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Remo-Yosakoi Festival 2023 as a Media For Surabaya Tourism Promotion

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to explore how the 2023 Remo-Yosakoi Festival was utilized as a tool for tourism promotion and to understand its impact on Surabaya's image at the global level. This research employs a qualitative method with a focus on primary data analysis, obtained through interviews with representatives from the Surabaya Department of Culture, Youth, Sports, and Tourism, as well as documentation from the festival activities. The findings indicate that the Remo-Yosakoi Festival 2023 has the potential to significantly enhance Surabaya's tourism appeal by showcasing the city's cultural identity to an international audience, particularly in Japan. Additionally, the festival strengthens bilateral relations between Indonesia and Japan, although there is still room for further development in long-term tourism promotion strategies. In conclusion, the 2023 Remo-Yosakoi Festival plays a strategic role in supporting cultural diplomacy and tourism promotion in Surabaya. Through cross-cultural collaboration between Indonesia and Japan, the festival not only fosters intercity relations but also successfully presents local arts and traditions to an international audience. By offering a unique and inclusive performance, the festival contributes to shaping Surabaya's image as a culturally diverse and attractive tourist destination.

Keywords: *Remo-Yosakoi Festival 2023; Tourism Promotion; Cultural Diplomacy*

INTRODUCTION

Surabaya is the second-largest metropolitan city in Indonesia, often associated as a center of industry, trade, and logistics (Abidin et al., 2024; Prasutiyon et al., 2025). However, behind its busy economy, Surabaya also holds cultural riches that continue to be developed and introduced to the world. In recent years, the Surabaya City Government has become increasingly serious about developing the tourism sector, not only as a complement to the city's economy, but also as a face that it wants to show to the international community (Putri, 2025). One of the strategies used is to organize cross-cultural events involving partner countries, including Japan through sister city relations with Kochi City (Rochman & Hudalah, 2020). One of the most prominent forms of cultural collaboration is the organization of the Remo-Yosakoi Festival, which in 2023 was a special momentum because it also commemorated the 25th anniversary of the sister city relationship between Surabaya and Kochi (CLAIR, 2025). Remo dance itself is being preserved and promoted, used not only in local ceremonies but also as inspiration in creative industry, for example in creating new batik motifs and as part of character education in schools, reflecting its dynamic forms and heroic values (Indarti, Wahyuningsih, & Peng, 2023; Dawana, Safitri, & Admoko, 2023; Rahelia, 2025; Salim et al., 2023).

In the context of destination promotion through a cultural diplomacy approach, cross-cultural activities have the potential to be a strategy for building a city's image at the global level. One concrete form of this strategy can be seen in the holding of the 2023 Remo-Yosakoi Festival, which not only functions as a performing arts event, but also

develops into a medium for cultural diplomacy in introducing Surabaya as an international tourist destination. In this context, culture is no longer just an artifact or performance, but becomes an active instrument to build a city's image, form cooperation networks, and attract the attention of foreign and local tourists (Dutta, 2023; Pramono, 2025). This kind of diplomacy, known as "cultural diplomacy," utilizes cultural elements such as dance, music, and culinary arts to bridge relations between nations, while raising the tourist attraction of a region (Xu, 2024; Putri, Raharyo, & Hikam, 2021).

The Remo-Yosakoi Festival returned in 2023 after being suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic, marking the resumption of cultural diplomacy efforts through cross-cultural performances in Surabaya (Hanita, 2024). Public and government enthusiasm for the return of the Remo-Yosakoi Festival was very high, especially with the direct presence of a delegation from the city of Kochi, Japan, which numbered 39 people. This delegation consisted not only of government officials, but also UMKM entrepreneurs, representatives from CLAIR Singapore, and the Consulate General of Japan. In various series of events, the delegation was actively involved in city tours, the opening of the Cross Culture Festival, and became guests of honor at the Remo-Yosakoi Festival (Eljatin, Sumadinata, & Sari, 2025). This collaboration shows that destination promotion is not only carried out through brochures or social media, but can be strengthened through the direct presence of international partners in the local cultural scene, mirroring patterns in other Indonesian festivals where in-person foreign participation boosts destination image and tourist interest (Bagaskara & Syuryansyah, 2025; Viartasiwi, 2021).

