PROCEEDINGS
ICHST
International Conventionon Humanity Sustainabilityt Technology

Research
Article submitted to journal
https://conference.unupasurua.ac.id/index.php/ichst/index

Subject Areas:
Cultural Sustainbility

Keywords:
Cultural sustainability, Indonesian cinema, audience perception, phenomenology, media representation, cultural identity, heritage preservation, intangible cultural heritage (ICH)

***Author for correspondence:**
dwiprasetyo@unesa.ac.id

Cinema as a Catalyst for Cultural Sustainability: A Phenomenological Study of Indonesian Audience Perceptions

Dwi Prasetyo[1], Tia Sarasawati[2], Teguh Dwi Putranto[3]

1. Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia
2. Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia
3. Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

This study explores how Indonesian audiences perceive and interpret the representation of local culture in culturally themed films, and how these experiences contribute to cultural sustainability. Using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, we conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 12 participants aged 18–45 who had viewed films such as Laskar Pelangi, Denias, and Sang Pemimpi. Data were analyzed via a six-stage IPA workflow. The analysis revealed four major phenomenological themes: (1) nostalgia and cultural pride, (2) reflection on local identity, (3) film as a cultural education medium, and (4) emotional connection to cultural narratives. These findings show that culturally themed films serve not only as entertainment but as catalysts for identity reinforcement, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and empathy-driven cultural awareness. The study situates these results within Cultural Sustainability Theory and Media Representation Theory, demonstrating the potential of cinema to act as a bridge between diverse cultural communities in Indonesia. The research offers theoretical and practical insights for filmmakers, cultural policymakers, and educators, indicating that intentional cultural representation can strengthen national identity and motivate preservation efforts; it also informs curricular design and community-based screening initiatives. While limited in scope, this study underscores the transformative role of cinema in sustaining intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and calls for broader, comparative research to better understand media's role in cultural sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

In an era where cultural boundaries are increasingly porous, films have emerged as both a repository and a conduit for the preservation and reinvention of local cultural identity. Far from being mere entertainment, cinematic works function as cultural archives and pedagogical instruments, shaping how communities remember, reinterpret, and transmit their heritage (Latif & Hassan, 2020;Razali et al., 2016).

Landmark productions such as Jogho and Bunohan exemplify this dual role, embedding local traditions and value systems within compelling narratives that educate audiences while sustaining cultural continuity. Short films such as Zaleha Ayam Patah and Wayang similarly breathe new life into traditional Malay performance arts, ensuring their relevance for younger generations in an era of rapid cultural change.

© The Author. 2025. Published by UNU Pasuruan Conference under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/, which permits unrestricted use, provided the source and original author are credited.

The commercial hegemony of Hollywood and other dominant film industries continues to intensify pressures on local storytelling traditions, often marginalizing indigenous voices. In response, Various national cinemas have adopted state-led interventions and policy frameworks to safeguard cultural sovereignty while fostering cinematic expressions of national identity (Rajala et al., 2020;Holohan, 2017). These efforts coexist with processes of cultural hybridization, as the fusion of local narratives with global cinematic forms generates both creative opportunities and commercially viable narratives (Thies, 2020;Jin & Su, 2019).

In Indonesia, for instance, Pengabdi Setan (2017) marries global horror conventions (e.g., pacing and suspense mechanics) with Javanese mortuary rites and domestic spatiality; Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts (2017) repurposes the road-movie/Western grammar within Sumba's socio-cultural landscape; and Gundala (2019) adapts the superhero template to a local comic IP and contemporary socio-political concerns. Regionally, Thailand's Pee Mak (2013) blends romantic-comedy timing with the Mae Nak ghost legend, while Malaysia's Munafik (2016) fuses exorcism tropes with Islamic cosmology together evidencing a Southeast Asian pattern in which hybridization preserves culturally specific signifiers while leveraging global readability.

While these global dynamics illustrate the potential of film to preserve and promote cultural heritage, the Indonesian context offers a particularly rich case study. Indonesian cinema has long served as a vital medium for articulating and negotiating the nation's complex cultural tapestry. Landmark films such as Laskar Pelangi (2008), Denias (2006), and Sang Pemimpi (2009) occupy a prominent place in the national cinematic landscape, not only for their artistic merit but also for their ability to embed and transmit cultural values and traditions to contemporary audiences (Bing, 2015).

These films resonate with diverse audience segments, especially younger urban viewers, by addressing relevant social realities while engaging with broader questions about the coexistence of local cultures and modern national identity, the role of Islam in public life, and the transformative effects of global cultural flows on inherited traditions. Through detailed depictions of regional diversity, filmmakers forge a narrative bridge between past and present, weaving visual and performative elements that preserve distinctive practices, communal gestures, and indigenous decision-making traditions within the national imagination(Hanan, 2017).

