

Traditional Music Based Cultural Tourism: An Opportunity for Revitalization and Empowerment of Local Communities through Talempong

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Abstract: Talempong, a Minangkabau bronze gong ensemble in West Sumatra, embodies both cultural identity and creative economic potential, yet its role in cultural tourism remains rarely studied. This study examines Talempong's potential as a tourism attraction and creative economy instrument, as well as a strategy for revitalization and community empowerment. Using a qualitative case study approach through interviews, participant observation, and documentary analysis, data were triangulated and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. Findings indicate that Talempong functions as a living heritage asset, a performative tourism product, and a revenue-generating creative good through instrument making, performances, music education, and souvenirs, yet faces challenges of generational transmission, limited market access, and weak institutional support. Discussions highlight that the success of Talempong-based tourism depends on the synergy of cultural authenticity, community involvement, and market packaging. The study concludes that collaborative governance between artisans, the village, and the creative sector can revitalize Talempong while strengthening community livelihoods, with practical implications for sustainable music tourism policy.

Keywords: Community Empowerment; Creative Economy; Cultural Revitalization; Cultural Tourism; Traditional Music.

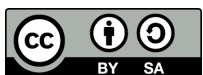
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1. Introduction

Cultural tourism now places rituals, crafts, dance, and music of intangible heritage as its main attractions (Mazlan, Abdullah, Hashim, Wahid, et al., 2025; Wahid et al., 2025). Traditional instruments become tourist attractions because they provide auditory experiences, tangible craftsmanship, and local cosmologies, but commodification risks eroding their authenticity and social meaning. The tension between preservation and commodification is a key issue in the integration of traditional arts into the tourism economy.

(Wahid et al., 2025). However, musical heritage tourism is also fragile: when traditional soundscapes are repackaged for the visitor market without regard for the communities that preserve them, their authenticity can be eroded and the practices tourists seek to witness can lose their social significance (Wahid et al., 2025). This tension between preservation and commodification is central to contemporary debates about how traditional performing arts should be integrated into the tourism economy.

In West Sumatra, the Minangkabau ethnic group has a distinctive percussion tradition called Talempong, a set of small bronze or brass gongs played melodically in the Talempong Pacik (portable, processional) and Talempong Dudaak/Renjeang (fixed, seated, tuned)

ensembles. (Fraser, 2020; Nursyirwan et al., 2025) Talempong has been documented as a marker of Minangkabau regional identity predating the arrival of Islam in Sumatra and has historically accompanied ceremonial processions, welcoming rituals, Randai theater, and Tari Piring (Plate Dance) performances (Fraser, 2020; Nursyirwan et al., 2025) . However, interest among younger generations has declined, migration traditions and urbanization have weakened transmission, and global popular music has narrowed the space for Talempong, reflected in the decline of active groups since the 1980s (Nursyirwan et al., 2025) .

At the same time, West Sumatra has been actively developing community-based tourism (CBT) around Minangkabau cultural villages such as Nagari Sijunjung, Nagari Tuo Pariangan, and Saribu Gonjong, where Rumah Gadang architecture, traditional ceremonies, and performing arts are packaged as cultural heritage experiences (Berutu et al., 2025; Syafrini et al., 2026) . Talempong performances often accompany welcoming tourists to cultural villages, serving as ambient or scheduled entertainment. However, this instrument is rarely studied as a separate economic and cultural resource with revitalization needs and creative potential separate from village tourism packages. This creates a research gap: while community-based tourism and creative economy empowerment in Indonesian tourist villages are relatively well-studied (Muda, 2025; Rusnarasyid et al., 2026) , and while ethnomusicological studies on Talempong document its tonal system and social functions in detail (Nursyirwan et al., 2025; Sastra, 2021) , few studies link these two fields of knowledge to examine how Talempong in particular can be positioned as both a cultural tourism attraction and a creative economy instrument capable of empowering the communities that support it.

Previous studies on traditional music and tourism have tended to adopt one of two approaches. The first is ethnomusicology, which documents tuning systems, repertoires, and performance contexts without extensive engagement with tourism or economic dimensions (Nursyirwan et al., 2025; Wardizal, 2022) . The second is tourism economics, which examines community-based tourism development, creative economic empowerment models, or the transformation of cultural heritage villages, but treats music as one undifferentiated component of a broader cultural package rather than as a distinct attraction with distinct revitalization requirements (Buchari et al., 2024; Rusnarasyid et al., 2026; Syafrini et al., 2026) . A smaller but growing international literature explicitly examines music as a tourism product, for example, flamenco in Andalusia, Aboriginal music tourism in Canada, and gong ensembles in Southeast Asia, demonstrating both the economic potential and ethical risks of commodifying musical heritage (Wahid et al., 2025) . Comparative literature rarely addresses the Minangkabau case, while Indonesian creative economy policies tend to group music, crafts, and performing arts as general subsectors without highlighting specific instruments such as the Talempong.

