

STRENGTHENING THE JATHILAN TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY THROUGH THE ROLE OF EVENT DIVISION: A COMMUNITY SERVICE IN KEMBARAN VILLAGE

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ABSTRACT

This community service programme was implemented in **Kembaran Village, Magelang**, to strengthen the preservation and development of the traditional **Jathilan art community**. The activity was motivated by the limited literacy and capacity of local art organisations in planning and managing cultural events, which hindered the sustainability of their heritage. Through the establishment of an **Event Division** in *KembaranFest*, the programme aimed to provide structured mentoring and collaborative platforms for local youth, art communities, and residents to engage in cultural revitalisation. The method was carried out through participatory observation, community assistance, and unstructured interviews with village leaders and local residents, combined with practical event management training based on Donald Getz's event planning framework. The programme successfully enhanced community participation, encouraged intergenerational involvement, and revitalised Jathilan performances as a cultural identity of the village. It also created economic opportunities for local MSMEs and strengthened festival promotion through Instagram @Pasardarakembaran. In conclusion, this community service initiative demonstrated that the role of the Event Division is essential not only in preserving local culture but also in empowering the community socially and economically.

Keywords: Cultural Empowerment, Community Service, Event Division, Jathilan, Kembaran Village

1. INTRODUCTION

Kembaran Village, located in Candimulyo District, Magelang Regency, Central Java, is a rural community with a strong cultural heritage. One of its most distinctive traditions is **Jathilan**, a traditional dance performance that combines music, symbolic props, and mystical elements. Jathilan is more than an artistic expression; it embodies collective memory, spirituality, and social cohesion of the Javanese community. As with many other traditional performances, Jathilan faces challenges of sustainability in the era of digital transformation and rapid socio-economic change. Younger generations are often more attracted to modern entertainment, while the organisational capacity of local art groups remains limited. Despite these challenges, cultural heritage like Jathilan holds significant potential for tourism development and community empowerment. The Kembaran Village Government has expressed interest in positioning local traditions as an alternative attraction, given the absence of strong natural tourism sites in the area. Thus, cultural festivals are seen as strategic avenues to preserve local traditions, generate economic activities, and promote community pride. However, such efforts require not only enthusiasm but also structured planning, effective management, and sustainable strategies.

The absence of structured event planning has often resulted in fragmented cultural activities with limited impact. Observations conducted in Kembaran revealed several weaknesses: the lack of written schedules, limited creativity in packaging cultural events, and minimal promotional strategies. Consequently, the community's efforts to introduce Jathilan to broader audiences have been slow. This gap highlighted the need for external collaboration, particularly from higher education institutions that could transfer knowledge and skills in event management. In this context, the **Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)** programme of Universitas Budi Luhur initiated a collaborative project with Kembaran Village. The project focused on organising **KembaranFest**, a cultural festival designed to integrate Jathilan performances with local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The festival was intended not only as a stage for cultural expression but also as a platform for economic empowerment through the promotion of local products. By combining arts and entrepreneurship, KembaranFest seeks to position the village as a destination for cultural tourism.

At the centre of this initiative is the **Event Division**, which functions as the backbone of festival organisation. Referring to the event planning model of Donald Getz, the Event Division undertakes a systematic approach, consisting of pre-event preparation, event execution, and post-event evaluation. The division is responsible for coordinating stakeholders, designing the programme, drafting scripts, managing schedules, and evaluating outcomes. This structured model ensures that the festival runs effectively and provides a replicable framework for future community-based events. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of cultural festivals in community development. For instance, Bimantara et al. (2023) examined how culinary tourism festivals enhanced local economies, while Ihsan et al. (2024) discussed the governance of cultural festivals in Sumbawa, emphasising

collaboration between communities and institutions. Similarly, Zamroni (2024) explored digital capacity-building for rural communities through training initiatives. These studies underline the critical role of structured management and innovation in sustaining local traditions. However, few studies have specifically addressed the role of *event divisions* as organisational units within cultural festivals, particularly in the context of traditional performing arts such as Jathilan. This research thus seeks to fill that gap.

