

Research Paper

## Digital Storytelling in Cultural Tourism: A Sustainable Communication Approach at the Lasem Heritage Foundation

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### Abstract

Responsible cultural tourism requires a sustainable approach that includes preserving cultural values while promoting economic and environmental sustainability. This study examines why the Lasem Heritage Foundation chose digital storytelling as a form of sustainable communication for managing cultural tourism and how it aligns with sustainable communication principles. Using a case study approach and qualitative methods, data were collected through interviews, observation, and literature review. Findings indicate that digital storytelling is an effective approach to managing cultural tourism for the Lasem Heritage Foundation, as it provides lasting impact and message amplification. Their Instagram and Website with "Kesengsem Lasem" as tourism branding have helped the foundation communicate and amplify their cultural values to the public and promote sustainable tourism practices to wider audiences. Furthermore, The foundation's use of digital storytelling as a sustainable communication approach in managing cultural tourism effectively conveys lasting messages and helps reinforce the cultural values and environmental sustainability of the destination. These include (1) Ecological Trust in their website articles, (2) ecological access in their Social Business Programs, (3) ecological disclosures in the use of Instagram and Website as the leading platform of digital storytelling & communication tools with all stakeholders, and (4) ecological dialogues in their preservation class, series of learning clinic, and a particular program called to travel for all. Future research should expand the number of informants and consider additional data collection methods such as focus group discussions and content analysis of digital platforms.

**Keywords:** *Cultural Tourism; Digital Platform; Digital Storytelling; Lasem Heritage Foundation; Sustainable Communication*

### INTRODUCTION

With the nicely packaged tourism branding "Wonderful Indonesia", Indonesia has gained recognition as a country with diverse tourism destinations, including cultural tourism. Cultural tourism is a significant sector in sustainable development as it embodies a region's historical values and reflects a society's diversity and identity. In recent years, cultural tourism has gained popularity as a viable option for tourism in Indonesia. Tourism is an essential sector in nation-building where in the process, tourism builds value both for the community, the organization, and, more broadly, for the country (Syarifuddin, 2016). As a region within the administrative Regency of Rembang in Central Java, Lasem is famous for its Peranakan Culture and its rich artistic and historical heritage (Darmayanti & Bahauddin, 2020; Pramono & Mutiari, 2016).

In recent years, the Lasem Heritage Foundation, a Non-Government Organisation, has emerged as a key player in the preservation of Lasem's heritage through its various initiatives, including promoting Lasem tourism and Discovering Lasem as a Tour Operator through its Kesengsem Lasem division. Its efforts have successfully attracted tourists, including celebrities, activists, researchers, and foreign tourists, to visit Lasem. The Foundation has also collaborated with several organizations, such as the Ministry of Education and Culture, The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, and UNESCO, to become a national cultural heritage area. This collaboration is an effort by Lasem, Little China, to become a national cultural heritage area (Lukiarti & Widodo, 2021).

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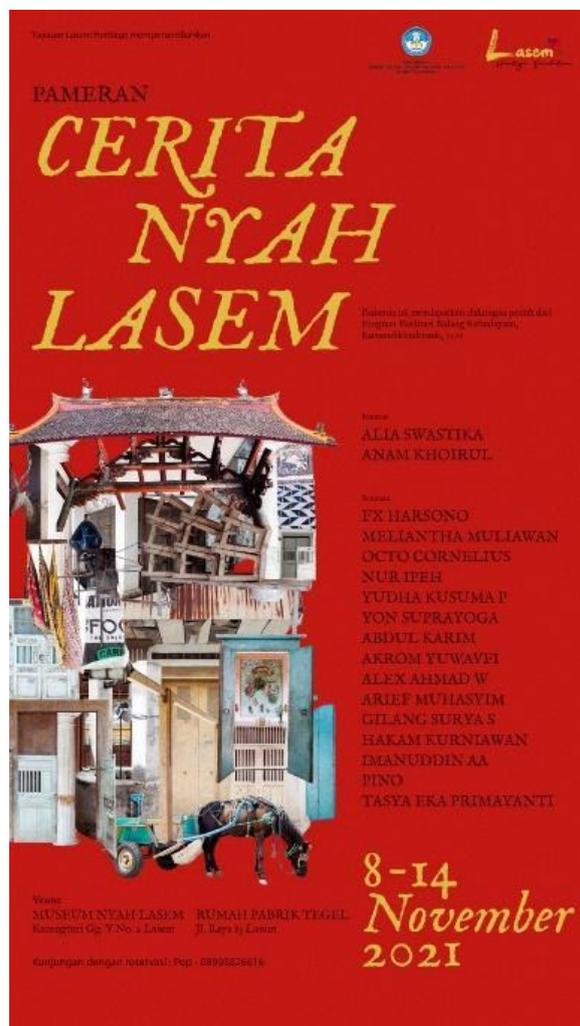
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To communicate Lasem as a cultural heritage city, the Lasem Heritage Foundation has employed various digital platforms, especially social media, to showcase its cultural heritage. They regularly upload on Instagram feeds and stories. Not infrequently, they also hold InstaLive or Zoom Meetings. One of the highlights is the "Stories of Nyah Lasem" Exhibition, their hybrid exhibition in November 2021. The exhibition narrative focuses on the life history of Madame in Lasem, a legacy of the Peranakan culture.



**Figure 1.** Hybrid Exhibition "Cerita Nyah Lasem"  
Source: Lasem Heritage Foundation

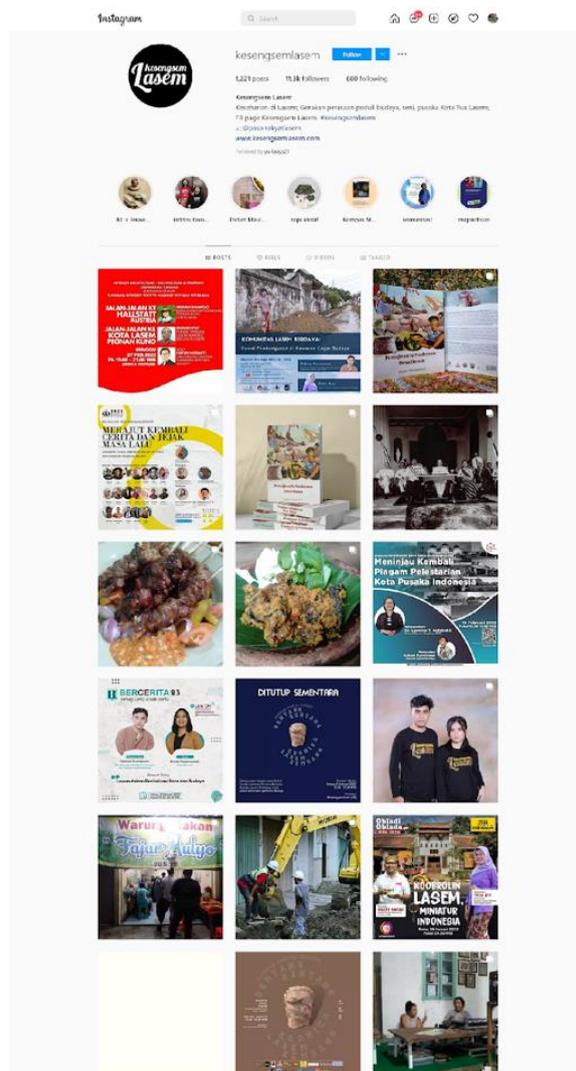
Additionally, the Foundation has collaborated with Traval.co in a virtual program, *Menyusuri Jejak Batik Tiga Negeri di Lasem*, that explores the traces of batik from three countries. This program invites participants to learn about the unique features of Lasem's three-country batik, which is still made by hand using ancient batik techniques by batik makers in Lasem. Through Traval Live and the stories of the great people in Lasem, people are invited to learn a lot about batik, that each color in the batik of the three countries has a meaning. Each motif is on a batik Tiga Negeri, such as Mount Ringgit Pring, Asem-aseman, Chrysanthemum Flower, Sekar Jagat, Kendoro Kendiri, or the ancient Kawung Baganan. It has its own story; the origins of batik from the three Lasem countries are long to tell, summarizing the history of Indonesia to the cultural diversity of many nations.



