



Cultural Diplomacy Through the Pacu Jalur Festival: Strengthening Riau's Cultural Identity on the International Arena

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Abstract

This study aims to identify and analyze the role of cultural diplomacy through the Pacu Jalur Festival as an effort to strengthen Riau's cultural identity at the international level. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, with the Pacu Jalur Festival serving as the primary unit of analysis within the framework of international relations. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews and a literature review based on official documents and previous research. The research findings indicate that the Pacu Jalur tradition has transformed from a 17th-century river transportation means into an international tourism festival included in the Karisma Event Nusantara (KEN). This festival has proven effective as a medium for international communication, an instrument for building a positive image, and a space for direct people-to-people interaction. The active involvement of local governments alongside the private sector through the digitalization of promotions has successfully triggered a surge in international tourist visits. Despite the event's seasonal nature, Pacu Jalur has strengthened soft power and the presence of Malay culture on the global stage.

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Introduction

Indonesia is widely recognized as a vast archipelagic state endowed with abundant cultural wealth, traditions, and tourism potential, stretching from Sabang to Merauke. This diversity, scattered across

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various regions, exemplifies a spirit of harmony, unity, and togetherness deeply rooted in the lives of indigenous populations. The preservation of this ancestral heritage serves as tangible evidence of the noble values consistently maintained amidst the currents of global modernization. One specific region in Indonesia that possesses a wealth of distinct cultural characteristics and consistently upholds traditional values is Riau Province (Fajriandhany et al., 2020).

In daily life, the people of Riau continue to preserve traditional Malay cultural values, which remain highly pronounced and distinctive despite contemporary developments. This strong commitment to nurturing cultural roots prompted the Riau Provincial Government to officially adopt a regional identity through the specialized tagline 'The Homeland of Melayu' (Fajriandhany et al., 2020). This designation is not merely a promotional tourism slogan, but rather a strategic cultural initiative designed to solidify Riau's position as the epicentre of Malay civilization. A prominent manifestation of this cultural richness, a source of collective pride for the local community, is the *Pacu Jalur* tradition. This annual event is centered in Kuantan Singingi Regency and involves the active participation of all societal strata across generations.

Historically, the *Pacu Jalur* tradition has existed in the Rantau Kuantan region since the early 17th century. In its initial conception, the longboat—locally referred to as '*jalur*'—served as the primary mode of water transportation for local inhabitants. These traditional boats played a vital role in daily mobility, as they could transport large quantities of agricultural produce from upstream to downstream. The absence of adequate land transportation infrastructure at the time rendered the *jalur* the economic lifeblood and the primary medium for social interaction within the community. The boat's carrying capacity of approximately 40 to 60 people simultaneously underscores the critical importance of its size and strength (Intansari, 2024).

Over time, as land road infrastructure in Riau rapidly developed, the practical function of the *jalur* as a daily transportation tool began to shift significantly. However, this functional transition did not eradicate the *jalur*; instead, it transformed the vessel into a highly revered symbol of cultural tradition. During the Dutch colonial period, this longboat rowing activity was repurposed into an annual competitive event to celebrate Queen Wilhelmina's birthday (PPID, 2024). Following the post-independence era of the Republic of Indonesia, the values and orientation of the competition were reclaimed by the community to align with the spirit of national struggle. Consequently, this routine celebration was integrated as a centerpiece of the agenda for commemorating Indonesian Independence Day, which takes place every August (Tiara & Nst, 2025).

Beyond the competitive cultural aspects visible to the general public, *Pacu Jalur* encapsulates profound spiritual, social, and philosophical values. The construction process of these longboats involves a series of sacred customary rituals, ranging from selecting trees in the forest to launching the boat into the river. The community believes that mystical elements are present in the selected timber and relies on the pivotal role of a shaman (*pawang*) to determine the team's victory (Kamilah et al., 2025). Values of cooperation (*gotong royong*), consensus-based deliberation (*musyawarah mufakat*), and inter-village solidarity develop organically at every stage, from preparation to race execution (Hasbullah, 2015). This unique character led the government to officially designate *Pacu Jalur* as intangible cultural heritage (Kemenparekraf, 2025).

