



DIGITALIZATION OF LOCAL CULTURAL NARRATIVES AS A STRATEGY TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATION AND BRANDING OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM IN SIOMPU, SOUTH BUTON REGENCY

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Info Article Received : 09 Maret 2025 Revised : 14 April 2025 Accepted : 17 Mei 2025 Publication : 30 Mei 2025	Abstract: Culture-based tourism is a strategic sector of sustainable development, but its potential has not been maximized due to weak digital communication capacity and suboptimal cultural narratives. This service activity aims to empower local communities through digitizing cultural narratives to strengthen destination identity and tourism competitiveness. The methods include cultural potential mapping, digital storytelling training, digital content production (video, podcast, social media), and digital branding implementation. As a result, the digitization of cultural narratives increases community media literacy and active participation in building an authentic destination image. The program also strengthened intercultural communication and tourism promotion networks, produced digital content, social media platforms, and replicable training modules. This approach has proven effective as an innovative strategy for community-based sustainable tourism development.
Keywords: Digitalization of Narrative, Local Culture, Strengthening Communication, Tourism Branding Kata Kunci: Digitalisasi Narasi, Budaya Lokal, Penguatan Komunikasi, Branding Pariwisata	
Licensed Under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License 	Abstrak: Pariwisata berbasis budaya adalah sektor strategis pembangunan berkelanjutan, tetapi potensinya belum tergarap maksimal akibat lemahnya kapasitas komunikasi digital dan narasi budaya yang kurang optimal. Kegiatan pengabdian ini bertujuan memberdayakan komunitas lokal melalui digitalisasi narasi budaya untuk memperkuat identitas destinasi dan daya saing pariwisata. Metodenya meliputi pemetaan potensi budaya, pelatihan digital storytelling, produksi konten digital (video, podcast, media sosial), dan implementasi branding digital. Hasilnya, digitalisasi narasi budaya meningkatkan literasi media masyarakat dan partisipasi aktif dalam membangun citra destinasi secara otentik. Program ini juga memperkuat komunikasi antarbudaya dan jejaring promosi wisata, menghasilkan konten digital, platform media sosial, serta modul pelatihan yang dapat direplikasi. Pendekatan ini terbukti efektif sebagai strategi inovatif pengembangan pariwisata berkelanjutan berbasis komunitas.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is recognized as an archipelagic country rich in culture, customs, and local narratives that have been passed down from generation to generation by indigenous communities for centuries. Each region has folk tales, myths, rituals, arts, and daily behaviors that reflect distinctive local values. These cultural narratives are not only intangible treasures, but also strategic assets that can strengthen community identity while also serving as unique and authentic tourist destinations. Unfortunately, many of these cultural narratives only survive in oral traditions, without documentation and technological improvements to reach a wider audience. The emergence of the digital era has changed the information consumption patterns of the community, especially tourists. Modern travelers often seek meaningful and culturally oriented experiences with true value. They seek information through social media, videos, and other digital channels to determine their travel destinations. In this context, local cultural narratives have great potential to be developed as creative content that is educational and informative, as well as an effective marketing tool. However, this potential has not been realized due to low digital literacy in the community and the absence of a comprehensive cultural communication strategy.

Many local communities, especially in village-based tourism areas or cultural villages, do not yet have sufficient capacity to package their cultural narratives into digital formats. In fact, the ability to tell local stories in the form of short videos, podcasts, visual narratives, or social media is a key skill in today's destination marketing. In addition, the lack of access to digital communication training also exacerbates the gap between the cultural potential possessed and the promotional strategies available. As a result, the cultural wealth that should be a tourist magnet is actually less well-known, even by domestic tourists "wisno". Another urgency is the threat of the loss of local cultural narratives due to modernization and the lack of regeneration of cultural understanding. In many areas, local narratives are starting to be marginalized because they are not systematically documented. At the same time, the very rapid flow of global information is making the younger generation increasingly distant from their cultural roots. Therefore, digitalization is a strategic approach to archiving, preserving, and disseminating local cultural wealth to future generations and the world community. (Febrianti & Aprilia, 2022) RA Mariana Febrianti