**Figure 2.** Virtual Tour “Batik Tiga Negeri di Lasem”  
Source : Traval.co

As the title suggests, this virtual tour explores the traces of batik from three countries, Lasem's iconic signature. Meanwhile, on Traval Live, virtual tour participants will be invited to exciting places spread across several villages in Lasem through videos and conversations with Lasem residents, especially batik makers, for about two hours. Lasem's typical three-country batik has unique features because it is still made by hand (handmade, written) by batik makers. Some even still use ancient batik techniques.

This live experience will invite tour participants to walk through the small alleys, the ancient Chinatown complex that has existed since the 18th century, to visit the homes of batik makers. Virtual tour participants even had the opportunity to have long conversations and ask questions about batik from the three countries to batik legends in Lasem. Three people from three batik-making families from three countries are representatives. They are Renny Priscilla (fifth generation) from Maranatha Ong's Art Batik House, Ekawatiningsih (sixth generation) from Lumintu Batik House, and Rudi Siswanto (sixth generation) from Kidang Mas Batik House. The digital storytelling carried out by the Lasem Heritage Foundation is curated on Kesensem Lasem's Instagram, which currently has around 11,000 followers as of March 2022.



**Figure 3.** Instagram Account of Lasem Heritage Foundation  
Source: Lasem Heritage Foundation

In recent years, storytelling has emerged as a popular approach to enhance the tourist experience. Almost all regions in Indonesia have attractive tourism potential, but not all are well narrated to tourists (Ibo, 2019). According to Nur Alam in Bakti et al. (2019), storytelling can make tourist attractions more engaging and create curiosity among potential visitors. By incorporating storytelling into tourism promotion, the Lasem Heritage Foundation aims to increase visitors' knowledge, attitude, and behavior toward Lasem's cultural heritage.

Responsible cultural heritage tourism concerns the destination's environmental and economic sustainability and cultural values. The Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism makes at least three points related to heritage and cultural preservation. First, making a positive contribution to heritage preservation, and second, connecting tourists with locals for greater cultural understanding. Thirdly, being culturally sensitive; increases local pride and self-confidence. In short, responsible tourism needs to be sustainable in every aspect possible (Poetry, 2021).

Human activities make a contribution to unsustainable development and lead to many environmental and social issues. Lifestyle and consumption patterns are significant reasons for

unsustainability. This is due to the fact that the current behavior patterns reinforce the values that inspire individuals to consume rather than conserve, including cultural tourism (Sterling, 2001).

Although communication for sustainable development is like other communication approaches in some ways, it is particularly effective in building bridges across numerous stakeholders. However, there are still some challenges that still need to be overcome. For instance, the application of communication in sustainable development is not achievable because of the properties of current media and message design, the practices adopted for the application, and finding approaches to assess the impact (Genç, 2017; Paolini & Blas, 2014).

The reason why communication is fundamental for sustainable development can be explained by considering the character of sustainability. Firstly, societal discourse is fundamental to offering legitimacy in sustainable development. Secondly, sustainability is a relatively complex problem that requires overcoming particular societal communication. This follows the principle of sustainable communication, where sustainable communication has ecological sustainability as its focus point (Kilbourne, 2004; Ijatuyi & Olatunde, 2013).

The use of digital storytelling in cultural tourism is a relatively new concept that has gained popularity in recent years. The digital format allows for greater flexibility in sharing stories, reaching a wider audience, and creating interactive and immersive experiences for visitors (Park et al., 2018). Moreover, digital storytelling is an effective approach to preserving and communicating cultural heritage, particularly for places with limited resources for physical preservation (Vilalta et al., 2019; Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007, Miller & Pennycuff, 2008).

However, while digital storytelling has become increasingly popular in cultural tourism, there is still a need for theoretical and conceptual support. Several previous studies have focused on the use of digital storytelling in tourism promotion (e.g., Chen et al., 2018; Gretzel et al., 2015, Munar, 2018; Mutuveloo et al., 2020), but there is a limited understanding of the role of digital storytelling in preserving cultural heritage.

Related to every content in the digital storytelling of the Lasem Heritage Foundation, the key messages always consist of two points. Firstly, historical value education about Lasem as a Small China Town, which has a unique identity and cultural diversity, and an invitation to preserve cultural tourism is an important key in sustainable communication. Some academic and non-academic researchers have made Lasem a research idea concerning history and culture. Lasem keeps a lot of exciting stories that are not enough to be seen only but need to be explored from various perspectives so that they can be better understood.

Furthermore, while the Lasem Heritage Foundation has attracted several tourists and visitors, including celebrities, activists, and researchers, it is important to consider the foundation's position within the cultural tourism domain. In this regard, it is essential to provide a theoretical and conceptual foundation for the study by citing previous researchers' work in the field of cultural tourism. The authors of this study contend that few studies have explored its potential to promote sustainable communication. This paper seeks to address this gap in the literature by investigating the role of digital storytelling in promoting sustainable communication in cultural tourism. In doing so, the authors aim to provide theoretical and practical insights for cultural tourism practitioners, policymakers, and academics interested in the potential of digital storytelling to promote sustainable communication.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the Lasem Heritage Foundation's use of digital storytelling as an approach and form for sustainable communication in managing cultural tourism. In this study, sustainable communication refers to the use of digital storytelling to promote Lasem's cultural heritage while maintaining the integrity of the region's cultural values and practices.

Based on the description, researchers are very interested in studying digital storytelling as a form of sustainable communication by the Lasem Heritage Foundation in managing cultural

tourism. This study aimed to (1) examine and analyze why digital storytelling was chosen as a form of sustainable communication by the Lasem Heritage Foundation in managing cultural tourism and (2) review and explore how digital storytelling is assessed with the principles of sustainable communication.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Over the past few years, storytelling has become a popular and effective tool in tourism, as it allows destinations and businesses to create a more meaningful and memorable experience for their visitors. Previous studies suggest storytelling is an effective method of enhancing cultural tourism experiences. Tourists seek more than just visiting a cultural site; they want to be engaged and understand the local history, culture, and traditions. Cultural tourism storytelling offers a unique opportunity to convey the local culture, values, and traditions, enabling tourists to connect with the destination on a more personal and emotional level (Lindawati, 2018; Makela, 2000; Pasupa, 2017).

