Language maintenance in Sumbawa: Domains in the virtual accessibility of Istana Dalam Loka

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the dynamics of language maintenance at Istana Dalam Loka, focusing on the role of various domains in both physical and virtual access to the site. Utilizing data from Google Search and Google Trends, the research analyzes the prevalence of different domains—tourism, historical and cultural, religious, entertainment, and educational—within the virtual landscape, and compares them to their physical reality. The findings indicate that tourism is the most dominant domain, both in physical and virtual contexts, followed by historical and cultural activities. However, despite the stream of external influences through tourism, the study reveals a strong resistance to language and cultural differences, as the local Sumbawa culture remains deeply rooted in activities conducted at Istana Dalam Loka. This cultural resistance suggests that Sumbawa language and cultures are being maintained through a process similar to a sociolinguistic diversity of 'melting pot,' where diverse languages and cultures are integrated to the Sumbawa language and culture. The study concludes that while virtual access offers an alternative platform for language contact and multicultural engagement, it is primarily locals who both produce and consume activities at Istana Dalam Loka in virtual access. It also ensures the continued dominance of Sumbawa language and culture.

Keywords: domain, Istana Dalam Loka, language maintenance, Sumbawa language and culture, virtual access

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a multilingual country with more than 700 spoken languages as stated by Ethnologue 15. This fact makes Indonesia the 26th country with the most linguistically diverse nation. Language diversity contains the diverse cultural tradition, knowledge, and identity which makes each regional or local language precious and has the urgency to be maintained. It is also strengthened by the fact that the 2019 study conducted by Badan Bahasa (Agency for Language Development and Cultivation) under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of Indonesia found 27 regional languages were vulnerable, 29 regional languages were in decline, 26 regional languages were on the brink of extinction, and 11 regional languages have gone extinct (ANTARA, 2022). The status of regional languages in Indonesia has prompted a call for language maintenance. Not only to preserve the diversity but also to maintain the

local values and traditions in the language. This underlines the complex interplay of the cultural impacts on language perceptions (Kramsch, 1998, 2014). Since each language encapsulates a unique knowledge system, losing language means losing this invaluable knowledge (Ajani et al., 2024). This study examines the language maintenance of Sumbawa language which contains the local knowledge of *Tau Samawa*.

The Sumbawa language is spoken by people in Sumbawa island, Indonesia, shared with Bima language speakers on the island. Although the status of its language is considered stable with a considerably big population of speakers, it has the potential for a language shift. With the influence of Indonesian monolingual policy, the speakers are encouraged to use the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, in almost any circumstances (education, work, hospital, laws, etc). This limits the use of the Sumbawa language to only be spoken in the family and small environments (Septri & Supriadin, 2021). In addition, the study also found the shift of Sumbawa language speakers to its neighboring local languages, Bima and Sasak, caused by multiple factors as migrations or education factors (Aini et al., 2021). Hence, the Sumbawa language needs to be maintained. Various efforts have been made to maintain the Sumbawa language - by expanding its uses to not only be limited in the family and small environments but also be used in other contexts as in the formal contexts of education. When talking about language maintenance, the context here is referred to as domain - the circumstance in which the language is used (Jakobovits, 1985; Yuliana & Yanti, 2023). The study of language maintenance in the Sumbawa language has recently included exploring language attitudes of Sumbawa language speakers outside the area of Sumbawa (Menggo & Suastra, 2020) as well as exploring the factors that cause the Sumbawa language shifts (Aini et al., 2021; Septri & Supriadin, 2021). This study completes previous research about language maintenance for the Sumbawa language with a focus on expanding its accessibility to make the Sumbawa language use accessible to various contexts (or domains).

