

The Role of Social Media in Promoting Tourism Villages: A Case Study in Semarang Regency

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ABSTRACT

This research highlights the role of social media in promoting tourist villages in Semarang Regency, Central Java Province. With the advancement of information and communication technology, social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook have become effective tools for increasing awareness and visitor traffic to tourist villages. Through various digital promotion strategies, tourism village managers can attract visitor interest with engaging and informative content. The results of the study indicate that the higher the intensity of social media use by tourists, the greater the likelihood of them visiting tourist villages. Additionally, age differences influence responses to digital promotions; younger generations tend to be more influenced by interactive and visual promotions, while older groups rely more on information from traditional sources. Despite the many advantages of social media, this study also identifies several limitations, such as a limited sample size and potential bias in the questionnaire. Furthermore, the rapid development of technology may affect the relevance of the results in the future. Nevertheless, overall, this research provides guidance for tourism village managers to leverage social media as a dynamic and adaptive promotional tool in response to changing digital trends.

Keywords: *Social Media, Tourist Village, Semarang Regency*

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a country with a very large population. Based on the latest data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in 2024, Indonesia's population will reach 282 million. This figure reflects consistent population growth and places Indonesia as one of the most populous countries in the world (Baroroh et al., 2022). This significant population is an important factor in various development sectors, including the digital field which is growing rapidly in the country.

In line with population growth, the number of internet users in Indonesia is also showing a positive development. According to a report from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), by 2024, there will be around 221.6 million people in Indonesia who are connected to the internet. This figure is part of Indonesia's total population in 2023, which is estimated to reach 278.7 million. This widespread internet penetration reflects the increasing adoption of digital technology at various levels of society, especially among the younger generation who are increasingly familiar with cyberspace. Based on a survey conducted by APJII, the internet penetration rate in Indonesia in 2024 will reach 79.5%. This represents an increase of 1.4% compared to the previous period, signaling positive developments in internet accessibility and usage (Prasetyo et al., 2023). This increase not only shows the growth of better telecommunications infrastructure, but also the increasing role of

the internet in people's daily lives, both for information, entertainment, and the digital economy sector.

Social media are platforms that allow users to create and share information and ideas through online and virtual networks, facilitating instant communication through applications available on their smart phones (Thackeray et al., 2012). Various forms of social media include social networking sites, online communities, user-generated services such as blogs, video sharing sites and review platforms, where individuals can publish, edit and design content (Krishnaveni & Monica, 2016). With the most popular social media tools such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram, technology continues to evolve with many new platforms emerging (Fisher & Clayton, 2012; Wylie et al., 2014). Social media has become an influential communication channel and has changed consumer behavior by providing authentic information that allows customers to compare products as well as interact directly (Prasad et al., 2016). The advantages of marketing through social media include wide reach, low cost, and increased speed and interactivity between businesses and consumers (Reene & Sanford, 2010). By removing the barriers of time and physical location, social media allows marketers to connect directly with many consumers (Chen & Borges, 2009). Building solid relationships with customers is crucial in marketing and can be achieved through online communities (Farquhar & Rowley, 2006). In addition, social media significantly influences consumer perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes, and acts as an important source in purchasing decisions, as it provides a public forum for expressing opinions and accessing product information (Kozinets et al., 2010).

Marketing through social media can be applied to various sectors, ranging from the sale of physical products and services to the promotion of locations that have high potential to be visited, such as tourist destinations. One type of tourist destination that is increasingly in demand is a tourist village. Village tourism is a tourism development concept that focuses on the active participation of local communities and the preservation of the rural environment. This destination prioritizes authentic culture-based tourism experiences and maintains strong traditional values in the region (Dewi et al., 2013). Tourism villages offer unique attractions in the form of cultural activities, natural beauty, and direct interaction with the daily lives of village communities, making them ideal places for promotion on social media platforms to attract tourists who are looking for a different experience from modern tourism.

One of the regions that has a diverse tourist village is in Central Java Province, especially Semarang Regency, which has a few excellent tourist villages that are the mainstay of regional tourism (Atiko et al., 2016). Along with the rapid development of information and communication technology, both through online and offline media, tourism sector actors, including tourism village managers, are increasingly active in utilizing this progress to promote tourist destinations in their area. Some village tourism managers have even taken the initiative to introduce tourism potential in their villages through various promotional strategies to attract tourists and increase visits to the area.

Social media is one of the effective options chosen to promote tourism in a village. However, there are still many tours that have not utilized social media optimally (Diwyarthi, 2023). This needs to be a concern for tourism village managers so that later they can make the best use of social media. From this discussion, researchers want to know how the role of social media in increasing the promotion of tourist villages in Semarang Regency? Then what factors

influence the effectiveness of promoting tourist villages in Semarang Regency through social media?

