Research Square

Preprints are preliminary reports that have not undergone peer review.
They should not be considered conclusive, used to inform clinical practice,
or referenced by the media as validated information.

Communicative empowerment after certification: digital marketing gaps in a community-based tourism village in Indonesia

Revi Marta

revi@soc.unand.ac.id

Andalas University

Yuliandre Darwis

Andalas University

Andri Rusta

Andalas University

Article

Keywords: community-based tourism, digital marketing communication, communicative empowerment, rural tourism, certification, developing countries, case study

Posted Date: October 6th, 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-10650973/v1

License: This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
Read Full License

Additional Declarations: No competing interests reported.

Abstract

Community-based tourism villages across the developing world increasingly gain formal recognition through national certification and award schemes, yet many fail to convert that recognition into sustained digital visibility. This paper examines this recognition–visibility gap through a qualitative case study of Ampiang Parak, a coastal mangrove and sea turtle conservation tourism village in West Sumatra, Indonesia, which received the 2024 Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia national award. In-depth interviews with eight stakeholders, content analysis of the village's digital platforms, and field observation reveal three interlocking gaps: a strategic gap between certification and operational digital planning, a representational gap in which residents appear as photographic subjects rather than narrators of their own story, and an evaluative gap in which digital engagement goes unmeasured. Drawing on Scheyvens' empowerment framework, the paper argues that digital-era community-based tourism requires a fifth, communicative dimension of empowerment—the capacity of a community to narrate its own tourism product to external audiences—that functions as a precondition for the economic, psychological, social and political dimensions the framework already describes. The study proposes a five-component community-narrated communication model and discusses its implications for certification policy design and destination management in resource-constrained rural settings.

Introduction

Village-level tourism certification has expanded rapidly across the developing world as governments look for low-cost instruments to formalise and promote rural destinations. In Indonesia, the Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia (ADWI) scheme grew from 1,831 registered villages in 2021 to more than 6,000 by 2024 (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif RI 2024). Comparable programmes operate in southern and eastern Africa, Latin America, and across much of Southeast Asia: South Africa's Tourism Grading Council certifies graded establishments and routes, Botswana and Kenya have built community-based tourism enterprises into national policy, and Namibia's community-based natural resource management programme has formalised village-level tourism operations for over two decades (Kavita & Saarinen, 2016; Manyara & Jones, 2007; Sebele, 2010). Two regions, separated by an ocean, have converged on the same policy instrument.

These certification schemes promise more than a plaque on a village hall wall. They are designed to function as a signal that travels outward—to potential visitors, to investment partners, to government agencies deciding where to allocate further support. A recurring pattern across newly certified village destinations, however, is that recognition does not automatically translate into digital voice. Villages secure a national award, enjoy a brief media moment, and then largely disappear from the platforms where prospective travellers actually search, compare and decide. This paper calls this phenomenon the recognition–visibility gap: official certification operates as an input, while a sustained, audience-facing communication output rarely follows.

The gap has practical consequences because community-based tourism (CBT) scholarship has long identified limited communicative and managerial capacity as a binding constraint on rural tourism in developing countries (Manyara & Jones, 2007; Sebele, 2010; Tosun, 2000). What this literature has not yet examined closely is how formal certification interacts with that communicative capacity once a destination enters the digital era, when the relevant audience is no longer a tour operator or a donor agency but an anonymous traveller scrolling on a phone. The Indonesian case examined here offers an unusually clear empirical window onto exactly that interaction because both the certification and the communicative shortfall occur within the same destination and in the same year.

Three gaps in the literature motivate this study. First, community-based tourism research is strong on economic and institutional participation but considerably thinner on communicative participation—on who actually gets to speak for a destination once it goes online (Millan-Anaya et al., 2025). Second, digital marketing research on tourism in the developing world skews toward urban and resort destinations, with rural, village-scale cases underrepresented relative to their real share of CBT activity (Jiang & Phoong, 2023; Kurniawati, 2023). Third, the certification literature, whether Indonesian or African, focuses on quality assurance and compliance at the point of assessment rather than on what happens to digital communication capacity afterwards.

