

From Celebration to Empowerment: A Synergistic Model of Community, Culture, and MSMEs in the Cisarua Bisa Festival 2025

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Abstract

Cultural festivals are increasingly recognized as strategic vehicles for community empowerment and the enhancement of local tourism economies. The Cisarua Bisa 2025 Festival combines three main pillars—community participation, arts and culture, and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)—into a synergistic ecosystem. This study examines how festivals can foster sustainable collaborative models that function as instruments for social empowerment, cultural preservation, and creative economic development. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, involving 21 key informants selected through purposive sampling, with data collected over three days through participant observation, in-depth interviews, documentation analysis, and literature review. The findings reveal the emergence of the Festival-Based Community Empowerment Model (FBCEM), which emphasizes integrated community engagement, cultural heritage preservation, and MSME development. This model contributes a novel conceptual framework that is replicable in other regions. Academically, the research enriches the discourse on cultural tourism and empowerment models; practically, it offers strategic insights for stakeholders aiming to develop festivals as sustainable and collaborative platforms.

Keywords: Community Empowerment, Cultural Festivals, MSMEs, Local Tourism, Creative Economy

INTRODUCTION

Cultural festivals have evolved far beyond their traditional role as platforms for entertainment. Globally, they are increasingly recognized as strategic instruments for sustainable tourism development, community empowerment, and local economic growth. Festivals create spaces for artistic expression, foster collective identity, and act as catalysts for tourism innovation and place branding (Finkel & Platt, 2020; Richards & King, 2022). Notable examples such as the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland, the Rio Carnival in Brazil, and the Kerala Festival in India demonstrate how cultural events can integrate community participation, heritage preservation, and creative economic activities within a competitive tourism ecosystem.

In contrast, the Indonesian cultural festival landscape remains predominantly ceremonial. Many events function as top-down tourism promotions, organized primarily by local governments or tourism agencies with limited grassroots involvement. This ceremonial tendency—characterized by aesthetic display without participatory planning or sustainable follow-up—has been noted in studies such as (Koike, 2019; Jeon et al., 2024), which highlight the marginalization of community agency and economic continuity. Consequently, such festivals often lack mechanisms for capacity-building, local ownership, or long-term socio-economic impact.

Community involvement is central to transforming festivals into empowerment platforms. Inclusive tourism models emphasize communities as active agents—planners, organizers, and beneficiaries—rather than passive spectators (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). Likewise, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a pivotal role in strengthening local economies by

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offering culinary products, crafts, and cultural goods that enhance the tourist experience (Carvalho et al., 2021). When integrated with arts and cultural heritage, these elements co-produce sustainable tourism value chains that benefit both cultural preservation and economic resilience.

Arts and culture also serve as the symbolic backbone of tourism destinations. Intangible cultural heritage—such as performances, rituals, and craftsmanship—carries intergenerational value while serving as a marketable attraction (Franklin, 2018; Valek & Mura, 2022). However, most academic studies on Indonesian festivals tend to emphasize promotional outcomes or short-term visitor impacts (Rusiawan & Wijayanti, 2024), with limited exploration of their potential as holistic empowerment ecosystems. This creates a research gap in models that integrate cultural preservation, local entrepreneurship, and participatory governance.

To address this gap, the present study explores the Cisarua Bisa 2025 Festival as a strategic case of cultural festival-based empowerment. The study proposes the Festival-Based Community Empowerment Model (FBCEM), which synthesizes three core elements—community engagement, cultural heritage, and MSME development—within a pentahelix collaboration framework that includes government, academia, businesses, communities, and the media. Unlike existing models such as Community-Based Tourism (CBT), which focus on tourism planning and community benefit, or creative tourism, which centers on co-creation and experience, FBCEM explicitly integrates economic, cultural, and social dimensions into a synergistic and replicable empowerment model. This model is both contextually grounded in Indonesian socio-cultural realities and aligned with international principles of sustainable cultural tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community Empowerment in Tourism

From the lens of community participation theory, the success of empowerment in the tourism sector is determined by the extent to which local communities are involved at every stage—from planning and implementation to evaluation (Reindrawati, 2023). This participatory paradigm aligns with Friedmann's (1992) notion of transformative empowerment, which emphasizes the redistribution of power, access to resources, and institutional recognition of community voices. Similarly, (Scheyvens, 1999) framework outlines four dimensions of empowerment in tourism: economic, psychological, social, and political—each of which is relevant in the context of the Cisarua Bisa Festival.