The literature presents a wealth of ethnomusicological descriptions and tourism management theories, but a limited connection between the two. This study addresses this issue by formulating the question: how can Talempong, as an endangered traditional music, be revitalized through cultural tourism, thereby providing tangible creative economic benefits and empowering the Minangkabau communities that produce and transmit it. To address this issue, this study proposes an integrated qualitative approach that treats Talempong

simultaneously as (a) an object of cultural preservation, (b) a tourist attraction, and (c) a creative economy commodity, and that examines these three dimensions through the lived experiences of artisans, performers, and tourism managers, rather than solely through policy documents. This approach responds to calls in the literature for an empowerment model grounded in the perspectives of key cultural bearers, rather than one imposed from the top down (Gutierrez, 2023; Rusnarasyid et al., 2026) .

The specific objectives of this study are: (1) to map the current state of Talempong as a living cultural practice and identify challenges that threaten its sustainability; (2) to analyze how Talempong is, or could be, positioned as a cultural tourism attraction in West Sumatran nagari tourism; and (3) to formulate a revitalization and community empowerment strategy that treats Talempong as a creative economy instrument. The contributions of this study are threefold. First, it provides an empirical account of Talempong-based tourism that bridges ethnomusicology and tourism management perspectives. Second, it offers a replicable framework for evaluating instrument specific musical heritage as a tourism and creative economy resource, which can be applied to other endangered ensemble traditions in Indonesia and abroad. Third, it provides practical recommendations for nagari governments, tourism operators, and cultural institutions seeking to design community-centered music tourism programs and preserve their authenticity. The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews relevant literature on cultural tourism, traditional music, and creative economy empowerment; Section 3 describes the research method; Section 4 presents the results; discussing these results in relation to previous research; and Section 5 concludes with implications and limitations.

2. Literature Review

This section synthesizes three streams of literature relevant to this research: (i) theories of cultural tourism and music, (ii) studies of Talempong and Minangkabau performing arts, and (iii) creative economy-based community empowerment. Combining theory with related literature in this way allows the specific gap addressed by this research, namely, the instrumental-level explanation of Talempong as a tourism and creative economy resource, to be appropriately situated within the broader debate.

Music and Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism studies increasingly treat music as an intangible cultural asset and as a driver of destination attractiveness, economic development, and regional image (Wahid et al., 2025) . A recent bibliometric and peer-reviewed review of forty highly cited studies on music in cultural tourism found that music contributes to cultural preservation, tourist motivation, and regional identity, but the commodification of musical heritage creates persistent ethical tensions, particularly for marginalized or indigenous communities whose expressions are repackaged for visitor consumption (Wahid et al., 2025) . Case studies cited in this work—flamenco in Andalusia, Balinese music and dance, Aboriginal music tourism in Canada, and Afro-Cuban religious music—illustrate a recurring pattern: music tourism succeeds economically and culturally when local communities maintain control over how their music is presented, and risks eroding authenticity when presentation decisions are made externally (Wahid et al., 2025) . Similar preliminary reviews of the performing arts in cultural tourism also conclude that performing arts tourism functions best as a two-way exchange, where tourism revenues support the sustainability of the art form rather than simply extracting visible

spectacle from it (Mazlan, Abdullah, Hashim, & Wahid, 2025; Mazlan, Abdullah, Hashim, Wahid, et al., 2025) .

Specifically in Indonesia, cultural tourism research has documented how traditional and indigenous Balinese performing arts such as Kolintang, gamelan, Reog Ponorogo, angklung, and dance forms are recognized as intangible cultural heritage and promoted internationally as instruments of cultural diplomacy and soft power of the creative economy (ANTARA News, 2025) . Nationally, the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) has established an Indonesian administrative structure for protection measures, although implementation studies indicate that the translation of international heritage status into local economic benefits remains uneven (Intangible Heritage System, 2025) . The angklung, a bamboo musical instrument comparable to the talempong in its communal and processional functions, provides an instructive parallel: research on the angklung paglak shows that deliberate visual identity and branding strategies can strengthen public recognition of a traditional musical instrument without displacing its ceremonial meaning (Zihana & Chaysalina, 2023) , suggesting a pathway explored by this study for the talempong.

