

Art and Cultural Tourism for Sustainable Income Generation in Senior Citizen Centres: Stakeholder Insights from Malaysia

Mohd Nasiruddin Abdul Aziz ^{1*}, Nor Zhafira Adlina Mohammad Mazani ², Mohd Khairulnizam Ramlie ³, Muhamad Abdul Aziz Ab Gani ⁴, Najat Affendy Dzulkifly ⁵

¹ Dr., Faculty of Art and Design, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, 32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia

² Faculty of Art and Design, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, 32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia

³ Dr., Faculty of Art and Design, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, 32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia

⁴ Prof. Dr., Faculty of Art and Design, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, 32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia

⁵ Ts., Department of Creative Multimedia, Faculty of Art, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), 35900 Tanjung Malim, Perak, Malaysia

* **Corresponding Author:** mohdn571@uitm.edu.my

Citation: Abdul Aziz, M. N., Mohammad Mazani, N. Z. A., Ramlie, M. K., Ab Gani, M. A. A., & Dzulkifly, N. A.. (2026). Art and cultural tourism for sustainable income generation in senior citizen centres: Stakeholder insights from Malaysia. *Herança*, 9(2), 77-88. <https://doi.org/10.52152/heranca.v9i2/1256>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 16 Apr 2026

Accepted: 25 Jun 2026

ABSTRACT

Art and cultural tourism projects are potential mechanisms that have emerged as drivers for sustainable income generation and social interaction in ageing communities. In Malaysia, senior citizen centres have a significant impact on active ageing. However, most centres still are funded on an external basis. This study explores the interest of stakeholders regarding the art and cultural tourism of senior citizen centres in Malaysia. Using a descriptive mixed-methods approach, quantitative data from 142 institutional representatives were collected to ascertain the initiative of choice. Qualitative data were extracted from open-ended responses, which were analysed using ATLAS.ti (Version 25.01) and examined according to Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework. Based on the multiple-response frequency analysis, handicraft making and workshops were the initiatives most frequently endorsed, followed by cultural food and culinary experiences and other participatory activities, including traditional games and heritage storytelling. Meanwhile, themes on collaboration and partnerships, funding and resources, programme innovation, infrastructure readiness, cultural identity, health considerations, inter-generational engagement, and stakeholder support were derived from the qualitative analysis. Collectively, these results indicate that the successful implementation of art and cultural tourism interventions in senior citizen centres relies on holistic institutional aid, appropriate resources, and culturally-relevant, age-appropriate programmes. The current results enrich discussions on sustainable income generation and community-based programme development in senior citizen centres in Malaysia.

Keywords: Art and Cultural Tourism; Active Ageing; Community-Based Tourism; Sustainable Income Generation; Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

Art and cultural tourism is one of the strategies recognised to stimulate inclusive economic development, as well as promote social cohesion and cultural sustainability, within local communities (Richards, 2018; United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2024). These strategies were revealed by Bianchini & Parkinson (1993) and World Health Organisation (2002) as aligning with the idea of active ageing in society. These strategies align with active ageing principles by encouraging social participation, creativity, and community engagement through culturally-oriented programmes. In Malaysia, senior citizen centres are vital community-oriented initiatives to ensure the health and social engagement of older people. Nonetheless, most of them remain financially reliant on

government allocations and external assistance, a situation that can limit the sustainability of programmes' persistence and survival over the long term (Abdullah et al., 2024; Md Isa et al., 2022). Identifying culturally-grounded yet economically-feasible strategies that generate income, therefore, continues to be a key challenge.

According to previous studies on local community-based tourism and creative ageing, participative cultural projects can empower older adults to participate in cultural production and local economy (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009; Richards & Raymond, 2000). However, empirical evidence on stakeholder preferences and implementation of art and cultural tourism initiatives in senior citizen centres, especially in Malaysia, is still limited (Liew et al., 2021; Mohammad Mazani et al., 2025). Consequently, this study examined stakeholder perspectives regarding the implementation and sustainability of art and cultural tourism initiatives in Malaysian senior citizen centres. This paper summarised one segment of the ongoing research project, in which descriptive insights were elicited from two questions focusing on desired initiatives and qualitative recommendations were made for generating sustainable income.

Despite growing interest in cultural tourism and active ageing, existing studies primarily focus on outcomes such as tourist satisfaction, economic impact, or senior participation. Limited attention has been given to the institutional feasibility and stakeholder perspectives required to implement such initiatives within senior citizen centres, particularly in the Malaysian context. Therefore, this study contributes by examining stakeholder perspectives on institutional readiness, sustainable programme implementation, and culturally grounded income-generation strategies within Malaysian senior citizen centres.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Art and Cultural Tourism, Senior Citizen Centres, and Sustainable Development

Art and cultural tourism encompasses creativity, cultural identity, and local assets that contribute to sustainable livelihood and community development (Throsby, 2001). In the context of ageing populations, rapid demographic changes have made healthy ageing a global priority (United Nations, 2021; World Health Organization, 2021). Recent scholarship highlights tourism as a potential vehicle for promoting healthy ageing. For example, Hu et al. (2023) suggest that tourism activities including cultural, recreational, and social engagement can enhance older adults' functional abilities and overall quality of life.

