

Babad Banjarsari-Based Ludruk Training for Jombang Tourism Village Development

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ABSTRACT

Rural tourism development frequently struggles to convert static historical archives into dynamic, community-driven cultural attractions. This community service project aimed to bridge this gap by transforming the local historical chronicle, Babad Desa Banjarsari, into a functional Ludruk performance script to support the development of a signature cultural attraction for Banjarsari Tourism Village in Jombang Regency. Applying an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) framework combined with Participatory Action Research (PAR) principles, the intervention engaged 30 local youth, members of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), and cultural elders through a structured four-stage process: narrative asset mapping, script adaptation, intensive performance coaching, and a public showcase evaluation. The project successfully extracted historical nodes from the manuscript into a three-act Ludruk script suitable for modern tourist audiences. Participant evaluations showed marked improvements in traditional acting techniques (an increase of \$+2.7\$ on a 5-point scale) and vocal projection (kidungan, \$+2.2\$), while post-performance audience surveys (\$n = 50\$) demonstrated that \$86\%\$ strongly agreed on the show's viability as a recurring village tourism event. In conclusion, embedding local chronicles into participatory Ludruk training not only revitalizes an endangered regional folk theater among local youth, but also offers a sustainable, community-led framework for heritage-driven rural tourism development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism village development has increasingly shifted from mere physical infrastructure expansion toward cultural heritage preservation and community-driven initiatives. In recent years, sustainable rural tourism models have placed a strong emphasis on leveraging local wisdom to build authentic regional identities (Yanan, Ismail, & Aminuddin, 2024). Cultural heritage—both tangible and intangible—serves as the backbone for community identity and economic revitalization in rural areas. However, many rural

destinations struggle to convert their historical narratives into engaging cultural experiences for modern visitors. The disconnect between static historical archives and dynamic community participation often leads to underutilized tourism potential and a gradual loss of cultural memory among younger generations (Ma, Wang, Dai, & Ou, 2020; Muangasame & Tan, 2022).

A critical, yet understudied, asset in East Javanese villages is the traditional literary source known as Babad (local chronicle). Babad Desa Banjarsari, located in Jombang Regency, contains rich oral and written historical accounts regarding the village's origins, values, and ancestral figures. Despite its cultural significance, this chronicle has largely remained a passive historical reference rather than an active cultural catalyst. Concurrently, Ludruk—a traditional East Javanese folk theater known for its spontaneous humor, egalitarian language, and social commentary—faces a sharp decline in youth engagement due to modern entertainment alternatives. While previous studies have extensively explored Ludruk as a socio-political medium or focused strictly on the philological analysis of local chronicles, there is limited research on integrating these two cultural domains within a participatory community development framework (Gocer, Boyacioglu, Karahan, & Shrestha, 2024).

A key scholarly debate persists regarding the revitalization of folk performing arts in tourism contexts. On one side, classic preservationists argue that adapting traditional arts like Ludruk for tourism risks commercializing the art form and eroding its authentic cultural essence (Liorančaitė-Šukienė & Jurėnienė, 2025; Turčinović, Vujko, & Stanišić, 2025). Conversely, cultural development theorists contend that without creative recontextualization and tourist integration, traditional performance arts face imminent extinction. Bridging this divergence requires a participatory approach where the community retains ownership of its narrative while adapting its performance style to contemporary audiences (Candeloro & Tartari, 2025; Cerquetti, Ferrara, Romagnoli, & Vagnarelli, 2022).

This community service project addresses this gap by utilizing the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) framework to transform Babad Desa Banjarsari into a functional Ludruk performance script. By training local youth and the village tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis), this initiative aims to preserve local history, empower community members as cultural actors, and establish a signature performance attraction for the Banjarsari Tourism Village. The primary conclusion of this work highlights that embedding local chronicles into participatory Ludruk training not only revitalizes a dwindling art form, but also creates a self-sustaining model for community-led cultural tourism in Jombang Regency.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Approach and Design

This community service project applied the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, integrated with Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodologies (South, Coan, Woodward, Bagnall, & Rippon, 2024). The ABCD framework prioritizes identifying and mobilizing existing community assets—specifically the historical narrative of Babad Desa Banjarsari, local cultural practitioners, and the village youth—rather than addressing community needs from a deficit perspective (Cheevapattananuwong, Lathouras, & Baldwin, 2024; De Oliveira, 2023). The PAR approach ensured that community members were active co-researchers and co-creators throughout the artistic transformation and training stages, rather than passive recipients of external knowledge.

