



The Soundmark of Tradition: Communicative Functions of Pentatonic Music in the Gula Gending Street Trade of West Nusa Tenggara

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Submitted date : 9 April 2026	Revised date : 15 April 2026	Accepted date : 27 April 2026
Abstract		
<p><i>This study investigates the communicative functions of pentatonic music in the Gula Gending street vending practice in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, positioning it as a culturally embedded soundmark within everyday economic activity. While previous soundscape scholarship has largely foregrounded environmental listening, relatively little attention has been paid to the ways in which structured musical systems function as active communicative agents in informal economic contexts. Adopting an ethnomusicological ethnographic approach, this research integrates participant observation, in-depth interviews, and audio-visual documentation to examine the intersections between musical structure, performance practice, and socio-cultural context.</i></p> <p><i>The findings demonstrate that Gula Gending music operates as a multi-layered communicative system: it serves as an auditory marker of identity, a mechanism for attracting attention, a medium for transmitting cultural memory, and a facilitator of social interaction between vendors and consumers. The deployment of pentatonic structures enhances perceptual accessibility, enabling rapid recognition and response within fluid and dynamic street environments. Beyond its functional dimension, the music embodies symbolic meanings that link individual experience to broader collective cultural identities. This study contributes to ethnomusicology and sound studies by reconceptualizing the notion of soundmark as an active semiotic and economic practice rather than a passive acoustic phenomenon. Furthermore, it highlights the capacity of traditional musical forms to operate as adaptive communicative strategies within contemporary informal economies, offering critical implications for cultural sustainability and policy formulation.</i></p>		
<p>Keywords: Soundmark, Pentatonic Music, Street Vending, Ethnomusicology, Informal Economy</p>		
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Introduction

Over the past several decades, the study of sound has emerged as a critical approach for understanding the interrelations between humans, culture, and the environment. The concept of *soundscape*, introduced by R. Murray Schafer, refers to the acoustic environment that shapes auditory experience within a given social space (Schafer, 1994). Within this framework, a *soundmark* is understood as a distinctive sonic element endowed with symbolic value and functioning as a marker

of cultural identity within a community. This concept has subsequently been expanded through perceptual and cognitive approaches, emphasizing that auditory experience is inherently subjective and shaped by cultural context and ongoing social transformations (Iwamiya, 2006; Johánek, 2024; Shelemay, 2015).

Anthropological approaches to sound further assert that sound and music are not merely aesthetic phenomena but constitute social practices imbued with emotional, cognitive, and symbolic significance (Feld, 2012; Erlmann, 2004; Wong, 2019). From this perspective, sound functions as a communicative medium that mediates identity, collective memory, and social relations. Consequently, music cannot be reduced to artistic expression alone; rather, it operates as a system of signs embedded within broader networks of cultural meaning.

Within ethnomusicology, music is conceptualized as a complex cultural phenomenon that reflects the value systems and social structures of a given society (Merriam, 1964). It also plays a central role in the construction of identity and social space, where musical practices become sites for the representation and negotiation of meaning (Stokes, 1994; Rice, 2014). This perspective enables a more nuanced analysis of music not merely as a cultural artifact but as an active communicative practice within social life.

One particularly relevant context for examining such functions is street vending, which constitutes both a form of informal economy and a dynamic arena of social interaction. Street vending involves not only economic transactions but also the production of distinctive social and cultural landscapes (Turner, 2015; Racaud et al., 2018). In this setting, sound – whether in the form of music, vocal calls, or other acoustic signals – serves as a communicative medium between vendors and consumers, while simultaneously acting as a marker of spatial identity (Mitullah et al., 2021; Kesumasari, 2020). In the Indonesian context, musical practices are deeply intertwined with everyday life. Music is not confined to ritual or performance settings but permeates various social and economic activities (Yampolsky, 2010). In cultural forms such as folk theatre, for instance, music functions as a medium for sustaining local identity amid the pressures of modernization (Harnish, 2007). This illustrates the adaptive capacity of music, enabling its integration across diverse domains of social practice.