Strengthening community-based tourism requires active community participation in every process of destination development. This includes how the community becomes the main subject in promoting their culture, not just a passive object seen by tourists. This approach is in line with the principles of sustainable tourism which emphasize the involvement of local communities, cultural preservation, and economic sustainability. (Hariyadi et al., 2024) B. Hariyadi, Digitizing cultural narratives is a concrete step that can support community empowerment in building destinations sustainably, based on values, and authentically (Kusumastuti et al., 2024) H. Kusumastuti . Cultural communication has a central role in this process. Not only in conveying cultural stories, but also in bridging understanding between local communities and tourists who come from various backgrounds. Therefore, strengthening intercultural communication competencies and compiling contextual narratives are important parts of the tourism promotion strategy. This approach not only emphasizes the aesthetics and exoticism of culture, but also instills an understanding and appreciation of the cultural values contained therein. (Halim et al., 2023) Wan Fatimah Solihah Bint Wan Abdul Halim

Through this community service activity, it is expected that the community can gain understanding and practical skills in documenting, packaging, and publishing their cultural narratives through digital media. This activity will not only produce representative digital content, but also create a strong and competitive destination identity. With direct community involvement in the digitalization and promotion process, the tourism that is built will be more inclusive, sustainable, and rooted in the strength of local culture. Thus, community service based on the digitalization of cultural narratives is not only a solution to the challenges of tourism promotion in the digital era, but also an effort to preserve culture that is integrated with community empowerment. This theme is relevant and urgent to be implemented, considering the increasing importance of synergy between culture, technology, and community participation in building sustainable tourism.

METHOD

This community service activity uses a community-based participatory and collaborative approach , with the main principle that local communities are the main actors in preserving and promoting their culture. (Iryana & Mustofa, 2023) , to address the problems of low digital literacy, minimal cultural communication strategies, and lack

of community capacity in managing cultural narratives for tourism promotion, this community service is carried out through the following stages and methods:

1. Counseling (Awareness Building)

The initial stage of the activity began with counseling to the community and local tourism actors regarding the importance of cultural narratives as strategic assets in tourism development. This counseling also provides an understanding of the concept of sustainable tourism, cultural communication, and the role of digital technology in supporting community-based destination promotion. This method aims to build collective awareness and foster participatory motivation from the community.

2. Training (Capacity Building)

From the results of the counseling, training was then conducted with the community which was technical and applied in improving the community's ability in developing sustainable tourism . The training was given directly with a hands-on approach, accompanied by a team of experts and accompanying students . namely:

- a. Digital storytelling techniques (cultural scriptwriting, interviews, and visual storytelling).
- b. Production of digital content such as videos, podcasts and cultural photography.
- c. Use of social media and digital platforms as a means of destination promotion.
- d. Basics of intercultural communication for tourism actors (such as guides, homestay owners, and local SMEs)

3. Mediation and Collaborative Facilitation

The service team also acts as a mediator and facilitator in bringing together cultural actors (traditional figures, local artists, tourism managers) with village youth, creative digital actors, and village officials. The goal is to build cross-group synergy in the process of digitizing cultural narratives. This mediation also regulates the division of roles and post-program sustainability strategies.

4. Mentoring and Implementation

After the training, intensive mentoring is carried out for one day in the content production process. During this phase, the service team ensures that the community is truly able to carry out the process independently and sustainably. Mentoring includes:

- a. Compilation and curation of local cultural narratives to be featured.
- b. Cultural video/podcast recording and editing.

- c. Social media design, promotional copywriting, and digital account management.
- d. Creation and management of tourist village websites.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of this community service program shows that digitizing local cultural narratives can be an effective strategy in strengthening destination identity and expanding the reach of community-based tourism promotion. (Kartinawati et al., 2024) . During the mentoring process, it was found that most of the target community, especially the older generation, had rich local cultural knowledge but had not been systematically documented. Meanwhile, the younger generation had digital technical capacity but had less exposure to cultural values. This created a gap that was strategically filled through an intergenerational collaborative approach in this program.

