives can become instructional resources for language development. Such an approach reverses the conventional assumption that language merely serves to communicate tourism content, because tourism itself becomes a context through which linguistic competence is cultivated. The long-term significance of this model lies in its capacity to connect cultural transmission, education, and tourism development within a single process of capital reproduction.

Community participation represents another central condition that determines whether tourism value remains locally controlled or becomes externally appropriated. In Cigugur, sustainable tourism development was associated with community-based planning and the mobilization of local wisdom as part of an inclusive tourism strategy (Darto et al., 2025). Similar patterns were identified in Pangandaran, where the internalization of local wisdom into tourism management depended on coordination, local involvement, and the integration of community values into destination governance (Ginting et al., 2025). These findings indicate that cultural and linguistic resources are more likely to generate durable community benefits when residents participate directly in decisions concerning how those resources are represented, interpreted, and commercialized.

Table 2. Conditions Supporting the Conversion of Linguistic and Cultural Capital into Tourism Value

Conversion Condition	Evidence from Reviewed Cases	Type of Value Generated	Main Constraint	Source
Formal language training	Heritage guides at Yogyakarta Royal Palace	Professional and symbolic capital	Dependence on institutional continuity	Artanti et al. (2024, 2025)
Local-language promotion	Bugis-Makassar tourism communication	Symbolic and economic value	Need for structured training	Arafah et al. (2026)
Literacy and narrative competence	Pematang Serai Village	Communicative and economic value	Uneven community capacity	Yunus et al. (2024)
Tourism-based language	Mojokerto tourism literature	Educational and cultural capital	Need for contextual curriculum integration	Zainudin (2025)

education					
Community-led planning	Cigugur, Kuningan	Social governance capital	and	Coordination among stakeholders	Darto et al. (2025)
Local-wisdom-based management	Pangandaran	Symbolic social value	and	Consistency of community participation	Ginting et al. (2025)
Cultural resilience institutions	Penglipuran, Bali	Cultural symbolic value	and	Pressure from commercialization	Pratiwi et al. (2022)
Local-wisdom policy support	Tenganan, Bali	Governance cultural capital	and	Balancing modernization and tradition	Surpa et al. (2023)

Institutional continuity also affects whether cultural resources can be sustained after their initial incorporation into tourism. Penglipuran demonstrates that customary rules and community institutions can preserve cultural resilience even under substantial tourism pressure, suggesting that conversion is more sustainable when local norms remain authoritative within destination management (Pratiwi et al., 2022). Tenganan similarly illustrates the role of local-wisdom-based policy in maintaining a connection between tourism development and traditional cultural structures (Surpa et al., 2023). These cases demonstrate that the durability of cultural capital depends on governance systems capable of regulating the pace and form of commercialization.

The availability of supporting infrastructure can further determine whether cultural resources generate meaningful economic returns. In Poto Village, the Ponan tradition possesses substantial cultural and social value, yet limited infrastructure and promotional capacity have constrained its full conversion into tourism benefits (Pattaray, 2022). This case shows that cultural richness alone is insufficient when accessibility, promotion, and organizational support remain underdeveloped. The conversion of cultural capital therefore requires material and institutional conditions that connect local traditions to wider tourism markets without reducing those traditions to superficial attractions.

Market recognition also plays a decisive role because the value of a linguistic resource depends on whether tourism actors and visitors perceive it as desirable or legitimate. Li et al. (2020) demonstrated that Hani linguistic capital in China was convertible into economic capital only within particular tourism and regional-product submarkets rather than throughout the wider economy. This finding reinforces the idea that linguistic capital is market-specific and that its value can change significantly across social and economic fields. Indonesian tourism communities therefore cannot assume that local-language distinctiveness will automatically translate into economic benefit unless destination markets actively recognize and reward that distinctiveness.

The same market logic can generate unequal outcomes when globally dominant languages possess greater symbolic or commercial value than regional languages. Tourism signage in Bali has often privileged English because it is associated with international accessibility and economic opportunity, potentially limiting the visibility of local linguistic capital (Budiarsa et al., 2018; Khazanah et al., 2021). Similar patterns in Northern Mindanao show that the dominance of English in tourism spaces can marginalize Cebuano despite its local communicative significance (Sieras, 2025). These cases reveal that capital conversion may benefit one linguistic resource while simultaneously devaluing another, making language choice an economic as well as cultural decision.

The conversion process is therefore best understood as a negotiated relationship among cultural resources, community capacity, institutional structures, and market demand. Tourism development becomes more likely to strengthen linguistic and cultural capital when communities possess the skills, governance mechanisms, educational systems, and institutional support necessary to retain control over how local resources are represented. Research on cultural identity under globalization similarly suggests that local communities can adapt global tourism structures through processes of glocalization rather than simply surrendering local identity to global market pressures (Tong & Cheung, 2011). This interpretation is also consistent with Robbins' (2005) warning that Bourdieu's concept of capital should be understood relationally rather than as a fixed inventory of cultural assets.