Indonesian cinema also functions as a platform for social commentary, using visual stylization, mise-en-scène, and production design to immerse audiences in the socio-cultural conditions of specific communities(Purnama, 2023). These portrayals often challenge reductive stereotypes and explore nuanced gender roles, where female characters embody both leadership and domesticity, reflecting enduring traditions alongside evolving social norms (Izharuddin, 2017)(Michalik, 2015). Increasingly, the hybridity between Indonesian films and global media exemplified by cross-pollination with Korean dramas has produced new modes of cultural expression, enabling young audiences to negotiate between global modernity and local heritage (Afifulloh, 2025). However, the industry continues to face challenges, including competition from foreign imports and the risk of cultural dilution. Incorporating local folklore, especially in children's media, has emerged as a promising strategy for maintaining cultural authenticity while appealing to global markets (Sugihartono & Adi, 2024).

Situating the Indonesian case within broader academic discourse requires engagement with current trends and challenges in cultural sustainability research in media and communication studies. Contemporary scholarship increasingly embraces interdisciplinary approaches to address the multifaceted nature of sustainability, integrating perspectives from cultural studies, political economy, and environmental media (Tsatsou, 2016;Chan & Lee, 2017).Recent research has also

examined the ecological dimensions of media production and consumption, such as the environmental impact of digital infrastructures (Cubitt, 2014;Christensen et all, 2018) and the role of media platforms in embedding sustainable values into public discourse (Agarwal et al., 2024;Alevizou et al., 2019). At the same time, the field faces persistent methodological tensions, conceptual fragmentation, and the challenge of translating research insights into tangible cultural preservation practices (Hunting, 2021;Smith et al., 2016). These gaps underscore the need for empirical studies that connect theoretical insights on sustainability with lived audience experiences of cultural media.

Phenomenology provides a particularly valuable methodological lens for addressing this need, offering a nuanced approach to understanding how audiences construct meaning from cultural encounters. By privileging the lived experiences and subjective interpretations of viewers, phenomenology moves beyond content analysis to illuminate the affective, cognitive, and interpretive processes that shape audience engagement (Grace, 2021). In audience studies, phenomenology has revealed how cultural meanings are co-produced at both societal and personal levels, from autobiographical therapeutic performances (C.-H. Chang et al., 2024) to cross-cultural film reception (Desilla, 2014). Among phenomenological tools, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) has proven especially effective for capturing idiosyncratic meaning-making, making it well-suited to studies of culturally themed cinema (Eatough et all, 2006;Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022).

The present study also draws on established theoretical frameworks to situate its analysis. Cultural Sustainability Theory (Petrova, 2011) emphasizes the preservation of both tangible and intangible heritage through ongoing cultural vitality, while Media Representation Theory (Hall, 1997) highlights the ways in which media constructs and circulates cultural meaning, particularly through the *encoding/decoding* model that differentiates preferred, negotiated, and oppositional readings. Additional perspectives such as non essentialist approaches to identity (Arapoglou et al., 2016), ritual and performativity (Sola-Morales, 2016), and multimodal discourse analysis (J. Chang, 2024) further elucidate how media representation interacts with identity formation. These frameworks underscore the role of cinema not only in reflecting cultural realities but also in actively shaping them

Within these frameworks, audience perceptions emerge as a decisive factor in sustaining intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Perceptions influence the perceived relevance, value, and adaptability of traditions, affecting whether cultural practices are preserved, transformed, or abandoned (Xue et al., 2019). Digital engagement strategies, including gamification, virtual reality, and augmented reality, have expanded access to heritage while fostering deeper emotional connections, particularly among younger, digitally native audiences (Srdanović et al., 2025). Educational initiatives, economic incentives through cultural tourism, and community participation have all been identified as key to reinforcing cultural identity and ensuring the intergenerational transmission of heritage (Aziz et al., 2022; Cerquetti et al., 2018;Kevseroğlu et al., 2021).

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates how Indonesian audiences perceive and interpret the representation of local culture in culturally themed films, and how such perceptions contribute to cultural sustainability. By integrating IPA with the above theoretical frameworks, the research captures the interplay between lived audience experiences, mediated cultural narratives, and broader preservation outcomes. This dual emphasis on experiential depth and theoretical grounding addresses a critical gap in the literature and offers both conceptual and practical insights into the role of cinema in sustaining Indonesia's cultural heritage. Accordingly, we address two research questions: RQ1 How do Indonesian audiences decode culturally themed films in terms of cultural symbols, identity, and affect? RQ2 In what ways do these decodings relate to attitudes and intentions

supportive of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) sustainability?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

IPA is rooted in three philosophical traditions: phenomenology, which focuses on the essence of lived experiences; hermeneutics, which emphasizes the interpretive process between researcher and participant; and idiography, which prioritizes the detailed examination of individual cases before identifying shared patterns (Eatough & Smith, 2006).