This aligns with active ageing principles, which emphasise continued participation, social inclusion, and well-being. By embedding art and cultural elements into senior citizen centre programmes, such initiatives can contribute to improved quality of life and sustained engagement among older adults.

In Southeast Asia, these programmes have sustained indigenous arts, culinary heritage, and storytelling traditions, and also allowed the local population to benefit economically (Chong & Balasingam, 2019). Previous studies suggest that participation in cultural and creative activities may support active ageing, social inclusion, and sustained participation among older adults (Chacur et al., 2022). Senior citizen centres in Malaysia are community-based service institutions that provide the elderly with social, educational, and recreational facilities (Ministry of Women, 2024). However, financial constraints often limit their capacity to execute sustainable activities. According to the national policy on ageing in Malaysia and aspirations of the government of Malaysia (the 12th Malaysia Plan [2021-2025]), art and cultural tourism programmes can be a means of empowering older adults and providing them the means to be financially supported through culturally-based income-generating activities.

Seniors' Needs and Participation in Tourism

Despite the potential benefits, older adults' participation in tourism is influenced by various factors, including their preferences, motivations, and accessibility to suitable activities. Contemporary research indicates that older travellers seek more meaningful experiences beyond traditional leisure activities such as "sun and sea." For instance, Carrera (2025) found that seniors increasingly value social and cultural experiences, particularly opportunities for socialising, leisure, and cultural engagement that enhance overall well-being.

Empirical studies further suggest that participation in cultural and leisure activities significantly improves older adults' subjective well-being (Ji et al., 2025). These findings highlight the importance of designing tourism experiences that are socially engaging and culturally enriching for older adults.

However, most existing studies focus primarily on individual experiences rather than institutional contexts. As such, there is limited understanding of how these tourism-related activities can be implemented within organisational settings such as senior citizen centres. Existing frameworks for senior tourism emphasise that sustaining such initiatives requires the integration of economic, social, and operational factors (Mohammad Mazani et al., 2025). This shift towards an organisational perspective helps bridge the gap between individual

well-being outcomes and institutional viability.

Institutional Readiness and Sustainable Tourism

For cultural tourism initiatives to succeed in senior citizen centres, organisational readiness plays a critical role. Previous studies indicate that while communities are often motivated by anticipated economic and cultural benefits, implementation may be constrained by limited infrastructure, insufficient resources, and low levels of engagement across generations (Mahamad Najib & A. Rahman, 2025).

In addition, tourism development has been shown to generate multi-dimensional impacts, including economic, socio-cultural, and environmental outcomes (Liu et al., 2023). This suggests that initiatives within senior citizen centres must be carefully planned to balance these dimensions.

Such findings highlight the importance of cross-sector collaboration, strategic investment, and institutional capacity in ensuring programme sustainability. In particular, sustainable implementation requires the integration of funding mechanisms, partnerships, age-friendly infrastructure, and culturally relevant programme design. These elements are essential to ensure that art and cultural tourism initiatives are not only feasible but also aligned with broader community development goals.

Theoretical Perspectives: TBL and SEM

To further understand the sustainability and implementation of these initiatives, this study adopts the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) and Social-Ecological Model (SEM) as guiding theoretical frameworks. The TBL framework defines sustainability through the integration of social, economic, and environmental dimensions (Elkington, 1997). These dimensions, in art and cultural tourism, are related to social empowerment and well-being, economic viability through income generation, and the preservation of cultural and heritage resources (Throsby, 2001; United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2024). This framework also allows for assessing how cultural initiatives can simultaneously enhance quality of life, support supplementary income, and sustain cultural assets in the development of senior citizens' services. Nevertheless, striking a balance across these dimensions demands institutional aid, the appropriate design of programmes, and adequate resource allocation, especially in community-based settings (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2012).

According to the SEM, the programmes' success is determined by a process of inter-related interactions between levels of social relations, in which programme participation is at individual, interpersonal, institutional, community and policy levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; McLeroy et al., 1988). This model is widely used by research on ageing and community development to identify how participation is shaped as the result of personal and structural influences. In the case of art and cultural tourism projects in senior citizen centres, SEM posits that its effective execution requires not only individual capability or interest, but also organisational competence, cooperative working among agencies, support of communities, and conducive policy environments (Government of Malaysia, 2021; McLeroy et al., 1988).