METHOD

The research method used in this study is the Mix-Method approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain more comprehensive results. This approach was chosen because each method has complementary advantages, where quantitative methods are used to measure and analyze numerical data obtained from questionnaires to see certain patterns or trends, while qualitative methods are used to understand more deeply the perspectives, views, and experiences of tourism village managers and tourists regarding the effectiveness of promotion through social media. By combining these two methods, the research can provide a more complete picture of the phenomenon under study, including the influencing factors and dynamics of digital promotion of tourist villages in Semarang Regency. Mix-Method also allows researchers to validate quantitative results through qualitative interviews, thereby increasing the accuracy and reliability of the conclusions obtained.

Population and sampling method

The population in this study includes all tourist villages located in Semarang Regency, as well as managers of tourist villages and social media users who have visited these destinations. Tourism villages in Semarang Regency are quite diverse with different tourism potential, both in terms of cultural uniqueness, natural beauty, and the attractiveness of local tourism activities. Village tourism managers play an important role in developing promotions through various social media platforms. Therefore, this study also involved managers who are active in digital marketing strategies in their areas. In addition, social media users who have experience visiting the tourism village were selected to provide insights on the effectiveness of the promotions conducted by the managers. By targeting these two population groups, it is hoped that a comprehensive picture of the role of social media in promoting tourist villages in Semarang Regency can be obtained.

The sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling, where the selection of samples is based on certain predetermined criteria. Samples were selected from tourist villages that have actively utilized social media as the main promotional tool and have great potential to attract tourists. In addition, social media users who were used as respondents were those who had visited the tourist village and had knowledge or experience related to information obtained through digital platforms. This study involved five leading tourist villages in Semarang Regency that have demonstrated consistency in the use of social media for promotion, as well as 100 social media user respondents who met the criteria of being active tourists. This sample selection is expected to provide greater insight into the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies implemented, as well as the factors that influence the attractiveness of tourist villages in the eyes of tourists.

Research Instrument

The instruments used in this study consisted of questionnaires and interviews, which were designed to complement each other in obtaining more accurate and comprehensive data. The first instrument was a questionnaire containing 10 question points arranged using a 5-point

Likert scale, with answer options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The use of a Likert scale aims to measure respondents' level of agreement with statements related to the role of social media in promoting tourist villages in Semarang Regency. Through this questionnaire, the researcher wanted to find out how influential social media is in attracting tourists, as well as evaluate how elements such as interaction frequency, content quality, and the use of certain social media features impact the promotion of tourist villages. In addition, the questionnaire will also provide an overview of the extent to which promotion through social media contributes to increased tourist visits to the tourist villages selected as samples. The second instrument was an interview, which was conducted in a semi-structured manner to tourism village managers and selected social media user respondents. The interviews aimed to dig deeper into their subjective views and experiences regarding the effectiveness of the promotional strategies implemented. Interview topics included content strategy, challenges in utilizing social media, and innovations implemented to enhance tourism attractiveness. The interview approach allowed the researcher to flexibly adjust the questions based on the answers provided, thereby exploring factors that were not revealed through the questionnaire, such as the motivations behind social media use and perceptions of the impact of digital promotion. The combination of questionnaires and interviews is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the role of social media in the promotion of tourism villages in Semarang Regency, as well as identify the challenges and opportunities faced in its implementation.

Research Procedure and Timeframe

The research procedure began with an initial phase of secondary data collection that focused on the identification and mapping of tourist villages in Semarang Regency. This secondary data was obtained from various sources such as official reports from the tourism office, related literature studies, and information from tourist village websites. This step is important to provide an overview of the profile of the tourism village, its potential, and the promotional strategies that have been implemented previously. After the secondary data collection stage was completed, questionnaires and interview instruments were developed. The development of these instruments involved a validation process by seeking input from experts in tourism and social media to ensure that the questions formulated were in line with the research objectives and could appropriately measure the desired variables. The questionnaire was designed to measure tourists' perceptions of the effectiveness of social media promotion, while the interview instrument was developed to extract in-depth information from tourist village managers regarding their experiences, constraints, and strategies used in digital promotion.

After the research instruments were developed and validated, the research entered the primary data collection stage, which was conducted over two months. The data collection process involved distributing questionnaires to tourists who had visited tourist villages in Semarang Regency and had experience with the villages' social media promotions. The questionnaire was distributed online and offline to reach a wider range of respondents. On the other hand, interviews were conducted with managers of selected tourism villages to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of social media in tourism village promotion. Each interview lasted between 30 to 60 minutes and was recorded with the respondents' consent, then transcribed for analysis purposes. After data collection was completed, the data processing and analysis phase took about one month. This process involved screening, coding

and statistical calculations of the questionnaire results, as well as thematic analysis of the interview results to identify relevant patterns of findings. The results of this analysis were then presented in the form of a final report containing conclusions and recommendations for the development of a digital promotion strategy for tourist villages in Semarang Regency. With the entire process planned to last for three months, it is hoped that this research can make a significant contribution to the management of tourist villages in utilizing social media as an effective promotional tool.

Plan Analysis

Data analysis in this study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a thorough understanding. Questionnaire data collected from tourists was processed with descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS software to identify trends and patterns in their perceptions of the effectiveness of tourism village promotion through social media. Meanwhile, data from interviews with tourism village managers were analyzed using *content analysis* techniques to explore key themes related to promotional strategies and challenges faced. After both data were analyzed, the results were compared to see how the views of the managers and the experiences of tourists match up, with the main focus on how effective social media is as a promotional tool in increasing tourist visits. In this way, the study aims to provide recommendations that can help tourism village managers optimize their marketing strategies in the future.