The 2025 Cisarua Bisa Festival exemplifies a Community-Based Tourism (CBT) approach, as the local population serves not only as spectators but as organizers, performers, and MSME actors. Their involvement is instrumental in fostering a sense of ownership, cultural pride, and economic participation. Empowerment also requires capacity building, especially in human resource development and tourism entrepreneurship. According to (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018), strategic human resource management enhances both individual and collective capabilities, enabling communities to support tourism growth sustainably. In this context, festivals can function as empowerment laboratories, offering real-world platforms for developing competence, creativity, and local leadership.

MSMEs are central to this process. Entrepreneurship is considered a primary driver in building resilient, competitive tourism economies (Ramdan et al., 2022). Through festivals, MSMEs access public visibility, market testing, and networking opportunities. These interactions not only generate economic value but also reinforce place-based cultural identities, embedding economic development within local wisdom and aesthetics (Reindrawati, 2023).

Arts and Culture as Tourist Attractions

Arts and culture are increasingly recognized as Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES)—non-material benefits that contribute to cultural identity, aesthetic value, and spiritual well-being (MEA, 2005; Tuan et al., 2018). As tourism assets, they are both products and processes that mediate identity, memory, and meaning-making. In the Indonesian context, performing arts such as wayang golek, jaipongan, and Sundanese music are emblematic of intangible heritage that binds communities across generations (Badaruddin, 2023).

Festivals offer new spatial and temporal contexts for these expressions, renewing their relevance and accessibility. According to (Allen et al., 2021), cultural event management can strategically position festivals as authentic and immersive tourism experiences. This perspective is echoed in UNESCO's Living Heritage framework, which views cultural practices as evolving, community-driven expressions rather than static artifacts (UNESCO, 2003). The Cisarua Bisa Festival aligns with this view by revitalizing traditional performances through active youth participation (e.g., children's wayang cilik) and public engagement. The festival thus performs three critical functions: 1) Preservation: Keeping traditional arts alive through creative reinterpretation; 2) Economic activation: Providing income streams and entrepreneurship opportunities for

local MSMEs; 3) Education and identity: Transmitting cultural values while enhancing place branding. This integrated approach aligns with (Amerta, 2017) vision of CBT, wherein communities are the primary beneficiaries and stewards of tourism assets, rather than peripheral suppliers.

Cultural Festivals as a Medium of Synergy

Beyond entertainment, cultural festivals function as platforms for socio-economic and institutional synergy (Frost, 2016). They foster interaction among diverse actors—government, communities, MSMEs, artists, and tourists—thus enabling the pentahelix model of collaborative governance in tourism (Rachmat et al., 2021). At their best, festivals act as cultural infrastructures, capable of sustaining traditions, generating livelihoods, and building adaptive community resilience.

However, much of the existing literature tends to treat festivals in fragmented ways. For instance, (Pulido & Gonzalez, 2019) highlight their use in cultural promotion, (Finkel & Platt, 2020) explore their function as tourism attractions, and (Nadotti & Vannoni, 2019) focus on their economic contributions. What remains underexplored is the intersection of these functions. Few models holistically examine how community empowerment, artistic vitality, and MSME development can operate in a mutually reinforcing ecosystem.