Li et al. (2018) examined the impact of storytelling on tourist experiences in a cultural heritage site. They found that storytelling had a significant positive effect on tourists' emotional attachment, satisfaction, and loyalty toward the destination. This study highlights the importance of incorporating storytelling into cultural tourism experiences to enhance visitors' emotional connections to the destination.

Several studies have shown the positive impact of storytelling on cultural tourism. For example, a study by Jiang et al. (2019) found that storytelling significantly enhanced tourists' emotional attachment to a destination, leading to increased satisfaction and a higher likelihood of return visits. Similarly, another study by Jang et al. (2018) found that storytelling increased tourists' understanding of local culture and history and enhanced their overall tourism experience.

The evolution of storytelling in cultural tourism has been driven by advances in technology, changing visitor expectations, and the desire to create more immersive experiences. The use of technology such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and interactive installations have become more prevalent in cultural tourism. These technologies enable visitors to experience a site in a different way and can enhance the storytelling experience by providing a multi-sensory and immersive experience. In addition, studies have examined the use of storytelling to enhance visitors' experiences and engagement, with a focus on themes such as history, culture, and sustainability (Utomo & Kurniawati, 2021; Vashist & Anand, 2018; Widodo, 2021; Widianingsih & Cahyani, 2020).

Moving into 2019, researchers continued to explore the role of technology in storytelling, with a particular emphasis on the use of social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube to create and share travel narratives. Researchers also examined the use of co-creation and co-design in storytelling, highlighting the potential for visitors to actively participate in the creation of stories and experiences.

Additionally, Cheng et al. (2019) explored the role of digital storytelling in promoting sustainable tourism. They argued that digital storytelling could contribute to the sustainability of tourism by raising awareness of local cultures, promoting responsible behavior, and supporting community development. The study also highlighted the potential of digital storytelling in engaging and educating tourists on sustainable tourism practices.

In recent years, there has been a shift towards more authentic and personal storytelling experiences. Local communities are becoming more involved in the development of cultural tourism products and are taking ownership of their cultural heritage. This shift is reflected in the growing popularity of community-led cultural tours, where locals share their personal stories and

traditions with tourists. This trend highlights the importance of authenticity and the desire for more meaningful and genuine cultural experiences (Gray, 2019, Agustina, 2020; Ahmad et al., 2019)).

However, In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced many tourism destinations to reevaluate their storytelling strategies, with a shift towards digital platforms and virtual experiences. Researchers explored the potential of these virtual experiences to reach wider audiences and engage visitors who may not have had the opportunity to visit in person. Furthermore, studies have investigated the role of storytelling in promoting destination recovery and resilience.

Moving into 2021 and 2022, researchers have continued to explore the use of technology in storytelling, with a focus on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) to personalize and tailor narratives to individual visitors. Furthermore, studies have explored the role of storytelling in promoting sustainable tourism practices and raising awareness about environmental issues (Park et al., 2021; Santana et al., 2021).

Baggio et al. (2021) examined the role of storytelling in destination branding. They argued that storytelling could help create a strong brand identity for a destination by highlighting its unique culture, history, and values. The study also emphasized the importance of creating authentic and genuine storytelling experiences that resonate with visitors. Finally, in 2022, Buhalis et al. explored the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in storytelling for tourism. They argued that AI could facilitate the creation of personalized and interactive storytelling experiences for tourists based on their interests, preferences, and behavior. The study also highlighted the potential of AI in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of tourism marketing and management.

Meanwhile, Cultural tourism is a tourism activity in which the tourist's important motivation is to learn, discover, experience, and consume the tangible and intangible cultural points of interest or products in a tourist destination. Cultural tourism covers no longer just the consumption of the cultural products of the past itself. It also includes a contemporary culture or the 'way of life' of a people or place. Cultural tourism can be regarded as a meeting between social systems and cultures which will produce changes in both of them (Tour et al., 2003).

Culture can be understood as a whole of creations and works of humans, including objects resulting from human creativity. This aims to maintain and improve living standards, communicate, and make efforts to adapt to the environment. Culture has concrete forms (tools, architecture, clothing, crafts, and others) and abstract forms (belief systems, knowledge, values, and norms). If culture is associated with tourism, which in popular terms is called cultural tourism, it can be explained that cultural tourism is a type of tourism inherited from our ancestors based on traditions, arts, ceremonies, and experiences of photographing a nation or ethnic group and its people, reflecting the diversity and the identity of a society (Syarifuddin, 2016).

Tourism is part of a culture that includes three forms of culture, such as (1) Tradition, local wisdom, and local genius from various tribes in Indonesia, (2) Various structures, life, and activities of traditional communities, including ritual processions; and (3) Various handicrafts and arts; paintings, rattan, batik various kinds of food (culinary) preparations, which are closely related to regional potential and provide identity to the area (Hariyanto, 2016).

Cultural tourism is a type of tourism whose purpose is to enrich information and increase knowledge about people's behavior in a region, in addition to getting satisfaction and entertainment from the cultural products of a nation, such as traditional dances and ways of life (the way of life), creations. One of these humans ('artificial supply') is art (Syarifuddin, 2016). Cultural values, including tourism cultural values, can be seen from five aspects, namely (1) human nature to see aspects of the meaning of human life; (2) human nature to see the meaning of human relations with the natural surroundings; (3) time aspect, to see human perception of time; (4) activity aspect, to see human perceptions about work and deeds; and (5) relationship aspects, to see human relationships with other humans (Syarifuddin, 2016).

According to McDonagh (1998), sustainable Communication is characterized as "running towards a world in which humankind can preserve rather than dominate nature". It is argued that sustainable communication development differs from social marketing in two critical respects. While social marketing intends to influence the individual behavior of target audiences to improve their well-being and that of society, sustainable Communication has ecological sustainability as its focal factor (Kilbourne, 2004).

Such apparent functions are not recognized in marketing communications, and McDonagh (1998) argues that they may be helpful for sustainability. During the 1980s, for instance, significant research was conducted on the promotion of energy conservation, and the *Journal of Consumer Research* focused on the topic. Some energy suppliers have also promoted energy conservation. It is clear that, while sustainability has no longer been a focal point, existing communication practices are not necessarily against it. However, extra is needed from a sustainability perspective as it requires a transformation of both practices and institutions.

Apart from changing practices, sustainable Communication has moved society from excessive consumption to sustainable consumption as one of its goals (McDonagh, 1998). This is a challenge to the accepted way of doing things and should be based on how current sustainability issues are structured. A restructuring of society may be necessary to make the community culturally sizable and strat to an ecocentric attitude. The social, organizational, and marketing obstacles to this are sizeable, and introducing sustainable communications requires a standard restructuring of the business, government, and financial system (Kilbourne, 2004; Jumena & Amran, 2018).

Sustainable Communication is an interactive social system of uncovering and removing ecological alienations between an organization and its public or stakeholders. Based on the perception of totality or holism, it embraces conflict and criticism via the disclosure of information and access to and participation in policies, organizational methods, and structures that allow open dialogue. So by using 'green, eco-friendly or eco-communication', organizations build trust in the people in society's minds and enable a utopian approach to situations with a high level of environmental awareness and consensus about how humanity should exist. In order to realize ecological sustainability (McDonagh, 1998).

The four principles of Sustainable Communication are as followings.