IPA was selected for two main reasons. First, the research questions seek to understand how audiences interpret and experience the cultural representations in film, which aligns with IPA's emphasis on exploring personal meaning-making (Tindall, 2009). Second, IPA has proven effective in media and cultural studies for uncovering nuanced audience perceptions (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011), making it particularly appropriate for the study of culturally themed Indonesian films.

Methodological positioning and advantage. *Compared to Grounded Theory (GT) and Narrative Analysis (NA)*, IPA offers a closer fit to our aims. *GT* prioritizes iterative theory generation and theoretical sampling toward saturation; our study is idiographic with a bounded sample and theory is used as sensitizing, not generative. *NA* centers the structure and performance of storied selves; our focus is the phenomenological texture of viewing (affect, identity work, value attributions). IPA's double hermeneutic and case-by-case depth best capture how participants make sense of culturally charged films, directly answering our RQs.

Research Design

The study followed a qualitative, idiographic approach that prioritizes rich, detailed accounts of individual experience. IPA was used to capture how Indonesian audiences perceived and internalized cultural narratives within films such as Laskar Pelangi, Denias, and Sang Pemimpi, and analysis proceeded through a six-stage IPA workflow (familiarization; initial noting; developing emergent themes; searching for connections within cases; moving to the next case; looking for patterns across cases). We maintained researcher reflexivity (positionality memoing and bracketing) and an audit trail. According to (Tindall, 2009), IPA entails a double hermeneutic: participants interpret their viewing experiences, and researchers interpret those interpretations to surface shared meaning-patterns, enabling both descriptive and interpretative layers of analysis.

Participants were recruited through purposive maximum variation sampling to ensure they met the inclusion criteria: Participants and Sampling 1. Aged 18–45 years. 2. Indonesian residents from varied geographical regions (urban and semi-urban). 3. Previous viewing of at least one culturally themed Indonesian film. 4. Willingness to participate in a 45-minute interview and provide informed consent. Purposive sampling was chosen because it allows researchers to deliberately select individuals with direct relevance to the research question (Palinkas, et al.,2015). This approach is particularly effective in IPA studies where depth, rather than breadth, is prioritized. Unlike Grounded Theory, theoretical saturation was not the analytic aim; idiographic depth within cases was prioritized.

Trustworthiness and Ethics to enhance trustworthiness, we used member checks for factual clarifications, peer debriefs on theme boundaries, and maintained an audit trail (memos, codebooks, decision logs). Ethical approval was obtained from the university review board; all participants provided written informed consent, were anonymized with pseudonyms, and data were stored on encrypted drives.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis conducted on the experiences and perceptions of Indonesian audiences regarding culturally themed films. The results are organized into three sections: participant profile, emergent phenomenological themes, and patterns of perception.

3.1 Participant Profile

The study included 12 participants (6 female, 6 male) aged between 18 and 45 years. Educational backgrounds ranged from senior high school completion to postgraduate qualifications. Geographically, participants represented diverse origins, including urban centers (Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Makassar) and semi-urban or rural areas (Belitung, Papua). All participants had previously viewed at least one culturally themed Indonesian film, most frequently including Laskar Pelangi (2008), Denias (2006), and Sang Pemimpi (2009). Some participants had direct cultural ties to the settings portrayed, while others engaged with these cultures solely through mediated representation.

Prior studies have shown that audience demographics such as age, educational background, and geographic origin can significantly shape interpretations of cultural narratives in cinema (Kerrigan et al., 2016;Livingstone, 2015). For analytic clarity, we defined age brackets as younger (18–25), mid (26–34), and older (35–45). In this study, younger viewers (18–25) tended to emphasize the educational and inspirational aspects of the films, while older viewers (35–45) were more likely to highlight nostalgia and personal identity reflection.

3.2 Phenomenological Themes

The IPA revealed four central phenomenological themes, each supported by illustrative participant quotations and linked to broader literature on film and cultural sustainability. Each theme is elaborated into sub-themes and illustrated with regionally diverse quotations to capture variation across Java, Sumatra, Eastern Indonesia, and urban rural contexts.

Nostalgia and Cultural Pride

Participants frequently described a sense of return—to a place, a time, or a feeling—triggered by viewing culturally themed films. For those with direct ties to the depicted regions, scenes often functioned as "memory cues" that evoked personal histories.

> *"When I saw the children playing on the beach in Laskar Pelangi, I remembered my own childhood. It wasn't just a scene; it was my life on screen."* (P07, Belitung)

Nostalgia was intertwined with cultural pride, as participants expressed satisfaction in seeing their communities represented positively in national cinema. Even participants without direct cultural ties reported pride in Indonesia's cultural diversity, (Petkanopoulou et al., 2021) observation that cultural nostalgia can foster collective identity and heritage appreciation.

