

Digital Tourism Promotion Training to Enhance Local Community Capacity in a Tourism Village

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Abstract. The growing reliance on digital platforms in tourism has reshaped how destinations communicate and compete, particularly for tourism villages that depend on community involvement. The strength of human resources in managing tourism potential and conducting effective promotion is a key determinant of tourism village development. Therefore, targeted training is necessary to enhance local community capacity in tourism management and digital promotion to expand wider visitors. This study examines digital tourism promotion training as a community development practice in Rindu Hati Tourism Village, Indonesia, focusing on collaboration between local tourism actors and Universitas Bengkulu (UNIB). This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore processes, practices, and outcomes of digital tourism promotion training within the community. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation, capturing how digital promotion was prepared, implemented through participatory training, and integrated into everyday tourism management. The findings show that digital tourism promotion developed through collective training activities that enabled the community to manage websites and digital video platforms as shared promotional spaces. Digital platforms functioned not only as marketing tools but also as media for expressing local identity and strengthening community participation. The collaboration with the local university supported learning and facilitation while maintaining community control over tourism narratives. Furthermore, this research found that this training contributes to local community development when embedded in participatory processes, educational collaboration, and locally grounded practices.

Keywords: *Community Development, Digital Promotion, Tourism Village, Training.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the global tourism sector has undergone a profound transformation marked by the growing dominance of digital technologies in destination marketing, promotion, and communication. Changes in tourist behavior, particularly among international travelers, have increasingly shifted the decision-making process toward digital platforms such as search engines, review websites, and social media. As a result, digital visibility has become a strategic determinant in shaping destination image, influencing tourist perceptions, and attracting visitation. Tourism destinations are no longer evaluated solely based on their physical attributes, but also on how they are represented, narrated, and circulated through digital spaces, processes that increasingly require social interaction and collective practices at the local level.

Empirical evidence highlights the central role of digital platforms in contemporary travel behavior. Phocuswright (2024) reports that 57% of leisure travelers use social media to seek inspiration, conduct research, or plan their trips, while Statista (2024) shows that approximately 75% of global tourists rely on social media as their primary source of travel inspiration. Furthermore, Phocuswright finds that 62% of travelers who engage with social media during trip planning subsequently make booking decisions based on the digital content they encounter. These findings demonstrate that digital tourism promotion exerts a direct influence on tourist decision-making, positioning digital content as a critical driver of destination performance.

The growing dominance of visual content further reinforces the importance of digital tourism promotion. Industry reports indicate that nearly 80% of users who watch travel-related

video content take follow-up actions within one week, such as searching for additional information or considering bookings (Hotelier Middle East, 2025). This trend confirms that tourism promotion can no longer rely primarily on conventional offline approaches such as brochures, exhibitions, or print media. Instead, destinations are increasingly required to adopt creative, interactive, and sustained digital promotion strategies that are socially embedded within destination communities.

In Indonesia, digital transformation has become a central component of national tourism and creative economy development, particularly in the context of tourism villages. The Indonesian government has positioned digitalization as a key strategy to enhance destination competitiveness, expand market reach, and strengthen local narratives. This orientation is reflected in national initiatives such as the Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia (ADWI), which incorporates digital and creative performance as a core evaluation indicator, and the Beli Kreatif Desa Wisata campaign, which emphasizes online-based promotion of village destinations and products. These policies align with domestic tourism trends, as more than 74% of Indonesian tourists seek destination information through digital media prior to travel (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2024). Consequently, digital tourism promotion has become a decisive arena of competition among tourism villages at the national level.

Digital tourism promotion in tourism villages differs from conventional destination marketing because it is closely intertwined with local community involvement. In community-based tourism settings, local communities act as primary agents in producing, managing, and disseminating destination narratives. Digital promotion thus functions not only as a marketing instrument but also as a social process through which communities represent local identity, articulate cultural and natural values, and engage directly with broader tourism networks. This perspective aligns with community development theory, which emphasizes participation, collective processes, and the recognition of local knowledge as fundamental elements of sustainable development (Ife, 2013).