Entering the modern era, the popularity of *Pacu Jalur* has experienced a massive escalation, evolving from a local community rite into an international-scale tourism festival (Maharani & Raflesia, 2023). The term '*Pacu Jalur*' itself combines the word '*Pacu*,' which means to grow rapidly, and '*Jalur*,' which refers to a longboat measuring 25 to 30 meters in length (Gazali et al., 2018). Recognition of this cultural potential was further solidified when *Pacu Jalur* was included in the *Karisma Event Nusantara*

(KEN) program. This flagship initiative positions the festival as one of the nation's primary tourism magnets. Statistical data indicate a dramatic surge in tourist arrivals, reaching 1,651,082 visitors in 2025 (Heru, 2025). The presence of thousands of foreign tourists along the banks of the Kuantan River demonstrates that local culture possesses a universal appeal.

This developmental phenomenon demonstrates that regional cultural assets can be optimized as strategic instruments for public diplomacy in international relations. Contemporary international relations are no longer exclusively dominated by military or economic might, but are increasingly influenced by the power of cultural attraction (Nye, 2019). The Riau Provincial Government uses this festival as a primary platform to build a positive, peaceful regional image rich in historical value (D. Riau, 2025). Accordingly, this study focuses on analysing how the *Pacu Jalur* Festival is used as a tool of cultural diplomacy to introduce Malay heritage. Drawing on the conceptual frameworks of soft power and public diplomacy, this research aims to make a comprehensive and novel academic contribution.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach to explore the phenomenon deeply and comprehensively. The descriptive approach was selected to articulate the reality of cultural diplomacy implementation in the field without manipulating any variables. The use of a qualitative method strongly supports the researcher's effort to unpack the tradition's philosophical meaning and understand the motives of the actors involved (Waruwu, 2023). The researcher positions the *Pacu Jalur* Festival as the primary unit of analysis, dissected through the lens of international relations. The focus of observation is directed toward the interaction patterns among the regional government, local communities, and international audiences within the festival space (Creswell, 2017). The data collection technique in this study relies on two primary pillars: in-depth online interviews and an extensive literature review. Structured interviews were conducted with key informants from the Department of Culture and Tourism of Kuantan Singingi Regency and representatives from the Tourism Department of Riau Province. The literature review was implemented by examining official government documents, statistical data on tourist arrivals, scientific journals, and supporting textbooks. Data validity was tested using a source triangulation technique to ensure information consistency across perspectives. All collected data were subsequently analysed thematically based on the theoretical pillars of public diplomacy to generate scholarly conclusions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This theoretical approach ensures that the elements of public diplomacy can be precisely identified and targeted (Cull, 2007). The organizational structure of this journal article is systematically arranged to present logical, easily comprehensible insights to the reader. The initial section begins with the abstract and introduction, which lay the groundwork for the rationale and the formulation of the research problem. The subsequent section outlines the research methodology, serving as the operational guide for field data collection and processing. The core section presents the results and discussion in detail, with each subsection in the Discussion chapter analysed separately without merging any materials. The final section concludes with a summary that synthesizes the primary findings and offers constructive recommendations for future development of cultural diplomacy policy.

Results and Discussions

1. Pacu Jalur as a Local Cultural Practice in Riau

The Pacu Jalur tradition, which has existed since the early 17th century, originally functioned as the primary mode of transportation for the community of Rantau Kuantan Singingi along the Kuantan

River basin (Singingi, 2026). This traditional boat was designed to facilitate the mobility of agricultural produce while accommodating 40 to 60 passengers, a necessity given the scarcity of land infrastructure at the time (Intansari, 2024). Over time, its function evolved into a recreational event celebrating Queen Wilhelmina's birthday during the Dutch colonial period, which was later adopted by the local community to commemorate the Independence Day of the Republic of Indonesia in the post-independence era (PPID, 2024).

Entering the modern era, the status of Pacu Jalur evolved from a localized tradition into a large-scale folk festival, a momentum marked by the Governor of Riau's attendance at the opening ceremony of the 1983 competition (Amanan & Sabrina, 2025). This festival was officially integrated into the Riau Tourism Calendar in 1997, accompanied by more structured committee management and funding frameworks. Recognition of this tradition has steadily increased, ranging from its designation as the Most Popular Tourism Attraction in the Anugerah Pesona Indonesia (API) 2017 to its official endorsement by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in 2024 as an intangible cultural heritage and a part of the Karisma Event Nusantara (KEN) program (Singingi, 2026). Philosophically, this development reflects not only collective pride but also a form of community reverence for nature and ancestors, which ultimately strengthens the community's emotional bond with its homeland (Deanovans et al., 2025).