The stakes are not abstract. Certification and grading schemes are expanding across multiple developing countries at the same time that mobile penetration is reshaping how destinations are discovered (Adeola & Evans, 2019). If certification continues to outpace communicative capacity—if villages keep winning awards without building the narrative infrastructure needed to be found, understood and remembered online—the plausible outcome is a growing population of destinations that are formally branded but functionally voiceless. Understanding how this gap forms, and what might close it, is therefore a question that extends well beyond one Indonesian village.

This paper addresses three questions. First, what does digital marketing communication practice look like in a community-based tourism village immediately after it receives national-level certification? Second, what barriers prevent formal recognition from converting into sustained digital visibility? Third, what does this case suggest about how empowerment frameworks commonly used in CBT research should account for the communicative dimension of community capacity in the digital era?

The paper proceeds as follows. The next section reviews community-based tourism scholarship, digital marketing communication in rural destinations, certification schemes, and the empowerment framework underpinning the analysis. The methods section describes the case, data collection and analytical strategy. Findings are organised around three gaps. The discussion compares these findings against the wider literature, proposes a five-component communication model, and extends Scheyvens' (2002) empowerment framework. The final section sets out implications for practice and future research.

Literature review

Community-based tourism in the developing world

Community-based tourism refers to tourism in which local communities retain substantial ownership, control and benefit from tourism activity on their own land or in their own settlements (Scheyvens, 2002). The concept emerged from a critique of top-down, externally financed tourism models that delivered limited local benefit, and it has since become a standard rural development instrument across much of the developing world (Tosun, 2000). CBT has been documented extensively in southern and eastern Africa: Botswana's Khama Rhino Sanctuary Trust combined conservation revenue-sharing with community governance (Sebele, 2010); Kenya's community-based enterprises drew on Maasai cultural assets to diversify income beyond livestock (Manyara & Jones, 2007); and Namibia's conservancy programme used devolved natural-resource rights to anchor village-level tourism (Kavita & Saarinen, 2016; Saarinen, 2010). Indonesia's desa wisata movement follows a parallel logic, formalised through national schemes such as ADWI but resting on the same underlying premise: that community ownership of the tourism product is both more equitable and more sustainable than externally controlled development (Damanik, 2015; Prayudi & Susilo, 2022).

A recent bibliometric analysis of community-based rural tourism research published in this journal found significant growth in the field since 2017, with community participation and empowerment among the most recurrent keywords, but noted that studies concentrating on communicative and digital dimensions remain scarce relative to economic and governance dimensions (Millan-Anaya et al., 2025). The constraints documented across regions are strikingly similar: limited managerial capacity, uneven market access and dependence on a small number of motivated individuals (Manyara & Jones, 2007; Tosun, 2000). This convergence is not coincidental. Southeast Asian and African CBT scholarship traces its structural constraints to a single root cause: communities are asked to manage a tourism product without commensurate investment in the managerial and communicative infrastructure it requires.

Digital marketing communication in rural tourism destinations

The shift of tourism marketing onto digital platforms has not been kind to rural and village-scale destinations. Studies of Indonesian secondary destinations report a consistent pattern: digital content is produced reactively around events rather than planned as part of a strategy, posting is irregular, and audience segmentation is absent (Kurniawati, 2023; Prayudi & Susilo, 2022). Kurniawati's (2023) study of Langkat Regency found that promotional efforts remained constrained by limited collaboration between government, media and community actors, despite digital media being recognised by local stakeholders as central to tourism promotion. A ten-year systematic review of digitisation's impact on tourism development found that, while digital tools increasingly shape economic outcomes, the planning and evaluation layer that would translate tool use into strategy remains largely absent in rural contexts (Jiang & Phoong, 2023). Studies of mobile and social media marketing in southern Africa's hospitality sector report comparable structural barriers: mobile social media is the dominant channel in practice but is used inconsistently and without a measurement framework (Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2021;

Nyatsambo et al., 2022). Adeola and Evans (2019) found a non-linear relationship between mobile and internet penetration and tourism outcomes across Africa, suggesting that connectivity alone does not translate into marketing effectiveness without complementary communicative capacity.