The significance of this study is twofold. Practically, it provides the Kembaran community with a framework for organising festivals that combine cultural expression with economic activities. Such a model can inspire other rural communities facing similar challenges of cultural preservation. Theoretically, the study contributes to the discourse on communication, cultural management, and community development by showcasing how event management practices intersect with traditional art preservation. In sum, this research positions the **Event Division** not merely as a technical organiser but as a strategic agent of cultural sustainability. By structuring and professionalising festival management, the division fosters cultural pride, stimulates local economies, and ensures that traditional performances such as Jathilan remain relevant to future generations.

Kembaran Village is characterised by a population that relies largely on agriculture and small-scale trade. The majority of households earn their livelihoods from farming, livestock, and modest businesses, with limited exposure to external markets. Such socio-economic conditions make community members highly dependent on collective activities for both cultural expression and economic survival. Cultural festivals, therefore, serve not only as entertainment but also as opportunities for income generation and community bonding. However, without structured planning and professional management, these festivals often remain small in scale and fail to reach their full potential as drivers of development. The preservation of Jathilan in Kembaran faces both internal and external challenges. Internally, generational shifts have led to a decline in youth interest, with younger villagers often preferring modern cultural products over traditional performances. Externally, the dominance of mainstream entertainment industries and the rapid spread of digital content pose a significant threat to local traditions. These conditions underline the urgency of designing interventions that are innovative yet rooted in cultural authenticity, ensuring that traditions such as Jathilan do not vanish amidst the pressures of modernisation.

One of the innovative aspects of KembaranFest is the use of digital media as a promotional tool. By creating an official Instagram account and curating visual content, the Event Division sought to expand the reach of the festival beyond the village. Digital platforms provide a low-cost yet effective avenue to promote cultural heritage, attract visitors, and engage younger audiences. Previous studies on digital communication in cultural promotion (Nasrullah, 2015; Putri et al., 2020) have shown that social media can significantly amplify visibility and participation in community-based activities. In this regard, KembaranFest demonstrates how traditional culture and digital innovation can complement each other. The involvement of the MBKM programme also represents a model of knowledge transfer from universities to communities. By positioning students as agents of change, the programme encourages collaboration, innovation, and contextual problem-solving. In Kembaran, the role of MBKM students was not limited to organising the festival but extended to empowering the community with skills in event management, digital promotion, and collaborative planning. This synergy between academic institutions and local communities highlights the importance of experiential learning in achieving sustainable community development.

Finally, this project contributes to the broader academic discourse by bridging the fields of communication, cultural studies, and community development. While many studies on cultural preservation emphasise artistic expression or policy frameworks, fewer have addressed the managerial dimension of festivals as vehicles of community empowerment. By focusing on the role of the Event Division, this project integrates cultural sustainability with organisational innovation. It demonstrates that festivals, when managed systematically, can become powerful instruments for both cultural resilience and socio-economic advancement.

2. METHOD

This community service project was carried out through collaboration between Universitas Budi Luhur students under the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) programme and the community of Kembaran Village, Magelang. The activity was designed to empower the local Jathilan traditional arts community by establishing an **Event Division** responsible for planning and executing KembaranFest. The method of implementation focused on participatory engagement, capacity building, and direct involvement of community members in every stage of the festival.

The community service activities followed three main stages:

1) Pre-activity (Preparation)

- a) Coordination with the village government, art groups, and youth organisation (Opptima).
- b) Identification of community needs related to cultural preservation and tourism potential.

- c) Initial discussions to determine festival concepts, objectives, and expected benefits.

2) Main activity (Implementation of KembaranFest)

- a) Formation of the Event Division consisting of MBKM students, community volunteers, and local youth.
- b) Development of a festival programme that included Jathilan performances, MSME exhibitions, and cultural activities.
- c) Management of technical aspects such as stage preparation, scheduling, promotional media, and coordination with performers.
- d) Utilisation of social media (Instagram @Pasardarakembaran) for promotional purposes to expand the festival's reach.

3) Post-activity (Evaluation and Sustainability)

- a) Conducting evaluation meetings with community leaders, youth groups, and performers to identify strengths and weaknesses of the festival.
- b) Collecting feedback from participants and audiences to improve future events.
- c) Providing recommendations for sustaining KembaranFest as an annual cultural event and encouraging independent management by the local community.

The implementation of this community service emphasised **participatory observation and mentoring**. Students and lecturers acted as facilitators, while the local community actively contributed as organisers and performers. Unstructured interviews with village officials and local residents were conducted to obtain insights into cultural expectations and to ensure that the festival design reflected community values.

