

Research Article

Talempong in the Context of Minang Cultural Heritage: Phenomenological Study Based on Nvivo 12 Plus

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Abstract: This research is motivated by the fact that today's younger generation is more familiar with modern pop music, K-Pop, and various digital music genres than talempong, as well as low participation. This study aims to determine talempong's function as a symbol of Minang cultural identity, the challenges faced in preserving it amidst globalization, and strategic efforts undertaken to maintain its transmission across generations. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 15 informants consisting of traditional musicians, cultural figures, art educators, and tourism practitioners in West Sumatra. Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 Plus software, which allows systematic coding, thematic grouping, and pattern identification from a rich qualitative data set. The findings indicate that talempong occupies a sacred and functional role in Minang ceremonial life. At the same time, it faces existential threats from the proliferation of digital entertainment and declining interest from the younger generation. The study identified three interrelated preservation strategies: institutional integration through formal arts education curriculum, commercialization through cultural tourism, and community-based revitalization through traditional institutions. This research contributes theoretically to the discourse on intangible cultural heritage and practically to heritage tourism policy in Indonesia. The findings suggest that a hybrid model combining traditional transmission with digital documentation and a creative economic approach offers the most sustainable path to talempong preservation.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage; Intangible Heritage; Minangkabau; NVivo; Talempong.

1. Introduction

The talempong is one of the most iconic intangible cultural heritages of the Minangkabau people of West Sumatra, Indonesia (Wimbrayardi & Parmadi, 2021; Yolanda & Syeindra, 2025). This bronze percussion instrument has become an integral part of the Minangkabau social system, rituals, and cultural identity (Illahi et al., 2026). In various traditional ceremonies, such as batagak penghulu (headman's ceremony), weddings, and welcoming guests of honor, the talempong serves as a medium of cultural communication that connects the sacred and the profane (Ediwar et al., 2022). Its existence is not merely entertainment, but a reflection of Minangkabau philosophy as reflected in the adage "alam takambang jadi guru" (Satria, 2024). In some talempong music performances, musical instruments such as tambua, gondang, bansi, serunai and bass are used (Aisyah & Idawati, 2025).

UNESCO, through the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, established a preservation framework that emphasizes the importance of intergenerational knowledge transmission, documentation, and community revitalization

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(UNESCO, 2023) . Indonesia, as a signatory to the convention, has a moral and legal responsibility to preserve its intangible cultural heritage, including talempong. However, the reality on the ground shows that the process of preserving talempong faces various multidimensional challenges that require in-depth and comprehensive study (Putra & Syafri, 2023) .

Globalization and the development of digital technology have fundamentally changed the cultural landscape. Today's young Minang generation is more familiar with modern pop music, K-Pop, and various digital music genres than talempong . Research by Ramadhani and Kurniawan shows that youth participation in traditional arts activities in West Sumatra has declined by approximately 42% over the past decade. This situation raises serious concerns about the sustainability of talempong as a living heritage that requires practitioners and heirs (Ramadhani & Kurniawan, 2024) .

To date, research on talempong tends to focus solely on musicological and organological aspects, while sociocultural dimensions, creative economy, and empirically based preservation strategies remain relatively limited. There is a significant research gap in understanding how indigenous communities, educational institutions, and the tourism industry interact within the holistic talempong preservation ecosystem. This study attempts to fill this gap using a phenomenological approach and computer-assisted analysis using NVivo 12 Plus.

This research aims to (1) analyze the position and function of talempong in the Minangkabau cultural heritage system, (2) identify contemporary challenges in preserving talempong, (3) map preservation strategies that have been and are being implemented by various stakeholders.

2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

Intangible Cultural Heritage and Cultural Identity

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is defined by UNESCO as the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills recognized by a community, group, or individual as part of their cultural heritage . This concept encompasses oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, celebrations, knowledge of the universe, and traditional handicraft skills (L. Smith & Akagawa, 2021) . From this perspective, talempong is not only a musical artifact but also a cultural knowledge system containing the values of Minangkabau local wisdom.

