



Comparative Study of the Utilization of Social Media by Indigenous Religious Organizations in Indonesia: The Cases of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa and Lalang Rondor Malesung

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Abstract: This study explores the use of social media by indigenous religious organizations in Indonesia to preserve cultural identity and teachings amidst the challenges of the digital era. Focusing on two contrasting cases—Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) in Central Java and Lalang Rondor Malesung (Laroma) in North Sulawesi—the research examines how each organization approaches digital adaptation within its social and cultural context. PBB, with its conservative stance, prioritizes traditional methods of knowledge transmission and maintains a cautious approach to digital media, while Laroma embraces social media to engage youth and promote cultural heritage to a global audience. The study identifies three key factors in the digital preservation of indigenous cultures: digital preservation strategies, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and youth participation in cultural preservation. Findings reveal that while both organizations face challenges in balancing digital engagement with cultural authenticity, Laroma's proactive use of digital platforms, particularly through youth-driven initiatives, offers a model for broader cultural dissemination and preservation. In contrast, PBB's selective approach underscores the importance of safeguarding sacred knowledge and ensures that digital platforms do not undermine cultural values. The research contributes to intercultural communication and media studies by highlighting the complex interplay between tradition and digital innovation, offering insights into how marginalized communities can navigate the digital landscape to preserve their cultural heritage. The study advocates for context-sensitive strategies that integrate both traditional authority and youth-led digital initiatives to effectively preserve cultural heritage in a rapidly changing world.

Keywords: Indigenous Religious Organizations, Digital Cultural Preservation, Social Media and Cultural Heritage, Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer, Social Media Strategies, Media and Culture, Youth and Digital Media

1. Introduction

In Indonesia, indigenous religious organizations face substantial challenges in preserving their cultural identity and customs, particularly in the digital age. Recent trends indicate a concerning decline in both the number of adherents and the organizational presence. Data reveal a decrease in followers from 138,791 in 2017 to 117,412 in 2022 (Mustajab, 2023), as well as a reduction in the number of registered organizations from 187 to 179 between 2017 and 2024 (Sidakerta, 2024). Multiple factors contribute to this decline, including societal stigma and difficulties associated with maintaining the transmission of their beliefs. These organizations are often mischaracterized as primitive or deviant, discouraging younger generations from embracing ancestral traditions (Novianti et al., 2023). The oral transmission of teachings makes them particularly vulnerable to misinterpretation or extinction within contemporary digital cultures. In response to these challenges, religious organizations have begun adapting to the digital landscape, utilizing social media not only to disseminate their teachings but also to assert their presence and visibility within society.

Recent studies have highlighted the potential of social media to challenge stereotypes of marginalized communities. Digital platforms can confront prejudice (Kroon & Selm, 2024) and strengthen cultural identity (Helmi et al., 2024). Hashtags and curated self-presentation empower underrepresented groups to reshape public perceptions and reinforce collective identities (Zhang & Tandoc, 2024). LGBTQ+ digital engagement reveals strategies of resistance against algorithmic discrimination while fostering community solidarity (Chartrand & Duguay, 2024). Similarly, African digital influencers challenge racial stereotypes and reclaim cultural narratives (Crigler,

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2024). Within Indigenous religious organizations, some view social media as a tool to reduce stigma, while others feel threatened by it, leading to diverse strategies for preserving teachings in the digital realm.

Bringing Indigenous belief teachings to social media is a contentious issue within these communities. Younger adherents see social media as essential for disseminating teachings, especially given the decreasing number of elders, while senior members worry that it may diminish the sacredness of rituals. Studies such as Ågren & Aarsand (2024) highlight the complexities of digitalization, as seen in the use of Facebook during mourning in South Africa, where it serves as both a quick communication tool and a potential threat to cultural practices. Similar concerns about cultural dilution are raised in Rosowsky's (2019) study. Research by Raaper et al. (2024) and Huttayavilaiphan (2024) further illustrates how communities negotiate cultural authenticity in digital spaces. These studies underscore both the benefits and drawbacks of using social media for cultural preservation, emphasizing its potential while acknowledging significant concerns. However, research on Indigenous religious organizations' use of social media remains limited, despite the ongoing decline in the number of adherents to local religions, including in Indonesia.

This study addresses this gap by analyzing two contrasting cases: Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) in Central Java and Lalang Rondor Malesung (Laroma) in North Sulawesi. These organizations were selected for their distinct geographical locations, socio-cultural contexts, and differing approaches to digital engagement. PBB, founded in 1917, adopts a conservative approach to digital platforms, prioritizing traditional methods of knowledge dissemination. In contrast, Laroma, established in 2016, actively uses social media for cultural preservation, despite experiencing persecution. This comparative analysis explores how varying social and cultural environments shape digital adaptation strategies while maintaining traditional values.

This study investigates how Indigenous religious organizations in Indonesia utilize social media to preserve and maintain their cultural identity. Through comparative analysis, it identifies key factors that influence the preservation and transmission of knowledge within these communities. The analysis focuses on digital strategies and content management techniques that contribute to the sustainability of these organizations, as well as the role of intergenerational collaboration and youth participation in enhancing the effectiveness of social media engagement. Drawing on contemporary theoretical frameworks in digital literacy (Oliveira, 2022) and the preservation of religious identity (Kühle & Larsen, 2021), the study identifies three fundamental components essential for Indigenous religious communities to effectively leverage social media: digital preservation strategies, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and youth participation. This research contributes both theoretically and practically by offering insights into how marginalized religious groups can preserve cultural authenticity while adapting to digital platforms, providing valuable lessons for other Indigenous communities facing similar challenges.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Digital Cultural Preservation Strategies

Digital cultural preservation refers to efforts aimed at conserving cultural heritage through digital technologies to ensure its accessibility and sustainability for future generations. It is defined as the process of documenting traditional knowledge through digital platforms to create sustainable digital archives of knowledge that might otherwise be lost over time (Nath, 2024). Hu (2024) asserts that digital media can be an extremely effective tool for preserving and promoting cultural heritage, transforming the way we engage with traditional cultures and fostering their sustainability in the modern world.