Far more than a mere annual celebration, Pacu Jalur is a tangible manifestation of the sustained spirit of cooperation (*gotong royong*). The stages of its process involve various societal elements across generations, allowing fundamental values such as deliberative culture (*musyawarah*), teamwork, and community solidarity to develop organically (Deanovans et al., 2025). The synchronized strokes of the oars are conceptualized as collective hard work that merges into the community's collective identity. This wealth of cultural values has propelled Pacu Jalur into the Top 10 KEN and established it as a flagship national tourism agenda, held annually on August 23–26 (Tiara & Nst, 2025). With participation rates reaching up to 200 *jalur* units annually, the government now actively uses this festival not merely as a traditional ritual but as a vital instrument of regional cultural diplomacy (Amanan & Sabrina, 2025). This transformation has successfully positioned Pacu Jalur as the new face of tourism and as a medium for nation branding, promoting Riau's identity on both national and international stages.

2. The Festivalization of Pacu Jalur and Regional Government Involvement

The festivalization process of *Pacu Jalur* into a massive tourism magnet involves active participation and a high level of commitment from the regional government. The Riau Province Tourism Department, in collaboration with the Kuantan Singingi Regency Government, acts as both the primary regulator and facilitator in packaging this event (Singingi, 2026). The festivalization strategy is manifested through the standardization of performance management, the establishment of a fixed annual schedule, and the provision of supporting infrastructure surrounding the arena. Furthermore, the government provides legal certainty regarding the utilization of forest timber for *jalur* construction through coordination with forestry agencies. This policy intervention ensures that the preservation of tradition runs in tandem with environmental protection principles (Singingi, 2026).

Budgetary synergy serves as a crucial pillar in maintaining the sustainability of this large-scale festival, ensuring it can be executed consistently every year. The primary source of funding relies on the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD), augmented by technical support from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. This budget allocation is utilized to finance committee

operations, provide subsidies for village boats, and supply competition prizes. The regional government also actively partners with the private sector and regional state-owned enterprises to serve as strategic event sponsors. This multi-stakeholder partnership helps overcome public budget constraints while simultaneously expanding the promotional network of the tourism festival (Alfriandi, 2026).

The positive impacts of this festivalization process are directly experienced by the creative economy ecosystem and micro-entrepreneurs around the event venue. The presence of hundreds of thousands of visitors generates massive market opportunities for culinary vendors, souvenir artisans, and lodging service providers. The Association of Indonesian Tour and Travel Agencies (ASITA) also collaborates with the government to offer integrated tour packages for travellers from various regions. These packages include transportation, hotel accommodations, tour guides, and exclusive access to the race-viewing grandstands. This increasingly professional governance has transformed *Pacu Jalur* from a community-based rite into a highly competitive cultural tourism industry (Alfriandi, 2026).

3. Pacu Jalur as an Instrument of Public Diplomacy

Pacu Jalur is no longer merely a localized tradition of Kuantan Singingi, but has instead evolved into a strategic diplomatic instrument to introduce Riau's culture to the international community. This promotional effort is frequently executed by showcasing traditional attributes and customary attire at various global events. Beyond its success in projecting a positive image of Indonesia, the festival's allure establishes a space for direct interaction between residents and international tourists. Such a naturally forged cross-cultural relationship ultimately fosters mutual trust and profound understanding among nations.

a. Festivals as a Medium of International Communication

Communication is the central pillar of public diplomacy, enabling it to reach a global audience. Along with its development, the Pacu Jalur Festival now functions as an effective and influential medium of international communication for Indonesia. As a diplomatic instrument, this international-scale cultural festival provides a strategic platform for Indonesia to showcase its traditional diversity on the global stage, while simultaneously leveraging the media to disseminate the cultural values underlying it (Firdaus et al., 2024). The use of massive visual documentation through digital diplomacy is crucial for capturing the international public's attention. The integration of the 'Aura Farming' approach, which focuses on appeal and emotional engagement in public diplomacy and strategically leverages a state's soft power, can elucidate this phenomenon (Thursina et al., 2025).

Figure 1. The Pacu Jalur Dance Performance at the State Palace



Source: (Alazhar, 2025)

Official exposure on a prestigious national stage has also served as a critical stepping stone toward international recognition for *Pacu Jalur*. The *Pacu Jalur* Dance at the State Palace during the official Independence Day celebrations was attended by foreign diplomats and heads of mission from friendly nations. The presence of this cultural performance at the epicenter of government left a profound impression regarding the richness of Indonesia's visual identity. Foreign diplomatic actors were allowed to witness firsthand the aesthetic representation of Malay values of cooperation (*gotong royong*). Consequently, this momentum opened the way for more formal cultural dialogues at the interstate level.

