

The Role of Social Media Exposure and Cultural Knowledge in Shaping Public Interest in Reog Ponorogo

Adinda Putri Wachyudi^{1*}, Abdul Basit²

^{1,2}Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang

*¹Correspondence Author: adindaputriw.16@gmail.com

Abstract

Reog Ponorogo faces preservation challenges in the digital era, especially among the younger generation. This study aims to examine the role of social media exposure and cultural knowledge in shaping public interest in Reog Ponorogo culture. This quantitative explanatory research surveyed 100 respondents aged 15-25 years in Tangerang Regency using an online questionnaire. The collected data were specifically analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis. The test results prove that social media exposure and cultural knowledge, both partially and simultaneously, have a positive and significant effect on public interest. The coefficient of determination analysis confirms that the integration of these two variables explains 53.6% of the variance in public interest in preserving Reog Ponorogo. In conclusion, digital exposure and cultural understanding positively predict public interest. This study recommends regular socialization regarding healthy social media usage and cultural education as a strategic effort to preserve Indonesian culture.

Keywords: Social Media, Reog Ponorogo, Cultural Preservation, Multiple Linear Regression, Youth Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Reog Ponorogo is a traditional performing art that serves as a cultural identity and a source of pride for the people of Ponorogo (Dharojah et al., 2024). Historically, the preservation and transmission of this cultural heritage relied heavily on direct physical interaction, live performances in open public spaces, and oral traditions passed down from one generation to another (Astuti & Sabardila, 2024). The sacred values and philosophical meanings embedded within Reog Ponorogo were understood through direct emotional and visual experiences, giving this traditional art form strong roots within agrarian communities (Sudarto et al., 2024). However, these conventional preservation methods have significant limitations in terms of geographical reach and the speed of information dissemination beyond their communities of origin (Bekti, 2022).

In the current era of digitalization, the landscape of cultural preservation has undergone substantial disruption, resulting in changes in public interest, particularly among younger generations, toward traditional cultural practices (Gunagraha & Kholilurrahman, 2024). Today's youth spend a considerable amount of time in digital environments and are continuously exposed to the massive influence of global culture. Consequently, local traditional arts are often marginalized and perceived as less relevant to modern lifestyles (Amalia et al., 2025; Rayhan et al., 2025). This contemporary phenomenon creates an urgent need for traditional cultural expressions to adapt to emerging communication platforms; otherwise, they risk becoming obsolete and losing future generations of supporters and practitioners (Fibiona et al., 2024).

The dynamics of cultural preservation cannot be separated from the high level of digital participation in Indonesia. According to DataReportal (2024), visually oriented social

media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok dominate media consumption among young people, making them primary channels for accessing information, including cultural content. This technological transformation positions exposure as a crucial starting point, where the intensity of psychological stimulus reception can increase audience familiarity with a particular object, consistent with the repeated exposure effect (Sulistya et al., 2025; Setyo, 2024).

Furthermore, the development of the digital communication ecosystem has transformed social media from a mere information dissemination channel into a participatory space that enables individuals to engage in discussions and collectively construct meanings. This condition positions social media as a strategic medium for promoting cultural preservation discourse within the digital public sphere (Sari & Basit, 2020). In addition, the characteristics of social media, which integrate visual, audio, and interactive elements, allow cultural values to be presented in forms that are more adaptive to the preferences and expectations of younger audiences. Consequently, messages related to cultural preservation, including the sacred values embodied in Reog Ponorogo, can be communicated in a manner that is more engaging, persuasive, and easier for young generations to understand (Basit et al., 2022).

Theoretically, this study is grounded in a modified version of Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory, adapted to the context of adopting and transmitting local cultural values through digital platforms (Maskurin & Azzahra, 2023). Conceptually, social media has been shown to increase visibility and public participation in preserving Reog performances through digital publication and dissemination (Dipoyono & Imama, 2023; Geovani & Diantama, 2023). Nevertheless, the transmission of local cultural knowledge within cyberspace presents unique challenges. A paradox emerges in which understandings formed through social media are often partial and fragmented (Adi et al., 2024). Many young people are capable of recognizing cultural visual attributes but do not fully comprehend their ritualistic and philosophical meanings, thereby creating the risk of cultural desacralization (Tsaltsabilla et al., 2025; Susanto & Pratama, 2022). In contrast, the accumulation of social media exposure accompanied by comprehensive cultural knowledge is believed to foster affective and conative public interest (Priambodo, 2024; Fitriyani & Rachmawati, 2024).