Within this context, higher education institutions play a strategic role as external actors supporting community development initiatives through capacity building: training. Adi (2023) highlights that community development is an intervention model that emphasizes human-centered processes, participation, and educational elements as mechanisms for community transformation. Universities, through community service and engagement programs, are well positioned to facilitate learning processes, provide technical support, and accompany communities in adapting to broader structural changes such as digitalization, while respecting local agency and decision-making.

This role is exemplified by the collaboration between Universitas Bengkulu (UNIB) and Desa Wisata Rindu Hati in the implementation of community development to encourage the digital tourism promotion. Through a series of participatory training and mentoring processes, local tourism actors were involved in managing a destination website and producing digital video content as promotional media. These activities emphasized collective practice, digital storytelling, and community control over promotional narratives, rather than the mere provision of technological tools. The collaboration illustrates how digital tourism promotion training can function as a practical arena for interaction between higher education institutions and local communities in developing tourism villages.

Desa Wisata Rindu Hati represents a particularly relevant case for examining these dynamics. As the first officially designated tourism village in Bengkulu Province since 2020, Rindu Hati has emerged as a pioneer in community-based tourism development. The village possesses diverse natural attractions, cultural heritage, and outdoor tourism activities, and has actively utilized digital channels to promote its tourism potential. The involvement of UNIB

further positions Rindu Hati as a living laboratory for exploring how digital tourism promotion operates within a developing local community context.

Despite the growing attention to digital tourism and community-based tourism, studies that examine digital tourism promotion explicitly as a community development practice, particularly through university-community collaboration, remain limited. Accordingly, this study seeks to address this gap by examining how digital tourism promotion is prepared, implemented, and experienced within the local community of Desa Wisata Rindu Hati. By focusing on the social processes underpinning digital promotion, this research contributes to the literature on digital tourism and community development, while offering practical insights into the role of higher education institutions in supporting sustainable tourism village development in the digital era.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Community Development

According to Ife (2013), community development emphasizes the importance of collective processes through which communities build awareness, strengthen solidarity, and develop capacity through participatory interaction. Meanwhile, Adi (2023) explains that community development, known globally by the same term, is an intervention model that places strong emphasis on human aspects and community empowerment, in which educational elements are deeply embedded as efforts to transform communities. Community participation in empowerment processes becomes one of the key factors in achieving social well-being. The involvement of community members, physically, intellectually, materially, and financially, is expected to strengthen the sense of togetherness and ownership over both the processes and outcomes of development within the community. Furthermore, Adi (2023) notes that community development in Indonesia is primarily focused on the village level, partly because more than two-thirds of the Indonesian population resides in rural areas (both rural villages and urban villages).

On the other hand, rural community development is closely linked to efforts to build local economic independence. Green & Haines (2012) assert that community development must position local economic development as an integral component of community strengthening. Villages, as bases of social production, hold substantial potential to develop enterprises rooted in local resources such as agriculture, handicrafts, and tourism. Beyond institutional and economic aspects, rural community development also emphasizes the importance of preserving local identity. Ife (2013) highlights that valuing the local, that is, appreciating local culture, knowledge, and practices is a core principle of community development.

2. Training as a Capacity Building

Training is widely recognized in development studies as a key instrument for capacity building, particularly in community-based development initiatives. Capacity building generally refers to processes through which individuals, organizations, and communities enhance their abilities to perform functions, solve problems, and achieve development objectives in a sustainable manner (Grindle, 1997; UNDP, 2009). Within this framework, training functions as a structured learning mechanism aimed at strengthening knowledge, skills, and practices relevant to specific development contexts. Grindle (1997) conceptualizes capacity building as a multidimensional process that operates at individual, organizational, and systemic levels. At the community level, training contributes to capacity building by enabling community members to acquire practical competencies while engaging with collective development goals.

Rather than focusing solely on technical skill acquisition, effective training supports the ability of communities to organize, adapt, and sustain development initiatives over time.

