UTILIZING WHATSAPP GROUPS AS VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LOCAL CULTURE IN WEST LAMPUNG

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Abstract

This scholarly discourse endeavors to elucidate the application of WhatsApp groups as virtual communities within the context of cultural preservation strugles in West Lampung. In the contemporary digital milieu, communication technologies, including WhatsApp, have garnered prominence as conduits for interpersonal interaction and the dissemination of information. This treatise is underpinned by an empirical investigation conducted through a qualitative research paradigm, wherein in-depth interviews and observational techniques served as the principal modes of data acquisition.

The subjects of this inquiry comprised denizens of the indigenous populace in West Lampung, who were active participants in WhatsApp groups expressly dedicated to communal initiatives germane to local culture. Subsequently, the amassed data underwent meticulous scrutiny to unearth discernible patterns and thematic undercurrents. The research findings incontrovertibly affirm that the harnessing of WhatsApp groups as virtual communities assumes a pivotal role in the safeguarding of indigenous heritage within the precincts of West Lampung. These digital enclaves facilitate the unfettered exchange of information, the dissemination of erudition, and the sharing of experiential insights pertaining to indigenous cultural proclivities. Furthermore, these forums afford a platform for cogent deliberations, the orchestration of collaborative aspires, and the coordination of cultural preservation activities of regional significance.

Keywords: WhatsApp Groups, Virtual Communities, Cultural Preservation.

1   INTRODUCTION

Lampung Barat, a regency situated in the Lampung Province of Indonesia, represents a region abundant in diverse local cultures. This area boasts a rich history replete with unique traditions, art, and cultural values that have been passed down from one generation to the next. The local culture reflects a strong identity and the sustainability of the Lampung Barat community (Fiqhri, 2021).

The cultural milieu of Lampung Barat encapsulates diverse facets of community life, encompassing language, music, dance, traditional rituals, and customary observances. The Lampung language, marked by its regional nuances across sub-ethnic divisions, stands as a crucial element in the construction of this cultural identity. Traditional ceremonies, including

customary nuptials and funeral processions, assume profound significance in the lives of the inhabitants (Hayati et al., 2022) of Lampung Barat .

Notwithstanding the opulence of indigenous culture in Lampung Barat, the contemporary epoch of globalization and modernization introduces formidable challenges to its conservation (Dery et al., 2023). The pervasive influence of global culture, concurrent with societal transformations and economic shifts, imperils the preservation of traditional cultural values and practices. Consequently, the comprehension of how information technology, exemplified by WhatsApp groups, can serve as an instrument for the conservation and reinvigoration of the rich local culture of Lampung Barat assumes critical importance. This study seeks to expound the central role of WhatsApp groups within this context and delineate how this platform may metamorphose into a virtual community buttressing the preservation of the region's invaluable cultural heritage (Mak et al., 2022).

The preservation of indigenous culture plays a crucial role in the perpetuation of community identity and sustainability (Maspul & Almalki, 2023a). Local cultural identity functions as a repository of historical lineage, cherished values, deeply ingrained beliefs, and the unique heritage that defines a community. In an era where the drift toward cultural uniformity is increasingly conspicuous due to globalization, the conservation of local culture ascends in significance. This is attributable to the fact that local culture is not solely a reflection of a community's identity but also serves as the bedrock for the cultivation of solidarity and pride among its members. Consequently, the preservation of local culture carries far-reaching implications, transcending identity to impinge on social, economic, and environmental sustainability (Schreer, 2023).

The preservation of local culture in the era of globalization has burgeoned into an increasingly pressing concern in the ambit of social and cultural development. Globalization, marked by the proliferation of information, technology, and global interconnectedness, has wrought profound changes in human lifestyles. However, the impacts of globalization occasionally pose challenges to the preservation of local culture (Andrew, 2023). Indigenous cultures, steeped in age-old traditions, enduring values, and distinctive identities, often confront formidable threats emanating from the forces of globalization.