Reflection on Local Identity

Films prompted viewers to reconsider their sense of belonging within Indonesia's multicultural landscape. Urban participants, in particular, noted that the films expanded their awareness of cultural realities beyond their own environment. This reflection manifested differently across regions, with participants from Papua, Belitung, Makassar, and urban Java articulating distinct vantage points on what "being Indonesian" entails.

> *"I realized I had never truly understood the lives of people in Papua. The film made me think about what being Indonesian really means—it's more than just where I live; it's about shared respect for all these cultures."* (P03, Jakarta)

"Seeing Denias as someone from Jayapura, I felt both seen and challenged—some scenes were spot on, others simplified our struggles—but it pushed me to rethink how my Papuan identity fits within Indonesia." (P01, Jayapura)

"As a Sundanese living in Bandung, I related to the values shown, but I also negotiate them with my urban routine traditions feel alive yet adapted, not frozen." (P08, Bandung)

"I loved the pride in local culture, but parts felt a bit touristic beautiful, yes, yet tidy. That tension actually made me ask what an honest representation should look like." (P11, Belitung)

This aligns with (Hall, 1997) view that media representation contributes to identity negotiation by offering reference points for self-concept and intercultural understanding, including varied *decoding positions* (dominant, negotiated, oppositional) in response to the films' encoded cultural meanings. In this study, identity reflection often involved reconciling modern urban lifestyles with more traditional rural values depicted in the films.

Film as a Cultural Education Medium

Participants, especially younger (18–25) ones, emphasized the educational value of culturally themed films. They reported learning about cultural practices, geographical contexts, and local histories previously unknown to them.

"Before watching Denias, I didn't know much about Papua's education struggles. The film taught me about their challenges, but also their spirit." (P05, Surabaya).

That cinema can serve as an informal yet powerful medium for cultural transmission, especially for audiences with limited direct exposure to the heritage portrayed. Participants in this study also saw films as tools for intergenerational dialogue, with older viewers using them to share personal stories with younger family members (Banerjee, 2024).

Emotional Connection to Cultural Narratives

Emotional engagement was a recurring theme across all participants. Empathy for characters, joy in cultural celebration, and sadness over hardships depicted were frequently cited as impactful.

"When I saw the struggles of the children in Laskar Pelangi, I felt as if I was struggling with them. It made me want to help children in remote areas." (P10, Makassar)

This supports (Plantinga, 2009) assertion that emotion is a central driver of narrative engagement, influencing both memory retention and attitudinal change. In the context of cultural sustainability, such emotional resonance can inspire advocacy and participation in preservation initiatives (Schofield Clark, 2008).

3.3 Patterns of Perception

The thematic interrelations identified in this study suggest a conceptual pathway linking cultural film exposure to the development of cultural preservation attitudes This pathway resonates with existing theoretical models that describe the relationship between media exposure and cultural awareness. The conceptual model illustrates the pathway: Exposure → Emotional Engagement → Reflection → Awareness & Attitude Shift, showing how culturally themed films influence cultural attitudes.

In line with the Media Effects Model proposed by (Potter, 2012) media exposure initiates a process of recognition whereby viewers identify familiar or novel cultural elements in the narrative. This aligns with the first stage in our findings: Exposure to Cultural Narratives, where participants recalled or discovered cultural symbols and practices.

The second stage, Emotional Engagement, mirrors the Affective Disposition Theory (Zillmann,

2000), which emphasizes that positive or empathetic emotional responses can intensify audience connection to content, thereby enhancing retention and internalization of cultural meanings.

The third stage, Reflective Processing, corresponds to the Reflective Model of Cultural Learning (Yang et al., 2023), where individuals reassess their own identity in light of new cultural information. This was evident in participants' self-reported identity negotiations after viewing the films.

Finally, Cultural Awareness and Attitude Shift reflects the Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1998), which argues that repeated exposure to consistent cultural narratives over time shapes long-term attitudes and beliefs. Consistent with (Petrova, 2011), our findings indicate that repeated encounters with authentic cultural representations foster enduring cultural pride and support for preservation efforts.

The model derived from our study—Exposure → Emotional Engagement → Reflection → Awareness & Attitude Shift—not only emerges inductively from participant narratives but also finds support in established media and cultural learning frameworks. This strengthens the argument that culturally themed films can play a sustained role in shaping both immediate and long-term cultural attitudes.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Alignment of Findings with Cultural Sustainability Theory and Media Representation Theory.

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for both Cultural Sustainability Theory and Media Representation Theory.