One such practice that exemplifies the intersection of music, economy, and local identity is the *Gula Gending* tradition in West Nusa Tenggara. In this context, music is employed as an integral component of street vending, functioning not only as a signal of the vendor's presence but also as a complex communicative medium. The music is typically based on pentatonic structures, which are characteristic of many Indonesian musical traditions. Here, music operates not merely as a promotional device but as a soundmark that represents cultural identity and shared collective experience.

Theoretically, the concept of soundmark can be understood as a sign system operating within social practice, where sound functions as a communicative medium linking economic, social, and cultural dimensions. This perspective aligns with the view of music as a structured and meaningful system of communication (Merriam, 1964; Wong, 2001). Music not only conveys messages directly but also shapes social experience through symbolic representation.

A semiotic approach to music further reinforces this understanding by conceptualizing music as a network of signs with multiple layers of meaning. Semiotic analysis enables the identification of how musical elements – such as rhythm, melody, and timbre – function in conveying messages and shaping listeners' experiences (Suryadmaja, 2025). In addition, the aesthetic dimension highlights that musical experience involves emotional and sensory engagement, thereby enriching its

communicative function (Suryadmaja & Saearani, 2025). Within traditional contexts, musical practices are inherently dynamic and continuously adapt in response to social change (Suryadmaja et al., 2024).

From the perspective of cultural ecology, music constitutes part of a broader system that connects humans with their environment (Titon, 2009). It functions both as a medium of identity formation and as a channel of communication within communities (Rice, 2014). Moreover, traditional music plays a significant role in sustaining cultural continuity and reinforcing social relations in everyday life (Seeger, 2004). Accordingly, musical practices cannot be separated from the social and cultural contexts in which they are embedded (Nettl, 2015), and are often intertwined with collective narratives and historical experiences (Barley, 1995).

In musical terms, the pentatonic system holds particular significance due to its widespread use across cultures. In Indonesian traditions, it reflects not only musical structure but also social practices involving interpersonal interaction within communities (Becker, 2010; Sutton, 2016). Furthermore, musical development in Indonesia has been shaped by evolving media landscapes and ongoing social change (Yampolsky, 2010). From an organological perspective, musical instruments play a crucial role in shaping distinctive sonic characteristics (Kartomi, 1990). Cognitively, pentatonic systems possess an advantage in that they are easily recognized and processed by listeners across diverse cultural backgrounds (Gill & Purves, 2009), making them particularly effective as communicative media.

Despite the growing body of research on soundscape and soundmark, studies that specifically address the communicative functions of music within street vending practices remain limited. Research on street vendors in Myanmar and Cuba, for example, has demonstrated that sound functions as both a marker of identity and a communicative strategy for attracting consumer attention (Keeler, 2017; Rosendahl, 2018). However, these studies have not extensively examined the relationship between musical structure – particularly pentatonic systems – and their communicative functions in localized contexts.

In Indonesia, existing studies on *Gula Gending* have largely focused on cultural aspects and social dynamics (Triyanuartha, 2015; Wahyuni, 2022; Hartono, 2022). Other research has highlighted the role of traditional music in shaping ethnic identity and cultural symbolism (Yudarta, 2017; Prajawati, 2022). Nevertheless, the integration of musical analysis, communicative function, and economic practice remains underexplored in a comprehensive manner.

This gap underscores the need for a more integrative approach that connects the concept of soundmark, pentatonic systems, and the communicative functions of music within street vending practices. Ethnographic approaches in ethnomusicology enable a contextualized analysis of musical practices in everyday life (Barz & Cooley, 2008), while also supporting an understanding of music as a dynamic and multidimensional cultural phenomenon (Nettl, 2015).

Based on this framework, this study aims to analyze the communicative functions of pentatonic music in the *Gula Gending* practice as a soundmark within the context of street vending in West Nusa Tenggara. Specifically, it seeks to address two primary research questions: (1) how pentatonic music in the *Gula Gending* practice functions as a soundmark; and (2) how this music mediates economic interactions and reinforces local cultural identity.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of ethnomusicology by integrating the concepts of soundmark, musical communication, and economic practice within a unified analytical

framework. Practically, it offers implications for the preservation of local cultural traditions and the development of culturally grounded creative economy policies (Rice, 2014).