Globalization has spawned issues such as waning interest among the younger generation in comprehending and inheriting their local culture. This phenomenon can be attributed to the

predominance of global culture in realms like social media, entertainment, and contemporary lifestyles. Consequently, the challenge lies in igniting the younger generation's enthusiasm for preserving and perpetuating their local culture (I. B. R. Putra et al., 2023).

Moreover, the transformations in the lifestyles of modern, urban populations may also imperil the existence of local culture. The ascent of urbanization, the omnipresence of global languages, and shifts in livelihoods have the potential to sideline longstanding local cultural traditions. In the age of globalization, the preservation of local culture necessitates an innovative and sustainable approach to guarantee the endurance of cultural values and identity in a manner that remains pertinent. In this regard, the collaborative engagement of education, communities, and governmental institutions is indispensable to comprehend and tackle these challenges.

Research exploring the role of information technology in the preservation of local culture stands as a pertinent subject in the context of globalization and contemporary technological advances. Globalization has engendered significant challenges to the sustenance of local culture, characterized by the looming specter of cultural uniformity facilitated by the infiltration of global culture. Information technology, specifically the internet and social media, harbors the potential to exert a substantial influence on the preservation and dissemination of local culture, including the utilization of prevalent social media platforms like WhatsApp, replete with its group functionality.

The advent of WhatsApp groups as a communication platform constitutes a principal facet in the investigation of the role of information technology in the preservation of local culture. WhatsApp has cemented its status as one of the world's most extensively utilized communication platforms, boasting millions of daily active users. Consequently, harnessing WhatsApp as a conduit for the preservation of local culture carries the promise of reaching a wider audience and ensuring the perpetuity of cultural traditions.

One crucial aspect of this development is the use of WhatsApp groups as a space for young people in the community to engage in the preservation of culture. Young individuals familiar with information technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012) are more likely to actively participate in WhatsApp groups dedicated to preserving local culture. This is essential because involving the younger generation in preservation efforts can ensure the sustainability of local culture in the future. Thus, the development of WhatsApp group usage in the context of preserving culture

represents a significant phenomenon. It reflects the adaptation of local cultural communities to modern information technology to ensure the continuity of their culture..

The research questions to be addressed in this article will include relevant aspects of these issues, such as how the use of WhatsApp groups can facilitate efforts to preserve local culture in Lampung Barat, how users can become more actively involved in culture preservation through information technology, and how documentation and sharing of knowledge about local culture through WhatsApp groups can help maintain cultural sustainability. By identifying these issues and formulating relevant research questions, this research is expected to provide valuable insights into preserving local culture in Lampung Barat in the modern era.

2   METHODOLOGY

This article is underpinned by research undertaken employing a qualitative methodology to conduct an in-depth exploration of the utilization of WhatsApp groups as a virtual community for the preservation of local culture in Lampung Barat. The selection of the qualitative approach is rooted in its capacity to facilitate an in-depth investigation into the nuanced and contextual facets of this phenomenon. Qualitative research methodology serves as a means for the collection of descriptive and narrative data.

The ensuing dataset is subjected to thematic analysis, a method aptly suited for unearthing meaning and significance within qualitative data. Researchers, in the process of thematic analysis, engage in data coding whereby they identify recurring patterns, conceptual frameworks, and essential issues discerned through interviews and observations pertaining to the use of WhatsApp groups in the context of preserving local culture.

These emergent themes are subsequently subjected to a comprehensive analysis to elucidate their implications vis-à-vis the role of WhatsApp groups as a virtual community in the conservation of local culture within Lampung Barat. By delving into the themes and elucidating the inherent meanings within the dataset, this research strives to furnish profound insights into the multifaceted role of WhatsApp groups as a virtual community space dedicated to the preservation and safeguarding of the cultural heritage of Lampung Barat.