1. Ecological Trust with the continuing loss of trust and confidence in businesses and organization leaders leading to an ecological legitimation crisis. The objective of Sustainable Communication is to rebuild that trust, if it ever existed, and set up it in society generally;
2. Ecological access; In the risk society, the issue of openness and disclosure of information has emerged as a discussion point in terms of being a mark of organizations looking to create and build trust;
3. Ecological disclosure; more and more organizations are publicly appraised by the public. They are judged by what they are willing to express freely about their activities;
4. Ecological dialogue; In this respect, it reflects Habermas' idealized speech act, but for ecology. Companies that are credible and wish to engage in Sustainable Communication with their public need ongoing dialogue to help apprehend troubles and come to be ecologically meaningful (McDonagh, 1998).

Digital storytelling has become a prominent form of communication in the tourism industry. As a result, it has influenced the way destinations and organizations communicate their cultural and natural heritage to tourists (Kuncoro & Wulandari, 2021; Kurvinen & Kankainen, 2003; Lee & Scot, 2019). According to Chen et al. (2020), digital storytelling is defined as a technique that utilizes digital media tools to narrate a story. This technique allows for the integration of various

multimedia components, such as images, videos, and audio, to enhance the storytelling experience (Kim & Ko, 2018).

One of the critical aspects of digital storytelling in the tourism industry is its potential to promote sustainable communication. Sustainable communication refers to the development and dissemination of messages that promote sustainability while addressing the needs of stakeholders (Kavaliauskiene & Ruzgiene, 2020). McDonagh (2018) defines sustainable communication as "the use of language and visual imagery to convey messages of environmental and social responsibility that enhance the well-being of both individuals and the planet."

Sustainable communication aims to create a dialogue between organizations and tourists, fostering mutual understanding and supporting sustainable practices. According to Buhalis and Amaranggana (2020), digital storytelling can contribute to sustainable communication by promoting the values of sustainability, authenticity, and responsibility. Through digital storytelling, destinations can convey their sustainability efforts, promoting the conservation of natural and cultural resources while educating tourists on sustainable practices.

In conclusion, digital storytelling has the potential to revolutionize the tourism industry by providing a powerful tool for communicating cultural and natural heritage. By adopting sustainable communication practices, destinations can use digital storytelling to promote sustainable tourism and foster mutual understanding between organizations and tourists.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The present study employed a descriptive qualitative research design with a case study method to investigate the use of digital storytelling as a form of sustainable communication in managing cultural tourism by the Lasem Heritage Foundation. The paradigm used in this study is constructivism, which emphasizes the subjective interpretation of social reality.

The data were collected through in-depth interviews with three key informants, Agni Malagina (AM) and Baskoro Pop (BP), Founder and Chairman of the Lasem Heritage Foundation, and (3) Yullia Ayu (YA), PR and Project Manager of the Lasem Heritage Foundation. Additionally, the primary digital platforms managed by the foundation, their website and Instagram, were observed and monitored. The data collected through the in-depth interviews and observation were analyzed using qualitative data analysis, which involved analyzing the data collected, classifying them into specific categories, interpreting the data, and theorizing to explain and argue the findings.

The informants were chosen based on their roles and responsibilities in the foundation's management and their expertise in the use of digital storytelling in cultural tourism management. The selection of the informants was made based on purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that involves selecting individuals who have the information and experiences that can help answer the research questions (Bryman, 2017). The informants were assured of confidentiality, and their consent to participate in the study was obtained.

To observe the indicators in the existing constructs in more depth, the study utilized in-depth interviews, which is a qualitative research method used to explore participants' perspectives and experiences on a particular phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014). The interviews were conducted using an interview guide, which contained open-ended questions that allowed the informants to express their views and experiences about the use of digital storytelling in cultural tourism management. The interview was recorded and transcribed for data analysis. The data analysis involved coding and categorizing the data, interpreting the data, and drawing conclusions based on the findings.

The study also utilized observation and monitoring of the foundation's digital platform, which provided insight into how digital storytelling is used in managing cultural tourism. The observation and monitoring involved tracking the foundation's website and Instagram account to understand the content, frequency, and engagement of their digital storytelling approach. The data

collected through observation and monitoring were analyzed using content analysis, which involves systematically analyzing the content of communication (Krippendorff, 2018).

Yin (2015) suggests several general strategies for case study data analysis, including informants in different lists, creating a matrix of categories and placing evidence into those categories, creating data analysis flowcharts and other tools to check the data in question, and entering informants into chronological order or using a particular time or group scheme. The authors utilized these strategies in the data analysis process to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The Lasem Heritage Foundation is a community-based organization that aims to establish Lasem as a World Heritage City by preserving its cultural identity and promoting it as a cultural tourism destination. The foundation was founded in 2015 by the "Kesengsem Lasem" community, a group of cultural tourism activists, and was officially incorporated in 2018.

*"Having a vision of participating in establishing Lasem as a heritage city that reflects the cultural identity of Lasem and its people, the Lasem Heritage Foundation aims to make Lasem a World Heritage City. Realizing Lasem as a Heritage City and a World Heritage City." - AM*

The missions of Lasem Heritage Foundation are (1) Strengthening the relationship between the Lasem community and stakeholders at the local, national, and international levels, (2) Inviting all elements of society to love and preserve Lasem's cultural heritage, (3) Developing intentions and encouraging every individual or group who exist in the community to increase their respective abilities and creativity in order to welcome Lasem as a heritage city and cultural tourism destination, (4) Increase the active role of community elements in the utilization of cultural heritage in a sustainable, creative and sustainable manner, comfort and improve the quality of life for its inhabitants.

The foundation has played a vital role in developing and managing cultural tourism in Lasem through various programs, including learning clinics, preservation classes, travel for all, and social business programs such as Discover Lasem, Pasar Rakyat Lasem, and Batik Tiga Negeri Virtual Tour. Additionally, the Lasem Heritage Foundation collaborates with several government agencies and creative economy product partners to strengthen its network and further promote Lasem as a cultural tourism destination.

*"We're now in the process of restructuring Lasem to be a National Cultural Heritage Area in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture." -YA.*

The collaboration network owned by the Lasem Heritage Foundation is quite strong, including (1) Ministry of Education and Culture (2019-present): Preparation of Lasem Old Town – National Cultural Heritage Area, ODCB Mapping, Indonesian Batik Museum, 2021 FBK Program, (2) Ministry Tourism and Creative Economy / Tourism and Creative Economy Agency (2019-present): Training on Tourism Products, Development of Cultural Arts and Religious History Tourism, Virtual Tour of Batik Tiga Negeri, (3) Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (2018-2021) City DED Reviewer Pusaka Lasem, (4) Creative Economy Product Collaboration Jerawood (Magelang) x Kesengsem Lasem (Lasem-Rembang).