Synthesis and Research Gap

Relevant works have proven that art and cultural tourism is a potential avenue for sustainable development, cultural preservation, and active ageing. Notwithstanding, empirical research on stakeholder preferences and implementation in senior citizen centres, particularly in the Malaysian scenario, is limited. Furthermore, previous studies have been overwhelmingly results-oriented rather than focusing on institutional feasibility. A critical limitation within this existing body of literature is its heavily decentralized, individual-centric focus, which primarily measures immediate tourist satisfaction or the standalone physiological benefits of creative ageing. This emphasis creates a significant conceptual oversight: it assumes that positive individual well-being outcomes automatically guarantee successful, long-term programmatic implementation without accounting for underlying institutional readiness, structural challenges, or localized administrative capacity.

To bridge this gap, the current study explored stakeholder preferences and offered guidelines for initiatives aimed at stimulating art and cultural tourism in senior citizen centres in Malaysia. Rather than presenting a purely descriptive summary of senior active ageing, this paper establishes a specific research angle that transitioning older adults from passive care recipients to active cultural producers requires a resilient institutional framework capable of converting intangible cultural assets into community-based social enterprises. The TBL and SEM perspectives framed this analysis, yielding context-specific insights on strategies for generating sustainable income and implementing community-based ageing programmes. Building on this gap, the study further develops a conceptual understanding of how such initiatives can be effectively implemented.

Synthesising these strands, this study proposes an integrated framework for sustainable senior-centre cultural tourism. This framework moves beyond descriptive synthesis by critically arguing that the sustainability of active ageing programmes is intrinsically linked to organizational governance. Drawing on a socio-ecological

perspective, it links tourism activities (e.g., arts and heritage programmes) with key outcomes such as social inclusion, improved health, and economic support, through enabling conditions including collaboration, resource availability, infrastructure readiness, cultural identity, and intergenerational engagement. Each of these elements is grounded in the reviewed literature. For instance, maintaining cultural authenticity and heritage value is essential in tourism programme design (Gonwirat et al., 2026), while ensuring appropriate health and safety considerations is critical for supporting older adults' participation (Boonmee & Arimura, 2026).

Overall, this integrated framework highlights how art and cultural tourism can support both the well-being of Malaysian seniors and the institutional sustainability of senior citizen centres, thereby addressing the need for a stronger conceptual foundation. Although the reviewed studies were conducted within broader contexts of cultural tourism, healthy ageing, and community development, their findings remain highly relevant to the present study. As community-based institutions that support older adults' social, educational, and recreational needs, senior citizen centres provide an appropriate setting for adapting these broader concepts into practical and age-appropriate programmes. By establishing this structural lens, art and cultural tourism can be critically contextualised not only to enhance older adults' well-being, but also to address and resolve the systemic financial vulnerabilities and resource dependencies that currently threaten the long-term operational survival of such centres in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive survey was carried out to understand stakeholders' opinions of art and cultural tourism development projects, specifically aimed at the senior citizen centres in Malaysia. The objective of this approach was to extract statistical information regarding initiative preferences and qualitative information regarding salient issues and potential solutions. Therefore, the findings reflect institutional and stakeholder perspectives on programme implementation and sustainability rather than the lived experiences of senior citizens themselves.

Population and Sampling

The study population consisted of official representatives from government-run senior citizen centres under the Department of Social Welfare (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat, JKM), including Pusat Aktiviti Warga Emas (PAWE) and Rumah Seri Kenangan (RSK). Based on official JKM records, a total of $N = 201$ eligible centres were identified nationwide, with one representative from each centre participating in the study. The minimum sample size was determined using the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sample size table, which recommends at least $n = 132$ respondents for a population of 201 at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Prior to data collection, an online briefing was conducted via Google Meet, after which the respondents completed the questionnaire using Google Forms. A total of 142 valid responses were obtained, exceeding the recommended minimum sample size and yielding a response rate of 70.65%.

Instrumentation

Two sections underpin this research questionnaire:

- Part A: A multiple-response checklist that identifies the preferred art and cultural tourism initiatives.
- Part B: An open-ended item inviting comments and suggestions to enhance the project implementation.

The questionnaire items were developed based on previous studies on cultural tourism, active ageing, and community-based programmes. Content validity was reviewed by experts in tourism and ageing studies. A pilot test was conducted to ensure clarity and reliability. The complete layout of the research instrument and specific survey items utilized are provided in the Appendix.

Scope of the Study

This study was based on data derived from analyses of cultural tourism initiatives for senior citizen centres. Two research questions related to stakeholder preferences informed the collection of the descriptive findings. Qualitative recommendations were also made for sustainable income generation. These insights were foundational to creating a wider economic empowerment framework to help guide future implementation.