The Festival-Based Community Empowerment Model (FBCEM) proposed in this study addresses this gap. It builds upon and transcends earlier models like CBT and creative tourism by operationalizing synergy across three pillars—community, culture, and commerce—within a replicable governance framework. By embedding festivals within local ecosystems of participation, value creation, and cultural transmission, FBCEM contributes a multi-dimensional lens for understanding sustainable tourism development in emerging economies.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the Cisarua Bisa 2025 Festival as a strategic model for community empowerment, cultural preservation, and MSME strengthening. The case study approach was chosen because it enables an in-depth and context-sensitive understanding of complex socio-cultural and economic dynamics involving multiple stakeholders. The research was conducted in Cisarua District, West Bandung Regency, Indonesia, during the Cisarua Bisa Festival held on August 16, 2025, as part of the 80th Indonesian Independence Day celebrations. Fieldwork took place over three days (August 14–16, 2025), during which the researchers observed various festival components, including traditional performances, MSME showcases, and community engagement activities. This context provided an ideal empirical setting to examine how a cultural festival can operate as a multi-dimensional platform for empowerment.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 21 key informants who played significant roles within the festival ecosystem. These included local government officials, festival organizers, MSME and creative economy actors, community leaders, and Pokdarwis members, representatives from village-owned enterprises (BUMDes), as well as cultural practitioners. This diverse sample captured the perspectives of all elements within the pentahelix framework—government, academia, business, community, and media—ensuring a holistic view of stakeholder collaboration. Data collection methods included semi-structured, in-depth interviews lasting 45 to 90 minutes, participant observation during the festival, and document analysis of festival archives, media reports, and supporting literature. Ethical research practices were followed throughout the study. All participants provided informed consent, and although formal institutional ethical clearance was not required due to the community-based nature of the research, the study adhered to academic standards regarding confidentiality, voluntary participation, and non-intrusive engagement.

The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Thematic coding was assisted by NVivo 12 software to ensure analytical rigor and transparency. Thematic saturation was reached after the 18th interview, at which point no new themes emerged, and data convergence was observed across sources. To ensure validity and trustworthiness, the study employed triangulation by integrating interview data with observations and documentation, while member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with selected informants for verification. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process to minimize bias and ensure the authenticity of interpretation. These methodological strategies ensured that the findings are contextually grounded, theoretically robust, and replicable for future studies in cultural tourism and community-based empowerment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Cisarua Bisa 2025 Festival

The Cisarua Bisa 2025 Festival, held on August 16, 2025, at the State Police School (SPN) Green Field in West Bandung, marked a significant milestone in the integration of culture, economy, and community

participation within a single tourism event. Timed to coincide with Indonesia's 80th Independence Day celebrations, the festival served as more than just a commemorative occasion—it functioned as a multi-dimensional platform for showcasing local identity, creativity, and entrepreneurial vitality. As an annual event, it aims to amplify the district's cultural assets and creative economy through the collective involvement of villages, MSMEs, and community groups.



Figure1. Cisarua Bisa 2025 Festival Stage

Source: Research Data, 2025

Each of the six villages in the Cisarua District was given a dedicated space on the main stage to present traditional performances such as *jaipongan*, *pencak silat*, *rampak jaipong*, and *wayang cilik*. The inclusion of *dangdut koplo* added an accessible and festive atmosphere, drawing a wide demographic of visitors from both within and outside the region. Complementing the stage performances was a curated exhibition of over one hundred MSME booths, housed in thematic tents. These showcased a diverse array of local products, including culinary specialties, traditional crafts, textiles, beverages, packaged goods, and creative souvenirs, demonstrating the richness of the district's creative economy.

The spatial and thematic organization of the festival reflects the principles of the experience economy (Chang, 2018), wherein tourists do not merely consume cultural products but engage in immersive and emotionally resonant experiences. Visitors to the Cisarua Bisa Festival encountered a synergistic blend of aesthetic, gastronomic, and social interaction that transformed the event into a holistic cultural encounter. Significantly, the festival also advanced the district's destination branding, positioning Cisarua not only as a cultural hub but as an empowered, self-reliant community capable of driving sustainable tourism development from the ground up.

The physical arrangement of the festival site, the deliberate programming of cultural content, and the prominence of locally-led economic initiatives collectively illustrate the operationalization of community-based tourism principles in real time. Rather than being passive observers, residents were co-creators of the festival narrative—curating performances, managing MSME participation, and serving as cultural ambassadors. This embeddedness of the community in the festival's design and execution underscores the event's relevance as a case study for models of integrated empowerment in cultural tourism.