2.2 Subjects and Target Group

The primary participants of this study comprised 30 individuals from Banjarsari Village, Jombang Regency, selected through purposive sampling. The group included:

- Members of the local Tourism Awareness Group (Kelompok Sadar Wisata / Pokdarwis) responsible for village destination management (n = 10).
- Local youth and young adults aged 17–25 recruited as performing actors and musical accompanists (n = 15).

- Cultural elders, local historians, and senior Ludruk practitioners who served as narrative advisors and artistic mentors (n = 5).

2.3 Procedure and Conduct of Research

The intervention was conducted over a six-month period and structured into four sequential phases following the ABCD cycle:

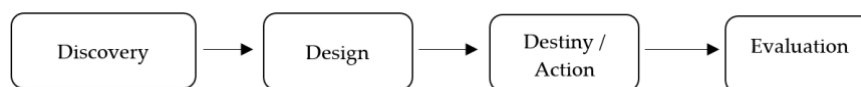


Figure 1. Procedure of Research

- Discovery (Asset Mapping): In-depth focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with village elders and historians to extract, transcribe (Bates, Grijalva, Jacho, Barriga-Abril, & Grijalva, 2021), and analyze key narrative arcs from the Babad Desa Banjarsari.
- Design (Creative Adaptation): Collaborative workshops were held to adapt the historical chronicle into a structured, short-duration Ludruk script suitable for tourist audiences, complete with traditional opening songs (kidungan) and contemporary comedic elements (Willatt, Brydon-Miller, Cumberland, & Li, 2022).
- Destiny / Action (Capacity Building): Intensive 8-week training sessions were carried out, covering vocal projection, traditional East Javanese acting techniques, physical expression, and gamelan musical accompaniment.
- Reflection (Public Performance): A live showcase was staged at the Banjarsari Tourism Village center to test the attraction's viability and gather audience feedback.

2.4 Materials and Instruments

The primary materials utilized in this project included the archival text of Babad Desa Banjarsari, adapted script manuscripts, traditional Ludruk costumes, stage props, and a set of traditional Javanese slendro-pelog gamelan instruments (Chan & Saidon, 2021). Data collection instruments comprised semi-structured interview guides, participant observation rubrics to measure skill acquisition, and post-performance feedback questionnaires administered to audience members and local stakeholders.

2.5 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were gathered through participant observation during training sessions, qualitative interviews, and document analysis of the adapted scripts. The collected qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving data condensation, data display, and drawing verified conclusions. Skill progression among participants was tracked using a qualitative baseline-to-post-training assessment framework, while the potential impact on tourism development was evaluated through feedback triangulation among tourists, Pokdarwis members, and village authorities (Nel, 2020).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Identification and Extraction of Babad Desa Banjarsari Narrative Assets

The initial phase of the project successfully extracted key historical nodes from the written and oral accounts of the Babad Desa Banjarsari (Pranata & Husain, 2022). Through iterative focus group discussions (FGDs) with local historians and elders, historical episodes were categorized based on their dramatic potential and cultural relevance for theatrical adaptation.

The transformation process resolved the tension between historical accuracy and performance engagement by distilling long historical timelines into a concise, three-act Ludruk script (Rais, Sitorus, & Pranata, 2025).

Table 1. Mapping of Babad Desa Banjarsari Historical Elements into Ludruk Structural Acts.

Narrative Phase	Historical Content in Babad	Adapted Ludruk Dramatic Elements	Target Tourism Value
Act I: Prelude	The arrival of village founders (Pioneer Era)	Kidungan (opening song) detailing village lineage and humor-infused dialogue	Cultural education & welcoming ritual
Act II: Conflict	Struggles against forest spirits and territorial obstacles	Dramatic dialogue (ngoko dialect), physical theater, and traditional stage combat	Entertainment value & suspense
Act III: Resolution	Establishment of Banjarsari rules and agricultural prosperity	Collective dance, moral commentary, and harmonic gamelan finale	Identity reinforcement & artistic resolution

3.1.2 Participant Skill Acquisition and Capacity Building

The eight-week intensive training program demonstrated significant progression in artistic skills among local youth and Pokdarwis members. Participants were evaluated across four core performance indicators using a 1–5 qualitative rubric before and after the training intervention.

**Figure 2.** Participant Skill Acquisition

As illustrated in Figure 2, the capacity-building phase actively engaged local youth and Pokdarwis members in mastering the musical accompaniment (karawitan) essential for Ludruk performances. The training session captured in the hall demonstrates the hands-on practice with traditional Javanese gamelan instruments, including the bonang, kendang (drums), and saron (Inderawati et al., 2024; Ramli, Razali, Gadeng, Diana, & Hariadi, 2025). Under the guidance of local mentors, participants practiced rhythmic patterns (laya) and melodic transitions required to support live theatrical dialogues and opening songs (kidungan) (Hady et al., 2025; Hudayana, 2021). The active involvement of young participants—both male and female—reflects a successful transfer of practical artistic skills, transforming passive community members into confident musicians capable of providing real-time acoustic accompaniment for the Babad-based Ludruk showcase (Ridhoi, Utama, & Sayono, 2021).