The main attraction of the festival lies in the meeting of two distinct but harmonious cultural elements: the *Remo* dance, which is part of the East Java tradition, and the *Yosakoi* dance of Japan, which is full of passion and dynamic movement. The union of these two cultures is not just an entertainment show, but reflects the values of inclusivity, openness, and the spirit of collaboration across nations. Activities like this open up space for local people to get to know foreign cultures firsthand, and conversely, provide an experience for foreign delegates to immerse themselves in Indonesian culture in a warm and friendly atmosphere. Interactions like this certainly have a long-term impact in building emotional closeness between the two cities, and ultimately, become the foundation for broader cooperation in the fields of economy, education, and of course tourism.

This activity also shows that cultural events can have a strategic role in urban development, especially in the context of sustainable tourism promotion. In an interview with Rina Wahyuni, Sub-Coordinator of Arts and Culture Development of the Surabaya City *Disbudporapar*, it was stated that this festival is not just an annual entertainment, but is designed as a form of active involvement of Surabaya in establishing international relations. One of the main goals of this festival is to expand the promotional reach of city destinations to foreign tourists, especially from Japan, which has been a potential market but has not been fully exploited. The participation of *UMKM* entrepreneurs from Kochi is also proof that the cultural agenda can go hand in hand with economic cooperation and

job opportunities, which ultimately brings real benefits to the people of both cities (Wahyuni 2025).

It is undeniable that in the era of globalization like now, tourism promotion can no longer only rely on natural or historical resources. A more creative approach that touches the human emotional side is needed, one of which is through cultural events that are able to present direct experiences and build collective memories. Cross-cultural festivals like *Remo-Yosakoi* offer a new dimension in tourism promotion strategies: combining art, diplomacy, and social interaction on a single stage. Thus, the existence of this event is part of a larger strategy in strengthening Surabaya's position on the national and international tourism map.

Moreover, the sister city cooperation between Surabaya and Kochi that has lasted for two and a half decades is not only built on the basis of formal agreements, but is strengthened by consistent cultural exchanges, such as the participation of art groups in festivals, student exchanges, and apprenticeship programs. This creates a deeper and more lasting relationship, which cannot be built with just ordinary diplomatic meetings. In other words, the *Remo-Yosakoi* Festival is a tangible manifestation of people-to-people diplomatic relations that add value to the promotion of tourism and the city's identity.

Against this background, this study will explore how the 2023 *Remo-Yosakoi* Festival plays a role as an instrument of cultural diplomacy used by the Surabaya City Government to promote its city as an international tourist destination. This research examines the process, involvement of actors, forms of cooperation, and the impact of festivals on public perception and wider cooperation opportunities. This approach is important to understand that tourism promotion today requires a holistic strategy, involving international networks, and utilizing culture as the main bridge of communication between nations.

Several previous studies have analyzed the role of cultural diplomacy in promoting tourism destinations. For instance, Ang et al. (2015) emphasized that cultural diplomacy through international festivals can strengthen people-to-people relations and generate soft power that directly impacts a country's image. Similarly, Ismail and Zawawi (2020) examined cross-cultural festivals in Malaysia, finding that such events not only promote local culture but also create new networks for tourism and business cooperation. However, both studies focused more on the national level and did not specifically address how city governments, particularly in Indonesia, strategically utilize cultural diplomacy for tourism promotion. The novelty of this research lies in highlighting how local governments can position cultural events as sustainable instruments of diplomacy and destination branding.

The objective of this study is to evaluate the festival's role in shaping Surabaya's international image and to identify strategies that strengthen its effectiveness. The benefits of this research are both theoretical—contributing to literature on cultural diplomacy at the city level—and practical, by offering insights for policymakers and cultural organizers in designing cross-cultural events that integrate tourism, diplomacy, and economic cooperation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to examine the role of the 2023 *Remo-Yosakoi* Festival as part of the Surabaya City tourism destination promotion strategy through a cross-cultural approach. The main focus of this study is to understand how the Surabaya City Government frames and utilizes the festival as a means of cultural diplomacy and an effort to improve the city's image as a tourist destination. To achieve this goal, this study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, which allows researchers to explore the social context and promotional strategies implemented. Data were obtained through interviews with relevant officials and analysis of festival activity documentation.

Approaches and Types of Research

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore the tourism promotion strategies implemented through the 2023 *Remo-Yosakoi* Festival, which allows researchers to observe social and cultural phenomena as a whole. The main goal is not to measure, but to understand in depth how an event—in this case the *Remo-Yosakoi* Festival—is conceived, run, and utilized as a means of promoting the destination. This research is a case study, as the main focus is on only one specific event that occurred in a specific location and time. Case studies allow researchers to explore tourism promotion narratives and strategies in depth, not just on the surface.