3   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1   WhatsApp Groups and Other Media in the Preservation of Local Culture

The utilization of WhatsApp groups as virtual communities has demonstrably exerted a positive influence on the preservation of local culture in Lampung Barat. These digital forums furnish the local populace with a robust platform for the exchange of cultural knowledge, narratives, and practices. A study undertaken by Trisnawati (2021) serves to illustrate the effective deployment of the WhatsApp application within the pedagogical domain, particularly for the instruction of cultural arts in educational institutions. This instructional approach has proven to be efficacious in the comprehension, safeguarding, and transmission of cultural knowledge to the younger generation, thus enhancing cultural awareness among students and fortifying the preservation of Lampung Barat's cultural heritage.

WhatsApp groups play a determining role in the preservation of various facets of local culture, including language, traditions, and historical narratives. Members of these virtual communities engage actively in dialogues that facilitate the perpetuation of regional dialects, oral traditions, and the dissemination of local history. For instance, within the Lampung Barat community, WhatsApp groups serve as conduits for discussions on cultural arts, such as the gambus orchestra, thus contributing to the safeguarding of traditional music and dance. Such initiatives serve to reinvigorate cultural elements that may otherwise be imperiled (Kartomi, 2012).

Virtual communities, notably WhatsApp groups, engage proactively in the preservation of local culture. These communities do not merely serve as repositories of knowledge and information; they also serve as organizing hubs for cultural events, such as group gambus orchestra rehearsals, as elucidated in the Lampung Barat study . Communication within these digital communities fosters collaborative labors of greater magnitude and motivates members to make substantive contributions to the preservation of their local culture. Consequently, virtual communities stand as critical entities in the tangible realization of cultural preservation as an integral facet of Lampung Barat's identity.

The preservation of culture in Lampung Barat encompasses diverse methods and vents. The use of WhatsApp groups, though modern, is gaining increasing prominence in the context of preserving cultural attributes. However, distinctions emerge when comparing this approach with traditional preservation methods, such as community assemblies and indigenous cultural groups. The latter approaches are characterized by their more physical nature and a direct orientation towards the tangible execution of cultural practices, including traditional dances and musical performances. These conventional methods are important in safeguarding oral traditions and cultural practices that can solely be transmitted through firsthand experiences.

While WhatsApp groups excel in the realm of information dissemination, traditional methods remain indispensable in maintaining the authenticity and cultural heritage.

Moreover, additional methods for cultural preservation in Lampung Barat encompass the active involvement of local governing bodies in the formulation of regulations and policies supportive of cultural conservation. This entails the promulgation of Regional Regulations (PERDA) pertinent to cultural preservation and the provision of financial backing for traditional cultural activities (Maddusila, 2020). WhatsApp groups can augment these initiatives by facilitating coordination and information dissemination. However, it is crucial to underscore that this digital platform cannot supplant the fundamental role of governmental authorities in preserving and safeguarding the culture of Lampung Barat.

WhatsApp groups have emerged as a ubiquitous mode of communication in various domains, including cultural preservation (Tulgar, 2019). Nonetheless, approaches to cultural conservation are inherently multifaceted, each bearing unique attributes, strengths, and limitations. When conducting a comparative analysis, several critical facets warrant consideration.

The foremost advantage of WhatsApp groups in cultural preservation resides in their capability to swiftly connect cultural communities, transcending geographical distances. This facilitates the real-time exchange of information, narratives, and cultural knowledge among individuals situated in disparate locations. Additionally, WhatsApp groups often function as archives for cultural content, encompassing visual media and textual documentation, which assume the form of valuable reference materials for subsequent generations.

Nevertheless, certain shortcomings merit attention. WhatsApp groups predominantly support text and multimedia-based communication, thereby posing challenges in representing cultural components of an oral or experiential nature. Moreover, issues pertaining to privacy and data security constitute legitimate concerns when disseminating cultural information through digital platforms. It is incumbent upon us to recognize that the deployment of modern technology, such as WhatsApp groups, should not supplant traditional cultural practices, which play an indispensable role in the preservation of cultural heritage.

The identification of situations wherein WhatsApp groups prove more efficacious in the preservation of local culture is vital to our comprehension of this platform's role within the

cultural heritage preservation context. There exist distinct scenarios where WhatsApp groups have demonstrated their pronounced effectiveness.