In the context of community development, training is increasingly understood as a participatory and practice-oriented process. Mikkelsen (2005) emphasizes that training in community-based programs should be grounded in local realities and involve active participation from community members. This approach shifts training away from one-way knowledge transfer toward experiential learning, where communities learn through direct engagement with real development activities. Such participatory training enhances relevance, ownership, and sustainability of development outcomes. UNDP (2009) further argues that capacity building through training is most effective when it is embedded within ongoing development processes rather than delivered as isolated interventions. Training that is integrated into daily practices allows communities to internalize new knowledge and skills while maintaining control over development directions. This perspective aligns with contemporary views that capacity building should support local agency rather than replace it.

Within tourism development, training as a capacity building strategy has been applied to support community-based tourism initiatives, including destination management, marketing, and digital promotion. Scholars note that training enables local actors to engage more effectively with market dynamics and technological change, particularly in rural and emerging destinations (Moscardo, 2008). However, recent studies also caution that training should not be treated as a purely technical solution; its effectiveness depends on how it is aligned with community participation, local values, and existing social structures.

3. Digital Promotion

Digital promotion in the context of tourism villages can be understood through various theoretical approaches that explain how destination messages are managed, disseminated, and received by digital audiences. One of the main theories is the Digital Marketing Communication framework by Kotler and Keller (2016), which positions digital promotion as part of integrated marketing communications. This theory emphasizes the importance of message consistency, cross-platform integration, and the use of digital channels such as social media, websites, and video to build destination image. In the context of tourism villages, this theory is relevant for explaining how local communities need to design promotional messages that are systematic and consistent in order to enhance the village's digital visibility.

Furthermore, the Social Media Marketing Theory by Tuten and Solomon (2018) explains that social media functions not merely as a publication tool but also as a space for dialogue and interaction that enables relationships to form between destination managers and tourists. The effectiveness of digital promotion is determined by content quality, the level of audience engagement, and the community's ability to build digital networks. This theory is highly relevant in examining how tourism villages utilize Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to increase engagement and convey visual narratives about the village's attractions. To understand technology adoption at the community level, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989) provides insight into the factors that influence individuals in using technology. Its two key variables, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, help explain why some village residents adopt digital media more quickly while others face barriers. This perspective is reinforced by the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) by Venkatesh et al. (2003), which emphasizes that technology use is influenced by performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. These two theories are useful in analyzing the readiness and capacity of local communities in managing digital promotion for tourism villages.

Content-based promotion is explained through the Digital Content Marketing Theory developed by Pulizzi (2014). This theory highlights that valuable content, relevant, engaging, visual, and consistent, is a key element in attracting audiences in digital spaces. In the context of tourism villages, this theory explains the importance of producing photos, short videos, and narratives that can portray local uniqueness. This is closely related to Destination Branding Theory proposed by Cai (2002) and Pike (2004), which posits that tourism destinations build identity through visual imagery, narrative elements, and unique local values. In this theory, digital promotion serves as a space for shaping the brand image of a tourism village.

In addition, the role of users and tourists in shaping digital perceptions can be explained through the Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) theory by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004). This theory states that reviews, comments, and user-generated content have a significant influence on visitation decisions. In the context of tourism villages, tourists' social media posts can serve as promotional assets that expand the reach of community-driven promotion efforts. From a media behavior perspective, the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) explains that users access media to fulfill their needs for information, entertainment, identity, and interaction. Modern tourists consume travel content to seek inspiration, compare destinations, and make travel decisions, thus providing a framework for understanding audience behavior as the target of digital promotion for tourism villages.

The process of digital technology adoption at the community level can also be understood through the Diffusion of Innovation Theory by Rogers (2003), which explains that innovations are adopted gradually by different groups in society, from innovators to laggards. In the context of tourism villages, this theory explains the variations in community capacities to utilize digital platforms and highlights the importance of capacity building to accelerate technology adoption. Finally, digital promotion efforts in tourism villages can be positioned within the Digital Tourism Ecosystem Theory by Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015), which views digital tourism as an ecosystem consisting of interactions between destinations, local communities, tourists, technologies, and digital platforms. This theory helps illustrate how digital promotion does not operate in isolation but relies on the synergy of actors and supporting infrastructure within the digital ecosystem of tourism villages.