Previous studies have extensively examined the effectiveness of social media in supporting cultural preservation efforts in general (Tobing et al., 2024; Rizal et al., 2025). However, research specifically investigating the simultaneous interaction between social media exposure and cultural knowledge in shaping youth interest within urban contexts, particularly among audiences who lack direct physical access to the place of origin of a cultural tradition, remains limited (Maskun et al., 2023). This gap constitutes the primary scientific novelty of the present study. Unlike previous studies that tend to position digital platforms merely as passive showcases, this research conceptualizes the digital ecosystem as a communal-virtual space capable of overcoming geographical barriers in the transmission and preservation of traditional arts.

Based on the research problem concerning the extent to which digital exposure and cultural understanding can predict increased interest among urban audiences, this study hypothesizes that both variables exert significant partial and simultaneous effects. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to empirically examine the influence of social media use

and cultural knowledge on enhancing public interest in the traditional art of Reog Ponorogo in the digital era.

METHOD

This study employed an explanatory research design using a quantitative approach to examine the causal relationships among variables. The target population consisted of individuals aged 15–25 years residing in Tangerang Regency. A purposive sampling technique was applied using specific criteria, namely respondents within the designated age range who resided outside Ponorogo Regency, the place of origin of Reog Ponorogo. This criterion was intentionally established to evaluate the effectiveness of social media in reaching audiences who do not have direct physical access to Reog culture, thereby ensuring that any interest developed was primarily influenced by digital exposure.

Regarding sample size determination, this study followed the multivariate sampling guideline proposed by Hair et al. (as cited in Yamin & Kurniawan, 2011), which recommends a sample size ranging from five to ten times the number of questionnaire indicators. Given that the research instrument consisted of 12 indicators, the minimum recommended sample size ranged from 60 to 120 respondents. Therefore, the inclusion of 100 respondents was considered sufficiently representative and met the adequacy requirements for regression analysis.

Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (5). The research instrument was developed by adapting indicators from previous studies to measure the three main variables examined in this study, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Operationalization of Variables

Variable	Indicators	Number of Items	Adapted From
Social Media Use (X_1)	1. Frequency of content exposure 2. Visual and narrative formats 3. Interaction (likes, shares, comments)	4	Setyo (2024); Ardhani & Chairil (2025)
Cultural Knowledge (X_2)	1. Understanding of Reog history 2. Understanding of philosophical values 3. Understanding of visual attributes	4	Tsalsabilla et al. (2025); Susanto & Pratama (2022)
Public Interest (Y)	1. Emotional attraction 2. Intention to participate 3. Desire to seek further information	4	Priambodo (2024); Fitriyani & Rachmawati (2024)

Before conducting the main analysis, the research instrument was evaluated using validity and reliability tests. Construct validity was assessed using the Pearson Correlation test, while reliability was examined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). After all questionnaire items were confirmed to be valid and reliable, the data were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Given that the analytical procedures employed in this study are widely recognized in quantitative research, the mathematical formulas are not presented explicitly in this article. Data analysis consisted of correlation analysis to ensure the absence of multicollinearity and to examine the preliminary linear relationships among variables, followed by multiple linear regression analysis. Hypothesis testing was conducted through partial significance tests (t-tests), simultaneous significance tests (F-tests), and coefficient of determination (R^2) analysis to determine the extent to which the independent variables explained variation in the dependent variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Primary data collection through an online questionnaire reached 100 respondents who met the purposive sampling criteria, namely young individuals aged 15–25 years residing in Tangerang Regency (outside the region of origin of Reog Ponorogo). The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondent Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	15–25 Years	100	100%
Gender	Male	60	60%
	Female	40	40%
Last Educational Level	Senior High School/Equivalent	77	77%
	Undergraduate/Diploma	23	23%
Main Social Media Platform	Instagram	50	50%
	TikTok	30	30%
	YouTube	20	20%