The developed theory of cultural identity asserts that identity is dynamic, constructive, and continuously produced and reproduced through everyday cultural practices (Nagata, 2022) . In the Minangkabau context, talempong serves as a marker of collective identity that strengthens a sense of togetherness and social solidarity. Customary deliberations (nagari customary meetings) consistently position talempong as a sacred element inseparable from Minangkabau identity (Alimin & Yusuf, 2023) .

Cultural Tourism and Heritage Preservation

Cultural tourism has been recognized as a strategic instrument in the preservation of cultural heritage. Richards defines cultural tourism as travel motivated by a desire to experience, learn about, and understand the destination's culture (Richards, 2021) . Tourism can be a dual force : on the one hand, it encourages preservation through funding and public attention, while on the other hand, it has the potential to commercialize and distort cultural authenticity. (McKercher & Cros, 2023) .

The concept of heritage commodification, developed by Boltanski and Esquerre, explains the process of transforming cultural heritage into an economic commodity. In talempong performances, commodification occurs when they are packaged as tourist attractions in destinations such as Bukittinggi, Padang, and Batusangkar (Pratiwi et al., 2024). This process creates tension between intrinsic cultural value and instrumental economic value, which requires careful management.

Transmission of Traditional Arts Culture and Education

Cultural transmission refers to the process of passing on knowledge, values, practices, and skills from one generation to the next. In traditional societies, this process occurs through informal learning within communities. However, social change and modernization have shifted traditional transmission patterns, requiring adaptation through the formalization of arts education (Wibowo et al., 2025).

Djohan and Christanday's research on traditional arts education in Indonesia shows that integrating regional arts into the formal school curriculum has proven effective in increasing young people's appreciation and participation in local cultural heritage (Djohan & Christanday, 2022). However, its implementation requires a contextually designed curriculum, competent teaching staff, and consistent institutional support.

NVivo as a Qualitative Analysis Tool

NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) developed by QSR International. NVivo 12 Plus offers advanced features for managing, coding, analyzing, and visualizing qualitative data in the form of text, audio, video, and images. NVivo's use in cultural and tourism research has become increasingly widespread due to its ability to handle complex and layered data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2021).

In phenomenological research, NVivo 12 Plus allows researchers to systematically conduct thematic coding, construct word frequency queries to identify dominant themes, use a matrix framework for cross-case comparisons, and generate visualizations such as word clouds, cluster analysis, and concept maps. These advantages make NVivo a highly suitable tool for analyzing in-depth interview data about cultural heritage, which is rich in nuanced meaning (Clarke et al., 2022).

3. Proposed Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with an interpretive phenomenological design. This approach was chosen to understand the deeper meaning of the informants' lived experiences related to talempong as a Minang cultural heritage. This study emphasized individual subjective perspectives, which were then systematically interpreted by the researchers (J.A. Smith et al., 2021).

The research was conducted in three major regencies/cities in West Sumatra: Padang City, Tanah Datar Regency (Batusangkar), and Bukittinggi City. These three locations were chosen because they are centers of Minangkabau culture and have active talempong arts communities. Data collection took place over four months, from October 2024 to January 2025.

Data Sources and Informants

The informants were selected using purposive sampling technique with the following criteria: having been actively involved in talempong art for at least five years, having in-depth knowledge of Minangkabau customs, and having a role in the preservation or education of

talempong art. A total of 15 informants were recruited, consisting of 5 traditional talempong musicians, 3 traditional figures or ninik mamak, 3 art educators in formal institutions, 2 managers of cultural tourism destinations, and 2 employees of the West Sumatra Provincial Cultural Office.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through three main techniques, namely semi-structured in-depth interviews for 60-120 minutes per informant which were audio recorded and transcribed, participatory observation of talempong performances, traditional ceremonies, and talempong learning classes, and documentation studies in the form of traditional archives, arts curriculum, and cultural policy documents.

Data Analysis Techniques

All interview transcripts were imported into NVivo 12 Plus and analyzed through the stages of open coding to identify initial codes from the raw data, axial coding to group codes into categories and subcategories, selective coding to identify core themes connecting all categories, and framework matrix analysis for cross-informant comparisons. A word frequency query was run to identify the 50 most dominant words, and a tree map was used to visualize the distribution of themes. Data saturation was reached at the 12th informant, and the final three interviews served as confirmation.