The embodiment of Sumbawa local culture, Tau Samawa, is reflected in the language of Sumbawa. For Sumbawa people or Tau Samawa, their life philosophy is, "*adat berenti ko syara, syara barenti kitabullah* (traditions are guided by sharia, sharia is guided by the holy book Al Qur'an)." The philosophy shows that the Sumbawa people have this system of knowledge which guides their lives by religious values. It portrays the influence of religion in their every activity. One clear example to observe the religion philosophy in their daily lives is through the "places" they occupy. This can include the traditional houses of the Sumbawa people. As Budiharjo (2018) suggests that a traditional house is a manifestation of behavior, knowledge system, and philosophy of their society. This study chooses a Sumbawa traditional house named Istana Dalam Loka (Dalam Loka Palace).

The Istana Dalam Loka has now changed its function; from a traditional house as a residence for the sultanate (royals) to a traditional house that functions as a museum and is open to the public. The word 'maintenance' in language maintenance has similar goals with the word 'preservation' in museum preservations. The preservation in museums these days does not only aim to preserve materials or physical exhibitions but also to preserve the collective memories and cultural knowledge which belong to the society (Hung et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2022). It is similar to the purpose of language maintenance that does not only preserve the physical language but also the cultural knowledge it contains. To achieve that, the access of museums should be open to the public. Opening the access of museums can bring the sense of belonging to the cultural knowledge being preserved. The International Council of Museums (ICOM) (2007, in Wu et al., 2022) also recommends opening the access of museums, and it should not be done passively. Opening the access should engage the public actively, for example utilizing museums as a tool for education, learning, and entertainment. This suggests that accessibility in museums plays a significant part for achieving the goals of preservation. In addition, in the goals of preservation, the Sumbawa language as the local language can act as a medium to convey the values of Tau Samawa at Istana Dalam Loka (Ntelu, 2014). This part also creates a "melting pot" or "a salad bowl" for the Sumbawa language and other languages spoken by visitors at Istana Dalam Loka. By opening the Istana Dalam Loka's access to the public with various people interacting within the Istana Dalam Loka, it is unavoidable that language contact in the "melting pot" or "salad bowl" can occur. The language contact can make a local language - the Sumbawa language - dynamic and getting more used. Besides, the Sumbawa language can be used in various domains through visitors' various activities. As stated previously, opening access to the public should be done actively by engaging the public in various activities at Istana Dalam Loka. Thus, how Istana Dalam Loka's accessibility brings the possibilities to maintain local languages can be observed through the use of Sumbawa language in various domains at Istana Dalam Loka.

However, the opening of access to the Istana Dalam Loka has not met its goal as found by Novita et al. (2022) that the Istana Dalam Loka has not been able to attract many visitors. Furthermore, the reason why the Istana Dalam Loka has not been able to attract many visitors is due to weaknesses in several aspects of accessibility including the community involvement. The goal of opening the access of Istana Dalam Loka as a means to preserve the values of Tau Samawa and the Sumbawa language needs the big number of visitors as well as their engagements to the place. By that, the Istana Dalam Loka can become the "melting pot" or "salad bowl" of languages and maintain the sustainability of the Sumbawa language as well as its cultural values. Therefore, the opening of access should also be expanded by involving virtual access instead of relying on physical access only. With all the possible physical limitations of visitors such as distant locations, limited time, or the Covid-19 pandemic experienced by the world from 2020 to 2022, the virtual access is expected to overcome these

limitations. The success of language maintenance through virtual access can be seen in the domains that attract most visitors by using the local language at Istana Dalam Loka. Based on this background, this study aims to explore the virtual accessibility and its domains in the effort of maintaining the language of Sumbawa and the cultural values of Tau Samawa within the context of digital language maintenance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ISTANA DALAM LOKA

