

IMPROVING DIGITAL MARKETING OF TOURISM VILLAGES IN YOGYAKARTA INDONESIA THROUGH STUDENT VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

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Abstract

Tourism villages in Yogyakarta have great potential to be developed as cultural and community-based tourism destinations. However, the main challenges faced are limited human resources in managing digital marketing strategies, lack of collaboration with influencers or content creators, and weak branding, which makes it difficult for tourism villages to compete. This research aims to identify marketing problems in tourism villages and offer solutions through student involvement in volunteer programs. This research uses a qualitative approach with observation and in-depth interviews with tourism village managers. The sample included five of the best tourism villages in Yogyakarta to provide a clearer picture of the problems and potential solutions. The effectiveness of social media management conducted independently by these tourism villages was also analyzed. The results showed that tourism villages in Yogyakarta still experience limitations in using social media, which impacts the lack of adequate digital promotion. Most tourism villages do not have competent human resources to manage digital marketing professionally and rarely collaborate with influencers or content creators. The solution offered in the form of a student volunteer program is expected to increase the frequency and quality of posts on social media, expand audience reach, and create more interesting content. In addition, the program is also expected to strengthen the branding of the tourism village through a more consistent and creative narrative. The student volunteer program is proposed as a potential solution to help tourism villages overcome digital marketing and branding challenges. With the involvement of students, the kampungs are expected to increase their visibility on digital platforms, strengthen their identity, and attract more tourists.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Student Volunteers, Tourism Village, Social Media.

A. INTRODUCTION

Tourism Village is an alternative tourist destination in the center of Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta has 25 tourism villages with various characteristics. Tourism villages offer various potentials ranging from culture, crafts, and culinary to agro. Tourism villages need to be managed optimally in order to get maximum results as well. As a destination, tourism villages also experience various problems, especially in terms of digitalization. Digitalization aims to promote and develop tourism villages (Mumtaz & Karmilah, 2022).

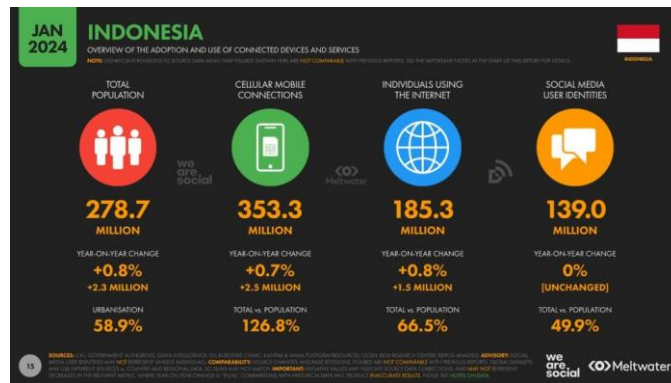


Figure1. Indonesia Digital Data 2024 Based on DataReportal

Source: DataReportal, 2024,

Digital Indonesia data shows that in 2024, Indonesia's population will reach 278.7 million, with 353.3 million connected mobile devices, or about 126.8% of the total population. The number of internet users reached 185.3 million people (66.5% of the total population), while active social media users amounted to 139.0 million people (49.9% of the total population), indicating the high penetration of technology and social media in everyday life. (Kemp, 2024).

Digitalization in tourism villages can be assessed through effective social media management. Proper social media management will create *branding* for the tourism village. *Branding* is needed for development and promotion. An essential strategy in the development and promotion of tourism villages is digital marketing (Gaffar et al., 2023). (Gaffar et al., 2023).. Digital marketing refers to promoting products or services through the internet as a digital channel, mobile devices, and other digital media. Through digital marketing, there is active engagement with customers and direct monitoring of promotional activities (Visser, 2019). (Visser, 2019). The cultural and natural potential of tourism villages can be demonstrated through digital marketing. (Andiani et al., 2023).

Social media is an integral part of modern communication, creating content, sharing, and exchanging information virtually. (Atteh et al., 2020). Social media offers various features such as messaging, discussion forums, and some content through various devices. (Kavitha, 2024). Social media must be managed wisely and with high creativity. Communities, governments, and tourism organizations must collaborate to produce good *branding*. (Sukarno & Mutiarin, 2023). In addition to the three parties mentioned above, students can also participate and promote local tourism potential in tourism villages. (Dewi & Rusdianto, 2023)..