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach employing an ethnomusicological ethnography to analyze the communicative functions of music within the *Gula Gending* practice. This approach is selected because it enables the examination of music as a cultural practice embedded in real-life social situations, particularly within economic interactions between vendors and consumers. In ethnomusicology, ethnography constitutes a primary methodological framework for understanding the relationships between musical structure, meaning, and social context through direct field engagement (Barz & Cooley, 2008). Accordingly, this study positions field experience as the principal basis for identifying *Gula Gending* music as a communicative soundmark.

Conceptually, this research integrates descriptive and interpretative analytical strategies. Descriptive analysis is employed to identify musical forms, including pentatonic structures and instrumental techniques, while interpretative analysis is used to examine the social functions and communicative meanings of music within trading practices. This combined approach ensures that the analysis extends beyond the mere description of sound to explain how music operates within its social context (Nettl, 2015).

The research was conducted in West Nusa Tenggara, focusing on the *Gula Gending* practice originating from Kembang Kerang Village, East Lombok, and now dispersed across various regions of Lombok. Empirically, *Gula Gending* represents a practice that integrates sugar-candy vending with the performance of a musical instrument known as *tangkaq*, a metallic idiophonic percussion instrument consisting of six tonal compartments, five of which produce pentatonic pitches, while the remaining section functions as a non-musical component supporting the vending activity. This practice serves not only as a strategy to attract buyers but also as a form of cultural identity embedded within the vendor community. Previous studies affirm that *Gula Gending* constitutes part of local cultural dynamics with both social and economic functions (Triyanuartha, 2015; Wahyuni, 2022), and demonstrates adaptive capacity in responding to social change without losing its musical character (Hartono, 2022).

Informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in *Gula Gending* practices. Primary informants consisted of vendors who actively perform the instrument while selling, while supporting informants included buyers and community figures. This strategy ensures that the data reflect both actual practices and social perceptions regarding the communicative functions of the music.

Data collection was conducted through participant observation, in-depth interviews, audio-visual documentation, and field notes. Participant observation was used to directly record musical practices within the trading context, including performance patterns and buyer responses (Barz & Cooley, 2008). In-depth interviews explored the subjective meanings attributed by informants to music as a communicative medium. Audio-visual documentation captured musical structures (pitch patterns and percussive techniques), while field notes functioned as reflective documentation of social contexts and interactional dynamics (Seeger, 2004).

Data analysis was carried out in two primary stages. First, thematic coding was employed to identify patterns in the communicative functions of music, including its role as an attention-generating

device, identity marker, and medium of interaction. Second, semiotic analysis was applied to interpret music as a sign system operating within social practice (Samuels, 2004). Within the ethnomusicological framework, this analysis integrates both structural and contextual dimensions of music (Merriam, 1964). The approach is further strengthened by contemporary semiotic perspectives to uncover deeper layers of meaning (Suryadmaja, 2025), as well as to understand musical practice as a dynamic phenomenon subject to ongoing adaptation (Suryadmaja et al., 2024). Through this design, the study explicitly positions *Gula Gending* music not merely as an acoustic object, but as a structured, contextualized communicative practice embedded within broader economic and cultural systems.

Results And Discussion

Musical Characteristics of *Gula Gending*

The findings indicate that *Gula Gending* music exhibits distinctive characteristics in terms of organology, tonal system, and performance techniques, all of which directly support its communicative function within street vending contexts. This musical practice is inseparable from its primary instrument, the *tangkaq*, a semi-circular metallic idiophone that simultaneously functions as a container for merchandise. The instrument consists of six tonal compartments, five of which produce pentatonic pitches, while one serves as a non-musical structural component supporting the trading activity.

From an organological perspective, the *tangkaq* can be classified as a metallophone, as its entire body is constructed from metal materials such as aluminum or stainless steel. These materials produce sharp resonant sounds with high auditory projection, making the instrument particularly effective in open environments. Field observations demonstrate that this resonance enables the sound to reach residential areas and semi-urban public spaces. This finding suggests that the material composition of the instrument serves not only an aesthetic function but also a practical communicative role, consistent with organological principles in ethnomusicology (Kartomi, 1990).