Talempong and Minangkabau Performing Arts

Talempong is one of the oldest recorded musical traditions of the Minangkabau ethnic group, associated by ethnomusicologists with the arrival of bronze culture in Sumatra and predating the arrival of Islam in the region (Fraser, 2020) . Ethnomusicological studies distinguish several Talempong genres based on playing techniques and social contexts: Talempong Pacik, a portable ensemble with interlocking techniques carried and played while walking in processions such as alek nagari (village festivals), Batagak Pangulu (inauguration of traditional leaders), wedding processions, and communal work events (Anonymous, 2025b; Fraser, 2020) and Talempong Renjeang or Talempong Duduak, a gong ensemble tuned and played in fixed formations, often accompanying the Plate Dance and Randai theatrical performances (Nursyirwan et al., 2025; Sastra, 2021) . A recent ethnomusicological survey of five West Sumatran districts, namely Tanah Datar, Agam, Lima Puluh Kota, Sijunjung, and Solok, documented that Talempong tuning is traditionally achieved through embodied sensory assessment (“raso batalun”, or a perceived sense of tonal cohesion) rather than standardized measurements, resulting in five-note (“limo salabuan”) or six-note (“onam salabuan”) scale variants that differ from village to village, and that this tuning diversity is itself a marker of local identity (Nursyirwan et al., 2025) . The same study noted that modern Talempong ensembles are increasingly adopting Western diatonic tuning to accommodate the performance of electric bass and keyboard instruments, reflecting a broader adaptation of the tradition to contemporary musical contexts (Nursyirwan et al., 2025) .

The formation of groups in Talempong performances is itself a social institution: some groups are formed based on genealogical or clan ties, others based on shared interests without kinship ties, reflecting the broader Minangkabau social structure where artistic collaboration reflects customary (customary) organization (Sastra, 2021) . Studies on transmission in the digital era further show that Talempong pacik is increasingly documented and disseminated through YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, which expands its audience beyond West Sumatra, particularly among the Minangkabau diaspora (rantau) community and introduces new risks of decontextualized or commercially diluted performances (Anonymous, 2023) . A complementary case study of the Talempong Pacik Tigo Duo describes its continuing ceremonial role, for example during the Mananti Marapulai (waiting for the groom) ritual, and

argues that such ensembles serve as a means of strengthening social bonds and collective identity, particularly for Minangkabau migrants balancing adaptation with cultural preservation in a diasporic environment (Anonymous, 2025b) .

It should be noted that this literature is largely ethnomusicological or sociocultural in orientation; it documents Talempong's tonal system, ceremonial functions, and social organization in depth, but rarely extends its analysis to tourism management, market positioning, or the creative economy value chain. This is the specific space this study aims to fill.

Community-Based Tourism and Creative Economy Empowerment

Community-based tourism (CBT) research in West Sumatra has documented how Minangkabau villages have transformed their architecture and customs into tourist destinations. A study of the traditional village of Nagari Sijunjung, marketed under the concept of a “Minangkabau Time Corridor,” found that cultural tourism development yielded largely positive outcomes: new business opportunities, strengthening cultural identity, and the formation of collective memory around Rumah Gadang architecture and traditional practices, contradicting concerns that commodification would simply turn the community into a passive display object (Syafri et al., 2026) . A similar evaluation of Nagari Tuo Pariangan, considered the cradle of Minangkabau civilization, used the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) CBT stage framework to show that the village had passed most stages of development but still needed to strengthen its market position and destination marketing (Anonymous, 2025a) . A comparative study of the Saribu Gonjong and Kampuang Minang tourist villages also emphasized that the role of the community, facilitation by the nagari government, and external partnerships (universities, tourism offices, migrant associations) were critical success factors (Berutu et al., 2025) , while gender-based leadership models such as the Bundo Kandung value-based communication framework demonstrated the importance of culturally embedded governance structures for sustaining tourist villages in the Minangkabau matrilineal society (Anonymous, 2026) .

At the same time, a systematic review of community participation in sustainable tourism in Indonesia identified recurring gaps: limited human resource capacity, digital literacy deficits, capital constraints, and weak institutional coordination often hinder the empowerment potential of community-based tourism, even where cultural assets are strong (Muda, 2025) . A qualitative study of creative economy-based empowerment in the Tepus and Gari tourist villages in Gunungkidul also found that empowerment develops contextually, positioning communities as key development subjects in homestay management, tour guides, handicraft production, and cultural performances, and that its success depends on government policy support, institutional presence, social capital, and locally available resources (Rusnarasyid et al., 2026) . Complementary research on the relationship between participation and empowerment in community based tourism internationally warns that participation alone does not guarantee empowerment unless accompanied by the transfer of decision-making authority and tangible economic benefits to the community (Gutierrez, 2023) , a warning that is particularly relevant to Talempong, where the performance opportunities generated by tourism can either strengthen or marginalize the artisans and performers who preserve the tradition.