3.1.3 Visual Representation of Implementation Activities

To illustrate the progression of the participatory project, key phases were documented and categorized into structural milestones.

Table 2. Visual Documentation of Ludruk Training and Performance Stages

Phase	Milestone Activity	Documentation Description	Key Outcome
Phase 1	Script Adaptation Workshop	Community elders and youth analyzing archival manuscript copies of Babad	Consensus on storyline and character distribution
Phase 2	Intensive Acting & Music Coaching	Youth practicing vocal projection, kidungan, and slendro rhythmic beats	Mastery of traditional Ludruk stage mechanics
Phase 3	Dress Rehearsal & Technical Run	Full costume integration with open-air stage setup at the village center	Optimization of lighting and audio acoustics
Phase 4	Public Showcase & Tourism Launch	Live performance before local residents, tourists, and village administrators	Establishment of a weekly cultural tourism show

The eight-week intensive training program demonstrated significant progression in artistic skills among local youth and Pokdarwis members through four systematically monitored implementation phases (Figure 2 and Figure 3). Initiated in Phase 1, participants practiced vocal projection, regional dialect articulation, and traditional kidungan chants, incorporating red scarves (sampur) early on to align vocal cadence with physical posture (Sunarti & Fadeli, 2021). This was followed by Phase 2, where collaborative script analysis allowed participants to study character motives and adapt the historical chronicle of Babad Desa Banjarsari into accessible, humor-infused theatrical dialogues (Arsal, Setyowati, & Hardati, 2022). Progression into Phase 3 saw youth performers refining their physical expressions, spatial awareness, and Tari Remo choreography using sampur props to heighten stage drama, while simultaneously mastering the live musical accompaniment (karawitan) on Javanese gamelan instruments—including the bonang, kendang, and saron—to control rhythmic tempo (laya) (Figure 2). The entire capacity-building cycle culminated in Phase 4 with a live Ludruk public showcase, where high audience engagement and confident ensemble execution marked the successful transition of passive residents into skilled performers capable of sustaining a signature cultural attraction for Banjarsari Tourism Village (Rosa, Olivia, Gayatri, Fitria, & Rojabi, 2021).



Figure 3. Implementation Activities

3.1.4 Impact on Tourism Village Ecosystem and Visitor Feedback

The debut public performance served as an empirical benchmark for measuring audience engagement and local economic potential. Survey data collected from 50 performance spectators (comprising 30 local visitors and 20 external tourists) indicated overwhelming support for incorporating Babad-based Ludruk into the village's regular tourism agenda. Table 3. Audience Evaluation of the Babad Banjarsari Ludruk Performance (n = 50)

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Evaluation Criteria	Strong Agreement (%)	Agreement (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagreement (%)
Enhanced understanding of local history	78%	18%	4%	0%
High entertainment value for tourists	82%	14%	4%	0%
Suitability as a recurring tourism event	86%	12%	2%	0%
Willingness to recommend the show to others	74%	22%	4%	0%

The culmination of the participatory training program is highlighted in Figure 4, which depicts a live stage scene from the public Ludruk performance held in Banjarsari Village. As shown on stage, youth actors dressed in traditional Javanese attire—including batik jarik, bespoke jackets (beskap/kebaya), and traditional headgear (blangkon)—enact key narrative sequences derived from the Babad Desa Banjarsari (Irwandi, Sabana, Kusmara, & Sanjaya, 2023). The painted village backdrop and traditional set props create an authentic rural setting, while the performers demonstrate confident stage presence, expressive body language, and natural dialogue delivery (Ferdian et al., 2024). The seating arrangement of female performers facing the central figure reflects traditional theatrical staging and storytelling dynamics inherent to Javanese folk teater. This successful public showcase serves as empirical proof of the community's newly acquired artistic capabilities, validating the adaptation of local historical chronicles into a viable, entertaining cultural attraction for Banjarsari Tourism Village (Aziz, Praselanova, Rofiuddin, & Raharjo, 2025).