Data Validity and Validity

Data validity was guaranteed through four criteria: credibility was achieved through member checking with three key informants and triangulation of data sources. Transferability was ensured through a thorough description of the research context. Dependability was ensured through an audit trail of the coding process in Nvivo. And confirmability was ensured through peer debriefing with two fellow researchers in the field of cultural studies

4. Results and Discussion

Result

Based on the analysis of data obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation at three research locations in West Sumatra, namely Padang City, Tanah Datar Regency (Batusangkar), and Bukittinggi City, talempong was found as a cultural heritage, namely as follows.

NVivo 12 Plus Analysis Results: Theme Mapping

Analysis using NVivo 12 Plus on 15 interview transcripts resulted in 287 initial codes (open codes) which were then consolidated into 48 subcategories and 6 main themes. The word frequency query process identified the most dominant words in the data corpus, namely talempong (n=412), adat (n=387), generation (n=298), culture (n=276), education (n=245), tourism (n=231), preservation (n=218), and identity (n=187). These frequencies describe the core constructs in the informants' narratives.

Table 1. Main Themes and Nodes of NVivo 12 Plus Analysis Results.

No	Main Theme	Subcategory (Node)	Number of Codes	% Reference
1	Sacred and Ceremonial Functions of Talempong	Traditional rituals, wedding ceremonies, welcoming guests, batagak penghulu	52	18.1%

2	Minang Identity	Cultural	Symbol of pride, local uniqueness, cultural differentiation, social cohesion	48	16.7%
3	Threats and Challenges of Conservation	and	Globalization, digitalization, youth interest, regeneration	45	15.7%
4	Institutional Preservation Strategy		Formal curriculum, art studios, teacher training	41	14.3%
5	Cultural Tourism as a Medium of Preservation		Tourism packaging, cultural festivals, creative economy	38	13.2%
6	Custom-Based Community Revitalization		The density of nagari customs, the role of ninik mamak, oral inheritance	35	12.2%

Source: NVivo 12 Plus Analysis Results, 2025

Sacred and Ceremonial Functions of Talempong

All 15 informants (100%) affirmed that talempong occupies an irreplaceable position in the Minangkabau traditional ceremonial system. NVivo analysis identified 52 references related to this sacred function, making it the theme with the highest coding density. A senior traditional musician explained that "Talempong is not just sounds. Talempong is a traditional language, a language of nature. When talempong sounds during a ceremony, it means there is a message being conveyed to ancestral spirits and to fellow human beings." This statement reflects the ontological dimension of talempong in Minangkabau cosmology, which cannot be reduced to mere artistic artifacts.

Field observations confirm that during the Batagak Penghulu ceremony in Batusangkar, talempong is played continuously for over six hours by four groups of musicians in rotation. The musical patterns played are specific and contextual, with each phase of the ceremony having a distinct talempong repertoire that should not be confused, as each melody carries a distinct meaning and message within traditional communication.

Talempong as a Marker of Minang Cultural Identity

The theme of cultural identity obtained 48 references in the NVivo analysis with cluster analysis showing a close relationship between the talempong node, Minang customs, regional pride, and collective identity. A senior traditional figure stated that "If children and grandchildren do not know talempong, it means that children and grandchildren do not know themselves as Minang people. Talempong is a reflection of the Minangkabau soul." This statement shows that talempong functions as a major component in the construction of Minang ethnic identity.

A framework matrix analysis across informants demonstrated consistent narratives about talempong as a marker of cultural differentiation, with 13 of 15 informants explicitly identifying talempong as an element that distinguishes Minang culture from other ethnic cultures in Indonesia. A tourism manager added an economic perspective, stating, "Tourists who come to Bukittinggi don't just want to see the Jam Gadang. They want to experience the true Minang culture, and talempong is its heart."