In terms of musical structure, *Gula Gending* employs a pentatonic scale consisting of five primary tones. Although often associated with the *pelog* system found in Javanese and Balinese traditions, field observations reveal localized characteristics, particularly the presence of non-standard intervals or “tilted tones.” This indicates that the pentatonic system in the Sasak context represents a culturally adaptive structure that forms a distinct musical identity rather than a direct structural adoption. This finding reinforces the argument that musical structures are inherently linked to cultural practice and social context (Becker, 2010).

From a performative perspective, the playing technique is directly percussive, using fingers to strike the tonal compartments. Unlike many traditional instruments that require auxiliary tools, this technique allows for high flexibility, enabling performance while walking, standing, or sitting. Observations show that vendors perform repetitive rhythmic patterns with slight variations, adjusted to environmental conditions and the responses of potential buyers. This flexibility is a key factor enabling the music to function effectively within the mobile context of street vending.

Furthermore, the musical practice is individualistic, with each vendor performing independently. This creates a direct relationship between sound production and performer identity, such that the music becomes an extension of the vendor’s presence rather than merely a background element. In

this context, sound production is situational and relational, as it is directly linked to ongoing social interaction (Sutton, 2016).

From a cognitive perspective, the use of a pentatonic system provides perceptual advantages. The simple and repetitive tonal patterns allow the sound to be easily recognized, even by listeners without formal musical training. Interviews with informants reveal that the presence of *Gula Gending* vendors can often be identified through their sound patterns prior to visual recognition. This suggests that the pentatonic system facilitates auditory processing and enhances communicative effectiveness (Gill & Purves, 2009).

Moreover, the musical characteristics of *Gula Gending* extend beyond structure and technique to include their integration with economic activity. The music is not performed as a complex composition but as a functional rhythmic pattern designed to attract attention and create anticipation. The integration of instrument, performer, and social space is clearly evident in field observations (see Figure 1). In this context, music functions as a pragmatic auditory signal that calls attention, marks presence, and initiates interaction between vendors and consumers.



Figure 1. A *Gula Gending* vendor performing the tangkaq instrument during street vending activity in Lombok, illustrating the integration of musical practice, mobility, and economic interaction (Researcher's archive, 2025)

In sum, the characteristics of *Gula Gending* music demonstrate that musical structure, performance technique, and contextual usage form an inseparable unity. Music operates not merely as an aesthetic expression but as a functional sound system designed to support communication within trading practices. These findings affirm the position of *Gula Gending* as a musical practice situated at the intersection of art, economy, and social communication.

Communicative Functions

The findings demonstrate that *Gula Gending* music operates as a complex communicative system within street vending practices. Its functions extend beyond pragmatic utility to encompass symbolic and relational dimensions, which can be identified across several key domains: as a marker of identity (soundmark), an attention-generating mechanism, a medium of cultural narration, and a facilitator of social relations.

First, *Gula Gending* music functions as a soundmark that signifies the presence of vendors within the social landscape. Field observations indicate that the rhythmic patterns and timbral qualities of the *tangkaq* instrument are consistently recognized by members of the community. As one buyer noted, “When I hear that sound, I immediately know it’s a *Gula Gending* vendor, even before I see the person” (Interview, buyer, 2025). This suggests that sound operates as an identity marker with clear social referents. In this context, sound is not merely an auditory stimulus but a sign system linking listeners’ experiences to specific objects and meanings. This aligns with the concept of soundmark as a sonic element carrying cultural identity within a given environment, as proposed by R. Murray Schafer (1994). Moreover, while individual vendors exhibit slight variations in performance style, they remain within a shared musical framework, thereby producing both collective and personal identity formations (Keeler, 2017).