Research Location and Time

The research was conducted in the city of Surabaya, with the main focus on the Culture, Youth, Sports and Tourism Office (*Disbudporapar*) of the City of Surabaya as a key factor in the implementation of the festival. This research lasted from January to April 2025, including data collection, internal document review, and the preparation of a narrative of field findings. The selection of this location is inseparable from Surabaya's position as the host of the festival and the implementer of the promotional strategy studied.

Techniques and Data Sources

The data sources in this study are divided into two main categories, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through a direct interview with Rina Wahyuni, Sub-Coordinator of Arts and Cultural Development of the Surabaya *Disbudporapar*, as well as from official documents of activities issued by the agency. The documents include reports on the implementation of festivals, planning of cross-cultural activities, and archives of communication with foreign parties, especially from the city of Kochi, Japan. This data provides a comprehensive overview of strategies, expectations, and the role of culture in promoting Surabaya tourism. Secondary data came from literature studies, especially relevant academic journals published in the last five years. This literature helps to strengthen the framework of analysis and compare the practices carried out by Surabaya with tourism promotion approaches in various other places. The

selection of journals was carried out selectively, taking into account their credibility, novelty, and relevance to the major themes of the research.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique was carried out through structured interviews and documentation studies. The interviews were conducted directly to explore information that was not available in the public space, such as the internal motivation of the service, communication strategies, and long-term expectations from the implementation of cross-cultural festivals. Meanwhile, documentation was used to examine evidence of activities and support the results of interviews with archives that are administrative and narrative in nature. Researchers did not make direct observations of the festival due to time constraints and conditions, but the data collected was still sufficient to fully describe the process through information from key actors and official documents.

Data Analysis Techniques

In this study, data analysis was carried out through three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction is the process of selecting and simplifying information obtained from interviews and documents, with the aim of highlighting important aspects relevant to the focus of the research. Furthermore, the reduced data is presented in the form of a structured narrative, allowing for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The final stage is the drawing of conclusions, where the researcher interprets the data that has been presented to identify patterns or themes that emerge, in accordance with the research objectives that focus on tourism promotion strategies through cross-cultural activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of field research conducted by researchers while participating in the MBKM internship program at the Culture, Youth and Sports and Tourism Office (Disbudporapar) of Surabaya City. The 2023 Remo-Yosakoi Festival is an important milestone in the cross-cultural tourism promotion strategy carried out by the Surabaya City Culture, Youth and Sports and Tourism Office (Disbudporapar). Through a series of planned activities, Surabaya not only presents art performances, but also wraps cultural diplomacy in a warm, open, and friendly format for local people and foreign visitors alike. This research found that the 2023 Remo-Yosakoi Festival is designed not only as an art event, but as a strategic tool to introduce the city's attractiveness through cultural cooperation with international partners, especially the city of Kochi, Japan.

In the series of festivals that took place from the beginning to the end of July 2023, there were a number of important agendas that were part of cultural diplomacy as well as a means of tourism promotion. Some of the key activities include a city tour to the Wonorejo Mangrove tourist area and Surabaya Kriya Gallery (SKG), the opening parade of the Cross Culture Festival, collaborative dance performances in the Remo-Yosakoi Festival, the Kochi delegation's honorary visit to the Mayor of Surabaya, a reception to

celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Surabaya-Kochi sister city cooperation, and a meeting forum with local UMKM actors.

The city tour to Mangrove Wonorejo and Surabaya Kriya Gallery provided a first-hand experience to the delegation of guests from Japan about the richness of ecotourism and the potential of the local creative economy in Surabaya. The well-managed mangrove forest shows that the city has a well-maintained natural destination and can be further developed as a sustainable tourist destination. Meanwhile, a visit to Surabaya Kriya Gallery showed how local craft and handicraft products are promoted in one modern curated space, complete with galleries and UMKM product stores. SKG is not only a showroom, but also a means of branding creative products typical of Surabaya.

The Remo-Yosakoi Festival itself is a central point in tourism promotion. The collaboration between Remo dance from Surabaya and Yosakoi from Kochi brings together two cultural identities on one stage. This combination is not only entertaining, but also a symbol of cooperation and openness between nations. In an interview with Rina Wahyuni, Sub-Coordinator of Arts and Culture Development of Disbudporapar, it was conveyed that the selection of this cross-cultural concept was deliberately chosen because it could create a strong emotional attraction and build closeness between local communities and foreign cultures. On the other hand, local cultures such as Remo can appear contextually in international forums.