Several Indigenous communities leverage social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram to preserve cultural continuity, knowledge, and traditions. These digital practices also serve to combat negative stereotypes that often surround Indigenous groups (Frazer et al., 2022). Schwarzkopf et al. (2024) emphasize the crucial role of social media in enabling Indigenous communities to maintain and strengthen cultural ties, particularly when traditional physical spaces for cultural exchange are unavailable. However, the study also highlights significant challenges in ensuring the authenticity of cultural traditions when transitioning to digital formats. When sacred or context-specific knowledge is transferred to digital platforms, there is a risk of losing the nuances tied to local rituals or social interactions that cannot be perfectly represented online. Thus, while digital preservation offers promising opportunities, it requires a cautious and thoughtful approach to maintain the authenticity of Indigenous cultures.

Religious communities are also adopting digital preservation strategies to adapt to the digital age. Medzhidova (2024) highlights how technologies like the internet and social media help religions disseminate cultural heritage, making traditions more accessible through digitized practices such as prayer apps and sacred text quotes. Digital platforms also enable virtual religious communities, allowing for remote participation in events. Medzhidova suggests that digital technology offers a transformative opportunity for preserving and evolving religious practices, emphasizing the need for strategies that support digital learning and ethical competencies to ensure the sustainability of these communities. Paul (2024) asserts that social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Twitter have become vital tools for religious organizations to communicate with their followers. These platforms enable direct, participatory communication, allowing religious organizations to engage more effectively with their communities. Although research indicates that social media has the potential to reduce

stereotypes and foster participatory communication, some marginalized groups choose to limit or even avoid its use. Andalibi (2020) explains that individuals from stigmatized communities often conceal information about their experiences due to fears of negative judgment.

Digital preservation requires not only technical skills but also a critical understanding of digital media, ethics, and active participation in the digital society. Meyers et al. (2013) suggest that community engagement in creative activities and digital collaborations, including online media platforms, can strengthen digital cultural preservation. They emphasize that fostering digital literacy in informal spaces can enhance cultural heritage preservation by encouraging individual involvement. Similarly, Pesce et al. (2019) highlight the importance of digital platforms in creating collaborative opportunities across sectors while preserving cultural diversity.

The literature indicates that digital technologies—especially social media—have become significant tools for cultural preservation among both Indigenous (Frazer et al., 2022; Schwarzkopf et al., 2024) and religious communities (Medzhidova, 2024; Paul, 2024). Digitization allows for the documentation of traditional knowledge in the form of digital archives (Nath, 2024) and opens participatory spaces for cultural communication. However, Schwarzkopf et al. (2024) firmly warn of the risk of losing cultural context and authenticity when traditions are transformed into digital formats. This remains a serious concern in the preservation of sacred and highly contextual knowledge, underscoring the importance of an ethical and thoughtful approach to the digitalization of culture.

2.2. Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer

Reis et al. (2021) emphasize the role of technology in bridging generational gaps, particularly between older adults (over 50) and youth (under 19). Their research shows that game-based and communication platforms enhance interaction, strengthen social relationships, and improve knowledge transfer. The study highlights the need to reinforce family and community ties to foster intergenerational learning. Technology, they suggest, plays a crucial role in promoting understanding, respect, and knowledge sharing across generations.

Shonfeld et al. (2021) highlight the importance of cross-cultural competence in digital learning across generations. Digital technology facilitates knowledge exchange, where younger generations offer digital skills and older generations share traditional knowledge. This collaboration, especially within Indigenous religious organizations, is vital for cultural preservation, as many teachings are not written down. Intergenerational collaboration allows youth to offer insights while elders provide guidance, strengthening cultural ties and promoting equitable learning (Campbell & Erbstein, 2012). Intergenerational knowledge transfer can also enhance a community's capacity to respond to environmental challenges by accelerating the understanding of ecosystems while preserving local knowledge (Hill et al., 2020).

Reis et al. (2021) and Shonfeld et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of intergenerational knowledge transfer in cultural preservation, where technology serves as a bridge to strengthen relationships between older generations (holders of traditional knowledge) and younger generations (users of technology). Digital cross-generational learning creates a collaborative space for documenting and regenerating cultural values (Campbell & Erbstein, 2012; Hill et al., 2020). However, its effectiveness is highly dependent on local social and cultural engagement. There is a need for approaches that strengthen community bonds and intergenerational trust, especially in Indigenous or belief-based communities where documentation of teachings remains minimal.

2.3. Youth Participation in Cultural Preservation

The role of youth in the development of digitalization in society is a compelling topic. Oliveira (2022) highlights youth involvement in the creation of digital narratives as part of media literacy and citizenship education activities in secondary schools. These activities aim to encourage young people to engage in discussions on citizenship, media literacy, and broader social issues. Meanwhile, Arantes (2024) emphasizes youth engagement in ecotourism, focusing on how young people participate in sustainable, nature-based tourism and shape travel narratives through digital platforms. Arantes notes that young people seek not only leisure but also broader social and cultural meaning in their tourism practices.

Furthermore, Liu et al. (2024) examine how youth in Canada engage with artificial intelligence (AI)-based social media platforms to promote Indigenous culture and enhance mental well-being. Youth involvement in interacting with Indigenous cultural content is tailored to their emotional needs through AI technologies. This engagement involves active participation in platforms that promote Indigenous mindfulness practices aimed at improving mental health.

With the increased use of social media, young people now have easier access to virtual religious practices, whether through Facebook pages, religious apps, or platforms like YouTube. This highlights how youth are becoming more involved in digital religious practices, enabling them to express and participate in their religious identities through social media (Marija & Anica, 2020). Social media has the potential to transform religious practices among youth by offering a more personal, connected form of engagement through digital platforms.

One approach to ensuring that youth can effectively engage in development or empowerment programs, according to Douglas (2023), is through the use of technology and social media. An inclusive and empowering

approach opens opportunities for youth to participate in and lead development initiatives, thereby maximizing their contributions to community and national development.