Primarily, WhatsApp groups excel in the preservation of local culture when cultural communities are geographically dispersed. In instances where community members are geographically dispersed, WhatsApp groups facilitate sustained connectivity and the exchange of cultural information, narratives, and practices. This holds particular significance in maintaining cultural continuity, especially in the face of cultural perturbations arising from urbanization or migration.

Secondly, WhatsApp groups manifest their efficacy in contexts wherein the younger generation evinces a vested interest in cultural preservation. With ready access to smartphones, the younger demographic is more predisposed to engage in WhatsApp groups dedicated to the perpetuation of their local culture. This serves to engender a robust flow of information between the younger and older generations, thereby ensuring the continuous transmission of cultural knowledge.

Lastly, WhatsApp groups prove highly valuable in situations necessitating rapid communication and immediate responses in cultural preservation endeavors. For example, in responding to threats directed at cultural sites or impending cultural traditions, WhatsApp groups enable expeditious communication and coordination among cultural stakeholders, thereby safeguarding and preserving cultural heritage.

3.2   Implications of Findings for the Sustainability of Local Cultural Preservation

In evaluating the implications of the findings for the sustainability of local cultural preservation in Lampung Barat, it is imperative to draw upon research that underscores the significance of preserving cultural heritage. The repercussions of these findings underscore the necessity for fortified efforts in the realm of cultural preservation, encompassing the enhancement of initiatives designed to facilitate the active engagement of the community in safeguarding their cultural heritage (Acar et al., n.d.).

Another salient discovery concerns the central role of technology in cultural preservation. Research delving into the application of the Internet of Things (IoT) for the purpose of bolstering cultural preservation affirms that contemporary technology can be a potent tool in the protection of cultural heritage. This highlights the prospect that, through the judicious

adoption of appropriate technology, cultural preservation can be rendered more sustainable and equipped to confront contemporary challenges.

Moreover, the significance of community participation emerges as a critical facet of cultural preservation. Findings accentuating the importance of fostering and endorsing community involvement in the domain of cultural preservation underscore the dependence of cultural sustainability on the active participation of the community in the safeguarding of their heritage. The implications of these findings underscore the pertinence of supporting community participation and cherishing cultural authenticity as instrumental in the perpetuation of the sustainability of local cultural preservation in Lampung Barat.

WhatsApp groups assume a momentous role in the preservation of multifarious dimensions of local culture, encompassing language, traditions, and historical narratives. They serve as a highly efficacious platform for the exchange of information, deliberations on cultural heritage, and the protection of local cultural identity. The ensuing enumeration highlights several key advantages and functions of WhatsApp groups in the sphere of cultural preservation:

1. Preservation of Local Language

    WhatsApp groups afford communities the opportunity to communicate and interact in their indigenous languages (Guillén et al., 2020). This facilitates the conservation of endangered native languages as group members can share linguistic expressions, narratives, and accounts in their mother tongue, thereby ensuring the linguistic heritage's perpetuity across generations. Furthermore, discussions on language within these groups serve as a valuable pedagogical tool for instructing children and young community members on the significance of their native language.

2. Maintenance of Traditions

    WhatsApp groups contribute significantly to the maintenance of local traditions (Tulgar, 2019). Members of these groups can collaboratively coordinate traditional ceremonies, festivals, and other cultural festivities. They can partake in the exchange of insights on the correct execution of traditional practices, thus guaranteeing the meticulous preservation of these cultural rituals. Additionally, the ability to upload and archive multimedia content like photos, videos, and notes pertaining to cultural events within the group augments the capacity for documentation, serving as invaluable resources for posterity.

3. Dissemination of History and Stories

    WhatsApp groups serve as effective conduits for the dissemination (Baulch et al., 2020) (Tulgar, 2019) of local stories and historical narratives, thereby contributing to the preservation of historical knowledge that might otherwise lapse into obscurity. Members can narrate tales concerning their forebears, overruling community occurrences, and local accomplishments. This mode of knowledge transmission proves instrumental in the dissemination of historical insights and the perpetuation of memories pertaining to the cultural heritage of the locale.