In addition to the performance, diplomatic activities such as an honorary visit to the Mayor's office and a reception celebrating sister city relations also emphasized that these cultural ties are not only ceremonial, but have strategic value in strengthening the global city network. The meeting with MSME entrepreneurs from Kochi City is also a real step on how the cultural and tourism sectors can synergize with the creative economy. The meeting opened up business collaboration opportunities between small business actors from the two cities, expanding the economic effects of the festival.

The activity report document from Disbudporapar noted that the implementation of this entire series of events had a positive impact on visits to various surrounding tourist destinations. For example, there has been an increase in activity in museums, city parks, and historical sites, especially those on the path that the Cross Culture Festival parade passes. This phenomenon shows that cross-cultural festivals have a significant spillover effect in encouraging interest in tourism exploration within the city. In addition, in terms of media exposure, this event received coverage from various local and national media, and was even raised on a digital platform that reached an international audience. Disbudporapar actively utilizes social media channels, official websites, and local influencer networks to disseminate information and visualization of activities. This strategy shows that Surabaya has included digital elements as part of the promotion of sustainable culture-based tourism.

Overall, the results of this study reveal that the 2023 Remo-Yosakoi Festival is not just a cultural performance, but an ecosystem of activities that touch on aspects of diplomacy, destination promotion, and strengthening networks between communities and local governments. Synergy between the government, artists, the community, and foreign

partners is a key factor in the success of this festival as a medium for tourism promotion. By combining local values and global networks, Surabaya shows how today's tourism promotion can be built through a communicative, creative, and cross-cultural approach. This section discusses the research results with data sets obtained in the field with the concepts explained previously, especially the concept of cultural diplomacy and city branding.

The main focus is to explore how the 2023 Remo-Yosakoi Festival acts as a form of cultural diplomacy that also supports city branding efforts in promoting tourism in the city of Surabaya. This festival is not only a place for cultural performances, but also a means of representation for city diplomacy that is manifested through artistic expression. The collaboration between the Remo Dance from Surabaya and the Yosakoi Dance from Kochi, Japan, provides a symbolic meaning that goes beyond the visuals of the performance. This festival reflects the long-term relationship between the two cities in the sister city bond, and shows that cross-cultural activities can be an effective instrument of diplomacy in the field of tourism. Within the framework of city branding, the 2023 Remo-Yosakoi Festival also strengthens Surabaya's identity as a city that is open to cultural diversity and has a distinctive local character. Through an attractively packaged cultural narrative, this festival contributes to building a stronger city image in the eyes of the international community, making Surabaya not only known as a transit city, but also as a tourist destination that has its own cultural appeal. The year 2023 is an important momentum because the Remo-Yosakoi Festival also commemorates the 25th anniversary of the sister city relationship between Surabaya and Kochi. A delegation from Japan came directly to Surabaya and was greeted with enthusiasm by the local community, the city government, and creative industry players. In that atmosphere, there was not only cultural exchange, but also an exchange of ideas, opportunities for creative business cooperation, and talks about sustainable tourism development. Indirectly, the implementation of this festival has created a positive impression about Surabaya in the eyes of the international community. This is important because in the concept of

cultural diplomacy as described by Zanella, A., Neves Junior, J. A., & Silva, M. (2024), cultural diplomacy functions as a soft power tool that allows countries or cities to build international relations by utilizing cultural elements such as art, festivals, and traditions. In this context, countries introduce their values and way of life to the international world, creating more harmonious relations and influencing the global community's perception of them. When the people and figures from Kochi feel comfortable and inspired during their time in Surabaya, the city's positive image will spread, forming a stronger perception at the international level.

Furthermore, the success of this event is also determined by the communication and promotion strategy carried out by the Surabaya Disbudporapar. Event promotion is carried out digitally through social media, official websites, and local and international partner networks. Event visualizations, activity documentation, and messages delivered during the promotion show the city's professionalism in welcoming and embracing foreign cultures. This approach is very much in line with the characteristics of destination

promotion, which is currently very visual and digitally oriented. Surabaya also shows that cities can be active actors in international relations through city diplomacy. In this concept, the city plays the role of not just an administrative unit, but as a subject with its own interests, strategies, and diplomacy. As G points out, Salome. (2019), Cities are increasingly playing an actor role in contemporary international politics by imitating diplomatic.