Yogyakarta, also known as the city of students, has around 192 higher education institutions: academies, polytechnics, high schools, institutes, and universities. (Ministry of Education and Culture's Education Data, 2024). Students, as part of higher education, who must also carry out the tri dharma of higher education, can participate in community service activities by volunteering in a tourism village. *Volunteering* means giving time to help others for free without any reward in the form of money or goods. (David, 2024).

Students, as academics from various scientific backgrounds, have sufficient capital to help the process of social media management in the tourism village. Student volunteer activities in the tourism village become a medium between the university and the community. Students can develop skills and values through interdisciplinary activities. (Rezzónico et al., 2021). Volunteer

activities can be carried out as an initiative by students or as a program managed by the university (Holmes et al., 2020). (Holmes et al., 2020).

This study sampled five of the twenty-five tourism villages in Yogyakarta City, namely Rejowinangun, Cokrodiningratan, Prenggan, Purbayan, and Sosromenduran. The reason for choosing the tourism village is the success of the tourism village in the competition, namely the Tourism Village Award in Yogyakarta City towards Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia (ADWI), namely Prenggan Tourism Village won first place, Cokrodiningratan Tourism Village won second place, and Sosromenduran Tourism Village won third place. (AMP, 2023). In addition, Rejowinangun Tourism Village and Purbayan Tourism Village were chosen because they both won awards at the national level in Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia (ADWI). Purbayan Tourism Village won second place in the category of Developing Tourism Village. (adminwarta, 2023) Moreover, Rejowinangun Tourism Village won the 2nd Best CHSE Category (Kuswaraharja, 2021).

Although the five tourism villages have won awards, there are still various problems in the digitalization aspect. These include a lack of human resources focused on social media management and a lack of understanding of effective social media management. As urban tourism is in the middle of the crowded city of Yogyakarta, these tourism villages need creative and innovative social media management, which fresh ideas from students can support through the tourism village volunteer program. Collaboration between various parties is expected to generate constructive discussions and new perspectives to optimize social media management in the five tourism villages. This research aims to identify marketing problems faced by the five tourism villages and offer solutions through student involvement in the volunteer program.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative case study method to explore digital marketing challenges in Yogyakarta's tourism villages and the role of student volunteers as a solution. Five villages—Rejowinangun, Cokrodiningratan, Prenggan, Purbayan, and Sosromenduran—were chosen based on their digital marketing success and recognition. Data collection included field observations, semi-structured interviews with village managers, and content analysis of social media posts. Data analysis identified key themes and patterns in digital marketing practices. Triangulation ensured reliability by combining observations, interviews, and content analysis. Ethical measures, including informed consent and confidentiality, were followed to maintain neutrality. These methods validate the findings and offer insights to improve digital marketing in tourism villages.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The role of social media as a digital promotion tool is becoming increasingly important. Tourism villages that rely on rich culture, traditions, and local wisdom face challenges in attracting tourists in the modern digital era. Social media not only serves as a means to introduce tourism potential but also as a medium to build sustainable interactions with audiences and strengthen a positive image. However, despite this great opportunity, many tourism villages in Yogyakarta are still unable to utilize social media effectively. Various obstacles, including limited competent human resources, lack of technical training, and a lack of understanding of efficient digital marketing strategies, hinder them from optimizing their promotional potential. An in-depth observation of five regional tourism villages revealed various aspects of the problems faced, which pose significant challenges in their efforts to maintain sustainability and attractiveness on digital *platforms*.