*"In utilizing cultural heritage, our Foundation focuses on heritage objects in ancient buildings by carrying out Heritage Trail and Educational Tourism activities. In addition, the intangible heritage in the form of Lasem's signature batik, arts, and culinary arts is packaged in the form of the Pasar Rakyat. The Lasem Heritage Foundation is particularly concerned about nature, environment, and culture preservation, spreading this mission through tourism activities, exceptional interest tourism, and interpretive tourism products." -AM*

### **Instagram and Website: The Key Platform for Digital Storytelling in Cultural Tourism.**

*"In communicating with the public, the Lasem Heritage Foundation uses two leading digital platforms: Instagram and the Website. Both platforms use the tourism branding "Kesengsem Lasem" for their names and domain. Kesengsem Lasem means "head over heels about Lasem" or "fall in love" with Lasem. It derives from the Javanese Language. However, before the pandemic of Covid 19, storytelling was carried out in the form of building added value in experiential marketing by tourists visiting Lasem. After the pandemic happened, the aim of using digital platforms is changing" - YA.*

Instagram and website are two of the most important platforms for digital storytelling in cultural tourism. The Website and Instagram @KesengsemLasem have played a vital role during the Covid-19 pandemic in communicating the implemented programs and building engagement through Digital Storytelling. Instagram, with its visual nature, allows tourism businesses to share photos and videos of cultural sites, experiences, and events. This platform enables them to tell compelling stories through social live Instagram, collaboration menus, social tagging, captions, hashtags, and other features such as Instagram stories, highlights, and reels. On the other hand, websites provide more space for detailed storytelling, including historical background, cultural significance, and local traditions. Websites can also take advantage of the Call to action menu to amplify stories and incorporate multimedia elements such as videos, 360-degree views, and virtual tours to engage visitors and immerse them in the cultural experience.

*"Instagram and the Website have become the key platforms for digital storytelling in cultural tourism, particularly for the Lasem Heritage Foundation. These two platforms offer unique features that support the Foundation in communicating its tourism branding and building engagement with its audience. The use of Instagram and the Website has also been crucial during the Covid-19 pandemic, where physical visits to Lasem were restricted." -BP.*

The Instagram account of the Lasem Heritage Foundation, @KesengsemLasem, has been used to share photos, videos, and stories about Lasem. This platform provides a creative way to share visual content with followers and allows for real-time engagement through features such as live streaming. The collaboration menu has also been utilized to collaborate with other tourism actors in Lasem, such as local guides and homestays. The social tagging feature enables the Foundation to reach a wider audience by tagging relevant users and tourism-related hashtags.

On the other hand, the Website provides a more comprehensive space to tell stories in-depth and breadth. The Call to Action menu allows visitors to the website to explore more about Lasem and the Foundation's programs, as well as to contact them for more information. The website also showcases Lasem's unique cultural heritage through the use of multimedia, such as photos, videos, and audio recordings.

*"Instagram and website offer numerous benefits for cultural tourism. Firstly, they provide a cost-effective way for tourism businesses to promote their cultural assets to a global audience. By sharing compelling stories and immersive content, businesses can attract potential visitors, create brand awareness, and build relationships with their target market. Secondly, these platforms allow businesses to showcase the authenticity and uniqueness of their cultural assets, highlighting their value and contribution to the local community. This can help to increase visitors' appreciation and respect for local cultures, which is crucial for sustainable tourism development." - YA.*

The use of Instagram and the Website by the Lasem Heritage Foundation highlights the importance of digital storytelling in cultural tourism. These platforms offer a unique opportunity for cultural tourism destinations to communicate their branding and create engagement with their audience. The findings are in line with previous studies that emphasize the potential of digital platforms in tourism, particularly in storytelling and engagement.

Another advantage of Instagram and websites for digital storytelling in cultural tourism is the ability to reach and engage with younger generations. Millennials and Gen Z are the largest consumer groups in the tourism industry, and they tend to seek unique and authentic experiences. By using Instagram and websites as platforms for storytelling, tourism businesses can cater to the preferences and expectations of these generations, showcasing cultural experiences and activities that align with their interests and values.

In conclusion, the use of Instagram and the Website has proven to be effective for the Lasem Heritage Foundation in digital storytelling and building engagement with its audience. These platforms offer unique features that support the Foundation in communicating its branding and sharing the cultural heritage of Lasem. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the potential of digital storytelling in cultural tourism and emphasize the importance of sustainable communication practices in the digital age.

*"However, we realize there are also challenges and limitations in using Instagram and websites as platforms for digital storytelling in cultural tourism. Firstly, businesses need to create high-quality and compelling content consistently to keep visitors engaged and interested. This requires resources, skills, and creativity, which may not be available to all businesses, especially small and medium-sized ones. Secondly, there is a risk of over-tourism and cultural commodification if businesses prioritize commercial interests over the preservation and respect of local cultures. Therefore, it is crucial for businesses to follow sustainable communication principles, such as involving local communities, promoting responsible tourism practices, and respecting cultural heritage." -AM.*

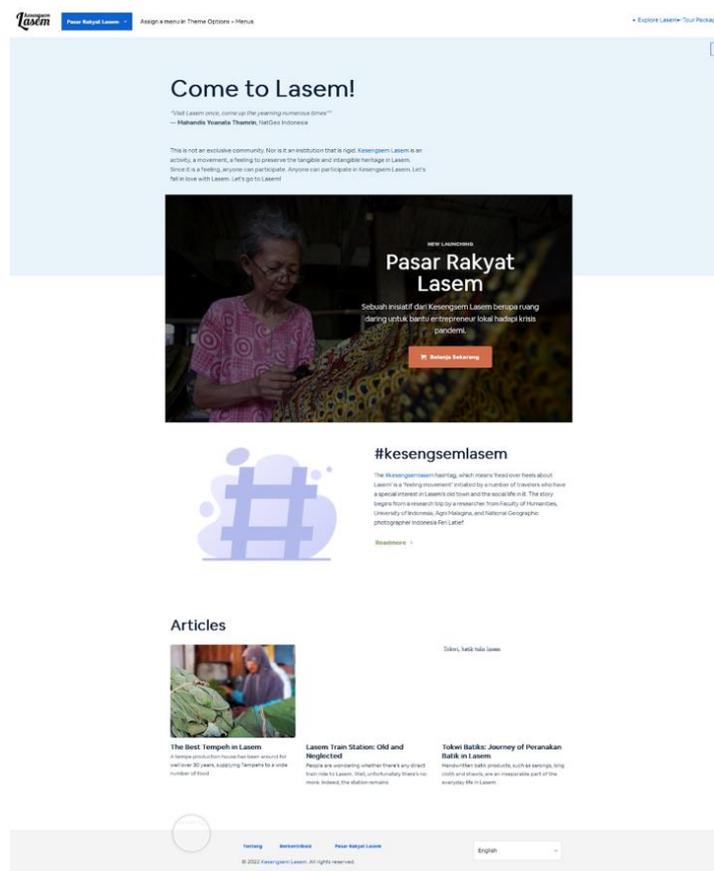


Figure 4. Website Kesengsem Lasem

## Digital Storytelling in Cultural Tourism: Long Lasting and Potential to Grow

The Lasem Heritage Foundation has leveraged digital storytelling to preserve and promote the cultural identity of the local people and attract more tourists. By combining data, visualization, and narrative, digital storytelling creates a more immersive experience for tourists, adding empathy and emotion to their understanding of the local culture.

*“In recent 5 years, digital storytelling has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting cultural tourism, as it combines data, visualization, and narrative to create a lasting impression and impact on audiences.” – AM.*

The Lasem Heritage Foundation, which focuses on developing cultural tourism, recognizes the potential of digital storytelling to convey historical values and sociocultural aspects that reflect the cultural identity of the people who live around tourist destinations. The involvement of the audience is crucial in digital storytelling, as it captures attention and propagates cultural messages. Digital storytelling also allows audiences to reproduce and distribute stories on various platforms, amplifying their potential reach and impact.