Community Empowerment through Festival Participation

One of the most prominent outcomes of the Cisarua Bisa 2025 Festival was its capacity to function as a community empowerment platform, particularly in how it engaged local stakeholders in the planning, performance, and production processes. Far from being passive beneficiaries, community members assumed active roles as artists, entrepreneurs, organizers, and cultural agents—thereby embodying the principles of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) (Agustina & Darma, 2021; Suansri, 2022). Evidence from in-depth interviews reveals that village leaders and residents viewed the festival not merely as a celebratory event but as a strategic space for cultural expression, local pride, and economic inclusion. For instance, the Head of Kertawangi Village emphasized that *wayang cilik* and *rampak jaipong* performances were more than entertainment—they symbolized the regeneration of cultural identity and served as intergenerational bridges for transmitting local traditions to youth. Similarly, the Head of Jambudipa Village noted that community participation in *pencak silat* and *jaipong* reinforced social cohesion and cultivated a sense of ownership over the festival.

These narratives align with (Scheyvens, 1999) empowerment framework, particularly the psychological and social dimensions, which highlight how tourism activities can boost self-esteem and strengthen community bonds. The Cisarua case illustrates how festival participation contributes to a "revalorization of the local", enabling rural communities to redefine their cultural significance within broader national and tourism contexts. Furthermore, the festival created new opportunities for institutional engagement among local actors such as Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Groups), BUMDes (Village-Owned Enterprises), and informal art

communities. The Head of Tugumukti Village explicitly linked the festival to increased collaboration among these groups, describing how the festival mobilized not only performers but also MSME vendors, volunteers, and logistical teams. This illustrates a distributed leadership model, where empowerment is not centralized in formal institutions but shared across multiple levels of community agency. The presence of youth performers—particularly children as puppeteers in wayang cilik—is also a noteworthy indicator of cultural continuity and innovation. According to local artists, the festival was not only a venue for cultural preservation but a “living classroom” for intergenerational knowledge exchange. Their perspective echoes cultural capital theory, which asserts that artistic knowledge, when socially recognized and practiced, becomes a form of community empowerment.



Figure 2. Empowering the local community in Cisarua

Source: Research Data, 2025

In this context, the festival operates as a “mobilizing structure” (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018) that enables collective participation, cultural transmission, and localized governance. By offering a shared platform for performance, expression, and collaboration, the Cisarua Bisa Festival empowers communities to reassert their cultural agency while also contributing to sustainable tourism development.

Revitalizing Cultural Heritage and Artistic Regeneration

Cultural heritage plays a central role in the Cisarua Bisa 2025 Festival, not merely as a form of spectacle but as an evolving medium of intergenerational knowledge transmission and identity formation. The festival foregrounded traditional performing arts such as *jaipongan*, *pencak silat*, *rampak jaipong*, and notably, *wayang cilik*—a children's adaptation of the wayang golek puppet theatre. These performances were not incidental but deliberately curated by each village to reflect local styles, creative expressions, and communal narratives. From a theoretical standpoint, this aligns with the concept of living heritage as articulated in UNESCO's 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage, where cultural expressions are viewed not as static relics, but as dynamic practices continually recreated by communities in response to their environment, history, and interaction with others. In this context, the Cisarua Festival does not simply showcase traditional arts; it reactivates them in a new socio-cultural milieu—one that integrates performance, tourism, and economic activity.