Read together, the evidence from Indonesia and southern Africa describes the same underlying problem in two different settings: digital tools are present and even actively used, but the planning, segmentation, and evaluation layer that would turn use into strategy is largely missing. The rural tourism contributions model developed by Brito et al. (2023) confirms this pattern, finding that while tourism's economic and social contributions to rural communities can be substantial, the communicative infrastructure needed to sustain and amplify those contributions is rarely addressed in policy or practice.

Award certification schemes and their communication implications

Certification and grading schemes serve a quality-assurance function in tourism: they signal to visitors, investors and funding agencies that a destination meets a defined standard. Indonesia's ADWI evaluates villages against five criteria—attractions, amenities, digital readiness, institutional capacity and resilience—and grew from 1,831 applicant villages in 2021 to more than 6,000 by 2024 (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif RI 2024). South Africa's Tourism Grading Council operates on a broadly comparable logic, certifying accommodation and route quality against defined service standards.

What the certification literature has examined less closely is what happens after an award is granted. Most evaluation frameworks—Indonesian and African alike—assess communication readiness at the point of certification rather than tracking whether that readiness is sustained or converted into actual digital performance afterwards. The underlying assumption of any award scheme is that recognition itself generates visibility, whether through media coverage, the prestige of the label, or eligibility for further support. Where that assumption does not hold, certification risks functioning as a one-time event rather than a platform for ongoing destination communication.

Empowerment framework: Scheyvens revisited

Scheyvens' (2002) framework identifies four dimensions along which tourism can empower or disempower host communities: economic (whether residents capture a fair share of revenue), psychological (whether tourism builds pride and self-esteem), social (whether tourism strengthens or fragments community cohesion), and political (whether residents have a genuine voice in decisions affecting the destination). The framework has been widely applied in CBT research across Africa, Asia and Latin America (Manyara & Jones, 2007; Saarinen, 2010; Sebele, 2010). It also aligns with Arnstein's (1969) classic ladder of citizen participation, which distinguishes tokenistic involvement from genuine community control.

This paper argues that the digital era introduces a fifth dimension the original framework did not anticipate, because it did not need to: communicative empowerment, understood as a community's

capacity to narrate its own tourism product to an external, often anonymous, digital audience. The claim is not that communicative empowerment replaces or competes with the original four dimensions, but that it increasingly functions as their precondition in any destination whose visitors discover it online before they arrive. A community can be economically engaged, socially organised and politically consulted, and remain invisible to the market if no one within the destination holds the capacity, mandate or platform to tell that story digitally. Empowerment that is not narrated does not travel beyond the village boundary.

Methods

This study uses a single qualitative case study design (Yin, 2014), with Desa Wisata Ampiang Parak in Pesisir Selatan Regency, West Sumatra, Indonesia, selected as a paradigmatic case: a destination chosen because it makes the phenomenon under study unusually visible, rather than because it is presumed statistically typical. Ampiang Parak is a coastal village built around mangrove conservation, sea turtle protection and community-based experiential tourism. In 2024, it received the Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia (ADWI) award in the resilience category, one of the scheme's five national assessment criteria, placing it among Indonesia's more visible rural tourism success stories on paper even as its digital communication practice remained largely informal. This juxtaposition of national recognition and limited digital infrastructure is precisely what this paper investigates.

Consistent with Yin's (2014) logic of case study research, the aim is analytic rather than statistical generalisation. The paper does not claim that Ampiang Parak is statistically representative of village tourism as a whole. It claims that the mechanism observed in this case—certification proceeding without a parallel investment in communicative infrastructure—recurs across structurally similar destinations, and that the case offers a detailed, mechanism-level account of how that gap actually operates, of practical use to destinations elsewhere that share the same structural conditions.