4. Tourism Village

According to Asyari (2015, in Sahara et al., 2024), a tourism village is a village capable of sustaining itself by relying on its own potential, which is then developed and offered as a tourist attraction without depending on external investment. Meanwhile, Nurdiansah (2014, in Sahara et al., 2024) explains that a tourism village is a tourism development approach based on the integration of key elements such as attractions, accommodation, transportation, management institutions, as well as infrastructure and public services, all of which are harmoniously intertwined with the daily life of local communities and the physical characteristics of the village environment. In other words, a tourism village is not merely a destination space, but a social space where cultural values, local ways of life, and social structures organically merge with tourism activities.

Sahara et al. (2024) identify several strategic benefits of developing tourism villages, derived from the active involvement of local communities as the main actors in tourism development. These benefits include five main dimensions: local economic empowerment, infrastructure development, cultural and environmental preservation, social and educational development, as well as improved welfare and the development of alternative destinations. Furthermore, within the planning framework of tourism village development, it is important to emphasize that not every area in the village should be commodified as a tourism object. Sahara et al. (2024) comprehensively highlight that the development of tourism villages must be

grounded in five interrelated and mutually reinforcing principles. First, the principle of sustainability, which emphasizes balancing economic growth, environmental preservation, and sociocultural stability as the direction of development. Second, the principle of community participation asserts that development cannot be designed solely by external actors or local elites but must be a collective process involving the community from the outset. Third, the principle of local wisdom reinforces that each village possesses unique local values and characteristics that cannot be generalized. Fourth, tourism village development should ideally be integrated with the growth of the creative economy. Lastly, the principle of natural and cultural conservation is emphasized as the central axis of long-term sustainability.

C. METHOD

This study was conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of how digital tourism promotion training is practiced and developed within a collaboration between local community context in Rindu Hati Tourism Village, Central Bengkulu Regency and a local university. The research focuses on describing the training process and results of the digital promotion activities, particularly in collaboration with external institutions such as higher education institutions. To achieve this objective, the study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design.

A qualitative approach was utilized as it enables the researcher to explore social realities, meanings, and practices of the training for enhancing local community's capacity in digital tourism promotion as they are experienced and interpreted by community members within their natural setting. According to Neuman (2014), qualitative research is an investigative process that emphasizes understanding social meanings constructed through interaction within specific social contexts with rich description and deep interpretation of social phenomena.

The study adopted a qualitative descriptive design to systematically and comprehensively describe the forms, processes, and patterns of digital tourism promotion training for the local community. Descriptive qualitative research seeks to document existing social conditions, identify categories of practices, and explain how particular activities unfold in real-world contexts (Neuman, 2014).

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Initial Conditions of Digital Tourism Promotion Capacity within Local Communities in a Tourism Village

Prior to the involvement of Universitas Bengkulu (UNIB), tourism promotion in Rindu Hati Tourism Village was conducted in a limited and unsystematic manner. Although the village possessed diverse tourism attractions, such as river, waterfalls, natural landscapes, outdoor activities, and community-based tourism facilities, these potentials were not optimally communicated to broader audiences. Promotional efforts relied mainly on direct visitor networks and informal word-of-mouth communication, as explained by the Village Head:

"Before there was support from the university, tourism promotion here was still very limited. Most visitors came through recommendations from friends or relatives, and we did not yet promote the village in a structured way through digital media" (Head of Rindu Hati Village, 2025).

Digital promotion had not yet functioned as a collective community practice. Information about the village was dispersed across personal blogs and inactive social media accounts managed by individual actors, without a centralized platform representing the village as a unified tourism destination. As a result, online visibility was low and tourism information lacked consistency and continuity. These conditions indicate that the challenge faced by the

village lay not in the absence of tourism resources, but in the limited organization of digital promotion at the community level.

2. Community Needs and Local Resources for Enhancing Digital Promotion

The limited reach of tourism promotion led the local community to recognize the need for more effective communication channels to introduce Rindu Hati Tourism Village to wider markets. Village authorities and tourism managers identified digital platforms as a strategic medium for improving visibility, strengthening destination identity, and attracting visitors. At the same time, the community possessed important internal resources that supported collective tourism development. A significant proportion of residents were of productive age and actively involved in tourism-related activities. The presence of organized community groups, particularly the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), provided an institutional basis for coordination and shared responsibility in tourism management. These social structures enabled collective participation in tourism promotion initiatives, as stated by the Head of Rindu Hati Village:

“Since the early stages of Rindu Hati Tourism Village development, the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) has been the most active actor, including in tourism promotion activities. They have coordinated promotional efforts, both through direct engagement and via social media platforms” (Head of Rindu Hati Village, 2025).