Figure 1. Illustrations Laskar Pelangi Film

From a cultural sustainability perspective, the phenomenological themes nostalgia and cultural pride, reflection on local identity, film as a cultural education medium, and emotional connection to cultural narratives illustrate how culturally themed cinema functions as an intangible cultural asset. In line with (Petrova, 2011), participants demonstrated that film engagement not only preserves but also revitalizes cultural awareness through repeated exposure to authentic narratives. Specifically, nostalgia/pride reflects cultural memory and identity value; reflection on

local identity relates to diversity and continuity; film as education supports intergenerational knowledge transfer; and emotional connection links to community participation and advocacy each a core dimension of cultural sustainability.

From the lens of Media Representation Theory (Hall, 1997), the findings confirm that cultural portrayals in media are not passive reflections but active constructions that shape identity and perception. Participants reported shifts in understanding and respect for cultural diversity after viewing films like Laskar Pelangi and Denias. These films served as "cultural bridges," enabling audiences from different regions to engage with unfamiliar traditions in ways that challenged stereotypes and fostered empathy. This aligns with (Song, 2025) argument that inclusive and authentic representations in media can transform intercultural relations. Making Hall's model explicit: filmmakers *encode* preferred meanings (e.g., positive valuation of local practices, communal resilience), while audiences *decode* these texts in dominant (affirming pride and unity), negotiated (accepting core values but questioning romanticization or feasibility in urban life), and oppositional (rejecting exoticized or touristic framings) positions. Our data exhibit all three positions, clarifying how identity work proceeds through negotiated uptake rather than simple transmission.

The conceptual pathway identified in this research—Exposure → Emotional Engagement → Reflective Processing → Cultural Awareness and Attitude Shift—not only emerged inductively from audience narratives but also mirrors established models in media effects and cultural learning. The alignment reinforces the theoretical premise that media's role in cultural sustainability is mediated through affective and interpretive audience engagement. Within this pathway, decoding positions operate as modulators between stages amplifying, reshaping, or attenuating movement from emotional engagement to reflective processing and, ultimately, to culturally supportive attitudes and intentions.

4.2 Practical Implications for Using Film as a Cultural Sustainability Tool in National Cultural Policy.

The results suggest multiple avenues for integrating culturally themed films into national cultural policy frameworks. First, curricular integration could harness film's educational potential by embedding culturally themed films into school programs. Specifically, integrate across Bahasa Indonesia, Civics (PPKn), and Arts at upper-primary (Grades 4–6), lower-secondary (7–9), and upper-secondary (10–12), using guided-viewing worksheets (encoding/decoding prompts), comparative scene analysis, and reflective journals. Such integration would not only enhance cultural literacy but also stimulate critical discussion on heritage, identity, and diversity among students. Provide teacher guides, screening licenses, and a curated film catalog; evaluate learning via pre/post cultural-awareness scales and rubric-based projects.

Second, policy incentives including subsidies for culturally themed productions and preferential distribution rights could encourage filmmakers to prioritize authentic representation without sacrificing market viability. As seen in European state-supported models (Rajala et al., 2020), strategic investment in culturally significant works can safeguard cultural sovereignty while stimulating the domestic film industry.

Third, collaboration with local communities during production could ensure cultural authenticity and foster community pride. This participatory approach aligns with (Jiménez de Madariaga, 2021) emphasis on community led heritage preservation and could be integrated into funding criteria for national cinema grants.

Finally, international promotion of culturally rich films can position them as tools of cultural diplomacy, showcasing Indonesia's cultural diversity on global platforms while countering homogenizing narratives in transnational media markets.

4.3 Strengths and Limitations of Phenomenological Approaches in Film Audience Research

This study highlights the methodological strengths of using IPA in film audience research. As in

previous audience phenomenology studies IPA enabled a deep, nuanced understanding of how audiences engage with and interpret cultural narratives. The approach foregrounds lived experience, allowing for the exploration of affective and cognitive responses and the interpretive textures of meaning-making in ways that quantitative surveys cannot capture.

One notable strength is IPA's capacity for idiographic depth—examining each participant's account before identifying cross-case patterns. This method captured diverse interpretations shaped by demographic factors such as age, regional origin, and cultural familiarity. It also surfaced *negative/variant cases* and a range of decoding positions (dominant, negotiated, oppositional), and allowed for the identification of emotional mechanisms, such as empathy and nostalgia, that link representation to cultural sustainability outcomes.

However, the study also reflects limitations inherent to phenomenological research. The small sample size, while methodologically consistent with IPA, limits generalizability. Findings are context-specific and cannot be readily extrapolated to all Indonesian audiences. Moreover, reliance on self-reported experiences introduces potential recall bias and social desirability effects. Selection effects may also be present given the focus on widely circulated titles and greater access among urban/streaming-savvy viewers; language/translation choices may nuance meaning. To address these issues, future studies could adopt mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to enhance robustness.