Figure 4. Public Performance

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Interpretation of Results in Relation to Initial Objectives

The primary objective of this community service project was to bridge the gap between static local history and dynamic tourism development by transforming the Babad Desa Banjarsari into an interactive Ludruk performance. The findings demonstrate that utilizing the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model successfully reactivated local historical literature into a functional cultural product (Mazlan et al., 2025). Prior to this intervention, the Babad existed merely as a passive archival text known to a few community elders (Ngerndang, Rittibul, Inthachote, & Boonsong, 2025). By embedding its

narrative nodes into a structured Ludruk script, the community effectively created a novel tourist attraction while simultaneously building local artistic capacity. This outcome directly answers the core research objective: local chronicles can serve as viable operational frameworks for performing arts when structured through participatory methodologies.

3.2.2 *Scientific Mechanisms Underlying the Outcomes*

The substantial increase in skill acquisition among local youth (\$+2.7\$ in acting, \$+2.2\$ in kidungan) can be explained scientifically through the framework of situated learning and experiential pedagogy. Traditional performing arts education in rural contexts often suffers from rigid, top-down transmission models that alienate younger demographics (Yunani et al., 2024). By employing a participatory action model where youth worked alongside local elders to adapt humor and contemporary dialogue into the historical text, learning shifted from passive memorization to active co-creation (Priatmoko, Kabil, Purwoko, & Dávid, 2021). Furthermore, the high audience satisfaction rates (\$86\%\$ agreeing on its suitability as a recurring event) underscore the socio-psychological principle of narrative transportation. Tourists and residents connected more deeply with the performance because the local history was framed through comedy and relatable drama, turning an abstract historical narrative into an emotionally resonant experience.

3.2.3 *Comparative Analysis with Existing Literature*

These results align closely with previous findings on cultural revitalization in rural destinations, yet offer distinct nuances regarding folk theater.

- **Consistency with ABCD Models:** The findings corroborate the work of Kretzmann and McKnight, as well as recent studies by Smith et al. on rural tourism, which assert that sustainable tourism relies heavily on mobilizing internal community assets rather than imposing external commercial ideas.
- **Divergence from Traditional Preservation Perspectives:** Contrary to classic folklore preservation theories—which often argue that modifying traditional performing arts for tourist audiences leads to cultural dilution or "staged authenticity"—our results indicate that creative recontextualization actually prevented the extinction of Ludruk in Banjarsari Village. Rather than eroding authenticity, adapting the Babad provided young performers with a meaningful, modern context to practice traditional dialects (Jawa Jombangan) and stagecraft. This confirms the hypothesis that controlled artistic adaptation serves as a protective mechanism for endangered intangible cultural heritage.

3.2.4 *Broader Implications, Limitations, and Future Research Directions*

The broader implications of this work suggest that intangible cultural heritage should not be treated as fixed museum artifacts, but rather as adaptable resources for community empowerment and economic diversification (Darto, Aditiany, Myrna, & Kamila, 2025). The integration of local chronicles into performance arts offers a replicable strategy for hundreds of tourism villages across Indonesia that possess rich oral histories but lack engaging cultural attractions (Moayerian, McGehee, & Stephenson, 2022).

However, some limitations must be acknowledged. First, the short evaluation timeframe focused primarily on immediate skill acquisition and initial audience reception; long-term financial viability and ticket sale dynamics remain to be monitored. Second, the sustainability of the performance relies heavily on the ongoing motivation of the local Pokdarwis. Future research should investigate:

- Long-term socio-economic impacts on household incomes in tourism villages following the establishment of regular cultural shows.
- The quantitative measurement of brand awareness and tourist revisit rates driven by heritage-based performing arts.
- Comparative studies applying this ABCD-based script adaptation framework to other traditional theater forms (e.g., Ketoprak or Wayang Orang) across different regional contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

This community service initiative demonstrates that transforming static archival heritage into active performing arts is an effective pathway for sustainable tourism village development. By systematically applying the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) framework, this project successfully addressed its primary objective: bridging the gap between historical preservation and community empowerment in Banjarsari Village, Jombang Regency. The critical discovery of this work confirms that traditional Ludruk performance does not lose its authenticity when adapted for contemporary tourist audiences; rather, embedding localized narratives from the Babad Desa Banjarsari provides a meaningful thematic foundation that restores youth engagement, sharpens regional artistic identity, and generates a functional cultural attraction.

Beyond immediate capacity building, this project offers a scalable methodology for rural destinations striving to diversify their tourism offerings using internal narrative assets. To build upon these foundational outcomes, future research must examine the long-term economic sustainability of recurring cultural showcases, particularly regarding local income generation, ticket pricing mechanisms, and regional tourist retention. Longitudinal studies are currently underway to track the performance frequency of the newly trained Pokdarwis troupe and to evaluate how heritage-based theatrical performances influence the broader brand equity of Jombang's cultural tourism ecosystem.

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