Second, music functions as an attention-generating device in public space. In practice, vendors perform repetitive and simple rhythmic patterns to elicit responses from potential buyers. One vendor explained, “If there’s no sound, people won’t know we’re selling. So we have to keep playing so people can hear and recognize that we’re here” (Interview, vendor, 2025). This statement illustrates the deliberate use of music as a communicative strategy. In this context, sound functions as an auditory signal that cuts through environmental noise and directs attention. This finding resonates with studies of street vendors in other cultural contexts, where sound mediates economic interaction (Rosendahl, 2018). Furthermore, given the mobility of vendors, music also serves as a dynamic spatial marker within the social environment (Turner, 2015).

Third, *Gula Gending* music functions as a medium of cultural narration imbued with emotional and symbolic dimensions. An informant stated, “Hearing that sound reminds me of my childhood, when I used to buy *Gula Gending* often” (Interview, buyer, 2025). This indicates that music not only conveys practical information but also evokes memory and emotional experience. From the perspective of the anthropology of sound, this reflects the capacity of sound to connect sensory experience with collective memory (Feld, 2012). Within a semiotic framework, music can thus be understood as a sign system that carries cultural meaning through its contextual usage (Wong, 2001).

Fourth, music functions as a mediator in the formation of social relations between vendors and buyers. Interactions often begin with a response to sound before any verbal communication occurs. A vendor noted, “Usually people come because they hear the sound first, then they start asking or buying” (Interview, vendor, 2025). This suggests that music operates as the initial point of social engagement. It not only facilitates economic transactions but also contributes to broader patterns of social interaction within the community. This finding is consistent with the view that traditional music plays a significant role in constructing and sustaining social relationships in communal life (Seeger, 2004).

In addition, this musical practice carries an expressive dimension related to individual identity. As one vendor explained, “Everyone has their own way of playing – some play louder, some softer, or even create their own patterns, so people can recognize which vendor it is” (Interview, vendor, 2025). This highlights that music also functions as a medium of self-expression, reinforcing the performer’s identity within the social context. From an ethnomusicological perspective, music does not merely reflect identity but actively constructs it through performative practice (Samuels, 2004).

Overall, the communicative functions of *Gula Gending* music reveal that sound operates as a multi-layered communication system that integrates dimensions of identity, economy, culture, and social relations. The interplay between musical structure, performance practice, and social context

positions *Gula Gending* as a soundmark that not only marks space but also shapes the social experience of communities within street vending environments.

Social Perception

The findings further indicate that community perceptions of *Gula Gending* music are not solely functional but also emotional, symbolic, and identity-based. The sounds produced are understood not merely as part of a trading activity but as a cultural experience imbued with deeper meanings in everyday life.

Interviews reveal that many informants associate *Gula Gending* music with strong feelings of nostalgia. One respondent stated, “*When I hear that sound, it feels like going back to childhood. There used to be vendors passing by almost every afternoon*” (Interview, buyer, 2025). This suggests that sound functions not only as a communicative signal but also as a trigger of collective memory tied to specific temporal experiences. In studies of music and modernity, listening is never a neutral act; it is always shaped by historical context and individual social experience (Erlmann, 1997). Thus, *Gula Gending* music operates as a medium connecting past experiences with present realities.

Beyond nostalgia, the music is also perceived as a symbol of local cultural authenticity. Several informants emphasized that the sound of the *tangkaq* differs significantly from modern, amplified, or recorded music, which is often described as “louder” or “foreign.” A community figure remarked, “*This is a distinctive Lombok sound, different from music played through speakers or recordings – it feels more traditional*” (Interview, L. Rahman, 2025). This perception indicates that music is evaluated not only aesthetically but also as a representation of cultural identity. Within ethnomusicological discourse, music plays a crucial role in constructing and representing collective identity through repeated social practice (Stokes, 1994). In this sense, *Gula Gending* sound becomes a marker distinguishing the “local” from the “modern.”

At the same time, social perceptions reflect an awareness of ongoing social change affecting the sustainability of this practice. Several informants noted that *Gula Gending* vendors are increasingly rare compared to the past. One vendor stated, “*Nowadays, not many people do this anymore – young people prefer other jobs*” (Interview, vendor, 2025). This highlights a tension between the continuity of tradition and the pressures of modernity. *Gula Gending* music is thus perceived not only as a cultural practice but also as part of an economic system vulnerable to social transformation. In this context, musical practice cannot be separated from broader economic conditions and livelihood choices (Rice, 2014).