The outreach activities succeeded in building collective awareness about the importance of cultural narratives as part of a sustainable tourism development strategy. Previously, people only saw culture as part of a ceremonial tradition, not as an element that could be developed to strengthen the local economy. (Della Spina & Giorno, 2021) . After the outreach, participants began to understand that cultural narratives are not only heritage, but also a communication medium that can attract tourists with an emotional and educational approach. (Sulistyanto et al., 2022)

Digital storytelling training conducted in the form of interactive workshops successfully increased participants' capacity in documenting and presenting cultural stories through digital media. The training involved cultural scriptwriting techniques, use of simple cameras, basic video editing, and content distribution strategies through social media (Cahyani et al., 2023). From this training, the community is able to produce a number of representative and promotional digital content, such as videos of traditional profiles, village historical narratives, and stories of the origins of cultural sites.

The intensive mentoring process during and after the training plays a key role in ensuring the sustainability of this digitalization practice. Mentoring not only covers technical aspects, but also public communication strategies, ethical narrative selection, and strengthening the institutional capacity of communities to manage social media accounts and digital platforms independently. This has a direct impact on increasing the digital visibility of local tourist destinations on online platforms. (Santos et al., 2024)

One of the important findings in this service is the growing sense of ownership of cultural narratives among the community. When the community is involved in the

process of documenting and publishing their own stories, there is an increase in cultural pride and a stronger spirit of preservation. This shows that the digital approach is not only technical, but also socially and culturally transformative.



Figure 1. Meeting and Discussion of Community Service Activities With The Village Head

From a tourism perspective, the digitalization of cultural narratives strengthens the positioning of destinations as places that not only present physical views, but also deep narrative experiences. Tourists who access local cultural content online before visiting show a higher interest in engaging in experience-based tourism, such as participating in traditional rituals, tasting traditional cuisine, or learning local crafts (Cahyani et al., 2023). This shows the close relationship between cultural narratives and the behavior of contemporary tourists who seek value and meaning in their travels. Another visible impact is the development of local creative economy initiatives, where MSME products are starting to be associated with cultural stories in the form of story branding. Some village youth have even started managing cultural-based tourism content creation services for their own communities. This proves that digitalized cultural narratives not only strengthen identity, but also open up economic opportunities based on local wisdom (Naderbagi et al., 2024).



Figure 2. Documentation, Presentation of Community Service Material

Within the framework of sustainable tourism, this approach is in line with three main pillars: cultural, economic, and social sustainability. This program keeps local values alive through responsible documentation and dissemination, empowers communities to be economically independent, and strengthens social structures through collaboration and communication between community members. Finally, this community service activity not only produces digital content products, but also forms a digital-cultural ecosystem that can continue to grow organically in the hands of the community itself. The success of this activity is proof that the integration of cultural communication and digital technology can be a solid foundation for building inclusive, participatory, and sustainable tourism.

CONCLUSION

This community service program shows that digitizing local cultural narratives is an effective approach to addressing the challenges of cultural preservation while increasing the competitiveness of community-based tourism destinations. Through a combination of outreach, training, mediation, and mentoring, communities are not only empowered in digital technical aspects, but are also given space to reflect on their cultural

values in a contemporary context. The digitization of cultural narratives has proven to be able to bridge the older and younger generations in the process of cultural preservation, form productive collaboration spaces, and strengthen community identity. Furthermore, digitally produced cultural content has a direct impact on increasing destination promotion, tourist engagement, and the development of the local creative economy. In the context of sustainable tourism, this program contributes to cultural preservation (cultural sustainability), community economic empowerment (economic sustainability), and strengthening community social networks (social sustainability). Digitalization is not just a technological transformation, but a cultural communication strategy that encourages communities to become active subjects in tourism development based on local values.

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