*“One of the main advantages of digital storytelling is its potential to reach a wider audience and promote the brand attitude towards cultural tourism. With the help of social media and other digital platforms, tourists can reproduce and distribute digital storytelling, amplifying the message and creating a potential for developing stories. In Lasem, digital storytelling has attracted new tourists who are exposed to the stories narrated by the Lasem Heritage*

*Foundation and previous tourists. This has created a lasting impact on their understanding and appreciation of the local culture." – BP.*

The involvement of the audience is one of the key advantages of digital storytelling. It captures their attention and propagates the cultural message in a more engaging way. Digital stories can be considered as ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) learning materials and persuasive tools that engage audiences through cognitive and affective domains. The narrative approach is particularly effective in explaining complex science and presenting information through stories, drama, historical accounts, personal experiences, and faith (Dal Cin et al., 2004; Di Blas, 2014).

Digital storytelling is an effective approach to promoting cultural tourism, and it is expected to have a long-lasting impact on tourists' perceptions and behavior. From the interviews with the Lasem Heritage Foundation, it was found that digital storytelling through Instagram and the website has become a key strategy for communicating with the public, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

*"The use of digital storytelling has enabled the foundation to maintain engagement and communication with the public, despite the physical restrictions imposed by the pandemic Covid 19." – YA*

Furthermore, the Lasem Heritage Foundation has recognized the potential of digital storytelling in enhancing the tourists' experience and creating a sense of place.

*"By using different storytelling techniques, such as images, videos, and narratives, digital storytelling can create a more immersive and interactive experience for tourists." – BP*

This can be achieved by showcasing the unique features of the destination, such as cultural heritage, architecture, cuisine, and cultural performance. The potential of digital storytelling is also reflected in the increasing number of tourists who rely on digital media to plan and experience their travels.

Existing research has also emphasized the importance of digital storytelling as a means of organizing a story and connecting story points. This approach is particularly effective in conveying complex science, which is traditionally explained in a paradigmatic way. Narrative-driven storytelling, on the other hand, provides a more straightforward approach to illustrating complex information through stories, drama, historical accounts, personal experiences, and faith.

In addition to cognitive learning, digital storytelling can also be used as a persuasive tool to change individuals' attitudes, which can be challenging to achieve when individuals avoid information that is incongruent with their beliefs. The narrative approach can overcome this resistance because stories are considered entertainment rather than direct persuasive messages. The resistance level will increase when individuals notice that they are being directly persuaded.

*"The Lasem Heritage Foundation's focus on digital storytelling for cultural tourism is, therefore, a wise move, as it not only provides a lasting impact on audiences but also has the potential to grow and reach more people. The use of digital storytelling as a means of amplifying cultural messages is crucial, as it allows for the dissemination of stories on various platforms, reaching a broader audience." – AM*

*“The importance of cultural tourism in preserving cultural heritage cannot be overstated, and digital storytelling presents an excellent opportunity for cultural organizations to continue promoting cultural heritage while adapting to the current digital landscape.” - YA*

The findings of this study are in line with previous research that highlights the importance of storytelling in cultural tourism. For example, Karami et al. (2019) suggest that storytelling can enhance tourists' emotional connection with the destination and create a more memorable experience. Similarly, Aksu et al. (2019) argue that digital storytelling can facilitate the communication of the destination's cultural heritage and encourage tourists to engage with the local community.

Storytelling is also fundamental in how individuals acquire knowledge and communicate with others daily. However, changing individuals' attitudes towards sustainability is a challenge, as they usually avoid information that is incongruent with their beliefs. The narrative approach can overcome this resistance because stories are considered entertainment rather than direct persuasive messages. Storytelling can create a safe space where people can engage with new ideas and perspectives without feeling directly attacked or judged. Digital storytelling has been used in many contexts to promote sustainable behaviors and environmental protection, and its effectiveness has been demonstrated in various studies.

Additionally, digital storytelling in cultural tourism can also provide a unique and immersive experience for tourists. By incorporating multimedia elements such as images, videos, and sounds, digital storytelling can transport tourists to another time and place, allowing them to fully immerse themselves in the cultural heritage of a destination. This immersive experience can create a lasting impression on tourists, increasing the likelihood that they will share their experiences with others and recommend the destination to friends and family.

*“Moreover, digital storytelling can also enhance the accessibility of cultural heritage sites for people with disabilities. Through the use of captions, sign language interpretation and audio descriptions, digital storytelling can make cultural heritage sites more inclusive and accessible to a wider range of visitors. This not only enhances the tourist experience but also aligns with the principles of sustainable tourism by promoting equal opportunities for all.” – AM*

In terms of its potential to grow, digital storytelling in cultural tourism can be used as a tool for destination marketing and promotion. With the rise of social media and digital platforms, digital storytelling can be easily shared and disseminated, reaching a global audience and increasing awareness and interest in a destination. This can lead to increased tourist arrivals and revenue for the destination, as well as support for the conservation and preservation of cultural heritage sites.

Overall, the integration of digital storytelling in cultural tourism has the potential to create a long-lasting and impactful experience for tourists, enhance the accessibility of cultural heritage sites, and promote destination marketing and promotion. Through the use of multimedia elements, storytelling techniques, and inclusive design, digital storytelling can create a unique and immersive experience that connects tourists with the cultural identity and heritage of a destination. As such, it represents a valuable tool for the development and promotion of sustainable cultural tourism.

### **Principles of Sustainable Communication in Digital Storytelling in Cultural Tourism**

The Principles of Sustainable Communication in Digital Storytelling in Cultural Tourism are essential for creating a meaningful and positive impact on the environment, society, and culture. This discussion elaborates on four key principles: Ecological Trust, Ecological Access, Ecological

Disclosure, and Ecological Dialogue. The digital storytelling of the Lasem Heritage Foundation is assessed based on these principles.

### 1. Ecological Trusts

This principle aims to rebuild that trust and internalize it in people's lives. In the digital storytelling of The Lasem Heritage, this principle is reflected in their website article titled Batik Tiga Negeri: the story of the journey of adiwastra, a symbol of tolerance and diversity in Indonesia

*“As a content writer, I tried to use this article to This is to bring back the public’s belief that batik cloth is not just fashion but a work full of acculturation messages, melting pots, and cultural diversity that shape the Indonesian nation’s identity. Batik Tiga Negeri is a mirror of the Archipelago’s past. During difficult times of political upheaval for colonial government power, the rise of nationalism awareness, and the economic crisis, batik appeared with three color characteristics. (1) getih pitik red (chicken blood), a reflection of the Chinese tradition of Lasem, (2) indigo blue, the color of the typical Dutch Indo batik of Pekalongan; and (3) the color of sogan brown, which is full of Javanese philosophy and cultural diversity.” – AM*

Along with the development of the era, more than three decades after its emergence in the early 20th century, the Batik Tiga Negeri also received a touch of green, representing the color of Islam. Harmen C. Veldhuisen, in his book entitled Dutch Batik 1840-1940: Dutch Influence in Batik from Java, History, and Stories (1993), states that (sarongs) of three countries have unique designs and colors, the batik refers to several different places on the coast. Northern Java and inland Java.