Contemporary Challenges of Talempong Preservation

NVivo analysis identified 45 references related to preservation challenges divided into four main subcategories: shifting interests of the younger generation (n=18, 40%), the dominance of digital media and global entertainment (n=12, 26.7%), limited regeneration of teachers and maestros (n=9, 20%), and minimal government funding support (n=6, 13.3%). Arts educators described the reality on the ground that “In schools, talempong classes that used to be always full now only have 5-6 students. Children are more interested in learning guitar or singing songs that are trending on social media.”

Word frequency analysis of transcripts from informants under 45 years old revealed that the words difficult, low interest, and no one wants appeared 2.3 times more frequently than those from informants over 60 years old. This indicates a more pessimistic perception of the future of talempong among the younger generation of preservationists.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal the empowerment of the Talempong community in Talempong cultural tourism in West Sumatra. The following discussion links these findings to relevant theories and previous research to strengthen the meaning and implications of each finding.

Talempong as a Cultural Heritage

Research findings demonstrating talempong as a medium for spiritual and social communication in Minangkabau traditional ceremonies align with the theoretical perspective of living cultural heritage (Jokilehto, 2021) . This concept emphasizes that authentic cultural heritage is not merely a static artifact but a living practice that is continuously reproduced in community life. These findings also reinforce research findings that suggest talempong has an ontological function that goes far beyond its mere aesthetic value, namely as a communication system between humans, nature, and ancestors in Minangkabau cosmology (Ediwar et al., 2022) .

This study found that the sacredness of talempong, paradoxically, acts as both a protective factor and an obstacle to its modernization. On the one hand, its sacred status prevents talempong from being distorted by excessive commercialization, but on the other, it creates a barrier to entry for younger generations who feel unworthy or unable to learn an instrument deemed too sacred. These findings expand on insights put forward that focus on the pedagogical dimension of preservation by adding the sociological dimension of the sacred as a variable that has previously received little attention (Putra & Syafri, 2023) .

Dynamics of Cultural Identity in the Digital Age

The function of talempong as a marker of collective Minang identity identified in this study corresponds to a study of West Sumatran cultural identity in the digital era (Ramadhani & Kurniawan, 2024) . Both found that amidst globalization, Minang society experienced a dynamic process of identity negotiation, driven on the one hand to adopt global cultural elements but on the other hand to increasingly appreciate the uniqueness of local heritage as a form of cultural resistance.

This study reveals a more complex nuance (Alimin & Yusuf, 2023) . While Alimin Yusuf's study focuses more on the role of traditional institutions in maintaining cultural identity, this study finds that talempong identity is increasingly constructed diasporically by Minang communities in diasporas such as Pekanbaru, Medan, Jakarta, and Kuala Lumpur,

playing an equally important role in strengthening the narrative of pride in talempong through social media and diaspora performances.

Conservation Strategy

The research identified three interacting pillars of the talempong preservation strategy: formal curricular integration, cultural tourism commodification, and community-based revitalization. This three-pillar configuration expands on the two-pillar model, which only considers formal education and community participation without explicitly incorporating the cultural tourism dimension (Djohan & Christanday, 2022) .

The first pillar of curricular integration has been found to be most effective in ensuring systematic exposure of talempong to the younger generation. As confirmed by educators, institutions such as ISI Padang Panjang have successfully produced hundreds of educated talempong musicians who are now spread throughout West Sumatra. This aligns with recommendations regarding the importance of formalizing traditional arts education as a guarantee of the continuity of cultural transmission in the context of modernity. (Wibowo et al., 2025) .

The second pillar of cultural tourism presents a more complex dilemma. This research finding reinforces the argument that tourism can be a double-edged sword for heritage preservation (McKercher & Cros, 2023) . In Bukittinggi and Batusangkar, packaging talempong as a tourist attraction has been shown to increase public exposure and generate income for musicians. However, several informants expressed concern that simplifying performances to suit tourist tastes could sacrifice the complex meaning of talempong rituals.