Data Analysis

The frequency and percentage distributions quantitatively analysed the respondents' preferences for art and cultural tourism initiatives. The dataset was assessed for completeness and accuracy, and SPSS Version 29 (pre-analysis) was used for processing these, generating descriptive statistics and tables. This is important for identifying the main patterns driving the study's non-experimental, descriptive design. Open-ended responses

were obtained from the qualitative data and analysed using Braun & Clarke (2021) six-phase process: familiarisation with the data, initial coding, theme generation, theme review and refinement, as well as narrative reporting. Using ATLAS.ti Version 25.01, qualitative analysis was conducted, allowing for orderly coding and themes. Two researchers independently screened the thematic coding as a means of enhancing the trustworthiness of the themes, with discrepancies resolved by consensus.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research aimed to identify specific art and cultural tourism initiatives suggested by senior citizen centre representatives and gain qualitative information on how these initiatives might be further developed to provide sustainable income generation. These findings combined quantitative ranking with thematic interpretation based on open-ended feedback from the respondents.

Respondents' Profile

This study gathered 142 valid responses from the official representatives of senior citizen centres in Malaysia. These responses were obtained via an online meeting held on 17 June 2025 in Google Meet, where the purpose of the study, methods and ethical considerations were explained to the participants. Informed consent was obtained from the respondents to ensure better geographical representation and to ensure that respondents were fully aware of the survey. The study respondents have a broad diversity in terms of demographics and industries. Most of them were under 40 years of age (43.0%), followed by those between 40-50 years old (29.6%). Based on the age groups, the majority of the employees serving or working at senior citizen centres were young and in their early or mid-career path. About 85.2% were women. This gender profile is in line with the social welfare and community care institutions in Malaysia. Similarly, more than 50% had post-secondary education (Diploma/Bachelor's), suggesting that the level of education is sufficient for delivery and management of the programme. A majority of the respondents (86.6%) were from Pusat Aktiviti Warga Emas (PAWE), followed by Rumah Seri Kenangan (RSK) and other community-based organisations. The geographical distribution across Peninsular and East Malaysia suggests a wide coverage in Malaysia. From an organisational perspective, most of the individuals were managers or supervisors, followed by welfare officers, volunteers, committee members, and support staff. Regarding experience, many respondents had below three years of service with elderly communities. A smaller percentage had more than a decade's experience, thus balancing new perspectives with institutional knowledge.

Quantitative Findings

This section describes descriptive findings on the stakeholders' preference for art and cultural tourism programmes for providing sustainable income generation in senior citizen centres. Given that the respondents could choose from more than one option, the resulting percentage and frequency numbers reflect multiple-response counts rather than the number of respondents per item. Handicraft making and workshops, which were the most highly-endorsed initiative, as presented in Table 1, indicate that stakeholders favour hands-on, skill-oriented activities that are culturally grounded and feasible to implement in community settings. Subsequently, cultural food and culinary experiences was indicative of food-based heritage activities' role in encouraging the public to become involved and generating additional income. Moderate support for participatory cultural activities, namely demonstrations of traditional games, cultural festivals or thematic events, and storytelling or guided tours of heritage, suggests diverse yet complementary pathways for programme development.

Table 1. Ranking of Preferred Art and Cultural Tourism Initiatives by Frequency and Percentage Distribution

Rank	Type of Art & Cultural Tourism Initiative	Frequency (responses)	Percentage (%)
1	Handicraft Making and Workshops	95	26
2	Cultural Food and Culinary Experiences	67	18
3	Traditional Games Demonstrations	56	15
4	Cultural Festivals or Thematic Events	44	12
5	Heritage Storytelling or Guided Tours	41	11
6	Traditional Dance or Music Performances	40	11
7	Visual Art Exhibitions	27	7

Note. Respondents could select more than one option; percentages are based on total selections (multiple responses).

Overall, the pattern of responses suggests that stakeholders favour initiatives that integrate cultural authenticity, practical skill utilisation, and market accessibility. Compared to passive or exhibition-based activities,

interactive and experiential ones were more viable for generating income. These preferences allow stakeholders in senior citizen centres to focus on community-oriented and participatory cultural programmes.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings derived from open-ended responses and thematically analysed via Braun & Clarke (2021) six-phase approach generated eight interconnected themes on stakeholders' perspectives regarding the factors influencing the art and cultural tourism initiatives implementation in senior citizen centres. To indicate the relative emphasis of each theme, the frequency of coded references (f) was examined, as a single response could contribute to multiple themes.

Saliency of Qualitative Themes

The frequency of coded references for each of the qualitative themes was also analysed to increase analytical transparency and highlight the relative emphasis of issues raised by the respondents. Qualitative data were examined with ATLAS.ti Version 25.01 for systematic coding, developing themes, and identifying frequency retrieval. Notably, the reported frequencies refer to the number of coded references, and not the respondents, as individual responses could contribute to multiple themes. Table 2 presents the distribution of themes.