A traditional house is a manifestation of the behavior, knowledge, and philosophy of the community (Budihardjo, 2018). The Istana Dalam Loka, the most famous traditional house in Sumbawa, also holds the life philosophy of the Sumbawa community. Moreover, traditional houses are also said to be the highest representative form of culture. Since a residence is a human's primary need, the building aspects are based on things that are believed to be the closest to its inhabitants. The religious values of the Sumbawa people as previously mentioned are reflected in the building aspects of Istana Dalam Loka. The building concept, site selection, orientation of the house placement, and the function of its spaces, all of these adhere to religious values (Hermansyah, 2017; Hidayati, 2021). For example, bala rea, bala bulo, and sarapo kamutar signify the strong communal spirit. *Lawang rare* is a symbol of their religiosity. *Bale pamaning* and *sarubung belo* represent cleanliness and environmental consciousness, while *lanyuk emas* and *tete sawai* show respect for women. All these elements demonstrate how religion serves as a fundamental guiding principle for the Tau Samawa community.

As the former residence of the sultanate, Istana Dalam Loka had exclusive access, restricting occupancy. The public was only allowed in the meeting room (*lunyuk*) and waiting room (*paladang*, *parangin*). This limited access hindered a broader sense of belonging to the Tau Samawa life philosophy reflected in the parts of Istana Dalam Loka. However, now that Istana Dalam Loka functions as a museum open to all visitors, its cultural values can be more widely shared. For instance, the special gate connecting Istana Dalam Loka to the Great Mosque facilitates visitors' access to the mosque for prayer, highlighting the central role of Islam in the accessibility of Istana Dalam Loka. Meanwhile, the role of language in this accessibility will be discussed in the next section.

LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE: DOMAINS AND ACCESSIBILITY

Language maintenance is essentially an effort to preserve a language. Yet, it is important to note that 'maintenance' does not imply enforcing the use of one language

over others. Rather, it involves acknowledging that languages always evolve over time (Mühlhäusler, 2000). Therefore, language maintenance also recognizes the changes that occur within a language during this language maintenance process.

This concept is particularly relevant to the linguistic situation in Indonesia. As a multilingual nation, one language often coexists with one or more other languages. Almost no one in Indonesia is monolingual; most Indonesians are bilingual or multilingual, typically speaking both the Indonesian language and a local language. Indonesians possess linguistic competence that allows them to use various languages in different contexts or domains (Musgrave, 2014). In this linguistic situation, language maintenance is successful when Indonesian speakers can continue to be bilingual or multilingual (Cohn & Ravindranath, 2014).

However, current policies in Indonesia tend to promote a monolingual approach, emphasizing the use of the Indonesian language across nearly all domains. This shift toward monolingualism may hinder efforts to maintain local languages. This situation raises concerns about the future of bilingualism and multilingualism in Indonesia. For example, Adelaar (2009) suggests that even major local languages with large speaker populations such as Javanese or Sundanese are at risk of endangerment as their domains are increasingly replaced by the Indonesian language. Nevertheless, some languages may still be maintained because certain domains resist replacement by other languages. Musgrave (2014) notes that Javanese, for instance, remains firmly rooted in specific domains like family and friendship, where it reinforces identity and solidarity among speakers. In contrast, middle-class females may shift to the Indonesian language, which they associate with education and social status.

Domains play a crucial role in language use, as highlighted by Yuliana and Yanti (2023), who examine how language is employed in various domains such as family, friendship, religion, public spaces, education, and employment. Their study shows that speakers' choices of which language to use in a given domain are influenced by behavioral factors. To expand the range of language use across different domains, it is essential to provide access to resources and institutional support that facilitate language maintenance. The next part will discuss accessibility - and virtual accessibility in particular.

VIRTUAL ACCESSIBILITY AND GOOGLE TRENDS

Since the functions of Istana Dalam Loka have evolved, Istana Dalam Loka is transforming into a traditional house, museum, and tourist attraction (Novita et al., 2022; Rahmat, 2022). Consequently, the concept of accessibility in this study refers specifically to the accessibility of the tourist site. According to Cooper et al. (2005), accessibility involves the ease of reaching a tourist destination, which is closely related

to the infrastructure and facilities that reduce the time and effort required to reach the site (Cooper et al., 2005; Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2017; Yen et al., 2021). Additionally, Novita et al. (2022) suggest that accessibility also encompasses access to information about the site and community involvement at the location. Based on this broader definition, virtual accessibility refers to the ease of accessing a tourist destination online, which is crucial for attracting a large number of visitors. Both physical and virtual accessibility at tourist sites can foster the creation of a "melting pot" or a "salad bowl" of languages, contributing to an effort to language maintenance.