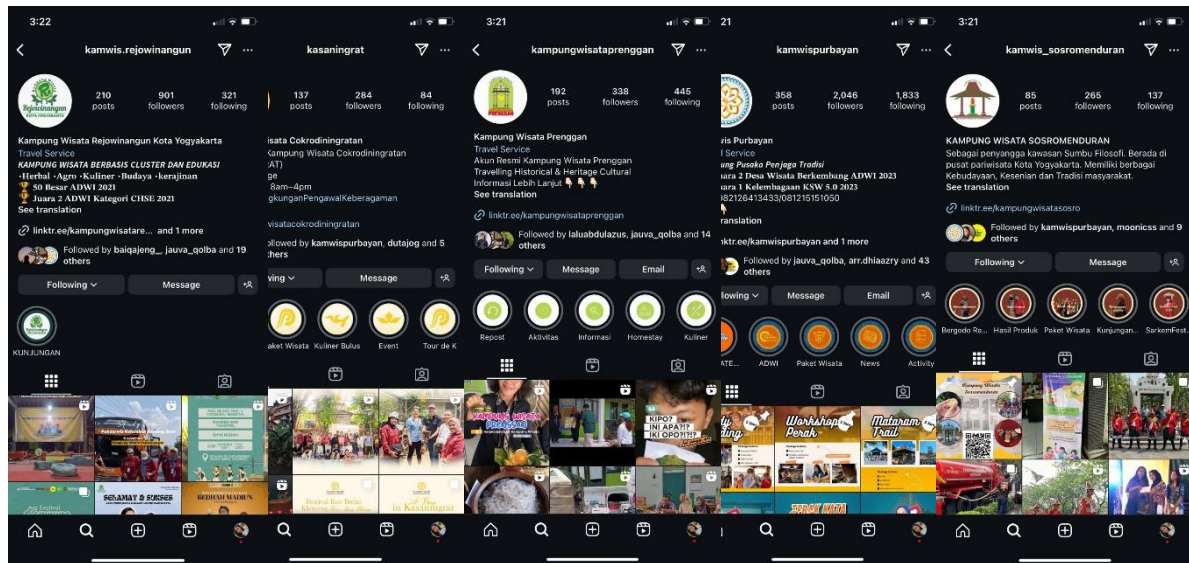


Figure2. Screenshot of Instagram Accounts of Rejowinangun, Cokrodingratan, Prenggan, Purbayan, and Sosromenduran Tourism Villages.
Source: Instagram.com

In-depth observations of five tourism villages in Yogyakarta revealed that inconsistency in uploading content on social media is the main challenge faced. Rejowinangun Tourism Village, despite having an IT team to manage social media, still struggles to maintain the consistency of uploads. Interviews with the manager show that this limitation is due to the lack of careful strategic planning and training in managing content schedules effectively. As a result, sometimes the time lag between uploads is too long, resulting in decreased audience *engagement*. Cokrodingratan Tourism Village faces similar challenges. The content uploaded is sporadic and does not follow a specific strategy, which, according to the manager, is due to limited human resources who are competent in planning and executing social media campaigns consistently. Creativity in content creation is a significant challenge in almost all tourism villages. Prenggan Tourism Village faces severe constraints in terms of human resource availability and skills. The manager revealed that the lack of technical training in editing technology resulted in low-quality visual content. The resulting documentation tends to be simple, less varied, and lacks vital visual elements to attract the attention of an increasingly selective digital audience. Purbayan Tourism Village also lacks content variety; their posts are often static photos or event information, without more dynamic formats such as short videos, behind-the-scenes content, or visitor testimonials. Interviews confirmed that the leading cause of this limitation is the lack of human resources with creative backgrounds and *storytelling* skills. Sosromenduran Tourism Village has different challenges related to managing audience engagement. Despite having an IT team, the village does not utilize social media management tools such as *Hootsuite*, which can help plan and produce more professional content. In interviews, the manager explained that this was due to a lack of knowledge of using these tools and a limited budget for training. Almost all tourism villages stated that their understanding of the latest digital trends is still limited, so the digital promotion strategies they implement are less effective.