As agents of social change, youth need to strengthen their holistic digital literacy by integrating media and information literacy. This enables them to use digital media wisely and critically while promoting active participation in an increasingly digital world. Such literacy involves not only technical understanding but also the ability to analyze and assess digital information (Leaning, 2019). With digital literacy, youth can help shape and negotiate their cultural identities via social media while preserving local traditions amidst the globalization of digital culture (Echesony, 2024).

Youth emerge as key actors in the digital preservation of culture—ranging from creating digital narratives (Oliveira, 2022) and engaging in sustainable ecotourism (Arantes, 2024) to using AI for promoting Indigenous practices and well-being (Liu et al., 2024). Through social media, they actively express religious identities (Marija & Anica, 2020) and contribute as agents of social change in community development (Douglas, 2023). This involvement depends heavily on holistic digital literacy, as emphasized by Leaning (2019) and Echesony (2024), highlighting the need for critical thinking and informed use of digital media.

Digital cultural preservation has gained increased attention in recent decades, yet it still faces significant research gaps, particularly in geographical, ethical, and practical domains. One major gap is the lack of focus on Southeast Asia—especially Indonesia—in digital preservation studies. Existing research tends to concentrate on regions such as Africa, Canada, Europe, and the United States, often neglecting the cultural, linguistic, and local diversity of Southeast Asia. Indigenous communities in Indonesia, with their oral traditions and belief systems, remain underrepresented in digital archives, threatening the survival of their cultural identity. Additionally, there is limited scholarly representation of local belief systems, underscoring the need for more focused research to preserve these communities' cultural practices in the digital realm.

Ethical gaps in digital cultural preservation—particularly regarding ownership and control over cultural narratives—also remain significant. While issues of authenticity have been addressed (Schwarzkopf et al., 2024), concerns over copyright and narrative control have received less attention. A key challenge is determining who controls the digitization of culture and ensuring that the narratives reflect authentic community voices. These issues require further research to prevent cultural exploitation and to preserve authenticity.

Practical gaps, such as limited digital literacy among youth and local communities, continue to hinder effective cultural preservation. While digital literacy training is emphasized (Meyers et al., 2013), rural and Indigenous communities often face significant barriers due to limited access to technology and skills. Developing inclusive digital literacy strategies that combine technical competence with critical thinking is essential to enable youth to meaningfully participate in preserving and promoting their cultures in the digital world.

By addressing these gaps, more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable digital cultural preservation strategies can be developed. It is also essential to ensure that local communities and Indigenous religious organizations have adequate control over how their cultures are documented and disseminated in the digital sphere, so that cultural preservation becomes not only a technological endeavor but also a community-led responsibility.

3. Methodology

This research investigates two Indigenous religious organizations in Indonesia—Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) and Lalang Rondor Malesung (Laroma)—to understand how various social, cultural, and geographical contexts influence digital preservation strategies. A case study approach has been adopted as the research strategy, as it enables the researcher(s) to deeply explore an event, activity, or process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In relation to the issue being examined, this study incorporates digital ethnography, which views the use of social media as a social practice. In line with one of the principles of digital ethnography—non-digital-centeredness (Pink et al., 2016)—this research does not focus solely on data presented on social media. Instead, it aims to explain the digital preservation strategies of Indigenous organizations as a means of understanding community values, while also highlighting efforts to transfer knowledge and teachings of Indigenous belief systems in the digital era.

3.1. Sampling

The two cases were selected based on the following criteria: (a) different geographical regions, (b) different social and cultural environments, and (c) different teachings and methods of regeneration.

Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) is an Indigenous religious organization based in Kebumen, Central Java. However, its followers are spread across Java and Sumatra. Although PBB's teachings are rooted in Javanese philosophy, membership is not restricted to individuals of Javanese ethnicity. The teachings have been passed down through generations since 1917, but the organization was formally recognized as an Indigenous religious organization in 2007. PBB adherents consistently state that they do not follow any institutional religion and are non-partisan. The foundation of PBB's teachings is the *Wet Kodrat Hukum Adat*, which means that the form or manifestation given by God must align with customary law. PBB teachings are conveyed orally by community elders during internal gatherings, and currently, there is no written documentation of the teachings or ritual

guidelines. However, the organization is in the process of documenting its teachings and rituals for future development.

Lalang Rondor Malesung (Laroma) is an Indigenous religious organization based in South Minahasa, North Sulawesi. The concepts and content of Laroma's teachings are derived from the spiritual values and ancestral wisdom of the Minahasa people (formerly known as Malesung), an ethnic group on the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia. Laroma was founded in response to the community's desire to continue practicing the teachings inherited from their ancestors. They regularly gather for rituals or ceremonies during the full moon, known as *Maso' Sico'o wo Towaku* or *Meru Nubat*. Laroma was formally recognized as an organization on February 17, 2016. Its followers include both pure adherents (those who do not follow any formal religion but practice Malesung rituals) and mixed adherents (those who follow a religion but also believe in and perform Malesung rituals). Laroma's teachings are conveyed both orally and through various media, including teaching books and social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok.

This study involved 15 participants selected using purposive and snowball sampling methods. The participants included organizational leaders (n = 4), youth members (n = 6), ritual specialists (n = 3), and media coordinators (n = 2) from both PBB and Laroma. The selection criteria focused on individuals directly involved in media-related decision-making, those familiar with traditional procedures, and those with expertise in managing digital platforms. This diverse participant pool ensures a comprehensive representation of different perspectives within the organizations.

Table 1: Participants' codes

Codes	Age	Gender	Role
P1	54	Male	Organizational Leader
P2	35	Male	Organizational Leader
P3	65	Male	Ritual Specialist
P4	44	Female	Media Coordinator
P5	34	Male	Youth Member
P6	25	Female	Youth Member
P7	26	Female	Youth Member
P8	23	Female	Youth Member
L1	42	Male	Organizational Leader
L2	40	Male	Organizational Leader
L3	65	Female	Ritual Specialist
L4	41	Male	Ritual Specialist
L5	41	Male	Media Coordinator
L6	26	Male	Youth Member
L7	25	Male	Youth Member

Source: Calculated by the author.