The internet provides a fast and instant way to disseminate and distribute information, making it possible for visitors to virtually access Istana Dalam Loka. Through this medium, visitors can engage with activities taking place at Istana Dalam Loka from a distance. Information about Istana Dalam Loka, including details on community involvement, is accessible through various big data platforms on the internet. The most prominent one is Google search engine. Google search provides information based on relevance—the most relevant information appears on the first few pages. Google search results can show what kind of information is considered most relevant by Google. The relevance of the information provided on the internet is crucial for improving virtual access to Istana Dalam Loka. This relevance is not only the content but also factors such as the timing of the content and the use of appropriate keywords. By ensuring that the information is as relevant as possible, virtual access to Istana Dalam Loka can be optimized, allowing visitors to observe the various activities and language dynamics occurring there.

To validate the data on virtual accessibility at Istana Dalam Loka, Google Search results will be compared with data from Google Trends. Google Trends is a tool that reports the popularity of searches on Google, offering insights into the correlation between the quantity of searches (popularity) and the information and community involvement found through Google Search. Google Trends can provide reports which include time-series data, and are available for any user-selected time period. Furthermore, in terms of language use in virtual access, Google Trends can focus on searches conducted in specific languages or from particular locations (Cebrián & Domenech, 2023). Searches reported by Google Trends can be categorized by terms, entities, or categories, providing valuable data for observing domains of language maintenance. This makes Google Trends a reliable resource for academic research (Jun et al., 2018). By analyzing the most searched keywords on Google, this study can identify key steps in language maintenance efforts.

METHODOLOGY

This study collects data on community activities at Istana Dalam Loka using Google Search and direct observation to the Istana Dalam Loka. For the data collected via Google Search, this study gathered the first ten pages of Google Search results for the query "Istana Dalam Loka" from the year of 2015 to 2022. To validate these findings, the results were compared with data from Google Trends, which provides insights into search terms, categories, times, and locations. These can illustrate the diversity of virtual visitors to Istana Dalam Loka. The data were then classified into a matrix according to key criteria for creating a "melting pot" or a "salad bowl" in a diverse linguistic environment. These criteria include language use, domains, audience, duration or time, and the type of sources (to identify who is authorized for virtual access). The matrix also served to assess information on the types of community involvement that engage with visitors virtually. Additionally, direct observations were conducted, and interviews were held with the guards of Istana Dalam Loka to gather insights on the various meetings that took place there and the symbolism of space at Istana Dalam Loka.