Creative economy studies place this empowerment within Indonesia's national policy architecture, where the Creative Economy Agency (Badan Ekonomi Kreatif) positions creative industries, including music, crafts, and performing arts, as pillars for job creation,

income growth, and sustainable development (Rusnarasyid et al., 2026) . A broader study of tourism village creativity in Bandung Regency shows that creative development strengthens urban sustainability and resilience when developed collaboratively across economic, social, infrastructural, and environmental dimensions, rather than simply treated as a marketing add-on (Buchari et al., 2024) . Overall, this literature suggests that the creative economy potential of cultural assets such as Talempong is realized not only through its performances for tourists, but through a value chain that includes instrument making (crafts), performance services, music education, and souvenir or media products, each of which can generate income and strengthen transmission if the community itself maintains ownership of the process.

By synthesizing these three strands, this study positions Talempong at the intersection of music tourism theory, Minangkabau performing arts studies, and creative economy empowerment research. The first strand provides a framework for understanding the promise and risks of music commodification, the second provides rich contextual detail about Talempong's social forms and meanings, and the third provides an empirically tested model of empowerment from comparable Indonesian tourism villages. The gap this study fills is the absence of studies that integrate these three strands specifically around Talempong as a unit of analysis, treating it not as a feature of the nagari tourism environment but as a distinct heritage asset with its own revitalization and empowerment pathways.

3. Research Methods

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design, which is appropriate for exploring the meanings, processes, and contextual dynamics of Talempong as a cultural and economic practice rather than measuring predetermined variables (Berutu et al., 2025; Rusnarasyid et al., 2026) . The case study design was chosen because it allows for an in-depth and holistic examination of Talempong in its natural nagari environment, captures the perspectives of artisans, performing artists, tourism managers, and government actors, and allows for triangulation through interviews, observation, and documentation as recommended for research on community-based tourism and the creative economy in the Indonesian context (Rusnarasyid et al., 2026) .

Research Location and Informants

This research was conducted in three nagari (traditional village units) in West Sumatra where Talempong is still an active practice and where cultural tourism activities are present or developing: the Talempong-producing nagari Pacik in Tanah Datar Regency, the Talempong performance center Renjeang in Agam Regency, and a nagari tourism village in Lima Puluh Kota Regency that regularly features Talempong in its visitor programs. These three locations were purposefully selected to capture variations in Talempong genres (portable/processionary versus seated/pitched ensemble), tuning traditions, and levels of tourism integration, in accordance with recommendations in the literature to research Talempong across districts to capture the diversity of the tradition (Nursyirwan et al., 2025) .

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling method, targeting individuals directly involved with Talempong as makers, performers, managers, or regulators. A total of eighteen informants participated: six Talempong craftsmen and instrument makers (pandai talempong), six active performers and group leaders (tuo grup), three managers of village tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis), and three representatives from the regional Tourism

and Creative Economy Office. This composition follows the practice in comparable Indonesian community empowerment studies, namely drawing informants from both the cultural production and tourism management sides to allow for triangulation of perspectives (Rusnarasyid et al., 2026) .

Data Collection Techniques

Three data collection techniques were used. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with eighteen informants, using an interview guide covering the history and current state of Talempong practice, perceived challenges to its sustainability, existing and potential tourism integration, and impacts on income or livelihoods. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, were conducted in Indonesian and Minangkabau, and were audio-recorded with the informants' consent prior to transcription and translation. Second, participant observation was conducted during eight Talempong performances staged for tourist audiences and four performances staged for purely ceremonial (non tourism) purposes, allowing for comparison between commercially and traditionally oriented performance contexts, following the observational approach used in previous studies of nagari tourism villages (Syafri et al., 2026) . Third, a documentary analysis reviewed nagari tourism promotional materials, local government creative economy program reports, and social media content (YouTube, Instagram, Facebook) related to Talempong, in line with the recognition in the literature that digital platforms are now the primary channels used to transmit and market Talempong (Anonymous, 2023) .