Table 2. Frequency of Coded References by Qualitative Theme

Theme	Frequency of Coded References (f)	Relative Emphasis
Collaboration & Partnerships	18	High
Funding & Resources	15	High
Programme Innovation & Activities	13	High
Infrastructure & Facilities	11	Moderate-High
Cultural Identity & Heritage	10	Moderate
Constraints & Health Considerations	9	Moderate
Youth & Inter-generational Engagement	7	Moderate-Low
Positive Feedback & Support	6	Supporting

The most relevant themes were Collaboration and Partnerships (f = 18) and Funding and Resources (f = 15). Consequently, institutional support and financial capacity were key to the success of programme delivery. The following domains of Programme Innovation and Activities (f = 13) and Infrastructure and Facilities (f = 11) illustrated the practice in relation to programme design and organisational preparedness. Cultural Identity and Heritage (f = 10) and Constraints and Health Considerations (f = 9) exhibited moderate importance, which emphasises the need to find a compromise between cultural preservation and age-appropriate programme design. Themes that supported long-term sustainability and stakeholder acceptance included Youth and Inter-generational Engagement (f = 7) and Positive Feedback and Support (f = 6).

Thematic Discussion

At the Collaboration and Partnerships level, the stakeholders regard multi-agency cooperation as an indispensable means to sustain their initiatives. Much attention is paid to jointly working with tourism authorities, cultural institutions and the education sector for knowledge, visibility, and resources. Funding and resources also reflect issues concerning the programme continuity. Ongoing financial support is required to go beyond short-term or impromptu initiatives. Programme Innovation and Activities and Infrastructure and Facilities highlight the necessity of innovative, feasible programming supported by appropriate spaces, tools, and competent facilitators. Stakeholders preferred participatory and experiential activities capable of involving both seniors and the wider community. Meanwhile, Cultural Identity and Heritage heralded senior citizens as "keepers of traditional knowledge", with art and cultural tourism serving as a mechanism for heritage conservation and income generation. Constraints and health elements also stress the need to develop physically feasible programmes that cater to elderly people's welfare. Youth and Inter-generational Engagement was less frequently cited, but provided a futuristic dimension. Cultural transmission and programme sustainability should be expanded by adopting inter-generational collaboration. While not being a dominant theme, Positive Feedback and Support may provide evidence of stakeholder readiness for and acceptance of the initiative, rendering implementation more feasible.

Integrated Results and Discussion

Both the quantitative and qualitative findings can be merged to comprehend the stakeholder views of art and cultural tourism programmes for sustainable income generation in senior citizen centres. Empirically, the respondents indicate a preference for practical, participatory interventions, namely handicraft making and workshops alongside cultural food and culinary experiences. These feasible and culturally-embedded initiatives

can be effectively incorporated into established community contexts. Therefore, there exists a strong preference for experiential activities, which indicates that income-generating programmes should be promoted when senior participant(s) are actively engaged and share their skills and cultural knowledge. Stakeholders perceived that senior participants could play more active roles in sharing skills and cultural knowledge within community-based programmes. These quantitative trends are supported by qualitative data, which show that collaboration, funding, and programme design are essential factors in determining the success of initiatives. Collaborative and partnership-based models acknowledge that senior citizen centres are not necessarily technically knowledgeable, market ready, or have promotional capacities to support a stand-alone cultural tourism initiative. Partnerships with cultural agencies, tourism bodies, and community organisations were cited as a key element of maintaining growth and extending programmes. Stakeholders must also have a consistent funding stream accessible to develop these into sustainable income-generating programmes. The preferences of stakeholders are also taken into account via programme innovation and infrastructure preparedness. Respondents intend to have broader creative initiatives in accordance with culture via proper facilities, spaces, and skilled facilitators. Thus, the feasibility of art and cultural tourism is not only dependent on the activities, but also on institutions' capacity to realise them.

To critically clarify the dynamics of sustainable income generation, this study explicitly notes that external funding and support are not conceptualized as permanent or long-term structural solutions for sustainability. Relying on ongoing external grants often perpetuates institutional vulnerability. Instead, drawing from the SEM, this study posits that external funding must be structurally treated as transactional 'seed capital'. Initial financial injections from governing bodies should be strategically restricted to building age-friendly infrastructure, purchasing equipment, and establishing commercial market linkages. True sustainability is achieved when senior citizen centres leverage this initial support to transition into self-contained, community-led social enterprises that generate their own steady revenue streams through the monetization of interactive workshops and heritage products.

This emphasis on cultural identity and heritage makes seniors the keepers of traditional knowledge. Stakeholders perceived that cultural tourism initiatives have the potential to support livelihood opportunities while contributing to cultural preservation. Health and physical limitations are moderators that stress the need for age-appropriate programmes that prioritise the health and wellness of older adults. Though underreported, inter-generational involvement may be sustainable over time. Collaborations between older adults and younger ones would provide the space for cultural transmission and increase the potential audience. If structural and resource barriers are tackled, positive response and stakeholder endorsement may indicate readiness for implementation. In summary, art and cultural tourism interventions in senior citizen centres may be most economically viable if there is participation in cultural activities and institutional and infrastructural support in addition to health and capacity considerations. These views resonate with sustainable approaches for balanced social and economic outcomes in community-based settings.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