WhatsApp groups emerge as dynamic platforms for the preservation of various facets of local culture, bestowing upon the community a swift and facile avenue for communication and collaboration in the service of preserving their cultural identity. By facilitating the sharing of language, traditions, and history, WhatsApp groups function as instrumental instruments in the conservation of invaluable cultural heritage, ensuring the enduring vibrancy and relevance of these cultural dimensions within modern society (Gani et al., 2023).

3.3   Interaction and Contribution of Virtual Communities in the Preservation of Local Culture

Virtual communities play an integral role in the preservation of local culture through a multitude of mechanisms. Primarily, these online communities serve as conduits for connecting individuals residing in disparate geographical locations, who share common cultural interests and identities. Platforms such as social media, online forums, and WhatsApp groups facilitate interactive exchanges, thereby enabling the sharing of cultural knowledge and stimulating in-depth discussions encompassing language, traditions, and local history. These digital dialogues serve as instrumental vehicles for perpetuating and rekindling cultural elements that might otherwise face the risk of fading into obscurity.

Furthermore, virtual communities operate as vehicles for disseminating information pertaining to local culture. Through these platforms, members can relay narratives, photographs, and videos chronicling traditional practices and cultural events. This dissemination effectively broadens the reach of cultural knowledge, transcending generational divides and extending access to younger demographics who might otherwise have limited exposure to their cultural heritage. Consequently, virtual communities assume the dual role of educators and promoters of cultural awareness (Kim et al., 2023).

Another salient advantage of virtual communities is their aptitude for collective engagement in cultural preservation projects. These online communities frequently embark on initiatives aimed at safeguarding ancient languages, preserving historical sites, or orchestrating cultural festivities. Collaborative efforts within the virtual realm enable members to conceptualize and execute these projects, thereby contributing to the contemporary resonance and vitality of cultural heritage (Maspul & Almalki, 2023b).

Furthermore, virtual communities serve as invaluable channels for resource mobilization in support of cultural preservation. Through online fundraising campaigns, community members can provide crucial financial support to cultural projects in need. This financial backing is indispensable for the maintenance and safeguarding of cultural heritage, which often necessitates ongoing conservation and upkeep (Xiao et al., 2023).

Virtual communities furnish a secure and inclusive forum for individuals to deliberate on issues that bear upon their local culture. Such topics may encompass environmental preservation, indigenous rights, or the protection of endangered languages. These digital communities empower and amplify the voices of those ardently dedicated to the preservation of their cultural heritage, affording them a platform for advocacy and positive change.

3.4   Supporting and Hindering Factors

The preservation of local culture within virtual communities is a multifaceted undertaking influenced by several critical factors that either bolster or impede its efficacy. Foremost among these supportive factors is technological accessibility, a pivotal prerequisite for participation in virtual communities. The requirement for access to suitable devices and internet connections poses a potential limitation, particularly in regions characterized by inadequate technological infrastructure. The trajectory of cultural preservation through virtual communities is contingent on the evolution of technological infrastructure. Where such infrastructure flourishes, it augments the prospects of cultural preservation; conversely, in cases of restricted access, the efficacy of cultural preservation via virtual communities is encumbered (Vijayabanu et al., 2023).

The second influential determinant is the active engagement of community members. The effort to conserve local culture necessitates unwavering dedication and contributions from participants within the virtual community. The level of engagement among members, when channeled into activities such as the sharing of narratives, the orchestration of cultural events,

or the cultivation of online cultural resources, can significantly bolster the prospects of local cultural preservation. On the contrary, a lack of active involvement from members poses potential impediments to the success of such preservation efforts (Bremer et al., 2023).

The third crucial factor encompasses external support, encompassing governmental assistance, the involvement of nonprofit entities, and the commitment of individuals devoted to the cause of local cultural preservation (M. A. H. Putra et al., 2023). External engagement and backing assume paramount importance, as they provide the requisite resources, expert guidance, and technical support imperative to the preservation of local culture. Conversely, the absence of external support presents a substantial deterrent to the realization of cultural preservation objectives.