Previous studies have addressed these limitations by employing mixed-methods designs that pair phenomenological interviews with broader audience surveys (Gamage, 2025). Others have adopted longitudinal approaches to assess whether attitudinal changes observed immediately after film viewing persist over time (Palinkas, 2015). These strategies could complement IPA in future research, balancing depth of insight with breadth of applicability.

4.4 Concluding Reflection

Integrating the findings with the two research questions (RQ1–RQ2) reveals a coherent narrative: phenomenologically grounded audience studies not only align with and enrich theoretical frameworks on cultural sustainability and media representation by making explicit the role of Hall's encoding/decoding positions (dominant, negotiated, oppositional) and the four-stage pathway (Exposure → Emotional Engagement → Reflection → Awareness & Attitude Shift), but also offer actionable pathways for cultural policy and practice. Furthermore, while phenomenological methods bring valuable depth and nuance to film audience research, complementing them with other approaches could strengthen the robustness and impact of future studies, as outlined in our recommendations for triangulating IPA with surveys, longitudinal panels, and field experiments.

By illuminating the processes through which culturally themed films influence awareness, identity, and preservation attitudes, this study affirms cinema's potential as both a cultural artifact and a strategic instrument for sustaining heritage in the era of globalization.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that culturally themed Indonesian films such as Laskar Pelangi, Denias, and Sang Pemimpi play a significant role in sustaining cultural identity by engaging audiences in processes of recognition, reflection, and emotional connection. Through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of audience narratives, four key themes emerged: nostalgia and cultural pride, reflection on local identity, film as a medium of cultural education, and emotional connection to cultural narratives. These themes illustrate that film can serve not only as entertainment but as an active medium for transmitting and reinforcing cultural values.

The study confirms that filmic representations can strengthen cultural sustainability by bridging the gap between lived traditions and contemporary urban audiences, fostering empathy and intercultural understanding, and motivating audiences to engage in preservation efforts. From a theoretical perspective, the research advances the integration of Cultural Sustainability Theory with Media

Representation Theory and phenomenological inquiry, showing how cultural sustainability is mediated by audience perception and emotional resonance, including encoding/decoding dynamics and the Exposure → Emotional Engagement → Reflection → Awareness & Attitude Shift pathway.

Practically, the study offers valuable implications for filmmakers, cultural policymakers, and educators. Filmmakers should strive for authenticity and collaborative storytelling with local communities; policymakers should incorporate culturally themed films into cultural preservation strategies; and educators should leverage these films as tools for intergenerational cultural transmission.

While the study's small sample size limits the generalizability of findings, it provides a strong foundation for further research on the role of media in cultural sustainability. Future work could expand to include comparative studies across regions or cultures, or longitudinal designs to assess the long-term effects of film exposure on cultural attitudes

In conclusion, culturally themed films represent a vital, living medium through which cultural identity can be celebrated, preserved, and revitalized in the face of globalization. Their capacity to elicit pride, foster understanding, and inspire action positions them as a key component of contemporary cultural sustainability efforts, particularly in supporting intangible cultural heritage (ICH).

References

Afifulloh, M. (2025). K-drama and Indonesian film hybridity in shaping youth identity: A postcolonial study. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Scientific Studies*, *8*(1), 939–947. https://doi.org/10.53894/ijirss.v8i1.4470

Agarwal, N., Agarwal, E., & Hipona, J. B. (2024). Role of media and communication on sustainable entrepreneurship. In *Sustainable Partnership and Investment Strategies for Startups and SMEs* (pp. 178–191). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-2197-3.ch010

Alevizou, P. J., Henninger, C. E., & Spinks, C. (2019). Communicating sustainability practices and values: A case study approach of a micro-organisation in the UK. *International Journal of Business and Globalisation*, *22*(1), 37–52. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBG.2019.097388

Alhazmi, A. A., & Kaufmann, A. (2022). Phenomenological Qualitative Methods Applied to the Analysis of Cross-Cultural Experience in Novel Educational Social Contexts. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.785134

Arapoglou, E., Kalogeras, Y., & Nyman, J. (2016). Introduction. In *Racial and Ethnic Identities in the Media* (pp. 1–10). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-56834-2_1

Aziz, N. A. A., Ariffin, N. F. M., Ismail, N. A., Ismail, S., Alias, A., & Utaberta, N. (2022). The Comparison of the Best Practices of the Community-Based Education for Living Heritage Site Conservation. In Y. L., N. U., A. O.G., & A. M. (Eds.), *Lecture Notes in Civil Engineering* (Vol. 161, pp. 1–8). Springer Science and Business Media Deutschland GmbH. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-2329-5_1