The thematic findings of this study demonstrate that organisational and institutional factors play a critical role in determining the sustainability of art and cultural tourism initiatives in senior citizen centres. The most emphasised themes, namely Collaboration and Partnerships ($f = 18$) and Funding and Resources ($f = 15$), indicate that stakeholders perceive multi-sector cooperation and financial sustainability as essential prerequisites for successful programme implementation. Similar findings have been reported in community-based tourism studies across Southeast Asia, where partnerships between local communities, cultural organisations, tourism agencies, and government institutions were found to strengthen programme continuity and enhance community participation (Chong & Balasingam, 2019). In Thailand, studies on heritage and cultural tourism also revealed that collaborative governance and institutional support are key determinants of sustainable tourism planning, particularly in projects involving local cultural communities (Gonwirat et al., 2026). The current findings therefore suggest that senior citizen centres in Malaysia similarly require external institutional networks and strategic support systems to sustain long-term cultural tourism initiatives.

The importance of Funding and Resources further reinforces previous findings that financial limitations remain among the primary barriers to sustaining ageing-related community programmes. Previous studies in ageing tourism contexts have shown that many community-based initiatives struggle due to dependence on short-term grants and insufficient operational funding (Mahamad Najib & A. Rahman, 2025). Similar concerns were observed in studies conducted in Indonesia and Thailand, where sustainable tourism programmes required continuous financial investment, sponsorship, and infrastructural support to remain operational. In the present study, stakeholders highlighted the need for ongoing financial assistance, indicating that sustainable income generation cannot rely solely on voluntary participation or temporary project-based support. This reflects broader

regional concerns regarding the institutional sustainability of ageing-support programmes.

Themes related to Programme Innovation and Activities ($f = 13$) and Infrastructure and Facilities ($f = 11$) further demonstrate the importance of organisational preparedness in implementing cultural tourism initiatives. Stakeholders preferred participatory and experiential activities that actively involve both senior citizens and the wider community. These findings are consistent with studies on creative tourism and active ageing, which emphasise that interactive cultural activities contribute more effectively to engagement, social participation, and programme sustainability than passive exhibition-based approaches (Richards, 2018). Research on senior tourism participation also suggests that older adults increasingly value meaningful and socially engaging activities that encourage interaction and cultural learning (Carrera, 2025). Similar observations have been reported in Japan and South Korea, where age-friendly cultural programmes were designed around experiential learning, traditional crafts, and intergenerational community interaction. In this regard, the current findings indicate that senior citizen centres in Malaysia require not only creative programme ideas but also adequate facilities, trained facilitators, and age-appropriate infrastructure to ensure effective implementation.

The theme of Cultural Identity and Heritage ($f = 10$) highlights the role of senior citizens as custodians of traditional knowledge and cultural memory. Stakeholders perceived art and cultural tourism as an opportunity to preserve local heritage while simultaneously supporting income-generating activities. Comparable findings have been identified in ASEAN cultural tourism studies, where elderly communities played important roles in sustaining traditional food practices, storytelling traditions, handicrafts, and local cultural performances (Chong & Balasingam, 2019). In Thailand and Vietnam, heritage tourism initiatives involving older adults were also found to strengthen cultural continuity while creating opportunities for local economic participation. The present findings therefore support the notion that cultural tourism initiatives in senior citizen centres may contribute not only to economic sustainability but also to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage within local communities.

Meanwhile, Constraints and Health Considerations ($f = 9$) indicate the need to balance programme participation with the physical and emotional well-being of older adults. Previous studies on active ageing and senior tourism have consistently highlighted that mobility limitations, health conditions, and accessibility concerns significantly influence elderly participation in tourism-related activities (Hu et al., 2023). Similar findings have been reported in studies on senior-friendly tourism destinations, which emphasise the importance of safety, accessibility, and age-sensitive programme planning (Liew et al., 2021). Therefore, while stakeholders recognised the potential benefits of art and cultural tourism initiatives, they also acknowledged the importance of designing activities that are physically manageable, socially inclusive, and supportive of elderly welfare.

Although Youth and Inter-generational Engagement ($f = 7$) received comparatively lower emphasis, stakeholders recognised its importance in ensuring long-term sustainability and cultural transmission. Previous research in community-based cultural tourism suggests that intergenerational collaboration strengthens knowledge sharing, community cohesion, and public participation (Ji et al., 2025). Similar approaches have been adopted in Singapore and Japan, where collaborative activities between youths and older adults were introduced to sustain traditional arts and cultural practices. In the Malaysian context, the present findings suggest that involving younger generations may increase programme visibility, expand audience engagement, and support the continuity of cultural heritage practices within senior citizen centres.