3.2. Data Collection

Data collection was conducted between January and August 2024 using multiple methods to ensure methodological triangulation. The primary methods included semi-structured interviews (30–90 minutes each), participant observation of both traditional ceremonies and social media management activities, focus group discussions (two sessions with 6–8 participants each), and document analysis of social media content, organizational policies, and traditional teaching materials. All interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Indonesian, recorded with participant consent, and transcribed verbatim.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis employed a thematic analysis framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process involved: (1) familiarization with the data through multiple readings of transcripts and field notes; (2) creation of initial codes by identifying key features in the data and organizing them into meaningful groups to prepare for developing broader themes in the next phase; (3) organization and analysis of initial codes by grouping them into potential themes; (4) review and refinement of themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) analysis of themes and writing a clear report with evidence and a strong argument.

This study also utilized NVivo 12, a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), to analyze and compare the social media strategies of PBB and Laroma. CAQDAS provides significant advantages in qualitative research, including efficient data management and increased transparency in the analytical process (Silver & Lewins, 2010). NVivo was used to identify key themes through word frequency analysis, visualized as a word cloud. Additionally, cluster analysis was conducted to explore relationships between data elements, enabling the identification of patterns and themes. The results were visualized using a dendrogram, illustrating the similarities and differences between data clusters and facilitating a comparative analysis of social media strategies.

4. Results and Discussion

The data analysis revealed three main themes in the utilization of social media by Indigenous religious organizations in Indonesia, namely: digital preservation strategies, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and youth participation in cultural preservation.

Table 2: Research Themes

No.	Theme	Aspects
1	Digital Preservation Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Documentation and digitization of cultural knowledge - Selection of digital platform - Content authenticity and ethical considerations
2	Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Security and long-term accessibility - Bridging generational divide - Training elders and leaders to share knowledge digitally - Using technology (social media, video, storytelling) to foster engagement
3	Youth Participation in Cultural Preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining cultural accuracy - Encouraging youth-led digital - Using social media trends to promote cultural heritage - Long-term digital communities

Source: Data Processed Researchers (2024)

The primary theme of digital preservation strategies addresses various aspects, including the recording and digital conversion of teachings and cultural knowledge, choosing appropriate digital platforms, ensuring content authenticity and ethical considerations, as well as maintaining security and ensuring long-term access.



Figure 1: Word Cloud of Digital Preservation Strategies. Source: Data Processed Researchers (2024)

The word cloud of digital preservation strategies (Figure 1) visualizes the key terms that appear most frequently in the dataset. Prominent words such as *knowledge*, *media*, *social*, *elders*, *PBB*, and *teachings* stand out, highlighting the central themes of the study: digital preservation, media use, and the involvement of elders in preserving cultural knowledge. The larger font size of words like *knowledge* and *media* reflects their significance in the context of the research, which explores how Indigenous groups manage and preserve their teachings through digital platforms. Additionally, the inclusion of terms such as *Facebook*, *TikTok*, and *videos* suggests the role of various social media tools in disseminating cultural knowledge and engaging diverse audiences. Words like *sacredness* and *essence* indicate ongoing concerns about maintaining the authenticity and integrity of cultural teachings in the digital space, aligning with the study's emphasis on ethical considerations in digital preservation strategies.

This word cloud (Figure 1) supports the study's primary theme by illustrating the strategies Indigenous communities use to record and convert their teachings and knowledge into digital formats. It emphasizes the importance of selecting appropriate digital platforms, maintaining content authenticity, addressing ethical considerations, and ensuring long-term access to preserved cultural materials. This visualization reflects the study's concern with balancing the preservation of traditional knowledge and the adaptation to emerging digital tools.

The word cloud of youth participation in cultural preservation (Figure 3) highlights key terms related to youth involvement in digital engagement, focusing on raising awareness of cultural heritage through social media trends and promoting youth-driven digital projects. Words such as *engagement*, *youth*, *online*, *adherents*, *Indigenous*, and *digital* emphasize the central role of young people in using digital tools to interact with and promote their cultural heritage. The prominence of the term *engagement* suggests active participation, which is a key theme in the study. This reflects the growing role of youth in expressing and sharing cultural identities through platforms like Instagram and other social media channels.

The term *Indigenous* underscores the focus on Indigenous communities, while words like *online*, *posting*, and *following* indicate the increasing involvement of youth in content creation and interaction within digital spaces. The presence of terms such as *status*, *shame*, and *confidence* suggests the emotional and social dynamics of youth engagement. These terms reflect concerns about the public representation of cultural identity and the courage required to express one's heritage, particularly in the face of potential social stigma.

This word cloud supports the study's focus on the significance of youth in digital cultural preservation. By engaging in online media and sharing rituals, beliefs, and cultural practices, young people contribute to the creation of sustainable digital communities that not only preserve but also promote their cultural heritage for future generations. Social media enables youth to connect with broader audiences, raise awareness, and foster a sense of pride, while also overcoming the traditional boundaries of physical communities.

4.1. Digital Cultural Preservation Strategies: Contrasting Approaches between PBB and Laroma in Social Media Use

In the context of cultural preservation, the integration of digital media has sparked differing perspectives, particularly among Indigenous and cultural organizations. While some view digitalization as a valuable tool for disseminating cultural heritage, others express concerns about its potential to disrupt traditional practices. This section explores these contrasting views by focusing on two Indigenous religious organizations—Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) and Laroma—which represent distinct approaches to digital preservation. Through an analysis of their respective strategies and practices, this discussion highlights how digital media is both embraced and resisted within the framework of cultural preservation, reflecting broader tensions in the adaptation of Indigenous communities to digital platforms.