The direct beneficiaries of this programme included:

- 1) Jathilan art groups from Dusun Kembaran and Dusun Tirip.
- 2) Local MSME entrepreneurs who showcased and sold their products during the festival.
- 3) The youth organisation (Opptima), which gained experience in event management.
- 4) The wider community of Kembaran Village, which benefited socially and economically from the festival.

The main output of this programme was the successful implementation of KembaranFest as a structured cultural festival. The presence of the Event Division created a model of festival management that can be replicated in future events. In addition, the programme strengthened community capacity in cultural promotion and provided opportunities for the younger generation to engage in local heritage preservation. The success of this programme relied heavily on the active participation of local stakeholders. The village head and village officials provided formal support by granting permission and mobilising resources, while the community elders ensured that the festival design respected cultural norms and traditions. The youth organisation, Opptima, became the operational partner that mobilised young volunteers and ensured smooth coordination during the event. Such multi-stakeholder involvement reflects the essence of community service, where the university serves as a facilitator rather than the sole driver of change.

An important element in the implementation method was **strategic communication**. Throughout the process, open dialogue and regular meetings were conducted to build trust and ensure transparency between organisers and community members. Informal gatherings and group discussions were used to convey ideas, negotiate differences, and strengthen a sense of shared ownership. By applying both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, the facilitators were able to create an inclusive atmosphere where every participant's opinion was valued. The programme also applied a **capacity-building approach** to empower community members. Rather than organising the festival entirely by the university team, the community was trained and guided in specific areas such as creating schedules, writing scripts, handling stage management, and promoting the event through digital platforms. This step ensured that knowledge and skills were transferred directly to the community, reducing dependency on external assistance and enhancing their confidence to manage future events independently.

Another significant method was the **integration of cultural and economic activities** within the festival. Jathilan performances served as the cultural core, while MSME stalls showcased local products, including traditional food, crafts, and agricultural outputs. By combining art and entrepreneurship, the festival provided not only cultural pride but also tangible economic benefits for local families. This integration encouraged the community to view cultural

preservation as an avenue for economic resilience, aligning with broader goals of sustainable community development. Finally, sustainability was addressed through the formulation of a **long-term plan**. During post-event evaluations, stakeholders agreed on strategies to institutionalise KembaranFest as an annual event managed by the community itself. The plan included forming a permanent organising committee under the youth organisation, securing potential sponsorships, and expanding the festival's digital presence to attract visitors from outside Magelang. These strategies highlight that the method was not limited to a single activity but was designed to create a lasting cultural and economic impact for Kembaran Village.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of this community service programme resulted in the successful organisation of **KembaranFest**, a two-day cultural festival that combined traditional Jathilan performances with local MSME exhibitions. The establishment of the Event Division was a central achievement, enabling the community to adopt structured event management practices that had previously been absent. The Event Division coordinated schedules, managed performers, supervised technical arrangements, and ensured that the programme reflected both cultural authenticity and modern festival standards. The most significant outcome of KembaranFest was the revitalisation of the Jathilan community. Performances from two local groups—Kembar Budoyo Krido Santoso (Dusun Kembaran) and Turonggo Seto Karumpoko (Dusun Tirip)—were featured as the main attraction. Their participation not only preserved local traditions but also created a platform for intergenerational cultural transfer, as young villagers were actively involved as performers and supporting crew. The festival demonstrated that cultural heritage could be celebrated in ways that appeal to both local residents and external visitors, thereby strengthening its relevance in contemporary contexts.

Another key result was the integration of MSMEs into the festival. Local entrepreneurs were given opportunities to showcase food products, handicrafts, and household goods during the event. This provided direct income for small businesses and raised community awareness of the importance of supporting local economic activities. From the evaluation conducted after the festival, MSME participants reported increased sales and new business contacts, highlighting the festival's role as both a cultural and economic development initiative. The programme also generated strong community participation and enthusiasm. Villagers from all age groups contributed, whether as performers, volunteers, or audience members. The involvement of Opptima, the local youth organisation, was particularly impactful in mobilising young people and ensuring intergenerational engagement. This active participation reinforced social cohesion, creating a sense of pride and ownership among community members. Moreover, it demonstrated that cultural festivals can be effective platforms for strengthening solidarity and local identity.