Figure 3. Wayang Golek Art Performance Seen By The Puppeteer Cilik Kertawangi

Source: Research Data, 2025

A key innovation was the emergence of *wayang cilik* as the festival's cultural icon. Originating from Kertawangi Village, this adaptation was performed by children who were trained by senior *dalang* (puppet

masters) within community-run workshops. This not only captured the audience's imagination but also symbolized a generational shift in cultural stewardship. Rather than relying on external preservation programs, the community initiated its own model of cultural regeneration—demonstrating what Bourdieu might call a conversion of cultural capital into both symbolic and economic value. The performances of *pencak silat* by villages such as Pasirhalang, Jambudipa, and Tugumukti further reinforced the idea that traditional martial arts remain relevant as embodied heritage, linking physical discipline with spiritual and communal values. Similarly, the various *jaipong* and *rampak jaipong* presentations illustrated not only stylistic diversity but also innovation within tradition, as youth groups introduced new choreography while preserving musical structures and costumes. This reflects hybridization as a cultural strategy—wherein traditions are not diluted but reimagined to engage new audiences, including domestic and international tourists.

Artists interviewed during the fieldwork noted that the festival provides more than a performance venue; it is a creative commons where artistic innovation and preservation converge. In their view, the festival operates as both a stage and a school: a space where older artists transfer knowledge, and younger performers reinterpret it. This reinforces the theoretical claim that cultural festivals can act as laboratories of intangible heritage, bridging the gap between preservation and contemporary relevance (Kurin, 2004; Klammer, 2013). Moreover, by embedding traditional arts within a festival supported by MSMEs and local governance structures, the cultural expressions are given economic scaffolding—allowing them to thrive not in isolation, but as part of a broader ecosystem of community resilience and creative economy.

Economic Empowerment through MSMEs

One of the most tangible impacts of the Cisarua Bisa 2025 Festival was the economic empowerment of local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which occupied a prominent place in the festival's spatial and programmatic design. The event featured over a hundred MSME booths strategically positioned in thematic tents, providing a vibrant marketplace for culinary products, beverages, crafts, textiles, and creative goods. These enterprises were not merely vendors, but key stakeholders whose presence reflected the intersection of local entrepreneurship, cultural identity, and tourism development. Empirical data from interviews reinforce the economic significance of this integration. Local culinary actors Entar and Dian described how the festival created a substantial boost in both sales volume and brand visibility, enabling them to expand their customer base beyond regular village markets. Their testimonies reflect the core tenets of community-based economic empowerment, wherein tourism activities serve as platforms for market exposure, product innovation, and income diversification (Ramdan et al., 2022). By participating in the festival, MSMEs gained more than financial profit; they accessed networks, knowledge, and consumer feedback, all of which contribute to long-term business resilience.



Figure 4. Local Products From Cisarua MSMEs

Source: Research Data, 2025

Furthermore, village-owned enterprises (BUMDes) also reported measurable benefits. According to Wildan and Hermawan, representatives from local BUMDes, the festival created a “domino effect” across the village economy—generating new partnerships, increasing cooperative engagement, and enhancing the visibility of BUMDes-supported products. This aligns with the notion of inclusive local development, wherein economic benefits circulate within the community rather than being extracted by external tourism operators. The festival thus functions as a “temporal market catalyst”—a limited-duration event that stimulates sustained entrepreneurial activity. The presence of MSMEs alongside cultural performances creates a synergistic value proposition: culture draws the crowd, while commerce captures economic value. This economic-cultural

synergy is central to the Festival-Based Community Empowerment Model (FBCEM), distinguishing it from other festival formats that separate tourism promotion from local economic integration.

From a theoretical standpoint, this dynamic illustrates how festivals can operationalize the "bottom-up creative economy", where local actors are not passive participants in global value chains but active producers of place-based economic identity (Duxbury & Richards, 2019). It also reflects (Scheyvens, 1999) concept of economic empowerment, which emphasizes access to financial benefits, entrepreneurial agency, and the capacity to reinvest in the community. Significantly, the economic role of MSMEs at the festival goes beyond transactional logic. Many vendors incorporated cultural aesthetics into their products—such as traditional packaging, local ingredients, and heritage narratives—thus participating in the commodification of culture without its erosion. This represents a nuanced form of cultural economy, where MSMEs become mediators of heritage and innovation, sustaining local livelihoods while reinforcing regional identity.