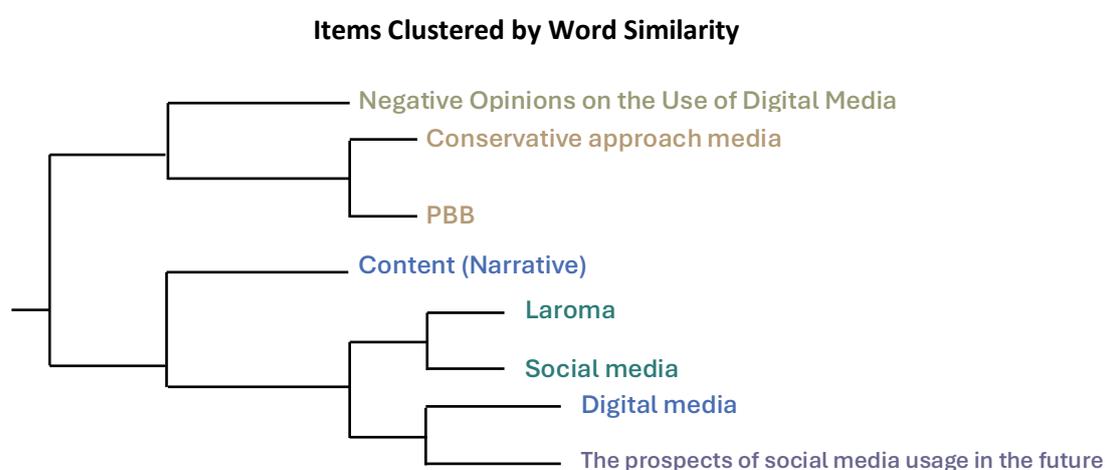


Figure 4: Items Clustered by Word Similarity on Digital Cultural Preservation Strategies. Source: Data Processed Researchers (2024)

The generated dendrogram reveals two main clusters that reflect differing attitudes toward the use of digital media in cultural preservation. The first cluster represents a more conservative view, characterized by resistance to the use of digital media. This group includes terms such as *negative opinions on the use of digital media*, *conservative approaches to media*, and *Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB)*. It indicates skepticism toward digitalization, which is perceived as potentially undermining cultural values traditionally preserved through conventional methods. PBB, which is cautious about adopting technology, aligns with this cluster, reflecting a preference for preserving culture through more traditional, less technology-dependent means.

In contrast, the second cluster highlights a more optimistic perspective on the role of digital and social media in cultural preservation. This group includes terms such as *content (narrative)*, *Laroma*, *social media*, *digital media*, and *the prospects of social media usage in the future*. It underscores the importance of digital platforms in disseminating cultural narratives to broader audiences. Laroma, which is actively engaged in digital media, exemplifies how cultural stories can be accessed and shared more widely through social platforms, thereby raising awareness of cultural heritage. Social media also creates opportunities for global interaction, enabling audiences to engage with and contribute to the evolving process of cultural preservation. The future of social media is viewed

positively, as the development of digital platforms is seen to facilitate more effective dissemination and intergenerational transmission of culture.

This analysis highlights the contrasting digital adaptation strategies of PBB and Laroma. It reflects broader trends identified in studies on the digital transformation of Indigenous communities (Liu et al., 2024; Zhang, 2024). PBB maintains a conservative stance, prioritizing traditional methods of knowledge transmission, while Laroma embraces digital participation. This divergence mirrors the tension between resistance and adaptation often observed among Indigenous groups (Schwarzkopf et al., 2024). Their differing approaches to social media adoption reveal deeper organizational divides regarding digital preservation, particularly in terms of policy, content management, and digital engagement.

PBB's conservative stance is reflected in its minimal online presence, relying primarily on WhatsApp for internal communication. As one elder stated, "We have not chosen to participate in that domain; we adhere to conventional practices exclusively within our internal group" (P1). This cautious approach stems from concerns about protecting sacred knowledge in digital spaces (Bow & Hepworth, 2019). PBB's limited social media use focuses on event notifications and organizational updates.

In contrast, Laroma exemplifies an "adaptive preservation" strategy (Sun et al., 2024), characterized by proactive digital engagement across multiple platforms. The media coordinator explained, "We control the narrative. It is not only photos that are open to interpretation by others. The elucidation includes the ritual's essence, its stages, and the materials used in the ceremony" (L5). This strategy aligns with Mudau et al. (2024) and illustrates Laroma's efforts to balance cultural authenticity with broader public engagement.

Content management practices further differentiate the preservation strategies of PBB and Laroma. PBB emphasizes "selective preservation," prioritizing traditional methods while limiting digital engagement. As one elder noted, "If an individual from PBB posts on their account, that is a different issue" (P2), underscoring the organization's commitment to maintaining boundaries between public and private knowledge. While this may help preserve cultural integrity, it risks limiting engagement with younger generations.

By contrast, Laroma implements a structured content classification system that distinguishes between public educational materials, member-exclusive teachings, and sacred knowledge. This approach, consistent with Nicholas (2022), allows digital engagement without compromising cultural sensitivity. One member explained, "Initially, recording photos or videos was prohibited. However, after explaining that it would enhance public comprehension, permission was granted under certain conditions" (L1), highlighting Laroma's flexibility in adapting to digital contexts.

PBB and Laroma represent two distinct attitudes toward digitalization in cultural preservation. While PBB staunchly maintains its traditional practices and acknowledges the necessity of digital tools, it chooses a conservative path due to concerns over the potential negative impact of digitalization on cultural values. Its online presence remains limited to WhatsApp for internal use. In contrast, Laroma recognizes the power of digital media to preserve and promote cultural heritage globally. It uses platforms such as TikTok to reach younger audiences and Facebook to deliver educational content, thereby enhancing public awareness and youth engagement. These contrasting approaches underscore the need to strike a balance between leveraging digital technology for cultural preservation and safeguarding the integrity of traditional practices.