To analyze the collected data, this study used descriptive statistics. The statistics, presented as graphs, were derived from the information obtained through Google Search and Google Trends. The analysis was grounded in domains of linguistic attitude - observing the key strategies for language maintenance. Domains from the linguistic attitude which are mostly discussed as the approach for maintaining language served as the ground for the analysis. This study focuses on two main aspects: (1) accessibility of virtual access and (2) the domains utilized in virtual access.
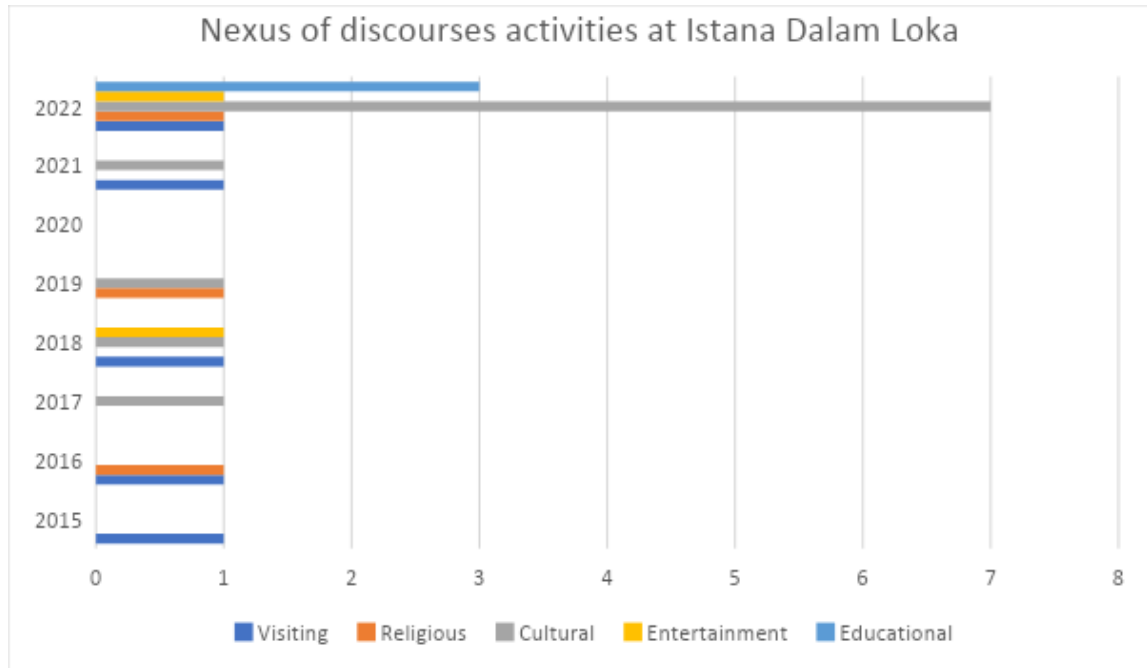
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents a discussion on the domains and accessibility of virtual access. First, the graphs illustrating different domains are analyzed, highlighting community engagements at Istana Dalam Loka from 2015 to 2022. These domains include tourism, religion, history and culture, entertainment, and education. A diversity of domains enhances the virtual accessibility of Istana Dalam Loka; the more varied the activities, the greater the openness of access. The second part of this discussion explains how these various domains lead to the accessibility that contributes to the language maintenance of the Sumbawa language at Istana Dalam Loka.

THE DOMAINS

These graphs on Picture 1 and Picture 2 below show the community engagements occurring in various domains from 2015 to 2022. The data were collected from Google

Search from the inquiries of "Istana Dalam Loka" which are compared to the data from Google Trends in the option of categories. However, other options from Google Trends such as the language use, times and locations, as well as types of sources are also explained in this section. This will explain how the community engaged in domains at Istana Dalam Loka.

Picture 1.

Year/Activities	Tourism (common visit)	Religion	History and Culture	Entertainment	Education
2015	■				
2016	■	■			
2017	■		■		
2018	■		■	■	
2019	■	■	■		
2020					
2021	■		■		
2022	■	■	■	■	■

Picture 2.

The colored table shows the activities held in a specific year. The graph on Picture 2 indicates that tourism activities were conducted almost every year, except in 2020. Tourism stands out as the most dominant domain of activity at Istana Dalam Loka, surpassing other domains. This suggests that tourism remains the primary reason for visitors coming to Istana Dalam Loka. The absence of visits, shown by no colored table, during 2020 occurred when the COVID-19 pandemic struck and all public activities were widely held back. It shows that no Google Search results for Istana

Dalam Loka were found in 2020. This means that no one accessed the Istana Dalam Loka on the internet.

Meanwhile, the historical and cultural domain is the second most prominent domain. Google Search results reveal that Istana Dalam Loka hosted various historical and cultural activities. Those activities include discussions among local communities (*musyawarah masyarakat adat*), exhibitions of Sumbawa culture at the Lunyuk Agung, and performances of traditional songs and dances in the courtyard. Among those, the most frequent activity was local community gatherings (*musyawarah masyarakat adat*). This indicates that space occupation within this domain is primarily local.