Operationalizing the FBCEM Model

The Festival-Based Community Empowerment Model (FBCEM) emerges from this study not merely as a theoretical abstraction but as a practical, replicable framework grounded in the lived experiences of the Cisarua Bisa 2025 Festival. At its core, the model conceptualizes community-based festivals as platforms that synergize three key dimensions: community participation, cultural heritage, and MSME development. Rather than viewing these domains in isolation—as is often the case in tourism or cultural policy—the FBCEM emphasizes their interconnectedness and mutual reinforcement, situating empowerment as both a process and an outcome of this synergy. The operationalization of this model in the Cisarua Festival was visible through several key mechanisms. First, there was evident cross-sectoral collaboration across the pentahelix elements—government, academia, business, community, and media. Local authorities provided logistical and infrastructural support; community members curated and performed cultural content; MSMEs activated the commercial dimension of the event; and both media and academia played roles in documentation, promotion, and reflection. This distributed form of leadership ensured that no single stakeholder dominated the narrative, allowing grassroots innovation and shared ownership to flourish.

Second, the festival integrated cultural and economic functions seamlessly. Traditional performances—such as jaipong, wayang cilik, and pencak silat—not only served as attractions but also directed visitor flows toward MSME booths and local product showcases. This reflects the principles of the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), wherein emotional and aesthetic experiences are converted into economic value. The dynamic between culture and commerce was not exploitative; instead, it was embedded in local narratives and identities, reinforcing authenticity while stimulating economic growth. Third, the model promoted social and generational sustainability. The inclusion of youth performers, especially in the revitalized wayang cilik tradition, illustrated an organic strategy for cultural regeneration. Knowledge transfer between senior artists and children occurred not through formal instruction but via community-based mentoring and performance practice. This approach aligns with UNESCO's concept of living heritage and demonstrates how festivals can function as cultural laboratories—spaces where tradition and innovation coexist through participatory practice.

Furthermore, the festival played a strategic role in place branding and destination identity. By mobilizing cultural assets, economic activities, and collective memory, the community of Cisarua was able to narrate its own identity—not as a passive rural locality, but as an active, creative, and economically self-reliant region. This constructed image resonates both internally (fostering pride and cohesion) and externally (attracting tourism and investment), supporting the idea that festivals can serve as vehicles for localized development narratives. Within the FBCEM, these elements are not linear but circular and interdependent. Community engagement fuels cultural vitality; cultural expression attracts tourism; tourism generates markets for MSMEs; and MSME success reinforces community agency and pride. This cycle creates a self-sustaining ecosystem of empowerment, supported structurally by the pentahelix framework. Unlike many festival models that depend on external promoters or one-time funding, FBCEM encourages endogenous growth, making it more resilient and adaptable to varying contexts. Ultimately, the strength of FBCEM lies in its grounded applicability. It is not a top-down model imposed from theory but a bottom-up synthesis derived from practice. The model bridges academic discourse on sustainable tourism, cultural capital, and creative economy with tangible, community-driven strategies. As such, it offers both a conceptual contribution to the literature and a practical blueprint for other cultural destinations seeking to build resilience, identity, and prosperity through festivals.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the role of the Cisarua Bisa 2025 Festival as more than a cultural event; it is a multi-layered empowerment ecosystem where social participation, cultural continuity, and economic agency converge. The Festival-Based Community Empowerment Model (FBCEM) developed from this case illustrates how cultural festivals, when designed and executed inclusively, can become strategic mechanisms for sustainable development that are both bottom-up and community-driven. One of the central contributions of this research lies in its articulation of multi-dimensional empowerment. Unlike existing literature that tends to isolate either the economic (Ramdan et al., 2022) or cultural (Pulido & Gonzalez, 2019) impacts of festivals, this study shows that social, cultural, and economic empowerment are not only coexistent but interdependent. Socially, the active involvement of community members—particularly youth and marginalized groups—in festival production enhances local pride, cohesion, and agency. Culturally, the intergenerational transfer of heritage through practices like wayang cilik reaffirms the continuity of tradition within a living, evolving context. Economically, the meaningful participation of MSMEs and BUMDes results in increased transactions, market expansion, and reinvestment in local enterprises. These findings support (Scheyvens, 1999) and expand its application within a festival-based tourism context.