4.2. Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer: Bridging Gaps Through Social Media

The increasing integration of digital technology into cultural preservation raises important questions about how traditional knowledge is transferred across generations. This study explores how digitalization intersects with established practices of knowledge sharing by examining two distinct yet complementary approaches. The generated dendrogram identifies two primary clusters that illustrate the relationship between digital media and traditional methods of cultural transmission. The first cluster highlights the significant impact of digitalization on knowledge sharing, emphasizing the role of youth in adapting traditional knowledge to modern technological platforms. The second cluster underscores the continued importance of traditional authority and methods, such as oral tradition and written documentation, in preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge. Together, these clusters demonstrate the evolving dynamics of intergenerational knowledge transfer and the challenges and opportunities posed by the digital era in maintaining cultural heritage.

The Figure 5 illustrates how the concepts in the study related to intergenerational knowledge transfer and digitalization are interconnected. Two main clusters emerge, each reflecting the relationship between digitalization and tradition in the process of knowledge sharing.

The first cluster focuses on the impact of digitalization on knowledge-sharing methods, as well as the role of youth in this process. Terms included in this cluster—such as *digital media*, *Laroma*, *religious and cultural boundaries*, *selective digitalization*, *negotiation of digital sharing*, and *role of youths*—indicate significant shifts in how knowledge is transferred. The grouping of *digital media* with *Laroma* suggests that Laroma is closely associated with digital technologies. This implies that digital media plays a vital role in disseminating cultural information and knowledge through accessible online platforms.

However, challenges in digitalization are also evident in the concepts of *religious and cultural boundaries* and *selective digitalization*. These concepts highlight the limitations imposed by cultural and religious considerations, which restrict the full digitalization of traditional knowledge. Certain cultural elements are regarded as too sacred or inappropriate for digital transmission, necessitating a selective approach. Additionally, the inclusion of *negotiation of digital sharing* and *role of youths* emphasizes the active role younger generations play in shaping how knowledge is shared online. Youth serve as a bridge between established traditions and technological advancements, ensuring that knowledge is preserved while being adapted to modern contexts.

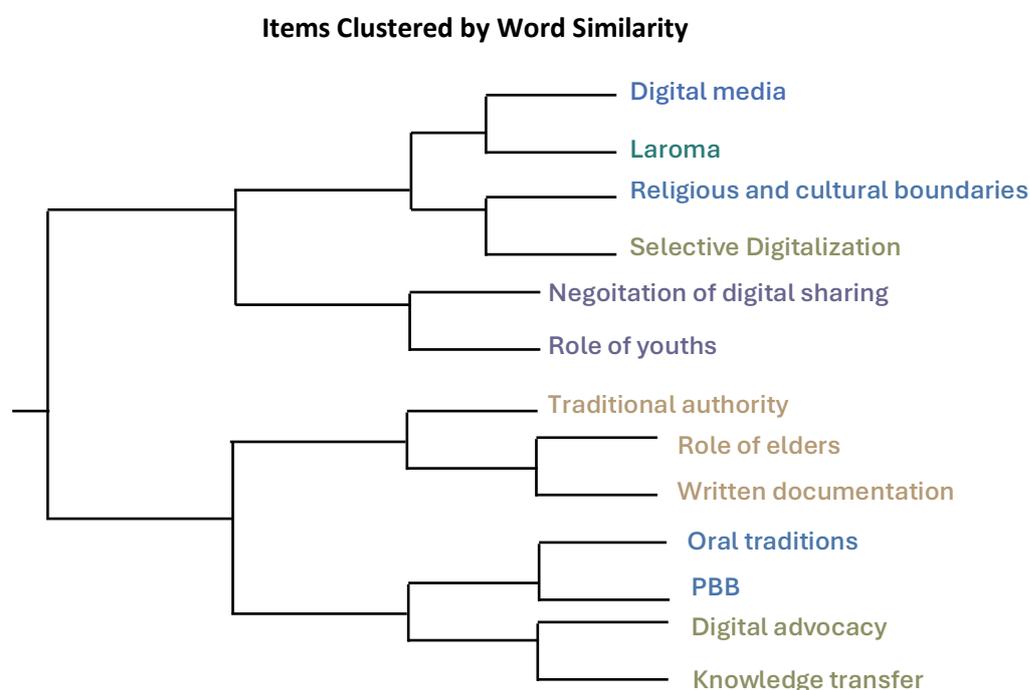


Figure 5: Items Clustered by Word Similarity on Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer. Source: Data Processed Researchers (2024)

The second cluster centers on traditional aspects of knowledge transfer, including traditional authority, written documentation, and oral tradition. Terms in this cluster—such as *traditional authority*, *role of elders*, *written documentation*, *oral tradition*, *Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB)*, *digital advocacy*, and *knowledge transfer*—indicate that despite advancements in technology, conventional methods remain vital to intergenerational transmission. The terms *traditional authority* and *role of elders* reflect the continuing reliance on respected community figures, such as tribal elders, to teach and transmit cultural knowledge.

Furthermore, the grouping of *written documentation* and *oral tradition* highlights their historical importance as primary methods of knowledge transfer. Written records provide permanence, while oral traditions remain the most commonly used method in many communities. PBB is closely linked to this cluster, signifying its commitment to preserving these traditional methods. The inclusion of *digital advocacy* and *knowledge transfer* suggests that digital technology can serve as a bridge between traditional and modern approaches. Digital advocacy, in particular, introduces new methods of ensuring cultural knowledge remains relevant and accessible to wider audiences.

Intergenerational knowledge transfer plays an essential role in both PBB and Laroma. Digital platforms serve as a bridge between generations. This dynamic aligns with Echesony’s (2024) concept of *digital cultural mediation*, wherein younger generations blend technical expertise with traditional knowledge. Acting as digital mediators, youth members of both organizations use their technological skills to connect traditional customs with modern communication methods. As one young Laroma member noted, “Young Indigenous adherents ought not to experience shame” (L7), suggesting that youth are increasingly becoming advocates for digital knowledge sharing. Similar findings by Brown et al. (2023) illustrate how marginalized youth leverage digital platforms for cultural preservation.