The final factor of consideration pertains to social and economic challenges, exemplified by demographic migrations, urbanization trends, and shifts in lifestyle patterns. These evolving factors can exert a profound impact on the perpetuation of local culture. Virtual communities undertaking the task of cultural preservation must demonstrate a capacity to address these challenges by identifying and implementing suitable strategies aimed at safeguarding their cultural heritage within an evolving environment. The level of awareness and the efficacy of the responsive measures adopted in tackling these challenges will ultimately determine the success of local cultural preservation efforts undertaken through virtual communities.

3.5   Discourse about Research that has been Conducted Previously

The research conducted on the utilization of WhatsApp Groups as virtual communities for the preservation of local culture has yielded substantive and pertinent findings. WhatsApp Groups, as a tool for cultural preservation, have exhibited significant effectiveness. This investigation has unveiled a multitude of insights that encompass various critical facets within the realm of cultural conservation.

To commence, it is evident from this research that WhatsApp Groups facilitate the swift and facile exchange of information, narratives, and knowledge related to local culture among community members. This attribute is fundamental, leveraging the real-time interactive capabilities of online communication to enrich and propel cultural preservation attemps (Turistiati, 2020).

The research findings underscore the significance of collaborative efforts within WhatsApp Groups (Udenze & Oshionebo, 2020). Members of the community can pool their resources and expertise to engage in cultural preservation projects that encompass the documentation of traditions, the collection of folk narratives, and the organization of cultural events. The facilitation of cross-border collaboration is especially noteworthy, contributing to the enrichment and perpetuation of local culture.

Furthermore, the research accentuates the decesive role of moderators or administrators within WhatsApp Groups (Caetano et al., 2019). These individuals bear the responsibility of steering discussions and activities toward the overarching goal of cultural preservation. They serve as custodians, guiding conversations, formulating action plans, and ensuring that the shared information aligns with the values intrinsic to local culture.

Moreover, the research findings address the challenges associated with the use of WhatsApp Groups for cultural preservation. Notably, one such challenge is the risk of disseminating inaccurate or misinformation (Omar, 2023), which can have deleterious effects on the comprehension of local culture. Consequently, the promotion of cultural literacy and the provision of credible cultural resources become imperatives.

In the broader context of this research's alignment with previous investigations pertaining to cultural preservation and communication technology, it is imperative to recognize the transformative impact of communication technology on cultural preservation. Previous research has probed diverse aspects relating to the role of communication technology in safeguarding local cultural heritage (Permatasari et al., 2020). The alignment of these research findings with prior work can be elucidated through several key perspectives.

One salient nexus pertains to the emphasis on communication technology's role in bolstering community engagement in cultural preservation. As delineated in the article "Factors explaining participation in WhatsApp groups" (Tulgar, 2019) antecedent research demonstrates how communication technology, specifically WhatsApp, amplifies community involvement across a spectrum of cultural preservation activities. This concurs with the current research, which underscores the affirmative contribution of WhatsApp Groups in fostering collaboration and information sharing vis-à-vis local culture (Barbosa & Milan, 2019).

Akin to antecedent studies, this research underscores how communication technology facilitates the creation of platforms for the sharing of cultural narratives. WhatsApp Groups

function as a paradigmatic embodiment of such platforms, enabling members to exchange folk narratives, oral traditions, and other vital constituents of local culture. In essence, this research dovetails with prior work that elucidated the role of social media in the preservation of folk narratives.

Furthermore, the symbiotic relationship between this research and prior investigations is evident with respect to the necessity of judicious group management. Earlier research, as elucidated in the article "WhatsApp Groups as a Medium for Maintaining Human Relations (Kapitan & Hana, 2020)," accentuates the pivotal role of adept moderators or administrators within communication groups. This synchronization is manifest in the current research's emphasis on the moderating role in steering group interactions toward the realm of cultural preservation.