Table of Digital Marketing Issues of Tourism Village 2024

Tourism Village	Problems
Rejowinangun Tourism Village	• Lack of understanding of digital trends, • Inconsistent content upload time, • Lack of creativity in content creation
Cokrodiningratan Tourism Village	• No clear content strategy • Lack of creativity in content creation, • Limitations in performance evaluation, • Inconsistent upload time
Prenggan Tourism Village	• Limited Human Resources • Lack of mastery of editing technology, • No consistent visual identity strategy • Low-quality visual content
Purbayan Tourism Village	• Lack of insight into storytelling, no clear target audience, • Lack of content variety • Lack of collaboration with local creative communities, influencers
Sosromenduran Tourism Village	• Limited Human Resources • lack of ability to manage engagement • Lack of collaboration with local creative communities, influencers

Source: Primary Data from Observation and Interview of Tourism Village, 2024

Interviews with managers in all villages revealed that they recognize the importance of collaboration with external parties, such as student volunteers and creative communities, to help overcome these constraints. The managers recognized that the involvement of student volunteers has the potential to have a significant impact. Students are considered capable of bringing new perspectives and the technical skills needed to produce content that is more creative, varied, and in line with current digital trends. Students can also assist in designing more effective marketing strategies, which include the use of *storytelling*, quality visuals, and interactive techniques to increase audience *engagement*. With the support of student volunteers, these tourism villages are expected to increase their digital visibility, strengthen their *branding*, and expand their audience reach so that they can compete more effectively in the increasingly competitive tourism industry. This engagement not only helps solve short-term problems but also has the potential to create a long-term positive impact in building a more solid foundation for the digital promotion of tourism villages.



Figure 3. Interview and Observation in Rejowinangun, Cokrodiningratan Prenggan, Purbayan and Sosromenduran Tourism Villages.

Source: Personal Documentation, 2024

The solution proposed through the student volunteer program is expected to help overcome the various challenges faced by tourism villages in Yogyakarta in managing their digital marketing. Student volunteers have great potential to bring positive changes, especially in improving the quality and frequency of content uploads on social media. With more up-to-date skills and insights into digital trends, students can help create more engaging and varied content, such as short videos, behind-the-scenes stories, and visitor testimonials presented with strong narratives and attractive visuals. The use of these more dynamic content formats is expected to increase audience engagement and expand the reach of the tourism village on digital platforms. Student volunteers can also assist in the development of a more structured and data-driven content strategy. They can provide input in creating a well-scheduled content calendar so that the tourism village can maintain the consistency of uploads. In addition, student volunteers can teach the use of social media management tools such as *Hootsuite*, *Canva*, or other tools that have not been fully utilized by these villages. With the mastery of these tools, village managers will be better able to plan and produce more professional and efficient content.

The participation of student volunteers can also help tourism villages build connections with local creative communities and collaborate with social media influencers. Through these collaborations, the *kampung* can expand its network and create more relevant and highly engaging content. In the long run, the contribution of student volunteers is expected to strengthen the branding of tourism villages through more consistent, creative, and authentic narratives and support the development of a solid digital identity. The impact of this program will not only help address short-term digital marketing challenges but also build a stronger foundation for sustainable growth in the future.

D. CONCLUSION

Tourism villages in Yogyakarta face various challenges in digital marketing, including inconsistent content uploads, limited creativity in content creation, and a lack of understanding of modern digital trends. Despite these obstacles, their potential as cultural and community-based tourism destinations remains significant. This study proposes the involvement of student volunteers as a practical and impactful solution to address these issues. The findings suggest that student volunteers can bridge existing competency gaps by providing fresh perspectives, technical expertise, and knowledge of digital trends. Through structured volunteer programs, students can support tourism villages in producing creative, consistent, and engaging digital content, such as storytelling, short videos, and dynamic visuals. These efforts not only improve audience engagement but also strengthen the branding and visibility of tourism villages on digital platforms. Moreover, collaborations with local creative communities and influencers further amplify these benefits.

To ensure sustainable impact, long-term partnerships between tourism village managers, universities, and creative communities are essential. Such collaborations can empower tourism villages to develop more robust digital marketing strategies and adapt to the evolving demands of the digital tourism landscape. Future research could explore the implementation of student volunteer programs in other regions, focusing on their scalability and adaptability to diverse cultural contexts. Additionally, studies investigating the integration of advanced digital marketing tools, such as AI-powered analytics and social media automation, could offer further insights into enhancing the competitiveness of tourism villages in Indonesia. These directions will help build a comprehensive framework for leveraging digital transformation in community-based tourism.

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