Furthermore, the Cisarua Festival exemplifies the potential of cultural events as arenas of social innovation. Rather than replicating ceremonial or state-driven models, the festival activated creative forms of local governance, where villages curated performances, organized MSME clusters, and mobilized institutional support through BUMDes and Pokdarwis. This aligns with (Dolezal & Trupp, 2019) argument that festivals can function as living laboratories for social entrepreneurship. In Cisarua, innovation was not limited to product development but extended to institutional recombination, where traditional structures were reimagined to fit contemporary socio-economic goals. Another significant insight relates to the role of the festival in enhancing destination resilience. In the wake of global tourism disruptions, particularly after COVID-19, scholars have called for models that reduce dependency on external tourism drivers and build localized, self-reliant ecosystems (UNWTO, 2020). The FBCEM contributes to this agenda by operationalizing resilience through cultural and economic embeddedness. By leveraging internal assets—local art forms, community knowledge, and small enterprises—the festival builds a tourism identity that is endogenous, adaptable, and less vulnerable to external shocks.

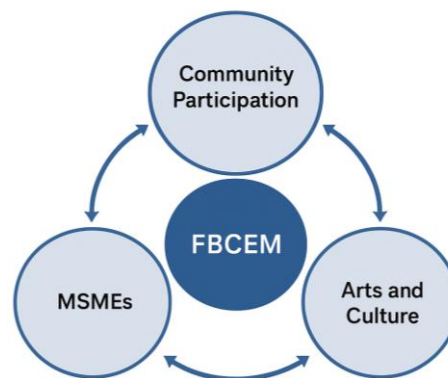


Figure 5. The FBCEM Framework

Source: Research Data, 2025

In line with (Bourdieu, 1986) theory of cultural capital, the study also illustrates how traditional knowledge and performance skills, often undervalued in economic metrics, are converted into symbolic and material capital through festivals. Importantly, this commodification is not extractive. It is framed within community ownership, where artists, elders, and youth collaborate to define the value of their heritage. In doing so, cultural capital is democratized and re-contextualized as collective economic potential—a process that challenges neoliberal paradigms of tourism development. The successful application of the pentahelix model in this festival provides further validation of collaborative governance in tourism. Unlike rhetorical references often made to the pentahelix, the Cisarua Festival demonstrated tangible contributions from each stakeholder: logistical infrastructure from the government, knowledge support from academia, entrepreneurial innovation from businesses, community mobilization, and media amplification. This integrated network generated not only visibility and coordination but also trust and co-ownership, essential elements for sustaining long-term tourism strategies in rural settings.

Finally, the FBCEM offers an important conceptual contribution to the literature on cultural tourism, creative economy, and community-based development. It differs from existing models—such as CBT or creative tourism—by explicitly operationalizing synergy across social, cultural, and economic dimensions. Its strength lies in its grounded applicability: it is not an idealized framework but one rooted in real practices, shaped by local realities, and replicable in other culturally rich but economically peripheral destinations.

Theoretical Implications

This study offers several important theoretical contributions to the fields of cultural tourism, community empowerment, and creative economy. Foremost among these is the development of the Festival-Based Community Empowerment Model (FBCEM), which advances the current discourse by synthesizing socio-cultural and economic empowerment into a single, operable framework. While prior models—such as Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and Creative Tourism—have addressed aspects of participation and co-creation, FBCEM goes further by explicitly operationalizing the synergy among community participation, intangible cultural heritage, and MSME development within a localized festival context.

The model also expands the theoretical application of (Scheyvens, 1999) empowerment framework, which traditionally separates empowerment into psychological, social, economic, and political dimensions. The findings from the Cisarua Bisa Festival suggest that these dimensions are interwoven and mutually reinforcing in the context of cultural events. For instance, cultural pride (psychological) fuels participation (social), which enhances MSME performance (economic), and ultimately contributes to a more empowered community voice in local governance (political).