External resources complemented local potential through the involvement of Universitas Bengkulu (UNIB). Through its community service program, UNIB contributed technical knowledge and facilitation related to digital tourism promotion. This collaboration positioned the university as a supporting partner that worked within existing community structures rather than replacing local roles.

3. Digital Tourism Promotion Training

The digital tourism promotion initiative in Rindu Hati Tourism Village was implemented through a structured training process involving collaboration between the university team and local tourism actors. The training was designed to support community-led tourism promotion by integrating digital practices into existing tourism management activities.

a. Training Preparation

The preparation phase focused on coordination with village authorities and local tourism groups to ensure alignment between the training activities and local tourism needs. This stage involved identifying key participants, determining the focus of digital promotion activities, and establishing an implementation schedule that accommodated community routines. Technical preparation was also carried out to support the feasibility of digital promotion activities. This included preparing basic digital equipment such as computers, cameras, and internet access facilities, as well as improving network connectivity in strategic tourism areas. These preparatory steps ensured that digital promotion activities could be carried out directly within the village context and sustained beyond the training period, as explained by the Village Head:

“During the preparation phase, the university team coordinated with village officials and tourism managers. They also helped provide signal boosters and supporting equipment so that digital promotion activities could be practiced directly at the tourism sites.” (Head of Rindu Hati Village, 2025)

b. Training Implementation

The training was conducted through a series of practical and participatory sessions. Initial activities introduced participants to the role of digital media in tourism promotion and

the use of websites and video-sharing platforms as promotional tools. Participants' initial experiences with digital media were explored to tailor the training process to local conditions.

Subsequent sessions emphasized hands-on practice. Participants worked collaboratively to document tourism attractions, produce photos and videos, and organize tourism information for digital platforms. Content creation activities included photographing natural attractions, recording tourism-related videos, and editing audiovisual materials using accessible software applications. The training followed a step-by-step workflow, beginning with content identification and documentation, followed by editing, uploading, and platform management. As described by a tourism manager:

“The training was very practical. We directly practiced taking photos and videos of tourism spots, editing the content, and uploading it to the website and social media. Everything was done step by step and together” (Tourism Manager, Rindu Hati Tourism Village, 2025).



Figure 1. Coordination of Digital Tourism Promotion Training Activities by the University of Bengkulu Team with the Local Tourism Actor Team

Source: Adapted by the Author (2025) from UNIB Archives



Figure 2. Training on Website and YouTube Management as Tourism Promotion Media

Source: Adapted by the author (2025) from UNIB Archives



Figure 3. Training in Taking Video and Photo Content for the village Website and YouTube

Source: Adapted by the Author (2025) from UNIB Archives

In parallel with content-related activities, technical support was provided to strengthen internet connectivity within tourism areas. This enabled participants to manage digital platforms more consistently and integrate online promotion into everyday tourism operations. Throughout the process, facilitators provided guidance and mentoring while encouraging active participation and collective decision-making among community members.



Figure 4. Installation of Cellphone and Internet Signal Booster Antenna
Source: Adapted by the Author (2025) from UNIB Archives

4. Outcomes of Digital Tourism Promotion Training

The implementation of digital tourism promotion training resulted in the establishment of community-managed digital platforms for tourism promotion. Rindu Hati Tourism Village developed an official tourism website and an active video-sharing channel that function as centralized sources of tourism information. These platforms enabled the community to present tourism attractions, facilities, and village activities in a more organized and consistent manner. Community members were able to independently produce and upload digital content, update tourism information, and utilize social media and web-based platforms as part of routine promotional practices.