Data Validity

Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, cross checking information obtained from artisans, performing artists, and officials against observational data and documentary evidence, an approach consistent with established practice in qualitative tourism research in Indonesia (Berutu et al., 2025; Rusnarasyid et al., 2026) . Member checking was conducted by returning initial interpretations to three key informants (two artisans and one Pokdarwis manager) to confirm their accuracy. Discussions with two tourism studies colleagues not involved in data collection were used to challenge emerging interpretations and mitigate researcher bias.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's interactive qualitative analysis model, consisting of data condensation, data display, and drawing/verifying conclusions, an analytical approach widely used in recent studies of community-based tourism and creative economy empowerment in Indonesia (Rusnarasyid et al., 2026) . Data condensation involved coding interview transcripts and field notes into initial descriptive codes (e.g., "knowledge of tuning," "youth disinterest," "performance costs," "handicraft sales"), which were then grouped into analytical categories corresponding to the three research objectives: current conditions and challenges, tourism positioning, and creative economy/empowerment mechanisms. Data display used a matrix to compare patterns across the three research sites, allowing for the identification of site-specific and cross-cutting findings. Conclusions were drawn iteratively throughout data collection and finalized only after triangulation and member checking were completed.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents empirical findings structured around three research objectives: (4.1) the current state and challenges of Talempong as a living practice, (4.2) its position in cultural tourism, and (4.3) the creative economy and empowerment mechanisms observed in the three research locations. Interpretations and comparisons with previous research will be discussed in the Discussion section.

Current Conditions and Challenges of Talempong Practice

Across all three research sites, informants consistently described Talempong as an actively practiced but structurally fragile tradition. At the Tanah Datar site, six active Talempong Pacik groups remain, down from the estimated fourteen groups reported by senior informants in the 1970s. Craftsman informants explained that tuning knowledge (*raso batalun*) is transmitted almost entirely through oral apprenticeship and years of listening practice rather than written notation, meaning that the loss of a single senior tuner could effectively end a distinctive village tuning variant. Four of the six craftsman informants were over 55, and none had confirmed apprentices under the age of 30, a pattern consistent across all three sites.

Player informants identified three main challenges to sustainability: (1) youth migration (*merantau*) for education and work, which removes potential players and audiences from the *nagari*; (2) competition from digital and popular music genres for youth attention and practice time; and (3) the financial uncertainty of instrument making, as a complete set of bronze Talempong Pacik requires specialized casting skills, imported or rare raw metals, and several weeks of tuning labor, yet the market price for a complete set was reported by the craftsmen to be insufficient to cover this labor at a sustainable hourly rate. Two craftsmen reported having stopped producing new sets of instruments altogether in the past five years, and instead focused on repairing and retuning existing instruments.

Despite these challenges, informants also described active adaptation. At the Agam site, three performance groups have begun incorporating electric bass and keyboards into performances for tourist audiences, consistent with the trend of diatonic adaptation documented in previous ethnomusicological research (Nursyirwan et al., 2025). At the Lima Puluh Kota site, a youth Talempong group has been formed through an extracurricular school program jointly initiated by the village government and a local teacher, and its members report that the visibility of tourist performances has increased their sense of pride in participating, although most describe their involvement as extracurricular rather than a long-term vocational commitment.

Table 1. Summary of Talempong Practice Conditions in Three Research Locations.

Dimensions	Flat Land (Talempong Pacik)	Agam (Talempong Renjeang)	Fifty Cities (Mixed/Integrated Tourism)
Active group	6 (from an estimated 14 in the 1970s)	4	3, including 1 youth group
Average age of players	Most of them are aged 40 years and above.	Mixed, 25–50	Teenagers aged 12–17 years; adults aged 35 years and above.
Instrument production	Experiencing a decline; 2 out of 6 artisans stopped new production.	Focus on improvement	The musical instruments are sourced from Tanah Datar craftsmen.
Tourism integration	Sometimes, prioritizing the ceremony	Regularly scheduled shows	Weekly scheduled performances for groups of visitors.
Noteworthy adaptations	Most of the traditional tuning is retained.	Diatonic instruments were added for touring performances.	School-based youth transmission program

The Position of Talempong in Cultural Tourism

Observational data indicate that Talempong is currently positioned within Nagari tourism primarily as a welcoming or ambiance performance, rather than as a paid stand-alone attraction. In seven of the eight tourism-context performances observed, Talempong was performed for 10–15 minutes upon the arrival of a tour group, generally as part of a broader package that also included the Plate Dance, a Rumah Gadang tour, and a shared meal, reflecting the packaging pattern documented in Nagari Sijunjung's "Minangkabau Time Corridor" concept (Syafri et al., 2026). Only at the Lima Puluh Kota site did the research team observe an example of Talempong being positioned as a separate, bookable experience, where a small group of tourists paid an additional fee to receive a 45-minute practical Talempong lesson following the welcoming performance.

Tourism management informants (Pokdarwis) indicated that Talempong is rarely marketed specifically in promotional materials; visitor brochures and social media posts often use general terms such as "traditional Minangkabau music" or "traditional welcoming ceremony" rather than presenting Talempong as a specific cultural product. Two Pokdarwis managers acknowledged that this use of general terms was unintentional and reflected limited digital marketing capacity rather than a deliberate strategy, a constraint consistent with the digital literacy gap identified in a national review of community-based tourism in Indonesia (Muda, 2025).