More broadly, social perceptions indicate that music transcends the boundaries between entertainment, communication, and identity. It serves as a medium that connects personal and collective experiences while linking individuals to their social environment. In everyday life, *Gula Gending* is not merely “heard” but “felt” as an integral part of a shared social world. In conclusion, community perceptions of *Gula Gending* music affirm that this practice holds not only functional value within street vending but also profound cultural significance. Music operates as a medium that binds memory, identity, and social experience, while simultaneously reflecting the dynamics of change within contemporary society.

Soundmark as a Sign System

The findings indicate that *Gula Gending* music functions not merely as an auditory marker but as a structured sign system embedded within social practice. Within the soundscape framework, a

soundmark is defined as a sound possessing cultural identity and significance within a particular environment (Schafer, 1994). However, in the context of *Gula Gending*, the findings demonstrate that soundmark is not a passive spatial indicator but an active agent in shaping social relations and economic practices.

The sound of the *tangkaq* operates as a sign with direct referential links to the vendor, the type of commodity being sold, and the associated cultural identity. This indicates that music in this practice performs a clear semiotic function, where sound is not merely “heard” but “read” by the community as social information. In ethnomusicological terms, music constitutes part of a cultural system that carries meaning and functions as a communicative medium (Merriam, 1964). Accordingly, *Gula Gending* can be understood as a musical practice that articulates meaning through contextually embedded sonic structures.

Furthermore, the soundmark in *Gula Gending* is inherently relational, as its meaning is constructed through interaction between performer and listener. Sound acquires significance because it is recognized, remembered, and responded to within specific social contexts. This aligns with the perspective that music plays a role in shaping social space and identity through performative practice (Stokes, 1994). In this sense, space is not merely physical but also auditory, constituted through the presence and circulation of sound.

In addition, the soundmark dimension of *Gula Gending* demonstrates that listening operates across boundaries of space, time, and memory. The same sound may evoke different responses depending on individual experience, yet remains situated within a shared framework of collective meaning. This perspective underscores that listening is itself a cultural practice that shapes broader social experience (Wong, 2019).

Thus, the soundmark in *Gula Gending* extends beyond marking the presence of vendors; it functions as a sign system linking identity, memory, and social interaction. These findings expand the concept of soundmark from a purely acoustic element into an active and contextual communicative practice within everyday life.

Beyond its semiotic dimension, *Gula Gending* music also functions as an economic resource that directly supports trading practices. The findings reveal that music is not merely a supplementary element in commercial activity but a primary instrument for attracting attention and facilitating interaction with buyers. From the perspective of music ecology, musical practices cannot be separated from the economic systems in which they are embedded (Titon, 2009).

Within the context of street vending, music operates as a communicative strategy that enables vendors to compete in public spaces saturated with visual and auditory stimuli. The sound of the *tangkaq* serves as a differentiating mechanism that distinguishes *Gula Gending* vendors from other forms of trade. This aligns with studies of street vending that characterize public space as a competitive arena requiring adaptive strategies from informal economic actors (Turner, 2015; Racaud et al., 2018).

Moreover, the use of music as an economic resource illustrates the integration of cultural practice and economic strategy. Music carries not only symbolic value but also practical value that can be translated into economic gain. In this context, sound becomes a form of “auditory capital” with productive functions in commercial activity.

This practice also reflects how informal economies operate within complex social environments, where relationships between vendors and buyers extend beyond purely transactional interactions. Music serves as a medium that softens and mediates these interactions, enabling economic

exchanges to occur within broader frameworks of social relations (Mitullah et al., 2021). This is closely tied to the configuration of both physical and social space in street vending practices, where sound plays a role in shaping interactional dynamics (Kesumasari, 2020).

Accordingly, *Gula Gending* music can be understood as a form of culturally grounded economic capital that not only sustains vendors' livelihoods but also enriches the social dynamics of public space.