Finally, Positive Feedback and Support ($f = 6$), although less dominant, reflects stakeholder readiness and acceptance towards implementing art and cultural tourism initiatives. Similar findings were identified in studies on community tourism development, where positive institutional attitudes and stakeholder commitment were found to influence implementation success and programme sustainability. Collectively, these findings indicate that the sustainability of art and cultural tourism initiatives in senior citizen centres depends not only on cultural activities themselves, but also on broader institutional, financial, infrastructural, and intergenerational support systems. The findings further demonstrate that the Malaysian experience shares similarities with broader ASEAN and international discussions on active ageing, community-based tourism, and sustainable cultural development.

CONCLUSION

The current findings revealed that the most feasible strategies related to art and cultural tourism development for senior citizen centres were based on participatory cultural practices, institutions working in collaboration, and supportive infrastructure that complements health and capacity dimensions. These findings conform with a sustainable framework for generating equitable socioeconomic outcomes at the community level. This research reinforced stakeholder support for art and cultural tourism initiatives as viable strategies for sustainable income generation and programme development in Malaysian senior citizen centres.

Crucially, this study explicitly resolves its overarching research questions regarding stakeholder strategic preferences and the operational mechanisms required for genuine programmatic sustainability.

In response to the first research question concerning preferred initiatives, the majority of stakeholders preferred participative, skill-based approaches, especially in terms of handicraft making, cooking, and other interactive cultural experiences. Thus, the implementation of programmes developed based on lived experience and cultural knowledge is viewed as practical and appropriate. By establishing a clear descriptive hierarchy, these choices prove that interactive, experiential cultural interventions are favored over passive showcases.

In response to the second research question regarding how these initiatives can be structurally sustained without causing external dependency, the data demonstrate that long-term viability relies on a hybrid socio-ecological model. True financial resilience within these centers requires leveraging initial external grants purely as developmental seed capital rather than recurring operational crutches. Financial sustainability must be structurally secured by forming cross-sector partnerships for wider market reach, designing innovative and adaptive activities, and deploying age-friendly infrastructure that systematically respects the health limitations of the elderly while honoring their roles as active custodians of heritage.

On practical grounds, this study informs policymakers, practitioners, and community organisations on the need for culturally-grounded, age-appropriate income-generating initiatives. The present study documented a segment of a broader research project. However, future scholars aiming to examine longer-term social and economic impacts of art and cultural tourism projects in ageing communities could utilise longitudinal or mixed-method designs to explore their socioeconomic impact. This study focused on the perspectives of institutional representatives rather than senior citizens themselves. Therefore, the findings primarily reflect stakeholder views on programme implementation, organisational readiness, and sustainability considerations in senior citizen centres. Future studies should incorporate the lived experiences and perceptions of older adults to better evaluate the direct impacts of art and cultural tourism initiatives on active ageing and quality of life.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, J. M., Ismail, A., & Yusoff, M. S. B. (2024). Healthy ageing in Malaysia by 2030: Needs, challenges and future directions. *The Malaysian Journal of Medical Sciences: MJMS*, 31(4), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.21315/mjms2024.31.4.1>
- Bianchini, F., & Parkinson, M. (Eds.). (1993). Cultural policy and urban regeneration: The West European experience. Manchester University Press.
- Boonmee, C., & Arimura, M. (2026). Enhancing cultural tourism performance through data-driven evaluation: A hybrid MCDM-machine learning approach in Northern Thailand. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2025.2598891>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Thematic analysis: A practical guide. SAGE Publication Ltd. <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/thematic-analysis/book248481>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Harvard University Press.
- Carrera, L. (2025). AGE TOURISM: going beyond health and “triple S” tourism toward a new request of journey. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 9, 1395405. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2024.1395405>
- Chacur, K., Serrat, R., & Villar, F. (2022). Older adults' participation in artistic activities: A scoping review. *European Journal of Ageing*, 19(4), 931-944. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-022-00708-z>
- Chong, K. Y., & Balasingam, A. S. (2019). Tourism sustainability: Economic benefits and strategies for preservation and conservation of heritage sites in Southeast Asia. *Tourism Review*, 74(2), 268-279. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-11-2017-0182>
- Duxbury, N., & Jeannotte, M. S. (2012). Including culture in sustainability: an assessment of Canada's Integrated Community Sustainability Plans. *International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development*, 4(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19463138.2012.670116>
- Elkington, J. (1997). *Cannibals with Forks: The triple bottom line of 21st century business*. Capstone.
- Gonwirat, S., Pitakaso, R., Khonjun, S., Srichok, T., Kaewta, C., Boonmee, C., ... Jirasirilerd, G. (2026). A fuzzy-integrated hybrid gradient-boosted AI system for resilient, safe, and sustainable heritage tourism planning. *Computers & Industrial Engineering*, 214, 111798. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cie.2025.111798>
- Goodwin, H., & Santilli, R. (2009). *Community-based tourism: A success?* 1-37. Retrieved from https://travolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/CBT_a-success-harold-goodwin-1.pdf
- Government of Malaysia. (2021). *Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021-2025)*. Putrajaya: Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department. Retrieved from <https://rmke12.ekonomi.gov.my/>
- Hu, F., Wen, J., Phau, I., Ying, T., Aston, J., & Wang, W. (2023). The role of tourism in healthy aging: An interdisciplinary literature review and conceptual model. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 56, 356-366. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2023.07.013>
- Ji, R., Sheng, Y., Zheng, C., & Chen, W. (2025). The impact of cultural leisure activities participation on older adults' subjective well-being: An empirical study in China. *BMC Public Health*, 25(1), 3686. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-025-24986-1>
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607-610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003000308>
- Liew, S. L., Hussin, S. R., & Abdullah, N. H. (2021). Attributes of senior-friendly tourism destinations for current and future senior tourists: An importance-performance analysis approach. *Sage Open*, 11(1), 2158244021998658. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244021998658>
- Liu, Y. L., Chiang, J. T., & Ko, P. F. (2023). The benefits of tourism for rural community development. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 137. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01610-4>
- McLeroy, K. R., Bibeau, D., Steckler, A., & Glanz, K. (1988). An ecological perspective on health promotion programs. *Health Education Quarterly*, 15(4), 351-377. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109019818801500401>
- Md Isa, F., Noor, S., Wei Wei, G., Syed Hussain, S. D. B., Mohamad Ibrahim, H., & Ahmdon, M. A. S. (2022). Exploring the facet of elderly care centre in multiethnic Malaysia. *PSU Research Review*, 6(1), 17-38. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PRR-05-2020-0013>
- Ministry of Women, F. and C. D. (KPWKM). (2024). *Senior citizens policy Malaysia*. Retrieved from <https://www.malaysia.gov.my/en/categories/law--safety/vulnerable-groups/national-policy-for-senior-citizens>