Overall, the reviewed evidence indicates that successful conversion occurs when language and local wisdom remain embedded in active institutions rather than being detached from community life

for promotional purposes. Training, literacy, community participation, customary governance, educational integration, infrastructure, and market recognition jointly shape whether linguistic and cultural resources produce economic, symbolic, and social returns. The importance of these conditions also explains why community-based tourism outcomes vary even among destinations that possess equally distinctive cultural traditions. Consequently, the sustainability of linguistic capital depends not only on what cultural resources communities possess, but also on the institutional and social mechanisms through which those resources are maintained, communicated, and exchanged.

Governance, Language Revitalization, and the Risks of Commodification

The final pattern emerging from the reviewed literature concerns the role of governance in determining whether tourism strengthens local-language resources or contributes to their gradual erosion. Linguistic and cultural capital can generate economic and symbolic benefits, but these benefits do not necessarily produce language maintenance unless communities retain authority over the representation and use of their cultural resources. Community governance therefore functions as a mediating mechanism between tourism commercialization and cultural sustainability. This relationship is consistent with the broader argument that cultural capital remains meaningful only when communities continue to control the social conditions through which it is reproduced and legitimized (Bourdieu, 1986; Heller, 2003).

Strong customary institutions appear repeatedly in cases where tourism development is associated with cultural continuity rather than displacement. Penglipuran provides an important example because cultural resilience in the village is supported by customary rules and institutional structures that regulate tourism activities and protect community values (Pratiwi et al., 2022). Similar arrangements can be observed in Tenganan, where local-wisdom-based policies continue to influence the direction of tourism development and help maintain cultural practices within processes of modernization (Surpa et al., 2023). These cases indicate that tourism becomes less disruptive when communities possess governance systems capable of defining the boundaries between cultural exposure and cultural exploitation.

Intergenerational transmission represents another essential factor in determining whether tourism contributes to revitalization. In Pentingsari, the continued practice of *gotong royong* and the involvement of youth organizations have strengthened community resilience and helped preserve locally embedded values through periods of crisis and tourism change (Husen et al., 2025). The importance of transmission is also reflected in research on indigenous tourism villages, where local knowledge conservation depends on active community participation and the continuation of traditional knowledge across generations (Pratama et al., 2024). Tourism can therefore reinforce cultural continuity when younger community members encounter local language and knowledge as living social resources rather than as static heritage displays.

Community identity also plays a protective role against excessive cultural commodification. In Cibuntu Village, local wisdom and cultural traditions function as both tourism attractions and markers of community identity, demonstrating that cultural resources can remain socially meaningful while also becoming part of destination development (Basyari, 2023). The same general pattern is visible in Kemiren, where Osing cultural practices and community-based tourism contribute to the representation of local identity within the wider context of the Ijen UNESCO Global Geopark (Sumarmi et al., 2026). These cases suggest that tourism is more likely to support cultural preservation when communities continue to interpret traditions primarily as collective identity resources rather than merely as commercial products.

Nevertheless, commercialization introduces a persistent tension between cultural visibility and cultural transformation. Tourism can create incentives for communities to maintain distinctive language and practices, but it can also encourage the simplification, standardization, or selective performance of cultural elements that are considered most attractive to visitors. Zaini et al. (2024) identify this tension in Indonesian creative-economy tourism, where local wisdom offers substantial development potential but also faces risks associated with cultural exploitation and conflict between modernization and tradition. The distinction between revitalization and erosion is therefore not determined simply by the presence of tourism but by the governance conditions under which cultural resources are selected, represented, and monetized.

Table 3. Governance Conditions and Potential Outcomes of Linguistic-Cultural Capital in Tourism

Governance Condition	Illustrative Case	Potential Positive Outcome	Main Risk	Source
Strong customary institutions	Penglipuran, Bali	Cultural resilience and continuity	Excessive tourism pressure	Pratiwi et al. (2022)
Local-wisdom-based policy	Tenganan, Bali	Preservation within development	Modernization–tradition conflict	Surpa et al. (2023)
Youth and intergenerational participation	Pentingsari, Yogyakarta	Continuity of <i>gotong royong</i> values	Declining participation across generations	Husen et al. (2025)
Indigenous knowledge conservation	Tourism village contexts	Sustained local knowledge transmission	Heritage becoming symbolic rather than practiced	Pratama et al. (2024)
Cultural identity orientation	Cibuntu, Kuningan	Strengthened destination identity	Commercial simplification of tradition	Basyari (2023)
Community-based cultural management	Kemiren, Banyuwangi	Preservation of Osing cultural identity	Commodification and seasonality	Sumarmi et al. (2026)
Community-controlled ecological governance	Raja Ampat	Conservation and cultural legitimacy	External appropriation of cultural meaning	Mentansan et al. (2023)
Global-language-dominated tourism market	Seminyak and Bali tourism areas	International accessibility	Displacement of regional-language visibility	Budiarsa et al. (2018); Khazanah et al. (2021)

The risks become especially apparent when global languages occupy a stronger market position than regional languages. Research in Bali has shown that English can dominate tourist-oriented linguistic landscapes because businesses associate it with international visibility, prestige, and economic opportunity (Budiarsa et al., 2018; Khazanah et al., 2021). A similar pattern occurs in Northern Mindanao, where the prominence of English in tourism signage reduces the public visibility of Cebuano despite its importance within local communication (Sieras, 2025). These examples demonstrate that tourism markets can simultaneously valorize cultural authenticity while privileging linguistic forms that are more commercially legible to international visitors.