Government informants from the regional Tourism and Creative Economy Office reported that Talempong has been included in the regional cultural inventory and is occasionally featured in provincial cultural festivals, but there is no dedicated funding channel or promotional campaign specifically for Talempong, in contrast to more widely promoted assets such as the Rumah Gadang architecture and the annual Pacu Jawi (bull racing) event. These findings suggest that, while Talempong is recognized as a culturally significant site, it has not been intentionally developed as a tourism product in its own right.

Table 2. Modes of Presentation of Talempong Observed in the Context of Tourism

Presentation Mode	Observed Frequency	Visitor Engagement Level	Revenue Mechanism
A relaxing welcome performance.	7 of 8 tourism shows	Passive (just watching)	Included in general village entrance/package fee.
Scheduled stage performances	5 of 8	Passive moderation (photos, short Q&A)	Donate in bulk or small groups.
Hands-on interactive lessons	1 of 8	Active (playing a musical instrument)	Separate paid add-ons
Sales of souvenirs/handicrafts (miniature instruments, recordings)	Present in 2 of 3 locations	Active (purchase)	Direct income from craftsmen/performers

Creative Economy and Empowerment Mechanisms

Four distinct creative economy pathways related to Talempong were identified across the research sites: (1) performance fees paid to groups for scheduled touring performances, ranging from approximately Rp 500,000 to Rp 1,500,000 per performance depending on group size and duration; (2) instrument-making and repair services, which generate income primarily for artisans in Tanah Datar, some of whom also sell miniature or decorative Talempong sets as souvenirs; (3) informal music education, where tourists or the Minangkabau diaspora visiting their native villages pay a small fee for short music lessons; and (4) digital content

monetization, where two performance groups reported modest income from social media platforms after videos of their performances gained wider circulation online, consistent with the documented role of digital platforms in expanding Talempong's reach beyond West Sumatra (Anonymous, 2023).

In terms of empowerment, informants painted a mixed picture. Performers in Lima Puluh Kota, where the village government has facilitated structured performance schedules and collectively negotiated fee arrangements by the groups, reported a strong sense of ownership over tourism relationships: performance schedules are set by the groups themselves, and fees are distributed according to an internally agreed formula. In contrast, performers in Tanah Datar reported that performance opportunities are often arranged informally through personal networks with tour guides, with less transparency in fee setting and no collective negotiation mechanisms—a pattern consistent with warnings in the literature that participation in tourism activities does not automatically translate into empowerment unless accompanied by a genuine transfer of decision-making authority (Gutierrez, 2023).

Across all locations, informants identified three factors supporting successful creative economy integration: active village government facilitation (funding, scheduling coordination, and promotional support), the existence of an organized Pokdarwis (tourism group) or similar institutional structure, and the availability of social capital in the form of trust and cooperation among group members. Conversely, three barriers were consistently identified: limited digital marketing capacity, insufficient capital for instrument maintenance and production, and weak coordination between the cultural (artisan/performer) and tourism management sides of village governance. These supporting factors and barriers are very similar to those identified in broader studies of creative economy empowerment in Indonesian tourism villages (Muda, 2025; Rusnarasyid et al., 2026), suggesting that the challenges of Talempong empowerment are not unique to the instrument itself but reflect the broader structural conditions of Indonesian community-based tourism, in which Talempong-specific transmission vulnerabilities are layered.

Discussion

Talempong Vulnerability and Adaptive Revitalization

The finding that active Talempong Pacik groups in Tanah Datar have declined from approximately fourteen to six since the 1970s, coupled with an aging base of players and craftspeople and a lack of apprenticeships, corroborates and extends previous ethnomusicological observations that a significant decline in Kenagarian Talempong practices began in the 1980s (Nursyirwan et al., 2025). This continuity of decline over four decades suggests that pressures on Talempong are structural rather than temporary, driven by the long-standing Minangkabau tradition of merantau (migration) that disperses potential players and audiences away from the nagari, a dynamic also identified in studies of Talempong Pacik's role in maintaining identity among diasporic communities (Anonymous, 2025b). While previous studies have primarily documented these migratory pressures as threats to cultural preservation, the current findings add a specific economic dimension: the labor economy of bronze instrument making itself has become unsustainable, with craftsmen reporting that market prices do not justify the time required for tuning with embodied sensory assessment (*raso batalun*). These findings extend the ethnomusicological literature, which has extensively documented the *raso batalun* tuning process as an aesthetic and social practice (Anonim, 2025b; Nursyirwan et al., 2025; Sastra, 2021), by demonstrating that this same practice is also

a fragile economic activity whose survival depends on market conditions rarely addressed in previous musicological accounts.