Figure 2. UIN Suska Students Presenting Pacu Jalur at the Cultural Carnival International Day, Yala, Thailand



Source: (Rahmat, 2025)

These cultural diplomacy activities are also proactively driven by non-state actors, such as student delegations studying abroad. University students from Riau successfully performed the traditional *Pacu Jalur* dance at the International Cultural Carnival in Yala, Thailand. This artistic performance, presented to a foreign audience, captivated the local Thai community and participants from other nations. This independent initiative serves as a tangible example of diplomacy driven by grassroots initiatives. Through dynamic artistic expression, these student delegations can effectively convey messages of humanity and peace within a Malay cultural context.

Figure 3. The Bollywood Debut of the Pacu Jalur Dance: A Collaboration Between 'Aura Farming' Child, Rayyan Arkan Dhika, and Zahrah S Khan



Source: (Haniyah, 2025)

The pinnacle of this cultural global penetration was achieved when the iconic movements of *Pacu Jalur* successfully permeated the popular Bollywood entertainment industry in India. A creative collaboration between a local child dancer, Rayyan Arkan Dhika, and an international artist triggered massive attention across the digital sphere (BBC, 2025). The music video, which integrated elements of the traditional dance, was viewed by millions of global audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds. This approach through the modern entertainment industry has proven highly effective in introducing Indonesian cultural identity without appearing rigid. This viral phenomenon has even inspired several similar dance competitions across various other Asian countries.

b. Image Construction Through Local Culture

Ultimately, the strategic utilization of international communication media aims to construct a regional image through local cultural instruments. The *Pacu Jalur* tradition has now transformed from a mere ancestral heritage into a large-scale rowing competition that secures broad community participation. This transformation is constructed as an image-building instrument that represents noble values such as teamwork, cooperation (*gotong royong*), social solidarity, and reverence for ancestors (Erlangga & Latif, 2026). Through this narrative, the regional government frames Riau not merely as a region rich in natural resources but as the epicentre of an inclusive, dynamic, and open Malay civilization. Based on interview data, this image construction is further reinforced by narrative synergy among content creators and influencers, as well as the active participation of the local populace. The collaboration among these three actors generates significant exposure, enhancing the positive image of Riau's culture among the wider public (Alfriandi, 2026).

The construction of this image through *Pacu Jalur* plays a crucial role in strengthening national identity. The success in packaging a communal tradition along the Kuantan Singingi River into a large-scale festival demonstrates Riau's ability to create a unique regional nation-branding framework. This success underscores that *Pacu Jalur* is an adaptive cultural asset capable of evolving into a global symbol without losing its local traditional roots. Consequently, the international community not only enjoys the festival's aesthetic aspects but also establishes an emotional connection with the values of togetherness and collective confidence promoted by the tradition (Thursina et al., 2025). Therefore, the inclusion of *Pacu Jalur* within the Top 10 *Karisma Event Nusantara* (KEN) transcends mere quantitative achievements in the tourism sector; this status serves as a political-cultural legitimization confirming that Riau's local identity has been officially recognized as an instrument of attraction for Indonesia's national image.

c. People-to-People Interaction

The practice of public diplomacy within the *Pacu Jalur* Festival is manifested through direct people-to-people interaction and the public responses elicited during the event. Based on interview results, domestic tourists enthusiastically welcome this annual festival for its deeply rooted traditional values. There is a sense of pride and profound emotion, even leading to tears, upon witnessing the high level of youth participation in preserving this culture, coupled with disbelief that their regional tradition has gone viral and been embraced by a global audience (Fortiana, 2026). Concurrently, social media posts on platforms such as TikTok show international tourists who perceive this festival as a unique and unparalleled cultural experience. Echoing this sentiment, an American tourist, Tony Eveizh, noted in an interview that *Pacu Jalur* had gone highly viral and was widely discussed in his home country.

The admiration of international tourists aligns with that of domestic visitors; they commend the participants' synchronized rowing and dancing and highly appreciate the hospitality of the local

community. Furthermore, interview data indicate a high level of enthusiasm among both domestic and international tourists who attempted to board the *Pacu* boats in traditional Malay attire, even standing on the *tanggo* (the boat's prow) to experience the sensation first-hand (Alfriandi, 2026). The exposure of this phenomenon has expanded rapidly, accelerated by the catalyst of social media and global pop culture. This exposure reached its zenith when international American rapper Melly Mike attended the event in person after his song went viral as the background music for the dances performed atop the *jalur* boats. His presence generated a highly positive impact, during which he praised the festival as an extraordinary, unique, and soulful event.