The third pillar of community-based revitalization through nagari customary density demonstrates the most organic resilience. Research confirms that customary institutions in Minangkabau possess unique capacity and legitimacy to maintain cultural practices that cannot be reproduced by state institutions or the market (Pratiwi et al., 2024) . This study adds new findings that the effectiveness of this pillar is highly dependent on the quality of local ninik mamak leadership and the level of social cohesion within the nagari.

The Role of NVivo 12 Plus in Revealing the Depth of Cultural Narratives

The use of NVivo 12 Plus in this study proved to provide significant methodological added value compared to conventional qualitative analysis. Framework matrix analysis successfully revealed substantial differences in perspectives between informant groups not visible at the level of conventional thematic analysis: traditional musicians tended to emphasize the spiritual dimension, arts educators emphasized technical transmission, and tourism managers focused more on economic value. These layered findings enrich our understanding of the complexity of the talempong preservation ecosystem and the power of computer-assisted analysis in uncovering hidden layers of meaning (Bazeley & Jackson, 2021) .

Cluster analysis in NVivo also identified an unexpected semantic link between the regeneration crisis and income mismatch nodes, with 11 of the 15 informants implicitly linking the low interest of the younger generation to the perception that a career as a talempong musician is not economically promising. This finding expands the analytical framework that focuses more on the technical aspects of NVivo by demonstrating how the tool can be used to identify latent factors influencing the sustainability of cultural heritage. (Clarke et al., 2022) .

Sustainable Talempong Conservation Model

The synthesis of all research findings resulted in a model for sustainable talempong preservation called the Adaptive Tri-Helix Model , which integrates educational institutions

(academics), traditional communities (nirik mamak), and the tourism industry into a mutually reinforcing system that adapts to changing contexts. This model is supported by findings on the importance of a multistakeholder approach in cultural heritage preservation (L. Smith & Akagawa, 2021) and the role of creative tourism in strengthening cultural authenticity (Richards, 2021) .

A significant difference between the Adaptive Tri Helix model and existing models is its emphasis on the principle of selective adaptability: talempong preservation must be dynamic and responsive to change without losing its sacred essence and social function. Digital documentation through platforms like YouTube and online learning applications needs to be integrated as a fourth layer supporting these three pillars, particularly to reach the Minang diaspora and the digital native generation.

5. Conclusions

This research yields several important conclusions about the position and future of talempong within the context of Minangkabau cultural heritage. First, talempong has been shown to have a multidimensional position within the Minangkabau cultural system as a medium for sacred ritual communication, a marker of collective identity, and a vehicle for transmitting Minangkabau philosophical values across generations. This multidimensional position makes talempong both highly valuable and vulnerable to rapid social change.

The two NVivo 12 Plus analyses identified three key interrelated challenges: the declining interest of the younger generation, exacerbated by economic factors (low financial incentives for musicians), the dominance of digital culture, which is shifting entertainment preferences, and the regeneration crisis of increasingly aging talempong maestros without adequate legacy. These three challenges form a downward spiral that requires simultaneous and holistic intervention.

These three studies formulated the Adaptive Tri-Helix Model as a preservation framework that integrates formal educational institutions, traditional institutions, and the tourism industry into a single system supported by a digital layer. This model emphasizes that authentic preservation requires a balance between sacredness and accessibility, between tradition and innovation.

Based on these conclusions, this study recommends several things: The Ministry of Education and Culture needs to include talempong as a mandatory material in the arts and culture curriculum of elementary and secondary schools in West Sumatra. The West Sumatra Provincial Tourism and Culture Office needs to develop a special scholarship program for young people interested in studying talempong, accompanied by guaranteed job placement in the cultural tourism sector. The nirik mamak community needs to strengthen its role in the talempong transmission system through more explicit customary regulations regarding the obligation to study talempong. And further research is needed that examines the comparative effectiveness of the three pillars of the Adaptive Tri Helix model in various nagari with different socioeconomic characteristics.

Limitations of this study include its limited geographic coverage of three regencies/cities in West Sumatra, as well as the under-exploration of the perspective of the Minangkabau diaspora community. Future research is recommended to expand the scope to all 19 regencies/cities in West Sumatra and involve Minangkabau communities abroad to obtain a more comprehensive picture.

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