At the same time, observed adaptive strategies, such as diatonic tuning for tourist-targeted performances, dissemination through digital platforms, and school-based youth transmission programs, are consistent with broader patterns in the international music tourism literature, where traditions that are completely resistant to adaptation tend to lose young practitioners, while traditions that allow for controlled adaptation by the community tend to retain a larger active base (Nursyirwan et al., 2025; Wahid et al., 2025). The Lima Puluh Kota school program in particular echoes findings from research on Angklung revitalization, where the combination of integrating formal education and identity branding strengthens public recognition of the instrument without replacing its ceremonial function (Zihana & Chaysalina, 2023). This suggests that revitalization strategies for Talempong should not treat tradition and adaptation as opposing forces, but should identify which elements of the practice (e.g., the aesthetic logic of raso batalun tuning, or the social function of group formation along customary lines) must remain intact for cultural integrity, and which elements (e.g., instrumentation, performance duration, or presentation format) can be adapted for new audiences without compromising that integrity.

Implications of Talempong's Current Tourism Position

The finding that Talempong is largely positioned as an ambient, welcoming performance rather than a named attraction in its own right reflects a pattern documented across Minangkabau nagari tourism more broadly, where cultural elements are often combined into a generic heritage village package rather than differentiated and marketed individually (Syafri et al., 2026). This integration is not inherently problematic; Sijunjung's "Minangkabau Time Corridor" concept demonstrates that integrated cultural experiences can yield positive outcomes for community identity and business opportunities without the negative commodification effects often warned against by critics of cultural tourism (Syafri et al., 2026). However, the current findings suggest that this integration has a particular cost for Talempong: because it is rarely named or marketed as a distinct product, it does not garner the visitor recognition, repeat interest, or potential price premiums that named cultural attractions such as Pacu Jawi or Rumah Gadang in the same province have achieved. This is consistent with international findings that generic or undifferentiated presentations of music limit a tradition's ability to capture tourism value, whereas destinations that name and market specific musical or performing arts traditions such as flamenco in Andalusia or the Guca trumpet festival in Serbia are able to convert cultural distinctiveness into direct economic and reputational benefits (Wahid et al., 2025).

The single instance of paid Talempong lessons and hands-on practice observed in Lima Puluh Kota is a particularly important finding because it demonstrates a latent demand for active, participatory engagement with Talempong beyond mere passive spectatorship. This finding is consistent with broader music tourism research showing that tourist motivation is increasingly driven by a desire for authentic, in-depth engagement with local traditions rather than mere passive observation (Mazlan, Abdullah, Hashim, & Wahid, 2025; Wahid et al., 2025), and suggests that expanding structured, participatory Talempong experiences short workshops, guided instrument-making demonstrations, or supervised ensemble participation is an underutilized opportunity to simultaneously increase tourism revenue and strengthen cultural transmission, as teaching visitors requires performers and craftspeople to actively rearticulate and strengthen their own knowledge of the tradition.

Empowerment Mechanisms in Comparative Perspective

The contrast between the Lima Pulu Kota site, where structured nagari facilitation and collective fee negotiations resulted in a strong sense of actor ownership, and the Tanah Datar site, where informal arrangements based on personal networks resulted in lower transparency and weaker collective agency, provides direct empirical support for the theoretical distinction between participation and empowerment articulated in the community-based tourism literature: mere involvement in tourism activities does not guarantee that a community gains meaningful control over how that involvement is structured or rewarded (Gutierrez, 2023). This finding also parallels the evolution of empowerment described in the Gunungkidul creative economy case study, where communities in more institutionally mature tourism villages (comparable to Lima Pulu Kota in this study) exercise greater agency as subjects of development than communities in the earlier stages of tourism development (Rusnarasyid et al., 2026).

The three enabling factors identified in this study—active village government facilitation, an organized Pokdarwis institutional structure, and social capital among group members—are highly consistent with the enabling factors for community empowerment identified in the national review of sustainable tourism in Indonesia, which also emphasized government policy, institutional presence, and social capital as determining variables (Muda, 2025; Rusnarasyid et al., 2026). Similarly, the three barriers identified here digital marketing capacity, capital constraints for instrument production, and weak coordination between cultural actors and tourism management reflect barriers documented throughout the broader Indonesian community-based tourism literature, including digital literacy gaps and weak institutional coordination (Muda, 2025; Rusnarasyid et al., 2026). This convergence suggests that Talempong's empowerment challenges are not unique, but rather exemplify a general pattern affecting the development of creative economy tourism in Indonesia, to which Talempong's specific transmission vulnerabilities (an aging artisan base, oral-only tuning knowledge, and an unsustainable instrument-making economy) are added. This has important practical implications: interventions designed for empowering Indonesian tourism villages in general (digital marketing training, capital access schemes, institutional coordination mechanisms) are likely necessary but insufficient for Talempong specifically, as they do not address the intangible knowledge transmission barriers unique to that instrument. Therefore, complementary interventions specific to Talempong, such as structured internship subsidies or documented knowledge archives, will be needed alongside general empowerment programs.