Banerjee, S. (2024). Film Festivals and Cultural Diplomacy: The Role of International Cinema in Global Relations. *Shodh Sagar Journal of Language, Arts, Culture and Film*, *1*(1 SE-Original Research Articles), 36–41. https://doi.org/10.36676/jlacf.v1.i1.7

Bing, J.-B. (2015). The Indonesian cinema, distorting mirror of a changing society. *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Mediterranee*, *137*, 177–192. https://doi.org/10.4000/remmm.8527

Cerquetti, M., & Ferrara, C. (2018). Marketing research for cultural heritage conservation and sustainability: Lessons from the field. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, *10*(3). https://doi.org/10.3390/su10030774

Chan, J. M., & Lee, F. L. F. (2017). Advancing comparative media and communication research. In *Advancing Comparative Media and Communication Research*. Taylor and Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315179285

Chang, C.-H., Tseng, H.-Y., & Chen, T.-S. (2024). Seeing Oneself in Others' Stories: A Study on Audience Experience in Autobiographical Therapeutic Performance. *Bulletin of Educational Psychology*, *56*(2), 429–452. https://doi.org/10.6251/BEP.202412_56(2).0009

Chang, J. (2024). The Construction of Cultural Identity in Multimodal Discourse Analysis under the Perspective of Media Convergence. *Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences*, *9*(1). https://doi.org/10.2478/amns.2023.2.00478

Christensen, M., & Nilsson, A. E. (2018). Media, Communication, and the Environment in Precarious Times. *Journal of Communication*, *68*(2), 267–277. https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqy004
Cubitt, S. (2014). Ecomedia futures. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, *10*(2), 163–170. https://doi.org/10.1386/macp.10.2.163_1
Desilla, L. (2014). Reading between the lines, seeing beyond the images: An empirical study on the comprehension of implicit film dialogue meaning across cultures. *Translator*, *20*(2), 194–214. https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2014.967476
Eatough, V., & Smith, J. A. (2006). I feel like a scrambled egg in my head: An idiographic case study of meaning making and anger using interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, *79*(1), 115–135. https://doi.org/10.1348/147608305X41100
Gamage, A. (2025). A comparative analysis of qualitative and mixed methods research: Strengths, limitations, and practical applications. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, *25*, 2040–2046. https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2025.25.3.0947
Gerbner, G. (1998). Cultivation Analysis: An Overview. *Mass Communication and Society*, *1*(3–4), 175–194. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.1998.9677855
Grace, S. C. (2021). The intermingling of meanings in marketing: semiology and phenomenology in consumer culture theory. *AMS Review*, *11*(1–2), 70–80. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13162-021-00192-1
Hall, S. (1997). Cultural Representations. *A Cultural History of Hair in the Modern Age*, 163–180. https://doi.org/10.5040/9798881817947.ch-8
Hanan, D. (2017). Cultural Specificity in Indonesian Film: Diversity in Unity. In *Cultural Specificity in Indonesian Film: Diversity in Unity*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-40874-3
Hefferon, K., & Gil-Rodriguez, E. (2011). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In *The Psychologist* (Vol. 24, Issue 10, pp. 756–759). British Psychological Society.
Holohan, C. (2017). Introduction: Mapping the European cinematic. *Studies in European Cinema*, *14*(1), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1080/17411548.2017.1294838
Hunting, K. (2021). Critical content analysis: a methodological proposal for the incorporation of numerical data into critical/cultural media studies. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, *45*(1), 39–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2021.1910061
Izharuddin, A. (2017). Gender, Islam, and the Nation in New Order Islamic Films. In *Gender, Sexualities and Culture in Asia* (pp. 97–126). Springer Science and Business Media B.V. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2173-2_4
Jiménez de Madariaga, C. (2021). Dry stone constructions – intangible cultural heritage and sustainable environment. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, *11*(4), 614–626. https://doi.org/10.1108/JCHMSD-12-2020-0180
Jin, D. Y., & Su, W. (2019). Asia-Pacific Film Co-productions: Theory, Industry and Aesthetics. In *Asia-Pacific Film Co-productions: Theory, Industry and Aesthetics*. Taylor and Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003011262
Kerrigan, S., & Batty, C. (2016). Re-conceptualising screenwriting for the academy: the social, cultural and creative practice of developing a screenplay. *New Writing*, *13*(1), 130–144. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790726.2015.1134580
Kevseroğlu, Ö., Ayataç, H., & Baturayoğlu Yöney, N. (2021). Understanding intangible aspects of cultural landscape; living cultures of northeast kayseri valleys. *Milli Folklor*, *17*(130), 185–203. https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85116109252&partnerID=40&md5=a24a3219565f6190f911522afb3dd7fd
Latif, R. A., & Hassan, B. R. A. (2020). Filmic education of borderland texts in Jogho and Bunohan. *SEARCH Journal of Media and Communication Research*, *12*(1), 125–139. https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85089000356&partnerID=40&md5=0867cabe6e22793be2dec93c8b68acb2
Livingstone, S. (2015). Active Audiences? The Debate Progresses But Is Far From Resolved. *Communication Theory*, *25*(4), 439–446. https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12078
Michalik, Y. (2015). INDONESIAN WOMEN FILMMAKERS: Creating a new female identity? *Indonesia and the Malay World*, *43*(127), 378–396. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2015.1054139
Palinkas. (2015). *Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. PG - 533-44 LID - 10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y [doi]* (Issues 1573-