Moreover, it is paramount to underscore previous research, which has scrutinized the challenges intertwined with the employment of communication technology for cultural preservation. This research's findings resonate with antecedent studies in acknowledging challenges such as the peril of disseminating erroneous or misleading content that can impede the comprehension of local culture. Consequently, the research underscores the imperative of enhancing cultural literacy and proffering authentic cultural resources, as previously posited in extant research.

Additionally, the alignment between this research and prior investigations can be expounded within the context of communication technology's capacity to transcend geographic and temporal constraints. This research underscores how WhatsApp Groups engender cross-border collaboration in the pursuit of cultural preservation, a facet that has been accentuated in prior research that extolled the ability of communication technology to bridge geographical disparities in cultural preservation efforts.

In the backdrop of using WhatsApp Groups as a conduit for the preservation of local culture and the conservation of cultural heritage, previous research has proffered insightful perspectives. Noteworthy is the research's revelation of WhatsApp Groups' role as an alternative platform for online learning, particularly in the milieu of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ningsih, 2020) (Hidayat et al., 2022). Research has unequivocally substantiated that WhatsApp Groups serve as a pragmatic online learning tool, facilitating the dissemination of cultural knowledge and traditional wisdom (Syafril, 2021).

Furthermore, extant research has explored the deployment of WhatsApp Groups within the ambit of nurturing social relationships and fostering interconnectedness among community members. This underscores the fundamental facet of cultural preservation, entailing the sustenance of interactions and cooperation among individuals or collectives dedicated to the preservation of traditions and local culture.

Research has also elucidated the transformative impact of WhatsApp Groups on social relationships among community members (Wibowo & Wasngadiredja, 2023), a dynamic that buttresses the preservation of local culture. The interactions within WhatsApp Groups are instrumental in fortifying social bonds, a particularly salient dimension in the context of communities fixated on cultural preservation.

3.6   Recomendations

This research carries substantial practical implications within the framework of local cultural preservation in Lampung Barat. Drawing upon prior research that underscores the utility of WhatsApp Groups in the sphere of cultural conservation, several propositions and recommendations can be proffered to the stakeholders engaged in local cultural preservation labors in the region.

Primarily, authorities, including local governing bodies and cultural institutions, are encouraged to contemplate endorsing initiatives that advocate for the utilization of WhatsApp Groups as a vehicle for documenting, disseminating, and acquainting the local culture of Lampung Barat. Provisions of financial support or the provision of training in the adept utilization of communication technology may be instrumental in facilitating the proficiency of the local community in administering these virtual groups.

Secondly, it is advisable to furnish local communities and cultural preservation collectives with comprehensive guidance and resources pertaining to ethical considerations and copyright matters when engaged in the documentation and dissemination of their cultural heritage via WhatsApp Groups. This measure is designed to ensure the sustainability of cultural preservation initiatives while concurrently safeguarding the rights of individuals and distinct communities.

Additionally, there exists a pronounced need to inaugurate a broader community forum or network with a specific focus on the cultural preservation of Lampung Barat through social

media platforms. This venture is positioned to catalyze the synergistic amalgamation of diverse groups, fostering knowledge exchange and collective endeavors aimed at the preservation of local culture.

Finally, it is imperative for the parties embroiled in local cultural preservation to conceive and implement effective communication strategies designed to disseminate the merits and value of WhatsApp Groups as a potent tool for cultural preservation within the community. It is momentous that the community at large develops a comprehensive comprehension of the benefits intrinsic to cultural conservation through this communication technology.

By the judicious implementation of these recommendations, there exists a sanguine anticipation that the preservation of local culture in Lampung Barat can be fortified and cultivated through the instrumental employment of WhatsApp Groups and ancillary communication technologies. These toils, in a concomitant fashion, are poised to serve as bulwarks for nurturing and perpetuating the opulent cultural heritage that permeates the region, thereby endowing subsequent generations with a robust cultural legacy.