*“These motifs are alongside the ‘prohibition’ (forbidden) motifs from the Surakarta or Yogyakarta palaces, such as the broken machete and kawung. A piece of batik cloth from three countries at that time was undoubtedly a premium product and expensive, worn mainly by Malay women and Chinese descendants: Dutch, Arab or local aristocrats who are.” – AM*

*“An expert assisted me in batik and natural dyes from Pekalongan, Zahir Widadi, to investigate the DNA of batik cloth from three countries through the theory and method of hand-drawn batik in Central Java.” – AM*

The DNA of batik from three countries can be ascertained by the naked eye through the red coloring process first, followed by blue, and lastly colored by sogan brown. The batik artists in Lasem and Pekalongan agree and ensure that the batik from the three countries is made by first dyeing red – Lasem. The Batik Tiga Negeri have red blanks. Then closed with indigo blue and finally entered sogan.”

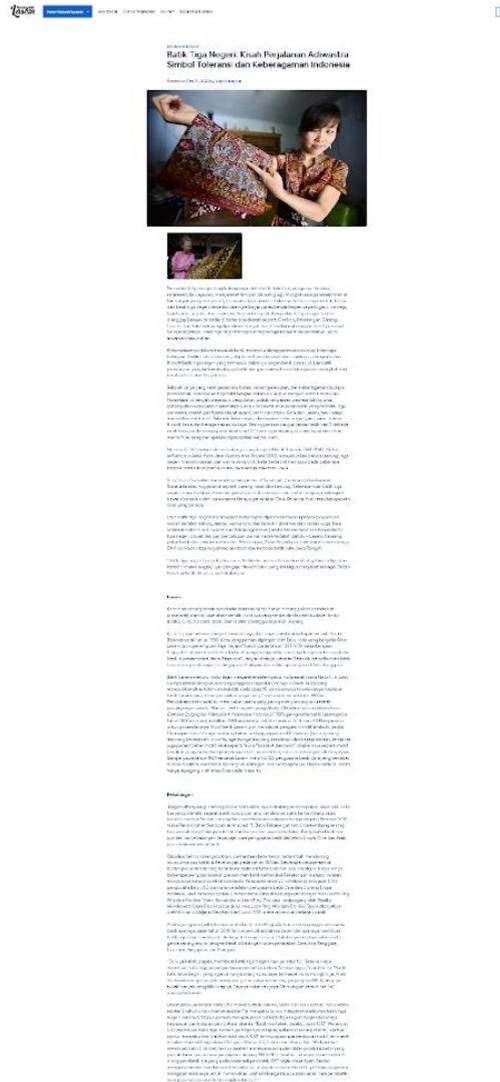


Figure 5. An Article of Batik Tiga Negeri

## 2. Ecological Access

This principle is a discussion point of being a mark of organizations seeking to create and build trust. In digital storytelling of The Lasem Heritage, it could be discussed in Social Business Programs in the form of Discover Lasem, Pasar Rakyat Lasem, Virtual Tour of, Hybrid Exhibition "Cerita Nyah Lasem" Principles of Sustainable Communication in Digital Storytelling. The exhibition's narrative focuses on the life history of the ladies in Lasem, a legacy of the Peranakan culture.

*“By looking back at the figures of Nyah Lasem and the social context around them, artists reflect on history and culture, which gave space to women's voices which so far have often been forgotten. This exhibition brings together local artists or art activists in Lasem and Rembang with artists from outside the area. Their works relate to issues of Peranakan, identity, or collective memory to show dialogue between those who live their cultural heritage daily and those looking from the outside.” – YA*

In this exhibition, Lasem's artists will show the diversity of perspectives in viewing and reading the history of their city and starting from cultural wealth, food, batik, or local architecture. The idea of Lasem as a meeting space for various cultures, such as Islam, Hindu culture, and contemporary life, is an exciting part to appear in various visual metaphors and other forms such

as design, films, or performances. For example, as shown by the artist Yon Suprayoga, his performance was converted into motion pictures. Yulia added that activities apart from exhibitions would also be sponsored by discussions and seminars. Hopefully, this would become a space for dialogue to develop cultural heritage and the art world in Lasem, nicknamed the City of Heritage.



**Figure 6.** Some Artists in Hybrid Exhibition "Cerita Nyah Lasem"

### 3. Ecological Disclosures

This principle emphasizes transparency and honesty in communication. In The Lasem Heritage Foundation, this principle is reflected in their digital storytelling by disclosing the truth about their initiatives and programs. For instance, in the data collection process of the Batik Tiga Negeri article, Agni Malagina, one of the Foundation's Founders, sought the assistance of an expert in batik and natural dyes from Pekalongan, Zahir Widadi, to investigate the DNA of batik cloth from three countries through the theory and method of hand-drawn batik in Central Java. By disclosing its data collection process, The Lasem Heritage Foundation is showing transparency and honesty in its digital storytelling. Moreover, it could be discussed on the use of Instagram and the Website as the leading platform of digital storytelling & communication tools with all stakeholders.

### 4. Ecological Dialogues

This principle emphasizes the importance of dialogue and engagement for sustainable communication. It can help them understand the issues and become ecologically meaningful. In The Lasem Heritage Foundation, this principle is reflected in their Hybrid Exhibition "Cerita Nyah Lasem" by sponsoring discussions and seminars.

*"These activities provide a space for dialogue to develop cultural heritage and the art world in Lasem, also known as the City of Heritage. The Foundation's initiatives and programs create a platform for local artists, art activists, and outsiders to engage in dialogue and collaborate in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of Lasem. " - BP*

In addition, it could be discussed in their preservation class, series of learning clinics, and a unique program called "travel for all"(a thematic tourism program for disabled people). For example, the 29th Learning Clinic takes the ULIK BATIK: Development and Utilization of the Archipelago's Cultural Heritage. In their Instagram, the caption told that Batik is Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage with superior philosophical, cultural, and economic values for artisans, producers, workers, batik lovers, and the people of Indonesia. Batik has become an Indonesian cultural identity as well as a World Heritage. Batik not only has a universal value of excellence which is part of the traditions and culture of the Indonesian people but also has some challenges to be faced in the future. To answer this challenge, the Lasem Heritage Foundation presented various speakers to discuss and get to know Lasem on its journey to becoming a National Cultural Heritage Area.

Furthermore, in their 30th learning clinic series, The Lasem Heritage Foundation has the theme Spreads Of Kendeng Lasem. Lasem, a coastal city in the northern part of Java Island, has a Saujana heritage that has become the unity of its environmental ecosystem system. The learning clinic raises discussions about what is exceptional and the challenges of maintaining the sustainability of the old city in the dynamics of its growth as a city. The Learning Clinic Series was held via Zoom meetings and broadcast live via Youtube and the Kesengsem Lasem website.



Figure 7. Learning Clinic Series

The Lasem Heritage Foundation's digital storytelling is aligned with the Principles of Sustainable Communication in Digital Storytelling in Cultural Tourism. The Foundation's initiatives and programs reflect their commitment to preserving, promoting, and educating the public about the cultural heritage of Lasem in an environmentally sustainable manner. The Foundation's digital storytelling not only preserves cultural heritage but also educates and raises awareness about cultural diversity, tolerance, and appreciation. By disclosing its data collection process, The Lasem Heritage Foundation is showing transparency and honesty in its digital storytelling. The Foundation's initiatives and programs provide access to the cultural heritage and history of Lasem for everyone, including locals and tourists.