Practices, organizing transnational networks, and engaging with international organizations and other international actors. Cross-cultural festivals such as Remo-Yosakoi are the embodiment of this city diplomacy. Surabaya uses its cultural strength to open up discussion spaces, strengthen cooperation, and expand networks with other international actors, both from the public and private sectors. The effect is not only felt by government agencies, but also by people who get the opportunity to interact directly with foreign culture, as well as UMKM who get a stage to introduce their products to the international market.

Another positive impact that is no less important is the opening of opportunities for strengthening the local creative industry. The craft products exhibited at the Surabaya Kriya Gallery (SKG) during the festival attracted the attention of foreign guests, including delegates from Kochi. This shows that cultural diplomacy does not stop on the performance stage, but seeps into other sectors that have the potential to boost people's economic growth. In other words, art is the gateway to diplomacy, and diplomacy paves the way for local development. However, this success must also be seen critically. One of the big challenges that are still faced is how to maintain the sustainability of initiatives like this. Festivals can be a busy seasonal event for a while, but they don't leave a mark if they are not followed by a systematic follow-up strategy. Therefore, the city government needs to develop a strategic plan to make cross-cultural.

festivals part of Surabaya's tourism promotion regular calendar, including formalizing post-event cooperation with international partners. In the context of cultural diplomacy development, Surabaya can also learn from other cities that have successfully elevated cultural festivals as their global identity. For example, the city of Busan in South Korea with the Busan International Film Festival, or Melbourne with the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival. Both are not only a performance venue, but also a business platform, an exchange of expertise, and branding for the city globally.

This is where the importance of strengthening event management and more integrated tourism promotion institutions is important. Human Right training, the formation of cross- disciplinary creative teams, and collaboration between related agencies such as culture, economy, transportation, and trade, are important steps so that activities such as the Remo-Yosakoi Festival do not run alone. Cities also need to open up more space for community involvement. Dance, cultural, youth, and even international student communities in Surabaya can be more actively involved in the process of preparing for the implementation of the festival. This will strengthen the community's sense of ownership of the event, and at the same time enrich the experience of the foreign guests who come.

In the concept of city branding, as stated by Kavaratzis (2013), a city that is able to consistently align its identity message through various channels (cultural events, city planning, visual communication, and public services) will be more easily recognized and remembered by the global audience. The Remo-Yosakoi festival can be a powerful city branding tool, as long as it is carried out consistently, professionally packaged, and associated with the city's grand narrative as a center of international cultural collaboration. The 2023 Remo-Yosakoi Festival is more than just a cultural celebration. It is a diplomatic strategy, a tourism promotion tool, and a real means of strengthening international cooperation.36 Surabaya, through this festival, is building a strong cultural bridge with the outside world, while strengthening its identity as an inclusive, creative, and globally competitive city.

Another aspect that should also be observed in the use of the Remo-Yosakoi Festival as an instrument of cultural diplomacy and tourism promotion is public involvement, both directly and indirectly. In practice, this festival not only displays cultural performances, but also opens up space for people to interact with other cultures more closely. The local people who watch the parades and performances are not only spectators, but also part of the cross-border cultural atmosphere. This is a form of cultural diplomacy that is not elitist, but touches directly to the grassroots level. This is in line with the concept people-to-people diplomacy, which emphasizes the importance of community involvement in building relationships between regions, especially in the.

Context of city cooperation.39 This approach allows diplomacy to run more fluidly, involving cultural exchanges and social experiences between citizens, thereby strengthening the network of inter-city paradiplomacy. Cross-cultural festivals like Remo-Yosakoi can build emotional knots between the people of Surabaya and international guests, especially from Japan. This kind of interaction, although seemingly trivial, actually forms a positive perception of Indonesia in the eyes of the international community, as well as creates a sense of belonging to the common cultural heritage.

Furthermore, in the context of city diplomacy, the Remo-Yosakoi Festival can be seen as a representation of the city's ability to establish international networks independently, separate from the central government's foreign policy. The Surabaya City Government, through the Disbudporapar, is actively building a relationship with the Kochi City Government—the sister city of Surabaya. This relationship is manifested in the form of cultural delegation exchanges, the sending of dance teams, and technical collaboration in organizing the festival. This shows that cities can be independent international actors within the framework of relations between communities.