One innovative aspect of the programme was the use of **Instagram (@pasardarakembaran)** for promotion. The Event Division created visual content—posters, videos, and event highlights—to attract attention beyond the village. This approach expanded the festival's visibility, particularly among younger audiences who are active social media users. The experience of utilising digital tools provided valuable lessons for the community in marketing and communication, showing that traditional culture can coexist with modern promotional strategies. The results of this community service activity align with the broader objectives of community development. The festival not only preserved intangible cultural heritage but also created tangible socio-economic benefits. By applying a structured event management approach inspired by Donald Getz's model, the programme demonstrated that cultural events can be transformed into community development tools when properly planned and executed. The role of the Event Division is particularly noteworthy, as it bridged academic knowledge with community practices, providing a replicable model for other villages seeking to organise cultural events.

The organisation of KembaranFest also contributed to the **visibility of Kembaran Village** as a potential cultural tourism destination. Prior to the programme, the village had limited recognition outside its immediate surroundings. By promoting the festival through both traditional word-of-mouth and digital platforms, the village gained attention from neighbouring communities, cultural observers, and visitors. This increased visibility not only showcased the artistic value of Jathilan but also positioned Kembaran as a hub for cultural-based tourism in Magelang Regency. In terms of **youth empowerment**, the programme provided an alternative avenue for young people to engage in productive activities. Many youths in rural villages are often disconnected from cultural traditions due to modern lifestyle shifts. By involving them directly in the Event Division, young volunteers acquired organisational and technical skills in event management, stage preparation, and digital promotion. This exposure instilled a sense of pride in their cultural heritage while equipping them with transferable skills relevant to future employment or entrepreneurial opportunities.

The festival also highlighted the **role of women in community development**. Women were actively involved as MSME entrepreneurs, performers in supporting activities, and contributors to the culinary exhibitions. Their participation demonstrated that cultural events can serve as inclusive platforms where women play both economic and cultural leadership roles. This outcome aligns with the principle of gender equality in community service programmes,

ensuring that development benefits are distributed fairly across different segments of the community. An additional impact was the **strengthening of intergenerational dialogue**. Elders, who are the custodians of traditional knowledge, shared insights into the history and spiritual significance of Jathilan, while younger generations experimented with creative promotional strategies using social media. This collaboration bridged the generational gap, ensuring that cultural traditions are preserved while adapting to contemporary communication tools. The intergenerational exchange became a cornerstone of the programme's sustainability strategy.

The community also benefited from **enhanced organisational capacity**. Through the mentoring process, villagers learned how to create structured timelines, allocate responsibilities, and monitor festival outcomes. These organisational skills are not limited to cultural festivals but can also be applied in other community initiatives such as local governance, cooperative development, or educational programmes. The transfer of management skills from university facilitators to the community marked a long-term contribution of the project. However, the programme also encountered several **challenges**. Financial limitations were a recurring issue, as community resources were modest and sponsorship opportunities limited. Technical constraints, such as access to sound systems, lighting, and stage equipment, required creative problem-solving and resource-sharing among organisers. Furthermore, the lack of prior experience in managing large-scale events initially created uncertainty. These challenges, while significant, became learning opportunities that strengthened resilience and adaptability within the organising team.

The evaluation process revealed several **lessons learned**. First, early and consistent communication among stakeholders proved crucial for maintaining alignment of expectations. Second, the inclusion of digital promotion was essential for increasing outreach, but it also required continuous guidance as not all community members were familiar with social media management. Third, ensuring cultural authenticity while adapting to modern festival formats required careful negotiation, illustrating the delicate balance between tradition and innovation in community service initiatives. In terms of **economic outcomes**, while MSME participants reported short-term financial gains, the longer-term impact lies in the establishment of new networks and market opportunities. Some entrepreneurs were invited to participate in subsequent cultural events in neighbouring areas, expanding their customer base. This indicates that cultural festivals can function as entry points for sustainable rural entrepreneurship, reinforcing the connection between cultural heritage and economic growth.