Validity and Reliability Test

. The validity test in this study was carried out using Content Validity, namely by asking experts for their opinions regarding the relevance and clarity of the questions contained in the questionnaire. This aims to ensure that each question asked is appropriate and can be understood by respondents. Meanwhile, to test the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach's Alpha method was used, which aims to ensure the consistency of the respondents' answers. If the Cronbach's Alpha value obtained is more than 0.7, this indicates that the instrument used has good reliability, meaning that the questions in the questionnaire can provide consistent results when answered by the same respondent.

Statistical Test and Comparison

In this study, several statistical tests were used to analyze the data. First, the Pearson correlation test was applied to measure the relationship between how often people use social media and how much they visit tourist villages. In addition, T-test and ANOVA were conducted to find out whether there are differences in views between different age groups of social media users. Finally, linear regression tests were used to identify factors that influence the effectiveness of promoting tourist villages through social media. In this way, the research aims to provide a better understanding of how social media can contribute to attracting visitors to tourist villages.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focused on the role of social media in promoting tourism villages in Semarang Regency, so the results are only applicable within the geographical and socio-cultural context

of the area. One of the main limitations of this study is the limited sample size, as well as the use of questionnaires as the main tool for data collection, which could lead to bias in respondents' answers. In addition, the rapid development of technology and social media platforms may also affect the relevance of the results over time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that social media has a significant role in promoting tourist villages in Semarang Regency. From the data analysis, it was found that the higher the intensity of social media used by tourists, the more likely they are to visit a tourist village. The use of platforms such as Instagram and Facebook not only help raise awareness about the existence of tourist villages, but also influences tourists' decisions in choosing a location to visit (Afifah & Drajat, 2022). Engaging and informative content on social media is proven to capture the attention and interest of visitors, leading to an increase in visits.

In addition, analysis of differences in perceptions by age showed that the younger group of social media users tended to be more influenced by digital promotions compared to the older group. This indicates that more interactive and visually appealing marketing strategies on social media are more effective in reaching the younger generation, who may be more active in seeking information about travel destinations online (Setiyorini & Kristiyana, 2019). On the other hand, older groups are more likely to get information through traditional means and are less exposed to promotional content on social media. The study also identified some limitations. The limited sample size may affect the generalizability of the results, while the use of questionnaires as the main tool may lead to bias in responses. In addition, rapid developments in technology and social media platforms have the potential to change the way people interact with promotional content, so the results of the study may not be fully relevant in the long run. Nonetheless, the findings provide valuable insights for tourism village managers to utilize social media as an effective promotional tool and be adaptive to changing trends in the digital world (Wijaya, 2016).

The results of this study are in line with research by Syafiul Muchtar Izza Nursanti, Sheidy Yudhiasta 2024 who conducted research in Kampung Samin Bojonegoro and showed the results that the purpose of this study was to develop the promotion of tourist villages through the use of social media, especially Instagram. The method used is descriptive qualitative. The results showed that the large number of Instagram users encouraged businesspeople to promote tourism products on this platform, with the hope of increasing visits and public knowledge about tourist villages (Aprilya, 2017). Japanese Hamlet, which is inhabited by the Samin Community, has uniqueness and potential as a tourist destination. However, the promotion of the village is still less active, and the name of the Instagram account is not optimal. It is recommended to change the account name to "Komunitas Masyarakat Samin" to make it easier to recognize. Conclusion: Social media is an effective platform for tourism promotion, and good content planning is essential to attract more tourists.

The second example is research conducted by Hilmy Baroroh, Fathur Haer, Maulina Yusufiani, Sri Vita Azhari, Wahyu Anggraini, Marini. This research was conducted in 2022 in Loyok Village, located in Sikur District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, which is a tourist village famous for its woven bamboo crafts. Despite having many artshops, the village's marketing is still done traditionally, without utilizing social media or digital

marketing, which hinders its visibility among national and foreign tourists. After analyzing this condition, Group 91 KKN 105 UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta suggested that the village switch to digital marketing, including the development of social media and websites. Branding bamboo handicraft products is also important to make them more recognizable and increase their selling value and income. Future research could focus on tourists' perceptions of the experience of traveling and buying handicraft products in Loyok Village. From this research, social media has an important influence on the promotion of tourism villages in Loyok Village.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study confirm that social media, especially platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, play an important role in promoting tourist villages in Semarang Regency, with the higher the intensity of their use, the more likely tourists are to visit these locations. Engaging and informative content proved effective in attracting attention, especially among the younger generation who are more influenced by digital promotions. The research also noted differences in perceptions by age, suggesting that more visual and interactive marketing strategies are more effective for younger generations, while older groups tend to rely on traditional information. Despite limitations in the sample size and potential bias from the questionnaire, the findings provide valuable insights for tourism village managers to optimize the use of social media in their marketing strategies.

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