The integration of digital promotion into village tourism management contributed to increased visibility of Rindu Hati Tourism Village and supported broader tourism development efforts. Digital media became a practical mechanism through which local tourism actors could reach wider audiences while maintaining control over the representation of local identity and tourism narratives. Overall, the outcomes indicate that digital tourism promotion functioned as a collective community practice, supported through structured training and collaborative processes, and embedded within the daily management of tourism activities in the village. As reflected by the local tourism managers:

“After the training, we were able to manage the tourism website and upload videos independently. Now we regularly update information about our village activities through digital platforms, and promotion no longer depends on word of mouth alone”
(Local Tourism Manager, Rindu Hati Tourism Village, 2025).

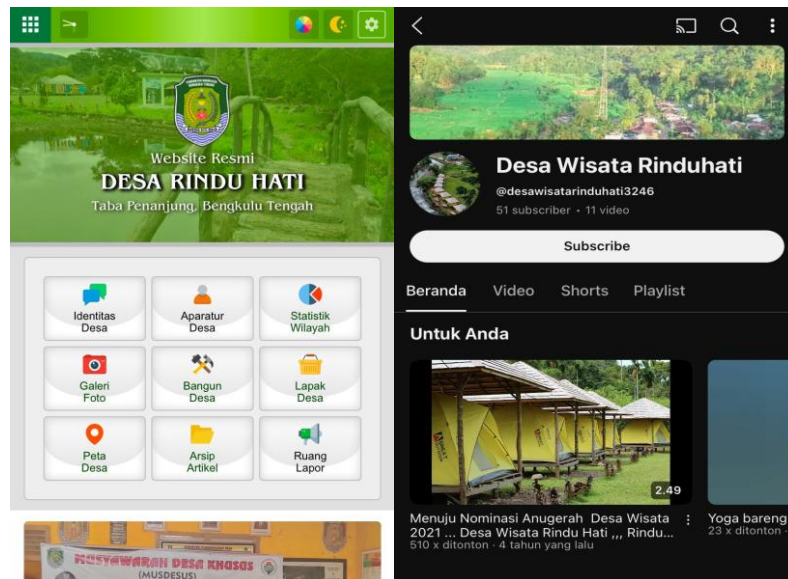


Figure 5. Website and YouTube channel of Desa Wisata Rindu Hati

Source: Adapted by the author (2025) from UNIB archives

This study demonstrates that digital tourism promotion in Rindu Hati Tourism Village operates not merely as a marketing strategy, but as a social process embedded within local community development. The findings show that digital promotion emerged through collective action, participatory training, and collaboration with an external institution, namely Universitas Bengkulu (UNIB). Rather than being treated as a purely technical intervention, digital promotion developed as a community practice integrated into everyday tourism management. This section discusses these findings by explicitly linking them to key principles of community development as articulated by Ife (2013), Adi (2023), and Green and Haines (2012).

Ife (2013) emphasizes that community development is fundamentally a participatory process in which communities actively engage in shaping their own development trajectories. Participation extends beyond attendance in activities to include decision-making, representation, and control over development outcomes. The findings from Rindu Hati clearly reflect this principle. Digital tourism promotion was not introduced as a top-down initiative, but developed through the direct involvement of local tourism actors during training activities, including content identification, documentation of tourism attractions, and management of digital platforms.

The establishment of an official tourism website and a video-sharing channel functioned as collective spaces where community members jointly represented their village. Through these platforms, local actors selected which attractions to highlight, how to visually frame tourism experiences, and how to communicate local values to external audiences. This participatory process reflects what Ife (2013) describes as community control over development processes, where communities act as subjects rather than objects of development. Digital tourism promotion thus became a mechanism through which the community exercised agency in defining and communicating its tourism identity.

According to Adi (2023), community development is an intervention model that emphasizes human-centered processes, with education serving as a key element for social transformation. The findings of this study illustrate how educational interventions can support community development when they are embedded in participatory practice. The involvement of UNIB was manifested through structured training activities that emphasized learning by doing, collective problem-solving, and continuous interaction between facilitators and community members.

Learning during the training process did not occur through one-way instruction alone, but through practical engagement in real promotional tasks, such as producing digital content and managing online platforms. This aligns with Adi's (2023) argument that effective community development interventions foster environments where communities actively engage with new knowledge while retaining control over development processes. In this context, training functioned as a medium for collective learning rather than as a mechanism for imposing external agendas.