Source: Processed Research Data, 2026

Before testing the hypotheses, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to ensure the absence of multicollinearity and to examine the strength of the initial linear relationships. The results of the analysis (Table 3) indicate a moderately strong positive correlation between Social Media Use and Public Interest (0.574), as well as a strong positive correlation between Cultural Knowledge and Public Interest (0.657). The correlation between the two independent variables (0.431) is below the threshold value of 0.80, indicating that the regression model is free from multicollinearity issues.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Matrix among Variables

Variables	Social Media (X_1)	Cultural Knowledge (X_2)	Public Interest (Y)
Social Media (X_1)	1.000	0.431	0.574
Cultural Knowledge (X_2)	0.431	1.000	0.657
Public Interest (Y)	0.574	0.657	1.000

Source: Processed Research Data, 2026

Hypothesis testing was conducted using a multiple linear regression model. For efficiency in presenting the statistical output, the summary results of the model feasibility test

(F-test), partial significance test (t-test), and coefficient of determination (R^2) are integrated into Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Multiple Linear Regression Results

Independent Variables	Regression Coefficient (B)	t-value	Significance (Sig.)	Description
Constant	-8.675	-3.777	0.000	
Social Media Use (X_1)	0.681	4.662	0.000	Significant
Cultural Knowledge (X_2)	0.751	6.557	0.000	Significant
F-value = 55.951	F-table = 3.09	Sig. = 0.000	Simultaneously Significant	
R-Square (R^2) = 0.536				

Source: Processed Research Data, 2026

The resulting regression equation $Y = -8.675 + 0.681X_1 + 0.751X_2$ indicates that every improvement in the quality of social media exposure and cultural knowledge education contributes positively to increasing audience interest. Based on Table 4, the partial significance test (t-test) demonstrates that Social Media Use (X_1) and Cultural Knowledge (X_2) each have t-values greater than the critical t-value (1.984), with significance levels of 0.000 (< 0.05). Simultaneously, the F-test reveals that both independent variables jointly influence the dependent variable, as indicated by an F-value (55.951) that is substantially higher than the critical F-value (3.09). Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.536 indicates that 53.6% of the variation in Public Interest is explained by the integration of these two variables, while the remaining 46.4% is explained by external variables outside the research model.

Based on hypothesis testing, the scientific findings of this study confirm that high levels of digital content exposure accompanied by adequate cultural understanding significantly contribute to increasing public interest in Reog Ponorogo. This phenomenon can be explained through the transformation of cultural appreciation infrastructure in the digital era. All respondents in this study were urban youth who did not have direct physical access to Reog performances in their place of origin. Consequently, visual-based platforms such as Instagram (50%) and TikTok (30%), which offer dynamic storytelling formats, have become the most representative channels for stimulating affective dimensions (interest) and conative dimensions (the intention to participate) among Generation Z audiences.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings strongly support Zajonc's (1968) Mere Exposure Theory, which states that repeated exposure to visual stimuli can reduce emotional distance and increase familiarity with cultural objects that may initially appear distant from contemporary lifestyles. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Zhang et al. (2023), who demonstrated that repeated digital exposure significantly increases audiences' intentions to engage directly with cultural heritage activities. Therefore, social media

functions not merely as a medium of information dissemination but also as a psychological bridge that connects audiences with local cultural heritage.

Although the Social Media variable (X_1) exerts a positive and significant influence, the statistical results indicate that its effect is lower than that of Cultural Knowledge, as reflected by the regression coefficient value of 0.681. This finding suggests that social media primarily serves as a visual trigger capable of attracting initial attention rather than functioning as the main determinant of deeper cultural engagement. This tendency can be explained by the characteristics of the respondents, who are entirely urban youth with Instagram and TikTok as their primary platforms. These platforms encourage rapid and brief information consumption patterns, resulting in cultural appreciation that is often limited to aesthetic and entertainment aspects.

This finding reinforces the argument of Zhang et al. (2023), who emphasized that repeated digital exposure is highly effective in generating familiarity but is insufficient on its own to transform curiosity into active participation without the support of educational content. In other words, social media is capable of creating awareness; however, awareness alone is not enough to build sustainable interest in cultural preservation.