Overall, this discussion suggests that Talempong revitalization through tourism is most likely to be successful when three conditions identified in the literature and current findings are simultaneously met: cultural authenticity is preserved through community control over adaptation decisions (Nursyirwan et al., 2025; Wahid et al., 2025), the position of tourism shifts from generic amalgamation toward differentiated, participatory product design (Mazlan, Abdullah, Hashim, Wahid, et al., 2025; Syafrini et al., 2026), and empowerment is pursued through structural mechanisms of collective negotiation, institutional facilitation, and transparent fee arrangements rather than relying on informal arrangements and personal networks that tend to concentrate benefits unequally (Gutierrez, 2023; Rusnarasyid et al., 2026). These three conditions collectively form the basis for the practical recommendations offered in the concluding section.

5. Conclusion

This study examines Talempong, the traditional bronze percussion ensemble of the Minangkabau people of West Sumatra, as a potential cultural tourism attraction and creative economy instrument, and identifies strategies for its revitalization and empowerment of the community that preserves it. Three key findings emerge. First, Talempong remains an actively practiced but structurally vulnerable tradition: active groups have declined substantially since the 1970s, the artisan base is aging with minimal apprenticeship intake, and the economy of bronze instrument making is becoming increasingly unsustainable, although the community has begun to adopt adaptive responses including diatonic tuning, digital dissemination, and school-based youth transmission programs. Second, Talempong is currently positioned within nagari tourism primarily as an integrated, general welcome performance, rather than as a specific and distinct attraction, which limits its ability to garner visitor recognition and premium value, although observed examples of paid Talempong lessons and hands-on practice indicate a clear latent demand for greater participatory engagement. Third, the creative economic benefits of Talempong currently flow through four channels: performance fees, instrument making and repair, informal music education, and digital content, but the true level of empowerment experienced by performers and artisans depends largely on whether nagari governance provides structured facilitation and transparent, collectively negotiated arrangements, rather than leaving tourism opportunities to informal personal networks.

These findings support the argument that Talempong-based tourism can meaningfully revitalize cultural practices and strengthen community livelihoods, but only if done through a synthesis of cultural authenticity, differentiated market positioning, and structural empowerment mechanisms, rather than through any one element in isolation. Comparative discussions with Angklung and Kolintang further suggest that the current lack of development of Talempong as a tourism product reflects a lack of strategic branding and institutional investment rather than inherent limitations of the tradition itself, suggesting that a viable path towards a more prominent role for Talempong in West Sumatran cultural tourism is certainly achievable.

Based on these findings, this study offers three practical implications. For village governments and tourism groups (Pokdarwis), Talempong should be managed and marketed as a distinct and distinctive cultural product, rather than simply a common environmental feature, with a more participatory format and hands on practice, similar to the learning based model observed in Lima Puluh Kota. For regional tourism and creative economy institutions, specific support schemes for Talempong artisans, potentially including subsidized apprenticeship programs or documented knowledge archives of refinement, are needed to address barriers to the transmission of specific intangible knowledge that cannot be addressed by general village tourism empowerment programs. For the performer and artisan communities themselves, the establishment of collective bargaining structures or cooperatives for negotiating performance fees, following the more empowering model observed in Lima Puluh Kota compared to the informal network model observed in Tanah Datar, is likely to yield more equitable and sustainable outcomes than relying on individual informal arrangements.

This study has several limitations. Its qualitative case study design, while appropriate for the exploratory purposes pursued, limits the generalizability of its findings beyond the three research sites in West Sumatra; quantitative or mixed-methods research in a larger sample of nagari (village) would be valuable to test the prevalence of the patterns identified

here. The relatively short observation period also limits the ability to assess seasonal variations in tourism demand and its impact on Talempong performance frequency and revenues. Future research could expand on this study by conducting a longitudinal analysis of Talempong transmission and tourism integration over several years, by developing and testing *branding* and product development interventions specific to Talempong modeled on the Angklung and Kolintang comparison discussed, or by conducting a comparative study of Talempong alongside other endangered Indonesian gong-chime ensembles to develop a more general framework for instrument-specific musical heritage tourism.

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