Figure 4. Tourist Arrivals at the Pacu Jalur Festival



Source: (Arsip Dinas Pariwisata Provinsi Riau, 2026)

The cultural allure of the Pacu Jalur Festival has proven highly successful in triggering a significant surge in tourist arrivals. According to government data, the number of visitors increased by 10%, from 1,440,790 in 2024 to 1,651,082 in 2025 (Heru, 2025). This positive trend is projected to escalate further in 2026, propelled by the viral phenomenon of the child helmsman who initiated the 'Aura Farming' trend, as well as the anticipated return of international figures such as Melly Mike. Transcending mere commercial appeal, the successful expansion of Pacu Jalur's global image is also underscored by the formal participation of actors from friendly states. This participation is tangibly demonstrated by the presence of delegations from 16 foreign embassies and international representatives in Kuantan Singingi. Among those in attendance at the event were the Ambassadors of Bangladesh, Fiji, Rwanda, Bosnia, Mozambique, Persia, Bulgaria, Kenya, Azerbaijan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Jordan, and Angola, as well as the Consulate General of Malaysia and United Nations (UN) envoys (Amelia, 2025). The direct interest and support from these diplomatic representatives serve as concrete evidence that the Pacu Jalur Festival is no longer merely a regional tourism agenda, but has effectively functioned as an internationally recognized instrument of Indonesian public diplomacy.

4. Implications for the Reinforcement of Cultural Identity and Local Soft Power

The organization of the Pacu Jalur Festival yields a significant impact on Riau Province and Kuantan Singingi Regency, particularly in strengthening local traditions while simultaneously building cultural appeal at the international level. Furthermore, the festival has transformed from a mere annual

folk celebration into a strategic instrument that shapes Riau's identity in the eyes of both local and global communities. The integration of preserving traditional values and maintaining consistent management has successfully made a tangible contribution to enhancing the region's soft power through the tourism sector. However, these positive achievements still face limitations, as the regional promotional efforts rely solely on a single annual event whose execution is not sustained throughout the year.

a. The Reinforcement of Riau's Cultural Identity

Figure 5. The *Selembayung* Ornament on the Pacu Jalur Prow



Source: (Daniswari, 2022)

The international expansion of this festival has had a significant impact on reinforcing Riau's cultural identity at the internal level. The local community's cultural awareness has experienced a drastic increase, mirroring the high level of appreciation shown by the international community. The philosophical meanings of traditional ornaments, such as the *Selembayung* carvings adorning the prow of the *jalur*, are now being restudied by the younger generation (Daniswari, 2022). As a symbol of the majesty of Riau Malay architecture, the *Selembayung* is granted an extensive visual stage throughout the aquatic racing arena. The revitalization of these customary symbols solidifies the community's cultural resilience in countering the negative impacts of cultural globalization.

Figure 6. The Traditional Attire of Kuantan Singingi Regency



Source: (BBC, 2025)

In the commercial and creative realms, the distinctive traditional attire of the Kuantan Singingi Regency, worn by rowers, is currently undergoing expansion of its operational functions. The traditional clothing, previously deemed sacred and worn exclusively during specific ceremonies, is now mass-produced for the souvenir industry (Deanovans et al., 2025). Tourists can easily and securely purchase these cultural attributes in physical stores and on digital commerce platforms. This phenomenon demonstrates that preserving tradition can drive the creative economy ecosystem without losing its authentic identity. The proximity of customary symbols to the daily lives of modern society extends the longevity of cultural preservation itself.