In contrast, Cultural Knowledge (X_2) emerged as the most dominant predictor, with the highest regression coefficient value of 0.751. Empirically, this finding is highly significant because it demonstrates that Generation Z audiences are not merely attracted to visual content but also require cognitive understanding to develop a deeper sense of concern for cultural preservation. When urban audiences who have never directly interacted with Reog Ponorogo are provided with knowledge regarding its historical background, philosophical values, and symbolic attributes such as Singa Barong, the emotional attachment that develops becomes substantially stronger.

These findings directly support the study conducted by Fitriyani and Rachmawati (2024), which concluded that cultural literacy and understanding are fundamental prerequisites for Generation Z in developing preservation-oriented attitudes toward cultural heritage. The results are also in line with the findings of Maskurin and Azzahra (2023), who argued that the transmission of historical narratives and philosophical meanings is essential to ensure that Reog Ponorogo does not lose its cultural essence. Within this context, cultural knowledge functions as a cognitive anchor that prevents traditional cultural expressions from being reduced to temporary popular trends and instead transforms them into genuine cultural interest.

The findings of this study also support Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations Theory, which emphasizes that the adoption of values requires individuals to pass through the knowledge stage before progressing to the stages of decision-making and participation. The dominance of Cultural Knowledge as the strongest predictor indicates that the process of cultural value adoption through digital media cannot rely solely on visual exposure but must also be accompanied by a comprehensive understanding of the cultural content being communicated.

More broadly, the empirical findings of this study address an important gap in the literature concerning cultural preservation in the digital era. Previous studies have predominantly emphasized the role of social media as a powerful instrument for cultural preservation while paying relatively little attention to the phenomenon of cultural meaning

reduction. Under traditional systems, cultural values were transmitted communally through direct social and spiritual experiences. In contrast, algorithm-based communication systems on social media often detach cultural expressions from their historical and contextual dimensions. As a result, the visual aspects of Reog Ponorogo can easily become viral and widely disseminated, yet simultaneously risk being reduced to entertainment commodities.

The findings of this study quantitatively confirm the concept of “digital rituals” proposed by Tsaltsabilla et al. (2025), which suggests that social media can contribute to the desacralization of cultural traditions when cultural literacy is absent. Furthermore, the results strengthen the arguments of Rayhan et al. (2025) and Susanto and Pratama (2022), who maintain that intensive social media exposure without adequate cultural education may accelerate the erosion of sacred cultural values. Therefore, this study offers a new perspective by demonstrating that social media functions most effectively when positioned as a dissemination catalyst supported by a strong foundation of cultural knowledge.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, the sample consisted of only 100 respondents from the urban area of Tangerang Regency, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings to broader populations of Indonesian youth. Second, the quantitative approach relied heavily on self-reported questionnaire responses, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Third, the cross-sectional design captured respondents’ perceptions at only one point in time and was therefore unable to identify fluctuations in public interest resulting from changes in social media algorithms and trends.

Based on these limitations, future studies are encouraged to develop this line of research through several strategic approaches. First, future research may incorporate additional variables, such as cultural influencer credibility or parasocial interaction, as mediating or moderating variables in explaining the relationship between social media exposure and public interest. Second, qualitative and mixed-method approaches are recommended to explore how sacred cultural values are internalized by young audiences when consuming digital content. Third, comparative studies involving urban audiences and communities residing in the cultural region of origin, such as Ponorogo, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of geographical proximity in shaping emotional attachment to local cultural heritage in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

This study empirically demonstrates that social media use and cultural knowledge have a positive and significant influence on shaping public interest in the traditional art of Reog Ponorogo, with cultural knowledge literacy acting as the strongest and most dominant predictor. This study contributes to the literature on cultural communication by extending the scope of Diffusion of Innovations Theory, emphasizing that extensive digital exposure carries the risk of cultural desacralization if it is not supported by a strong foundation of cultural knowledge serving as the audience’s cognitive anchor.

The findings imply that local governments, art practitioners, and content creators should design digital campaign strategies that do not merely exploit visual aesthetics for the sake of virality, but rather integrate educational historical storytelling into their communication efforts. As an empirical study specifically examining the interaction between digital exposure and literacy-based understanding among urban audiences geographically isolated from the

cultural region of origin, this research opens the way for a new paradigm of “virtual-communal” cultural preservation.

Ultimately, technology in the cyber era should be positioned solely as a medium of transmission. Genuine cultural preservation will always depend on a deep philosophical understanding firmly rooted in the hearts and minds of future generations.

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