3289 (Electronic)).
Petkanopoulou, Katerina, Wildschut, Tim, & Sedikides, Constantine. (2021). Nostalgia and Biculturalism: How Host-Culture Nostalgia Fosters Bicultural Identity Integration. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *52*(2), 184–191. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022120988345
Petrova, L. (2011). David Throsby: The economics of cultural policy. *Journal of Cultural Economics*, *35*(3), 237–240. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10824-011-9138-2
Plantinga, C. R. (2009). *Moving viewers : American film and the spectator's experience*. Berkeley : University of California Press. https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/7904527
Potter, W. J. (2012). *Media Effects*. SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781544308500
Purnama, A. (2023). Film style in Indonesian cinema, 1998-2018: Lighting, production design and camera movement. In *Film Style in Indonesian Cinema, 1998-2018: Lighting, Production Design and Camera Movement*. Edinburgh University Press. https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85212913587&partnerID=40&md5=62d1ddb536b02f11a21e8601ef131325
Rajala, A., Lindblom, D., & Stocchetti, M. (2020). The Political Economy of Local Cinema: A Critical Introduction. In *The Political Economy of Local Cinema: A Critical Introduction*. Peter Lang AG. https://doi.org/10.3726/b16846
Razali, M. F., Abu Hassan, B. R., & Latif, R. A. (2016). Disenfranchised arts and cultural heritage: What can film do? *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, *32*(1), 651–668. https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-84978745429&partnerID=40&md5=8a4add94abb362de92c62fa642019ea3
Schofield Clark, Lynn. (2008). Book Review: Roger Silverstone, Media and Morality: On the Rise of the Mediapolis. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007. Vii + 215 pp. ISBN 0—7456—3504—0, $25.95 (pbk). *New Media & Society*, *10*(3), 537–540. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444808089419
Smith, H., Suldovsky, B., & Lindenfeld, L. (2016). Mass Communication Research in Sustainability Science: Moving Toward an Engaged Approach to Address Society's Sustainability Dilemma. *Mass Communication and Society*, *19*(5), 548–565. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2016.1167916
Sola-Morales, S. (2016). Media and identification processes: A ritual and dramatic construction. *Athenea Digital*, *16*(2), 247–269. https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/athenea.1448
Song, D. (2025). Hall's encoding/decoding model revisited in the digital platform age: de/encoding, lincoding, affordecoding, and en/decoding. *Information, Communication & Society*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2025.2524571
Srdanović, P., Skala, T., & Maričević, M. (2025). InHeritage—A Gamified Mobile Application with AR and VR for Cultural Heritage Preservation in the Metaverse. *Applied Sciences (Switzerland)*, *15*(1). https://doi.org/10.3390/app15010257
Sugihartono, R. A., & Adi, S. P. (2024). Children's Animation Films: The Cultural Advancement Perspective. *Journal of Urban Culture Research*, *29*, 45–62. https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85216964727&partnerID=40&md5=8bcd62c5dbf86cb029183497918b7c55
Thies, S. (2020). Cinema. In *The Routledge Handbook to the Culture and Media of the Americas* (pp. 285–297). Taylor and Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351064705-25
Tindall, L. (2009). J.A. Smith, P. Flower and M. Larkin (2009), Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *6*(4), 346–347. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780880903340091
Tsatsou, P. (2016). Can media and communication researchers turn the present challenges of research impact and interdisciplinarity into future opportunities? *International Communication Gazette*, *78*(7), 650–656. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048516655718
Xue, K., Li, Y., & Meng, X. (2019). An evaluation model to assess the communication effects of intangible cultural heritage. *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, *40*, 124–132. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.culher.2019.05.021
Yang, Yongzhong, Liu, Shuangji, & Song, Xiaoting. (2023). The Co-creation of Museum Experience Value From the Perspective of Visitor Motivation. *SAGE Open*, *13*(4), 21582440231202120. https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231202118
Zillmann, D. (2000). Mood Management in the Context of Selective Exposure Theory. *Communication Yearbook*, *23*(1), 103–123. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2000.11678971