On an external level, this festival functions as a bridge to acquire cultural recognition on the international stage. Through the presence of foreign tourists, the involvement of 16 foreign embassies and representatives from friendly states, and the dissemination of event documentation across various international digital media, it is evident that the uniqueness of the *Pacu Jalur* Festival is increasingly being recognized and accepted by the international community. Based on interview data, the international public and delegations from friendly nations in attendance were captivated by the festival, ranging from the customary processes that possess underlying philosophical values to the perseverance demonstrated by the rowers representing each sub-district. Furthermore, visitors consider this culture an exemplary tradition of mutual assistance, affection, and cooperation, which has ultimately transformed the international community's perspective on it (Alfriandi, 2026).

b. Contributions to Regional Soft Power

Based on Table 1, the number of tourist visits during the *Pacu Jalur* event increased significantly, rising from 1,440,790 in 2024 to 1,651,082 in 2025 (Heru, 2025). This increase demonstrates that the allure of the local culture at the festival has been increasingly successful in captivating the international community. However, the converse occurred after the event, with visit numbers plummeting from 438,926 individuals in 2024 to 284,973 in 2025 (B. P. S. P. Riau, 2026). This stark discrepancy underscores that the massive influx of tourists is indeed heavily dependent on the momentum of the *Pacu Jalur* Festival's execution. The primary appeal of this festival lies in the sacred traditional values showcased to the public, thereby providing a novel experience that stimulates global curiosity.

Table 1. Comparative Data of Tourist Arrivals During and Post-Event (2024-2025)

Year	Tourist Arrivals During the Pacu Jalur Event	Post-Event Tourist Arrivals of the Pacu Jalur Festival
2024	1.440.790	438.926
2025	1.651.082	284.973

Source: (B. P. S. P. Riau, 2026)

The positive response from the global community translates into soft power that operates persuasively, in which cultural charm can foster natural admiration without coercion (Nye, 2019). By showcasing these captivating local values, Riau Province has successfully strengthened its position within the international constellation. As the most prominent cultural asset in its region, this festival is managed directly by the Riau Provincial Government under the supervision of the Department of Tourism and the local municipal government (Alfriandi, 2026). This structured governance is vital to maintaining the quality of the event, which attracts a vast number of visitors. Ultimately, Riau is recognized not only for its natural resources but also for successfully constructing a positive image as a region steadfastly safeguarding its traditional heritage against the currents of globalization.

c. The Limitations of Festival-Based Diplomacy

Although the Pacu Jalur Festival positively impacts the regional image, this cultural diplomacy instrument faces a fundamental limitation due to its exceptionally brief duration. Consequently, this cultural diplomacy appears to operate seasonally, and only a small fraction of the international community is willing to return outside the event schedule (Alfriandi, 2026). This temporary condition is tangibly evidenced by statistical data from the Riau Province Tourism Department, which shows a stark disparity in visitor numbers. When the festival took place in August 2025, tourist arrivals successfully recorded a drastic surge, reaching 1,651,082 individuals (Heru, 2025). However, this allure precipitously plummeted to 284,973 individuals upon entering the post-festival period in the same year (B. P. S. P. Riau, 2026).

This sharp decline in data underscores that the effects of this festival-based tourism diplomacy have not yet achieved consistent year-round sustainability. Beyond the brief duration, the festival's appeal is further exacerbated by the region's suboptimal capacity to manage the subsequent impacts of tourist surges. Based on interview data, technical challenges in the field encompass constrained waste management, price gouging on food items by UMKM, and inadequate public facilities (Alfriandi, 2026). If the relevant stakeholders do not promptly rectify these various management issues, the enthusiasm and interest of international tourists will inevitably diminish in the future. Therefore, a comprehensive post-festival management evaluation is highly imperative to ensure that this annual agenda does not merely dissolve into a ceremonial celebration that squanders diplomatic opportunities on the international stage.

Conclusion

The *Pacu Jalur* Festival has successfully demonstrated its optimal role as an effective instrument of cultural diplomacy for Riau Province on the international stage. The historical transformation of the longboat from a 17th-century means of transportation into a national tourism agenda within the KEN program illustrates the dynamism of local wisdom. This festival can perform strategic public diplomacy functions, ranging from serving as a medium for global communication and building a positive image to providing spaces for people-to-people interaction. The structured involvement of the regional government, customary communities, and the private sector constitutes the primary foundation of the festival's success. This achievement makes a tangible contribution to reinforcing Malay identity and expanding Indonesia's soft power.

To anticipate the seasonal and temporary limitations of the festival, a sustained commitment from all stakeholders is required going forward. The regional government is expected to expand its digital promotional programs consistently throughout the year so that international attention does not plummet after the festival. Upgrading physical infrastructure, improving environmental management, and implementing education on pricing standardization for local MSMEs are urgent priorities. Furthermore, strengthening cooperation with diplomatic networks and international organizations must be continuously nurtured through a range of derivative cultural activities. This comprehensive approach is vital to ensuring that the noble heritage of Kuantan Singingi remains a symbol of Indonesian cultural pride on the global stage.

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