3.7 Research Limitations

This research is subject to several noteworthy limitations that warrant acknowledgment. Primarily, it is essential to underscore that this research primarily adopts a conceptual and analytical approach in elucidating the overarching concept of preservation. Consequently, it is imperative to acknowledge that this limitation engenders a paucity of empirical data or specific case studies capable of furnishing real-world exemplifications pertaining to the application of digital communication media in the preservation of cultural heritage. Consequently, there arises a palpable exigency for future research aspires to address this lacuna by undertaking empirical studies or conducting field research involving key stakeholders enmeshed in the realm of cultural heritage preservation. Such investigations will inherently bestow a more profound comprehension of the utilization of digital technology in the actualization of cultural preservation practices.

Another constraint of significance resides in the expanse of the opportunities and challenges delineated within this research. While this research adumbrates the potentialities inherent in cultural preservation via virtual WhatsApp group communities, it is incumbent upon subsequent research initiatives to delve into specific facets that may engender formidable challenges. A pertinent exemplification entails an exploration into the mechanisms for

addressing data protection quandaries within the digital milieu or the methodologies for harmoniously integrating digital technology with the tenets of cultural preservation practices. Thus, while the present research constitutes a foundational elucidation, subsequent investigations are well poised to scrutinize and elucidate themes that are germane to cultural preservation within WhatsApp group communities.

In the evolution of this discourse, it becomes patently evident that future research endeavors are encouraged to encompass a myriad of research methodologies to engender a more holistic and multifaceted understanding. Moreover, a judicious avenue for exploration is the comparative analysis of varied digitization approaches as employed in diverse cultural and geographical contexts. Such an approach engenders the potential for the derivation of more comprehensive and diversified insights concerning the effectiveness of digital technology as a tool in the preservation of our cultural heritage.

4   CONCLUSION

The application of communication technology in the conservation of local cultures has emerged as a significant focal point in numerous global communities. Within the precincts of Lampung Barat, the deployment of WhatsApp Groups as a virtual community stands as an intriguing innovation in the strive to safeguard the region's multifaceted and culturally rich heritage. WhatsApp Groups have incontrovertibly demonstrated their efficacy as a platform conducive to fostering interactions, knowledge sharing, and the preservation of Lampung Barat's distinct cultural traditions. Within this context, WhatsApp Groups assume an instrumental role in the custodianship of the region's unique and invaluable cultural heritage.

A noteworthy research discovery lies in the capacity of WhatsApp Groups to facilitate active participation among members of the Lampung Barat community. These groups provide a virtual arena wherein individuals can engage in substantive discussions, exchange narratives, and share information that pertains to the tapestry of local culture. Through these digital spaces, the preservation and celebration of local customs, music, and the indigenous Lampung language find a nurturing platform. By virtue of this platform, members can glean insight into the cultural values bequeathed by their forebears.

Furthermore, the utilization of WhatsApp Groups for the conservation of Lampung Barat's cultural heritage engenders intergenerational collaboration. Younger cultural stakeholders have the opportunity to engage with their elder counterparts and cultural heritage experts, thereby

acquiring profound insights and wisdom pertaining to their traditions. This collaborative dynamic contributes to the perpetuity of cultural traditions and ensures the transference of the knowledge and skills intrinsic to Lampung Barat's cultural legacy to succeeding generations.

Nevertheless, the utilization of WhatsApp Groups as a virtual community in the realm of cultural preservation does not come devoid of challenges. A paramount challenge is that of preserving the privacy and security of the cultural information disseminated within these digital congregations. Additionally, the endeavor necessitates a more structured approach and the formulation of guidelines tailored to the management of WhatsApp Groups within the domain of local cultural preservation.

The deployment of WhatsApp Groups as a virtual community for the preservation of local culture within Lampung Barat serves as an exemplar of the pivotal role that communication technology can play in the safeguarding of treasured cultural heritage. By harnessing modern technology, communities are equipped to sustain and nurture their traditions, effectively bridging generational chasms and ensuring the enduring vibrancy and relevance of local culture in the digital epoch.

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