However, elders remain central in deciding which aspects of traditional knowledge may be shared digitally. One elder explained, “It cannot be documented because of the potential for misinterpretation. We may face allegations of various kinds” (L1). While acknowledging the need for digital adaptation, elders voice concerns about maintaining the integrity of sacred teachings. This careful negotiation between traditional authority and digital sharing aligns with Kühle & Larsen (2021), who discuss how religious communities manage sacred boundaries in digital spaces.

While youth push for broader digital engagement, elders emphasize selective dissemination of knowledge. As one elder stated, “For over a decade, we have contemplated consolidating our teachings into a book, as we believe

the younger generation will not trust unwritten teachings” (P1). This ongoing negotiation between preservation and adaptation is critical to successful intergenerational knowledge transfer.

Overall, PBB and Laroma represent two distinct approaches to intergenerational knowledge transfer. PBB prioritizes maintaining tradition and authority in knowledge preservation, while Laroma emphasizes the potential of digitalization to expand knowledge-sharing opportunities. Striking a balance between these approaches is essential. Mindful integration of technology into traditional knowledge-sharing practices is crucial for preserving cultural heritage in the digital era.

4.3. The Critical Role of Youth in Cultural Preservation

Youth play a crucial role in cultural preservation, especially as digital platforms open new opportunities for sharing traditions. The dendrogram analysis identifies two key clusters: one highlighting youth's active involvement in safeguarding cultural and religious values, and the other emphasizing the role of digital media in spreading cultural narratives globally. This discussion explores how youth contribute to preserving traditions while adapting them to the digital age. It also examines the challenges and opportunities they face in maintaining cultural heritage through technological means.

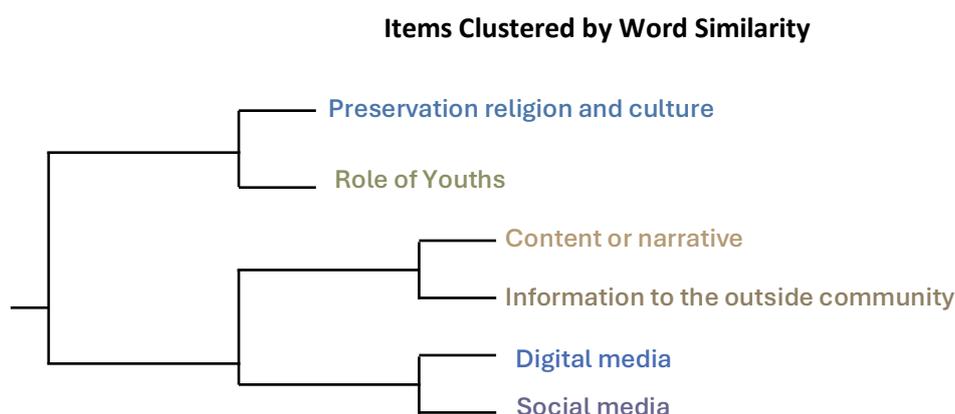


Figure 6: Items Clustered by Word Similarity on Youth Participation in Cultural Preservation. Source: Data Processed Researchers (2024)

The first cluster emphasizes the strong connection between cultural and religious preservation and the active involvement of youth. *Cultural and religious preservation* forms the core of this cluster, underscoring the importance of maintaining cultural heritage and religious values within the community. In this context, preservation is not only about safeguarding traditions but also about ensuring that these values remain relevant and vibrant in modern society. The role of youth in this process is pivotal—they are not merely passive recipients of culture but active participants in protecting and adapting traditions for contemporary contexts. This highlights the need to equip youth with the knowledge and skills required to fulfill this important responsibility.

The second cluster focuses on the documentation, communication, and dissemination of cultural and religious knowledge to a wider audience. Central to this is the importance of *cultural narratives*, which are essential for preserving cultural identity within the community. Moreover, cultural narratives serve as a means of introducing heritage to global audiences. To ensure broader acceptance, these narratives must be presented in engaging and accessible formats.

The inclusion of *digital media* and *social media* within the same sub-cluster underscores the role of digital platforms in disseminating cultural knowledge. Platforms such as social media, blogs, and videos have become powerful tools for sharing cultural content on a global scale. In today's digital age, social media acts as a bridge, enabling people to access, share, and interact with cultural material from different regions. Youth, who are typically proficient in using these technologies, play a leading role in promoting cultural preservation through digital media.

Youth participation in cultural preservation now extends beyond local and traditional realms into the global digital sphere. Young people serve not only as cultural stewards within their communities but also as key agents in using technology to share their cultures with the world. Through compelling narratives and strategic use of social media, youth significantly contribute to the sustainability of cultural and religious heritage, ensuring its continued relevance in the digital era.

Laroma's active engagement with digital platforms such as TikTok and Instagram highlights the crucial role of youth in cultural preservation. By taking on leadership roles in content creation and digital strategy, youth have driven the organization's online presence. A youth coordinator explained, "We use TikTok due to the simplicity of short videos. The purpose is the same: to provide correct knowledge to the audience" (L5), demonstrating their active involvement in shaping digital engagement.

As youth increasingly assume responsibility for social media administration and content creation, traditional leadership dynamics are being redefined. This shift aligns with Karhawi & Grohmann (2024), who found that digital platforms empower marginalized communities to challenge dominant narratives while preserving cultural authenticity. Laroma's success in involving youth has revitalized traditional ceremonies, while digital platforms have enhanced youth engagement and strengthened community ties. As one youth member noted, "Young Indigenous believers must strengthen themselves to become more known by society through posting on Instagram or WhatsApp, making others curious" (L6).

However, managing online representation remains a challenge for Laroma. The organization has occasionally encountered misunderstandings from outside audiences. As a ritual specialist remarked, "Occasionally, outsiders misconstrue our posts, leading to misunderstandings" (L3). In response, the organization has developed content guidelines to balance transparency with cultural sensitivity.