However, of course, the implementation of cultural diplomacy and destination promotion through cross-cultural festivals is not without challenges. One of the biggest challenges is sustainability and consistency. Although the Remo-Yosakoi Festival has been held for many years, there are still concerns that the event is just an annual routine that has not been fully integrated into Surabaya's long-term tourism promotion strategy. In fact, with more strategic packaging and. Cross-sector support (private, media,

community), this festival has great potential to become the city's flagship product worldwide.

One important thing is to strengthen local narratives. So far, the narrative of the festival tends to center on the element of 'Yosakoi' or Japan, while the element of 'Remo' as a local culture is sometimes not highlighted proportionally. In fact, the combination of these two cultural elements can be a unique, even rare, attraction in itself. If developed creatively, this festival can become a symbol of global and local cultural harmonization, while strengthening Surabaya's identity as an open, tolerant, and rich cultural heritage city. Regarding the aspect of tourism promotion, the Remo-Yosakoi Festival has the potential to strengthen Surabaya's branding as a cultural destination, not just an industrial or transit city. This can be seen from the increasing number of media reports about this festival, both at the local and national levels. However, it should be noted that the news is still mostly ceremonial. A more creative communication strategy is needed, including the use of cultural influencers, travel bloggers, and platforms such as YouTube and TikTok to expand the reach of the audience. This is an opportunity as well as a challenge for Disbudporapar to involve the younger generation as promotional ambassadors who are closer to digital platforms. In the context of international tourism, cross-cultural festivals can also strengthen Indonesia's soft power strategy. As stated by Charles Mbira (2024), soft power is the ability to

influence others through cultural attraction, values, and policies, not through coercion. The Remo-Yosakoi Festival is a potential soft power medium because it promotes the values of peace, cooperation, and cross-cultural appreciation. Through this festival, Indonesia (and especially Surabaya) can show a friendly, creative, and open face to the world. In addition, in terms of local economic development, this festival also opens opportunities for small and medium enterprises (UMKM), especially creative and culinary industry players. In organizing the festival, many UMKM actors are involved in the provision of food, handicrafts, and special souvenirs. This not only supports tourism promotion, but also encourages economic turnaround at the local level. However, the involvement of UMKM can still be maximized if the city government provides assistance schemes, access to capital, and business management training on an ongoing basis.

From the data obtained through interviews with the Sub-Coordinator of Arts and Culture Development of the Surabaya City Disbudporapar, it can be seen that the agency has made various innovative efforts in expanding the impact of the festival. One of them is to explore cooperation with international schools and the Japanese community in Indonesia. It is hoped that this festival will not only become an annual spectacle, but also become part of the city's cultural diplomacy calendar and ongoing cross-cultural education strategy. Furthermore, the implementation of this cross-cultural festival also has an impact on the image of the government institution itself. In the eyes of citizens and international partners, the

Surabaya City Culture, Youth, Sports, and Tourism Office is seen as an active, innovative, and open institution to foreign cooperation. This positive image is important in building trust and expanding collaboration in the future. As is known, many cities in

the world have made cultural reputation an attraction to attract investments, development partners, and international visits. It is a cultural bridge that brings together local and international actors in a creative and peaceful space. This festival is also a strategic instrument of city diplomacy and can be further strengthened through more structured policies, cross-sectoral synergy, and strengthening local narratives. The development of festivals as a tourism promotion platform also opens up new opportunities for Surabaya to increase the competitiveness of destinations at the national and international levels.

CONCLUSION

The 2023 *Remo-Yosakoi* Festival has demonstrated its effectiveness as both a cultural diplomacy instrument and a tourism promotion strategy by fostering meaningful interactions between Surabaya and Kochi, Japan. Beyond showcasing art performances, the festival has created a spirit of togetherness that strengthens international ties and rebrands Surabaya not only as an industrial hub but also as a culturally rich destination. Nevertheless, its sustainability as a tourism asset requires greater integration into long-term city branding strategies that involve the government, private sector, and local communities. To maximize its impact, the festival should be developed into a continuous cultural program, supported by digital technology for global promotion, stronger local storytelling to highlight Surabaya's cultural identity, and expanded collaborations with international partners. By addressing these challenges, the *Remo-Yosakoi* Festival can evolve into a flagship event that consistently contributes to Surabaya's global image, while offering a replicable model of cultural diplomacy and sustainable tourism development.

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