Moreover, religious and entertainment domains also play significant roles at Istana Dalam Loka. The site is often used for religious activities during Ramadan and other special religious occasions, where local communities gather for prayers and dua. This further emphasizes that the use of space within these domains is predominantly by locals.

Finally, in 2022, a new domain—education—was introduced at Istana Dalam Loka. For the first time, a provincial quiz event for elementary school students was held at the site. This event engaged students from across Sumbawa island. This expansion of activities can suggest the potential for new domain opportunities and broader community engagement at Istana Dalam Loka.

THE LANGUAGE DIVERSITY: A MELTING POT OR A SALAD BOWL?

Based on the analysis of the domains at Istana Dalam Loka, it is evident that the space is predominantly occupied by locals. Except for the tourism domain, all activities were initiated and enjoyed by the local community. However, there are some activities initiated by locals that eventually attract a multicultural audience, including visitors from outside Sumbawa Island. These activities often occur in mixed domains. For instance, during a fashion show event at Istana Dalam Loka, the historical and cultural domain intersected with the entertainment domain. The fashion show, which featured clothes made from Sumbawa's traditional *tenun* fabric, falls under the historical and cultural domain, while the event itself belongs to the entertainment domain. Although the event faced backlash from local communities—who deemed it culturally inappropriate due to the display of revealing clothing and contrary to the Tau Samawa values—it was still held and successfully attracted visitors (Talikanews.com, 2018). Such events that intertwine tradition and modernity, like this fashion show, illustrate the ongoing discourse between the concepts of a 'melting pot' and a 'salad bowl.'

As previously discussed, most of the domains at Istana Dalam Loka are occupied by the local community. This leads to a predominantly monolingual setting where only

the Sumbawa language is used. In the principle of language contact, the more dynamic the language is, the more it is used. According to Appel and Muysken (2005), language contact can result in language maintenance, language shift, or language death, depending on the dominance of one language over others. To ensure the continued use of the Sumbawa language as a means of preservation, it must remain dominant. The data above indicates a resistance to foreign cultural influences in the activities at Istana Dalam Loka, signaling the continued dominance of the Sumbawa language in the community.

The concepts of a 'melting pot' and a 'salad bowl' serve as metaphors for sociolinguistic diversity. A salad bowl suggests that the ingredients (languages) retain their separate identities, while a melting pot implies that they blend together. These metaphors highlight the competition between collective and individual identity within a larger society (Severino, 1992). The language use of various domains at Istana Dalam Loka continues to demonstrate the dominance of the Sumbawa language. Efforts to attract visitors from outside Sumbawa have involved combining domains that might appeal to a broader audience with those domains that are deeply rooted in Sumbawa culture. However, the resistance to domains that contradict Sumbawa cultural values has hindered the success of such efforts. This suggests that, in the context of Istana Dalam Loka, linguistic diversity may ultimately converge into the Sumbawa cultural 'melting pot.' The dominance of the tourism domain is overshadowed by the historical and cultural domain, supporting Hoffman's (1991) assertion that domains and language choice are closely linked, and that language maintenance at Istana Dalam Loka can be preserved by engaging in activities deeply rooted in Sumbawa's cultural traditions.
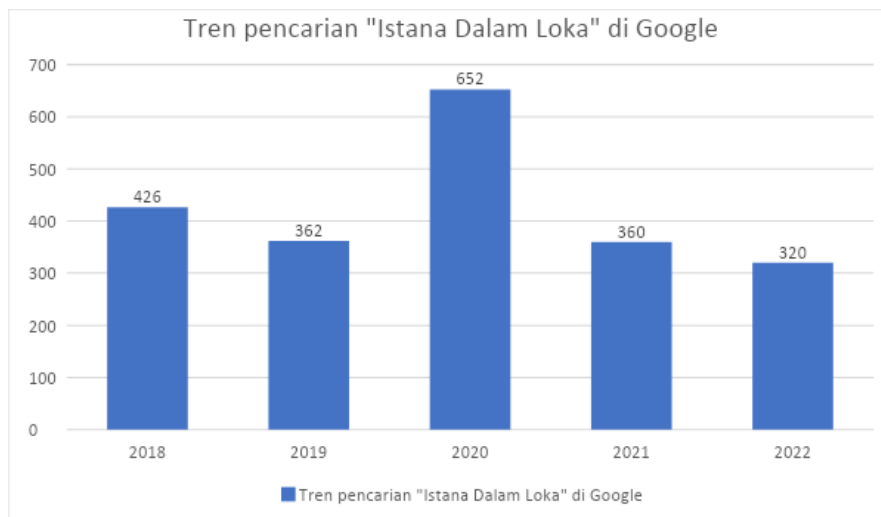
THE VIRTUAL ACCESSIBILITY