Beyond its pragmatic functions, *Gula Gending* music also embodies aesthetic dimensions and semiotic depth that enrich its overall meaning. The findings suggest that despite its relatively simple musical structure, the practice contains complex layers of meaning that are not immediately apparent.

From a semiotic perspective, music can be understood as a system of signs operating across multiple levels of meaning, ranging from denotative to connotative (Suryadmaja, 2025). In the case of *Gula Gending*, sound functions not only as a communicative signal but also as a symbol representing identity, experience, and cultural values.

Additionally, the aesthetic dimension of this practice is inseparable from the sensory and emotional experiences of listeners. *Gula Gending* music produces an immediate and contextual aesthetic experience, closely linked to collective memory and lived experience (Feld, 2012). This suggests that aesthetics in this context is not abstract but embedded in concrete social practice.

Contemporary aesthetic approaches further emphasize that musical experience arises from the interaction between sonic structure, social context, and individual perception (Suryadmaja & Saearani, 2025). In *Gula Gending*, this interaction is evident in how sound is produced, perceived, and interpreted across different situations.

Moreover, the practice illustrates the dynamic nature of traditional music, which continuously adapts in response to social change (Suryadmaja et al., 2024). Thus, the semiotic depth of *Gula Gending* lies not only in its musical structure but also in its capacity for ongoing adaptation and meaning-making within shifting contexts.

In comparison with similar practices elsewhere, *Gula Gending* exhibits both shared patterns and distinctive characteristics. Studies of street vendors in Myanmar demonstrate that sound functions as a marker of identity and an effective communicative strategy for attracting customers (Keeler, 2017). Similarly, in Cuba, vendors' vocal calls (*pregón*) form part of the soundscape with both cultural and economic significance (Rosendahl, 2018).

However, *Gula Gending* is distinctive in its use of a musical instrument as an integral component of trading activity. Unlike practices that rely primarily on vocal expression, *Gula Gending* integrates instrument, body, and mobility into a unified performative practice. This creates a more complex communicative dimension, as the produced sound not only conveys information but also shapes a distinctive auditory experience. Thus, while there are broader patterns in the use of sound as a communicative strategy in street vending, *Gula Gending* offers unique characteristics that enrich global discussions on soundmark and musical communication.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *Gula Gending* music cannot be understood solely as an aesthetic expression within local tradition, but rather as a structured communicative practice embedded in the socio-economic life of the community. The pentatonic music performed through the *tangkaq*

instrument operates as a soundmark that signals the presence of vendors, constructs cultural identity, and mediates interactions between economic actors and the public. In practice, sound functions not only as an auditory signal but as a sign system that is recognized, remembered, and socially responded to.

The findings reveal that the communicative functions of *Gula Gending* music are inherently multi-layered. Music serves as an attention-generating device, an identity marker, a trigger of collective memory, and a mediator in the formation of social relations. The integration of musical structure, performance technique, and contextual usage demonstrates that music in this practice is functionally designed to support economic activity while simultaneously preserving cultural values. In this sense, *Gula Gending* illustrates how music can operate simultaneously within economic, social, and symbolic domains.

Theoretically, this study expands the concept of soundmark by positioning it not merely as an acoustic element within a soundscape, but as an active and contextual communication system. Music, in this context, does not simply mark space but actively shapes social experience and economic interaction. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that a communicative ethnomusicological approach can effectively bridge the analysis of musical structure and social practice in an integrated manner.

Practically, these findings underscore the importance of musical practices such as *Gula Gending* as part of intangible cultural heritage with both economic and social value. In the context of ongoing social change and modernization, the sustainability of this practice depends not only on its cultural significance but also on its continued relevance within everyday life. Therefore, preservation efforts should extend beyond documentation toward strengthening the social and economic functions of the practice.

For future research, this study opens avenues for comparative cross-regional analysis and interdisciplinary approaches that integrate qualitative and quantitative methods. Further studies may also explore auditory perception and cognitive responses to soundmark practices across diverse cultural contexts.

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