Youth play a vital role in cultural preservation by bridging traditional practices and the digital era. Through their active participation and use of digital platforms, youth help safeguard cultural and religious traditions while making them more accessible to global audiences. The success of organizations like Laroma in leveraging platforms such as TikTok and Facebook demonstrates the significant impact of youth-driven initiatives in promoting cultural heritage. However, challenges related to online representation and cultural sensitivity highlight the importance of careful content management. Ultimately, youth are essential to ensuring the relevance and sustainability of cultural heritage in the digital age.

The following table compares the digital cultural preservation strategies of PBB and Laroma, focusing on their approaches to social media and technology use:

Table 3: Digital Cultural Preservation Strategies of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa and Lalang Rondor Malesung

Aspects	Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB)	Lalang Rondor Malesung (Laroma)
Approach to Digitalization	Conservative; minimal use of digital media, focused on traditional practices.	Embraces digital platforms; actively uses social media for cultural dissemination.
Youth's Role in Cultural Preservation	Limited youth involvement, with youth as passive recipients of culture.	Youth are active participants, leading content creation and digital strategy.
Content Management and Transparency	"Selective preservation"; is content shared within a close-knit group, maintaining boundaries between public and private knowledge.	Divides content into public, educational, and sacred categories, ensuring both transparency and cultural sensitivity.
Use of Digital Media	Very limited; WhatsApp is used primarily for internal communication and event notifications.	Extensive use of multiple platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook for engaging global audiences.
Challenges in Digital Engagement	Concerned about the potential loss of cultural authenticity in digital spaces, leading to limited online presence.	Manages the risks of misinterpretation of content and establishes guidelines for cultural sensitivity.
Cultural Adaptation and Modernization	Prefers preserving traditional methods with minimal digital intervention, focusing on face-to-face transmission of knowledge.	Actively adapts cultural practices to digital formats, engaging youth to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage in modern contexts.
Global Interaction and Audience	Primarily local; digital presence is not used for global outreach.	Global; uses digital media to introduce cultural heritage to a global audience.

Source: Data Processed Researchers (2024)

The comparison between PBB and Laroma highlights their contrasting approaches to digital cultural preservation. PBB adopts a conservative stance, prioritizing traditional methods with minimal digital engagement. Their use of digital technology is limited to internal communication via WhatsApp. Youth involvement is passive, and content is selectively shared within the community. In contrast, Laroma actively utilizes platforms such as TikTok and Facebook to engage with a global audience. The younger generation assumes leadership roles in content creation and strategy. Laroma focuses on balancing transparency with cultural sensitivity in content management, while PBB maintains a more traditional and cautious approach to digitalization.

5. Implications

This study compares the digital cultural preservation strategies of Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) and Laroma, highlighting their differing approaches. PBB resists digitalization and emphasizes traditional knowledge

transmission, while Laroma embraces digital innovation by using social media to share cultural narratives. These differences reflect contrasting organizational values and perspectives on digital media's role in heritage preservation.

A key finding is the role of youth as cultural mediators in the digital age. Laroma's youth-driven model bridges generational gaps through platforms like TikTok and Facebook, whereas PBB's approach limits youth involvement to internal, face-to-face communication. These differences illustrate the tension between maintaining cultural sacredness and adapting to digital engagement.

The study also reveals that cultural and religious boundaries influence digital adoption, with some traditions deliberately excluded from digitalization to preserve their sanctity. These boundaries underscore the need for a balanced approach that ensures cultural authenticity while leveraging the outreach potential of digital platforms. Laroma's strategy demonstrates that transparency and cultural safeguarding can coexist, while PBB's selective approach focuses on protecting tradition from misinterpretation.

Furthermore, the research highlights the continued importance of elders in knowledge governance. Elders play a particularly prominent role within PBB, where reluctance to adopt new media limits intergenerational engagement. In contrast, Laroma illustrates how digital participation can coexist with traditional leadership through mutual trust and clearly defined cultural boundaries.

Finally, the study suggests that, when used responsibly, digital platforms can raise global awareness of Indigenous cultures and foster cultural revitalization. Youth play a vital role in adapting traditional narratives for modern audiences. For successful cultural preservation in the digital age, strategies must empower youth, encourage inclusive participation, and balance tradition with innovation. The divergent strategies of PBB and Laroma underscore the importance of context-sensitive approaches that integrate both heritage and modernity. Cultural organizations must carefully navigate the balance between sacred knowledge and public storytelling, intergenerational authority and digital agency, to preserve heritage in an increasingly digital world.

6. Conclusions

This study explores how Indigenous religious organizations in Indonesia—specifically Paguyuban Budaya Bangsa (PBB) and Lalang Rondor Malesung (Laroma)—navigate cultural preservation in the digital era. Their contrasting approaches illustrate a spectrum of attitudes toward digital media. PBB remains conservative, relying on traditional knowledge transmission and resisting digital platforms, while Laroma embraces digital tools for cultural dissemination, involving youth in content creation and reaching global audiences.

The analysis underscores the importance of intergenerational knowledge transfer. Laroma's experience shows how youth can bridge generational divides and revitalize cultural practices through digital media. The study emphasizes the need to balance the sacredness and authenticity of cultural knowledge with the broader reach of digital platforms. While Laroma demonstrates the potential of digital media to enhance global engagement, PBB's cautious approach reflects concerns about misrepresentation and cultural dilution.

Findings suggest that effective digital cultural preservation requires fostering youth participation, ensuring cultural sensitivity in content management, and balancing traditional authority with digital agency. This study highlights the need for context-sensitive strategies that integrate both tradition and innovation to preserve and adapt cultural heritage in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

Future research could explore comparative studies across diverse Indigenous communities to understand how cultural, social, and regional contexts influence digital preservation strategies. Longitudinal studies are also needed to assess the long-term impact of digital engagement on cultural sustainability. Ethical research should focus on frameworks for digitizing Indigenous heritage, addressing issues of ownership, consent, and representation. Further investigation is warranted into the role of youth in blending digital innovation with cultural stewardship and the impact of digital literacy. Additionally, future studies should examine how social media helps Indigenous religious communities combat stigma, reshape public perceptions, and explore hybrid models for integrating traditional and digital knowledge transmission.

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