In the context of virtual access, the question arises whether physical access translates into virtual access, and whether virtual reality mirrors physical reality. According to data from Google Trends, which tracks the location of visitors, their language, and the domains they search, there is only a little difference between the domains accessed physically and those accessed virtually. As with physical access, the activities are primarily provided and accessed by locals. The table below illustrates that local media sources dominate other types of media. 'Local media' refers to media produced by and for the local community, typically covering local news. This trend is also reflected in the visitor data from Google Trends. It argues that the principle of 'from local and for local' in physical access continues to apply in the realm of virtual access. Furthermore, the similarity between physical and virtual access continues on the domain rank. The domains most accessed virtually from 2015 to 2022 are dominated by tourism, followed by historical and cultural, religion, and surprisingly, educational domain. Virtual access serves as a medium to mediate the physical discourse, allowing for a

continued understanding of local cultures still centered around Istana Dalam Loka. This indicates a positive benefit for language maintenance, as Sumbawa culture continues to hold a strong presence even in virtual reality.

Source	Numbers
Local media	12
National media	7
Government media (domain go.id)	11

Table 1.

While the table above shows a significant correlation between physical and virtual reality, there is a notable difference in terms of the popularity of accessing Istana Dalam Loka. As shown in Figure 3 below, 2020—when physical access to Istana Dalam Loka was completely halted—saw the highest level of searches in virtual access. Most virtual visitors access Istana Dalam Loka at that time. This suggests that when physical access is restricted, virtual access still effectively introduces Sumbawa's local culture to visitors. Although the local media primarily introduced content related to historical and cultural, religious, and educational domains, the data supports the idea that the discourse of the Sumbawa culture and its language remains robust at their home. However, it also highlights that the entertainment domain, despite attracting more visitors, is less effective in preserving Sumbawa culture.

Picture 3. Popularity trend result from the inquiry "Istana Dalam Loka"

CONCLUSION

This study explores the domains present in the virtual access to Istana Dalam Loka. The identified domains include tourism, historical and cultural, religious, entertainment, and educational domains. Each domain has their own distinctions across different years. Tourism was the most occupied domain, followed by historical and cultural, religion, entertainment, and education domains, with the latter appearing for the first time in 2022. Although tourism is the most prominent domain attracting visitors from outside Sumbawa Island, the resistance of local culture to external influences remains strong at Istana Dalam Loka. Consequently, the domains are both produced and consumed locally. When the domains from physical reality are translated into virtual reality, the most accessed domains remain consistent, reflecting a similar language attitude that reinforces Sumbawa culture across domains. Rather than leading to a divergence of identities through language contact, the sociolinguistic diversity at Istana Dalam Loka tends to converge into a 'melting pot.' The language maintenance of Sumbawa culture, through both physical and virtual access, is achieved by preserving local culture across various domains at Istana Dalam Loka. For future research, it is recommended to enhance virtual access by incorporating national and government media to cover the Google Search inquiries related to 'Istana Dalam Loka.'

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