The problem is therefore not simply whether local languages are visible, but who decides how, where, and for what purpose they are displayed. Linguistic-landscape research demonstrates that the public visibility of a language is produced through institutional, commercial, and political decisions that determine which linguistic forms are treated as legitimate within specific spaces (Wang et al., 2026). Research on minority-language representation in heritage museums similarly shows that institutions dedicated to cultural preservation still make selective decisions regarding which language varieties and expressions receive prominence (Robinson-Jones, 2026). Tourism governance should therefore address linguistic representation as an issue of cultural authority rather than treating signage, terminology, and translation as purely technical matters.

This governance question becomes even more significant when linguistic capital is unequally distributed across communities and tourism markets. A bibliometric critique of linguistic-capital research indicates that scholarly attention itself remains uneven, with some linguistic regions and dominant-language contexts receiving far more analysis than minority-language communities (Wang et al., 2026). Such inequality can influence which forms of linguistic capital are recognized academically, institutionally, and commercially, particularly in multilingual tourism settings. The

Indonesian context therefore offers an important opportunity to expand linguistic-capital research beyond dominant Anglophone and East Asian settings by foregrounding regional-language communities whose tourism practices remain underrepresented in international literature.

Processes of globalization do not necessarily lead to the disappearance of local linguistic identity because communities can strategically adapt external tourism models to local contexts. The concept of glocalization suggests that communities may selectively incorporate global practices while maintaining recognizable cultural and linguistic markers that distinguish local identity (Tong & Cheung, 2011). This process is visible when Indonesian destinations combine national or international tourism communication with regional expressions, customary terminology, and locally defined cultural practices. Effective governance can therefore transform globalization from a purely homogenizing force into a context within which local languages gain renewed symbolic relevance.

The synthesis ultimately indicates that language revitalization and commodification should not be understood as mutually exclusive outcomes, because the same tourism process may produce both simultaneously. Minority-language tourism studies have long demonstrated that cultural pride and commercial profit frequently coexist, creating opportunities for revitalization while also introducing pressure to package linguistic resources into marketable forms (Duchêne & Heller, 2012; Tuktamyshova et al., 2022). The critical distinction lies in whether communities retain sufficient institutional authority to determine how linguistic resources are used, transmitted, and economically converted. Community ownership, customary governance, educational transmission, and participatory tourism planning therefore become central safeguards against the uncontrolled transformation of living language into detached commercial symbolism.

Overall, the reviewed evidence suggests that governance is the principal mechanism connecting linguistic capital with either revitalization or erosion in community-based tourism. Strong institutions, intergenerational transmission, community control, and locally grounded planning increase the likelihood that tourism revenue and visibility reinforce rather than displace regional-language practices. Conversely, weak cultural control, excessive reliance on global-language markets, and the commercialization of decontextualized cultural symbols increase the risk that local languages become less visible even while local culture is promoted as a tourism product. These findings support a model in which sustainable community-based tourism depends not merely on exploiting the economic value of local wisdom, but on protecting the social systems through which language and cultural knowledge continue to be produced, practiced, and inherited.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that regional languages and local-wisdom vocabulary constitute important forms of linguistic and cultural capital within Indonesian community-based tourism. The reviewed evidence shows that local expressions perform three interrelated functions by signaling authenticity, reinforcing collective identity, and creating opportunities for symbolic, social, and economic value. However, these benefits do not arise automatically from the existence of distinctive linguistic resources, because their conversion depends on institutional support, community participation, language competence, literacy, market recognition, infrastructure, and culturally grounded tourism governance. Communities that maintain control over how their languages and traditions are represented are more likely to transform tourism visibility into cultural resilience and sustained local benefits.

The findings further indicate that tourism can produce both language revitalization and commodification, depending on the governance conditions surrounding cultural representation and commercialization. Strong customary institutions, intergenerational transmission, community ownership, and participatory planning can protect regional-language resources while allowing them to contribute to destination development, whereas weak community control and the dominance of global languages may gradually reduce local-language visibility. Sustainable community-based tourism should therefore treat language not merely as a promotional instrument but as a living cultural resource whose social meanings, ownership, and transmission require deliberate protection. Future research should extend this framework through empirical sociolinguistic studies that examine changes in language use, community attitudes, and economic benefits across Indonesian tourism destinations over time.

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