Secondly, the study contributes to the literature on cultural capital by offering a grounded illustration of how intangible heritage—often marginalized in mainstream economic analyses—can be converted into symbolic, social, and economic value. Drawing on (Bourdieu, 1986) theory, the FBCEM demonstrates that such conversion does not necessarily lead to commodification in the pejorative sense. Instead, when embedded within community-led festival platforms, cultural capital is localized, democratized, and collectively negotiated, reinforcing identity while producing tangible livelihood benefits.

A further implication lies in reframing festivals as vehicles for social innovation. In contrast to events that are state- or market-driven, the Cisarua Bisa Festival showcases a grassroots model of cultural governance, wherein villages experiment with new ways of integrating arts, business, and intergenerational learning. This supports the view of festivals as “living laboratories” (Dolezal & Trupp, 2019) where traditional knowledge systems adapt through creative recombination, fostering endogenous innovation.

Lastly, the model offers insights for the expanding discourse on resilience in tourism development, particularly in the aftermath of global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. FBCEM demonstrates that by leveraging locally embedded resources—cultural knowledge, community networks, and small enterprises—rural destinations can build self-reinforcing ecosystems less vulnerable to external shocks. This complements current resilience frameworks by illustrating how cultural empowerment and economic diversification coalesce through festival infrastructure. Taken together, these implications position FBCEM as a theoretically robust, context-sensitive, and practically replicable model that enriches the academic conversation on sustainable tourism, creative economies, and community-based cultural development.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that cultural festivals, when designed as inclusive and community-driven events, can function as multi-dimensional platforms for empowerment. Drawing from the case of the Cisarua Bisa 2025 Festival, we introduced the Festival-Based Community Empowerment Model (FBCEM), which integrates community participation, cultural heritage preservation, and MSME development within a synergistic framework. The model is supported by active pentahelix collaboration—between government, academia, business, community, and media—creating a holistic ecosystem that advances sustainable, locally-rooted tourism development. Empirical findings reveal that the festival enabled community members to act not merely as performers or vendors, but as co-creators of cultural and economic value. Traditional art forms such as wayang cilik, jaipong, and pencak silat were revitalized through youth involvement, demonstrating the dynamic nature of living heritage. At the same time, MSMEs benefited from increased visibility, expanded market access, and strengthened linkages with local institutions such as BUMDes. These elements interacted to create a self-reinforcing cycle of empowerment: cultural vitality enhanced tourism appeal; tourism stimulated local commerce; and economic gains incentivized further cultural investment and community mobilization.

Academically, this research contributes a novel conceptual model that advances the discourse on community-based tourism, creative economy, and empowerment theory. The FBCEM moves beyond fragmented approaches by operationalizing synergy across multiple empowerment domains—social, cultural, and economic. Theoretically, it extends Scheyvens’ empowerment framework, illustrates the applied value of Bourdieu’s cultural capital, and affirms the role of festivals as engines of social innovation and destination resilience. Practically, the findings offer a replicable framework for policymakers, festival organizers, and tourism planners, particularly in rural or culturally rich regions. By adopting the FBCEM approach, other communities can develop festivals that not only attract tourists but also strengthen local capacities, preserve heritage, and stimulate microeconomic development. The emphasis on pentahelix collaboration ensures that the model can be adapted across governance contexts while maintaining community ownership at its core.

Nonetheless, this study has several limitations. As a single-case study, its generalizability is context-bound and would benefit from comparative analysis across other regions or cultural festivals. The study also focused on short-term festival outcomes; future research could explore longitudinal impacts, such as changes in income, institutional capacity, or youth participation over time. Moreover, integrating quantitative metrics—such as tourism revenue data or network analysis—could further enrich the evaluation of FBCEM’s effectiveness. In conclusion, the Cisarua Bisa 2025 Festival exemplifies how cultural events can evolve from celebratory spectacles into strategic instruments of empowerment when they are designed around community values, artistic identity, and economic inclusivity. The FBCEM provides both a conceptual lens and a practical blueprint for transforming festivals into engines of local resilience, cultural sustainability, and inclusive development.

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