Green & Haines (2012) argue that community development must integrate local economic development as a core component of community strengthening. Villages are viewed as social and economic units with the potential to develop locally rooted economic activities. The findings show that digital tourism promotion contributed to the economic dimension of community development by enhancing the visibility of Rindu Hati Tourism Village and connecting local tourism assets with broader markets.

The integration of digital promotion into routine tourism management enabled the community to promote natural attractions, community-managed facilities, and tourism services more effectively. This increased digital visibility was followed by growth in tourist visits, indicating that digital promotion supported tourism as a locally driven economic activity. These outcomes support Green and Haines' (2012) assertion that local economic development is most sustainable when it builds on local resources and is driven by community participation.

A central principle in Ife's (2013) framework of community development is the importance of "valuing the local," which involves recognizing and respecting local culture, knowledge, and practices. The findings indicate that digital tourism promotion in Rindu Hati served as a medium for articulating local identity rather than standardizing tourism narratives. Community members highlighted locally meaningful attractions, activities, and environmental features within digital content produced during the training process.

This practice challenges the tendency of digital tourism promotion to prioritize externally driven or homogenized representations. Instead, the community-led approach observed in Rindu Hati demonstrates that digital platforms can amplify local voices and reinforce place-based identity. From a community development perspective, this finding reinforces the view that digital technologies do not inherently undermine local values; their impact depends on how they are socially embedded within community processes.

The collaboration between UNIB and the local community reflects a form of development partnership consistent with community development principles. Adi (2023) notes that community development in Indonesia often involves collaboration between communities and external actors, particularly at the village level. In this case, the university functioned as a supporting partner that facilitated training, provided technical guidance, and addressed contextual constraints, while respecting local leadership and decision-making structures.

This partnership aligns with Ife's (2013) emphasis on the supportive rather than directive role of external institutions in community development. The university's involvement enabled the community to engage with digital transformation while maintaining control over tourism promotion processes. The findings demonstrate how higher education institutions can contribute to community development by accompanying communities in adapting to structural changes, such as digitalization, without displacing local agency.

The findings of this study suggest that digital tourism promotion can be understood as a contemporary form of community development practice. In line with Green and Haines (2012), the integration of economic objectives with participatory processes and local identity strengthens the sustainability of development outcomes. Digital promotion, when embedded within community-driven training and collective practice, supports not only tourism growth but also social cohesion and local ownership.

Overall, this study contributes to community development literature by demonstrating how digital technologies can be appropriated by local communities as tools for development rather than as externally imposed solutions. By situating digital tourism promotion within the frameworks of Ife (2013), Adi (2023), and Green and Haines (2012), the findings underscore that the effectiveness of digital initiatives in rural tourism depends on participatory processes, educational collaboration, and respect for local values.

E. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the training for enhancing the local community's capacity in digital tourism promotion in Rindu Hati Tourism Village represents a form of community development practice rather than a purely technical or marketing-oriented activity. The findings demonstrate that digital promotion emerged through participatory training processes and collaborative interaction between local tourism actors and a higher education institution. These processes enabled digital practices to be integrated into everyday tourism management while maintaining community control over promotional narratives.

The collaboration with a local university illustrates the role of higher education as supportive development partners in rural contexts. Through practice-oriented training and continuous facilitation, the university contributed to collective learning without displacing local agency. Digital platforms such as websites and video-sharing channels functioned as shared spaces where the community articulated local identity, communicated tourism values, and engaged with wider tourism networks.

From a community development perspective, the strengthening capacity of digital tourism promotion contributes to enhancing local economic activities by improving destination visibility and supporting tourism-based livelihoods. At the same time, the process reinforced participatory engagement, social interaction, and collective ownership over development outcomes. These findings affirm that digital technologies can support sustainable rural tourism when embedded within participatory and locally grounded development processes.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature by reframing digital tourism promotion as a socially embedded development practice. The case of Rindu Hati Tourism Village highlights that the effectiveness of digital initiatives in tourism depends not only on technological tools, but on how they are implemented through community participation, educational collaboration, and respect for local values. Future studies may further explore comparative contexts to deepen understanding of digital tourism promotion as a pathway for community development in rural destinations.

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