The Foundation's website and Instagram account serve as key platforms for digital storytelling, enabling them to effectively communicate their message to a wider audience. Instagram, in particular, has become a vital tool for digital storytelling as it allows for the use of visual content and the incorporation of storytelling techniques such as captions and hashtags. The Foundation's Instagram account showcases its programs and initiatives through visually appealing posts that attract a younger generation of cultural enthusiasts. The website, on the other hand, provides in-depth information about the Foundation's initiatives and programs and serves as a platform for interactive storytelling. By utilizing these digital platforms, The Lasem Heritage Foundation is able to effectively communicate its message of sustainable cultural preservation and education to a global audience, positioning Instagram and its website as key platforms for digital storytelling in sustainable communication principles.

Table 1. Summaries and Key Findings of Study

No	Key Findings	Summaries
1.	Instagram and Website: The Key Platform for Digital	- Instagram and website are the most effective platforms for digital storytelling in cultural tourism due to their reach, interactivity, and visual storytelling capabilities

No	Key Findings	Summaries												
	Storytelling in Cultural Tourism	- The Lasem Heritage Foundation's digital storytelling on its website and Instagram has successfully promoted cultural heritage and educated the public about cultural diversity												
2	Digital Storytelling in Cultural Tourism: Long Lasting and Potential to Grow	- Digital storytelling has the potential to create a long-lasting impact on cultural tourism by preserving cultural heritage, promoting cultural diversity, and educating the public - Digital storytelling has the potential to reach a wider audience and provide access to cultural heritage for everyone, including locals and tourists												
3	The Principles of Sustainable Communication in Digital Storytelling in Cultural Tourism	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>- Sustainable communication principles are essential for creating a positive impact on the environment, society, and culture through digital storytelling</td> <td>Ecological Trust</td> <td>- Publishes website articles that educate and raise awareness about cultural diversity, tolerance, and appreciation.</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Ecological Access</td> <td>- Provides social business programs, such as Discover Lasem, Pasar Rakyat Lasem, Virtual Tour, and Hybrid Exhibition "Cerita Nyah Lasem - Provides access to the cultural heritage, art, and history of Lasem for everyone, including the locals and tourists.</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Ecological Disclosure</td> <td>- Discloses the truth about their initiatives and programs in their digital storytelling on IG and website - Shows transparency and honesty in their data collection process.</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Ecological Dialogue</td> <td>- Creates a platform for local artists, art activists, and outsiders to engage in dialogue and collaborate in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of Lasem - Collaborates with local artists and art activists to showcase the diversity of perspectives in viewing and reading the history of their city.</td> </tr> </table> <p>The Lasem Heritage Foundation's digital storytelling is aligned with these sustainable communication principles by promoting cultural heritage in an environmentally sustainable manner, providing access to cultural heritage for everyone, being transparent and honest in their communication, and engaging in dialogue and collaboration for sustainable communication.</p>	- Sustainable communication principles are essential for creating a positive impact on the environment, society, and culture through digital storytelling	Ecological Trust	- Publishes website articles that educate and raise awareness about cultural diversity, tolerance, and appreciation.		Ecological Access	- Provides social business programs, such as Discover Lasem, Pasar Rakyat Lasem, Virtual Tour, and Hybrid Exhibition "Cerita Nyah Lasem - Provides access to the cultural heritage, art, and history of Lasem for everyone, including the locals and tourists.		Ecological Disclosure	- Discloses the truth about their initiatives and programs in their digital storytelling on IG and website - Shows transparency and honesty in their data collection process.		Ecological Dialogue	- Creates a platform for local artists, art activists, and outsiders to engage in dialogue and collaborate in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of Lasem - Collaborates with local artists and art activists to showcase the diversity of perspectives in viewing and reading the history of their city.
- Sustainable communication principles are essential for creating a positive impact on the environment, society, and culture through digital storytelling	Ecological Trust	- Publishes website articles that educate and raise awareness about cultural diversity, tolerance, and appreciation.												
	Ecological Access	- Provides social business programs, such as Discover Lasem, Pasar Rakyat Lasem, Virtual Tour, and Hybrid Exhibition "Cerita Nyah Lasem - Provides access to the cultural heritage, art, and history of Lasem for everyone, including the locals and tourists.												
	Ecological Disclosure	- Discloses the truth about their initiatives and programs in their digital storytelling on IG and website - Shows transparency and honesty in their data collection process.												
	Ecological Dialogue	- Creates a platform for local artists, art activists, and outsiders to engage in dialogue and collaborate in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of Lasem - Collaborates with local artists and art activists to showcase the diversity of perspectives in viewing and reading the history of their city.												

Source: Primary Data

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this research highlights the role of digital storytelling in cultural tourism and how the Lasem Heritage Foundation has implemented sustainable communication principles in its digital storytelling approach. The study finds that Instagram and the website are essential platforms for digital storytelling in cultural tourism, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, as they help to communicate programs and build engagement with stakeholders.

Moreover, digital storytelling is a powerful tool for conveying cultural tourism messages and values that reflect the cultural identity of the local community. The Lasem Heritage Foundation's implementation of sustainable communication principles in their digital storytelling approach, including ecological trust, ecological access, ecological disclosure, and ecological dialogue, has helped to create a positive impact on the environment, society, and culture.

The study's findings have practical and managerial implications for cultural tourism foundations, including the need to implement sustainable communication principles in their digital storytelling approach. The Lasem Heritage Foundation's approach can serve as a model for other cultural tourism destinations seeking to use digital storytelling to promote their cultural heritage.

In conclusion, this research advances the field of cultural tourism by providing insights into the importance of digital storytelling and sustainable communication principles. The study's findings can help to guide cultural tourism foundations in their efforts to promote cultural heritage and sustainable tourism.

### **LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH**

While this study has provided valuable insights into the sustainable communication approach of digital storytelling in cultural tourism at The Lasem Heritage Foundation, there are several limitations that need to be acknowledged. One of the limitations is related to the feasibility of the informants representing this qualitative study. As most of the members of The Lasem Heritage Foundation are volunteers and frequently change people in a short time, it is possible that the information obtained from them may not represent the views and experiences of all members. Further studies with a larger number of informants and a more diverse range of positions can help to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of digital storytelling in cultural tourism.

Another limitation is related to the range of time in the process of observation and monitoring. As the researchers conducted random observations during the COVID-19 pandemic until mid-2022, it is possible that the findings may not fully represent the implementation of digital storytelling in cultural tourism in normal circumstances. Future studies can extend the time range to observe the implementation of digital storytelling in cultural tourism beyond the pandemic situation and analyze the impact of digital storytelling on tourist behavior and satisfaction.

In terms of further research, the findings of this study suggest several potential applications and recommendations. Future studies can explore the effectiveness of digital storytelling in promoting cultural tourism sustainability in other cultural tourism destinations. Moreover, as the study has shown the importance of sustainable communication principles in digital storytelling, future studies can investigate the impact of these principles on cultural tourism sustainability. Additionally, research can focus on the role of social media influencers in promoting cultural tourism through digital storytelling and how they can contribute to sustainable communication principles.

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