- Mohammad Mazani, N. Z. A., Abdul Aziz, M. N., Ibrahim, N. H., Ramlie, M. K., & Dzulkifly, N. A. (2025). Art and cultural tourism for sustainable income: A conceptual framework for Senior Citizen Centres in Malaysia. *Ideology Journal*, 10(2), 560-568. <https://doi.org/10.24191/ideology.v10i2.845>
- Mahamad Najib, N. N., & A. Rahman, M. A. (2025). Community willingness and readiness for cultural heritage tourism: The Case of Kampung Chitty, Malacca historic city, Malaysia. *Journal of Contemporary Tourism and Hospitality Research (JoCTH)*, 1(1), 268-293. <https://doi.org/10.31436/jocth.v1i1.23>
- Richards, G. (2018). Cultural tourism: A review of recent research and trends. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 36, 12-21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2018.03.005>
- Richards, G., & Raymond, C. (2000). Creative Tourism.
- Richards, G., & Raymond, C. (2000). Creative tourism. *ATLAS news*, 23(8), 16-20. <https://10.17605/OSF.IO/YWEG7>
- Throsby, D. (2001). Economics and Culture. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/YWEG7>
- United Nations. (2021). *UN decade of healthy ageing: Plan of action*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/decade-of-healthy-ageing-plan-of-action>
- United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2024). *World Tourism Barometer*. Retrieved from <https://www.untourism.int/node/14904>
- World Health Organisation. (2002). Active ageing: A policy framework. Retrieved from <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/active-ageing-a-policy-framework/>
- World Health Organization. (2021). *WHO's work on the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030)*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/initiatives/decade-of-healthy-ageing>

ETHICAL DECLARATION

Conflict of interest: All authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding this work. **Peer review:** Double anonymous peer review. **Acknowledgment:** We would like to express our gratitude to the Ministry of Higher Education (KPT) Malaysia for the funding this research through the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) with the grant no. FRGS/1/2024/SSIO8/UITM/02/1. Special thanks are extended to the Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM) for their valuable support and cooperation throughout this research. **Ethics Statement:** This study received ethical approval from the UiTM Research Ethics Committee (REC) under reference number REC/09/2025 (ST/MR/181). **Author contributions:** All authors contributed to the study conception, design, data collection, analysis, and manuscript preparation. **AI usage statement:** All authors contributed to the study conception, design, data collection, analysis, and manuscript preparation.

APPENDIX

Research Questionnaire

1. Which of the following types of Art and Cultural Tourism Initiatives do you recommend for generating sustainable income at Senior Citizen Centres? (You may tick more than one)

- Traditional Dance or Music Performances
- Handicraft Making and Workshops (e.g. batik, weaving, wood carving)
- Cultural Food and Culinary Experiences
- Heritage Storytelling or Guided Tours
- Visual Art Exhibitions (e.g. painting, sculpture by senior artists)
- Traditional Games Demonstrations or Participation
- Cultural Festivals or Thematic Events
- Others (please specify): _____

2. Do you have any comments or suggestions to improve the implementation of Art and Cultural Tourism Initiatives for Senior Citizen Centres?