The programme also created **positive psychological impacts** on the community. The sense of pride derived from successfully hosting a well-organised festival boosted community morale and collective identity. Villagers expressed increased confidence in their ability to independently manage similar events in the future. This psychological empowerment is as significant as material outcomes, as it strengthens community agency and reduces reliance on external support. Looking forward, the **discussion of sustainability** emphasises the need to institutionalise KembaranFest as an annual village agenda. Establishing a permanent organising committee under the village's cultural department or youth organisation is recommended. Moreover, future collaborations with government tourism offices, universities, and private sponsors could provide financial and technical support. If sustained, KembaranFest has the potential to evolve into a regional cultural attraction, contributing not only to the preservation of Jathilan but also to the socio-economic resilience of Kembaran Village.

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of this community service programme in Kembaran Village has demonstrated that cultural festivals can serve as powerful instruments for both cultural preservation and socio-economic development. By establishing the Event Division, the programme provided the community with a structured approach to event management, which enabled the successful organisation of KembaranFest. This structure transformed a traditional celebration into a professionally managed event with measurable cultural, social, and economic outcomes. From the cultural perspective, the programme revitalised the traditional Jathilan performance, which had faced challenges of diminishing interest among younger generations. By engaging local youths directly in performance, organisation, and promotion, the festival ensured that Jathilan remains relevant and appealing. The intergenerational collaboration between elders, who provided traditional knowledge, and youths, who contributed modern promotional strategies, reinforced cultural transmission in a dynamic and sustainable way.

The economic impact was equally significant. Local MSMEs benefited from direct income through sales during the festival, and several entrepreneurs reported increased exposure that led to opportunities beyond the village. This indicates that cultural festivals can be catalysts for rural entrepreneurship, linking cultural heritage to economic resilience. The integration of cultural performance and MSME exhibitions created a holistic model of community empowerment where culture and economy reinforce each other. From the social dimension, KembaranFest succeeded in strengthening community participation and solidarity. The inclusiveness of the event—engaging men, women, youths, and elders—demonstrated that cultural activities can unify diverse groups. The leadership of the youth

organisation Optima was a critical factor in mobilising volunteers and ensuring smooth implementation. This reinforced the role of young people as strategic partners in community development, rather than passive beneficiaries.

Capacity-building was another lasting outcome. Through direct mentoring and hands-on practice, villagers acquired organisational skills such as planning, coordination, and evaluation. These skills are transferable and can be applied to other community initiatives, ranging from educational programmes to local governance activities. The capacity-building element ensures that the impact of the programme extends beyond the festival itself, contributing to the long-term resilience of the community. Nevertheless, the programme also faced challenges. Financial limitations, technical constraints, and limited prior experience created difficulties in the preparation stages. However, the ability of the community and facilitators to overcome these obstacles highlighted their resilience and creativity. These challenges turned into learning experiences, strengthening problem-solving abilities and adaptability for future initiatives.

Several lessons were learned. First, early and consistent communication among stakeholders was crucial to align expectations and responsibilities. Second, the integration of digital promotion proved indispensable for reaching broader audiences, although continuous training was needed for villagers to master these tools. Third, balancing cultural authenticity with modern festival standards required sensitive negotiation, demonstrating the importance of maintaining cultural integrity while embracing innovation. The psychological impact of the programme cannot be overlooked. The successful execution of KembaranFest created a strong sense of pride and confidence within the community. Villagers expressed that they now felt capable of managing similar events independently in the future. This psychological empowerment is essential for sustainable community development, as it fosters agency and reduces dependency on external support.

Looking toward sustainability, institutionalisation of KembaranFest is necessary. Establishing a permanent organising committee, ideally under the leadership of the village's cultural unit or the youth organisation, would ensure continuity. Furthermore, partnerships with local government, tourism agencies, and private sponsors should be pursued to strengthen financial and technical resources. This institutionalisation would enable KembaranFest to evolve into a regional attraction with long-term cultural and economic benefits. In conclusion, this community service initiative illustrates that cultural traditions can be transformed into developmental assets when combined with structured event management, inclusive participation, and digital innovation. The synergy between cultural preservation, economic empowerment, and youth engagement created outcomes that are sustainable and replicable. The role of the university as a facilitator—providing knowledge, networks, and mentorship—was pivotal in enabling the community to take ownership of the programme. Thus, the presence of the Event Division in KembaranFest is not only a model for Kembaran Village but also a reference for other rural communities seeking to integrate cultural heritage into their development strategies.

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