Data collection took place during 2025 and combined three sources to allow triangulation. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight informants purposively selected for their direct involvement in the destination's tourism operations and communication practices. The informant pool comprised the head of the village tourism management body (1), members of the local tourism awareness group, known as Pokdarwis (3), a tourism official from the Pesisir Selatan district government tourism office (1), and community members directly engaged in tourism service delivery, including a homestay operator, a community guide and a sea turtle beach patroller (3). This composition ensured coverage of managerial, governmental and grassroots perspectives within a single destination case. Eight informants are consistent with the recommended range for single-site qualitative case studies employing thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and the small pool reflects the reality that a compact group of actors manages Ampiang Parak's tourism operation. Second, the research team conducted participatory field observation at the destination, documenting how digital content was produced and how community members were positioned during tourism activities. Third, the team conducted a content analysis of the village's digital platforms—social media accounts, its listing in the

national Jadesta village-tourism database, and available promotional documents—to assess what was actually published, by whom, and in what pattern.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure: familiarisation with the dataset, initial coding, searching for candidate themes, reviewing and refining those themes against the coded data, and final definition and naming of themes. The theoretical concepts introduced in the literature review—the recognition–visibility gap, Scheyvens' (2002) empowerment dimensions, and the proposed communicative-empowerment dimension—were used as sensitising concepts during coding rather than imposed as a fixed coding frame. Three procedures supported the credibility of the analysis: triangulation across interview, observation and document data; member checking with key informants; and reflexive awareness of the research team's position as academic observers entering a small community destination with its own internal dynamics (Bungin, 2013; Kriyantono, 2006).

Findings

The strategic gap: award without strategy

Ampiang Parak's path to ADWI recognition ran through the resilience category, one of five criteria in the 2024 assessment cycle. Field observation and interview data show that the qualities that earned the award—active conservation programming around sea turtles and mangrove habitat, and a community structure capable of sustaining tourism activity despite disruption—existed well before the award and largely remained unchanged afterwards. What did not exist, before or after certification, was a documented communication strategy translating that resilience into a sustained digital narrative.

Interviews with destination managers describe a pattern in which digital content is produced in response to events as they occur, rather than being planned. There is no content calendar linking posts to the conservation calendar—such as turtle hatching seasons, mangrove planting activities, and school visits—that would otherwise give the destination's social media a predictable rhythm. There is no documented audience persona distinguishing, for example, domestic eco-tourists from school groups from potential conservation donors. There is no brand-voice document, so tone and terminology vary depending on whoever happens to be holding the phone that week. Respondents were candid that this informality reflected capacity rather than choice: managing daily conservation and hospitality operations left little time for content planning, and no one in the village held digital communication as a clearly defined role.

This mirrors a structural gap documented repeatedly in the broader CBT literature, where formal recognition or grading frequently outpaces institutional capacity to act on it. Sebele's (2010) account of Botswana's Khama Rhino Sanctuary Trust found that communication and marketing capacity lagged well behind operational capacity throughout. Manyara and Jones (2007) likewise found that Kenyan community-based enterprises were constrained less by the quality of their tourism product than by weak promotional capacity when that product needed to reach markets beyond word of mouth. The Ampiang Parak case adds a specific twist: the gap persists through and immediately after a national certification

event that explicitly includes digital readiness as one of its assessment criteria. The award process measured a snapshot; it did not leave behind a strategy.

The representational gap: subjects, not narrators

A second pattern emerged from the content analysis of the village's digital platforms, read alongside observations of how content was produced on-site. Residents—the fishers who patrol the turtle-nesting beach, the women's groups who manage homestay hospitality, the young people who lead mangrove-planting activities—appear frequently in photographs and videos. They appear, however, almost exclusively as the subject of someone else's documentation rather than as the source of the destination's voice. Captions accompanying images of community activity are typically descriptive and administrative—noting that an activity took place, who organised it, sometimes a date—rather than carrying the voice of the people pictured.

This produces a specific kind of representational gap. The conservation narrative that anchors Ampiang Parak's identity—sea turtle protection, mangrove restoration—is told largely in a technical and administrative register: numbers of turtles released, area of mangrove replanted, programme milestones reached. It is rarely told in the register of the people actually doing that work: why a particular fisher decided to become a beach patroller, what a planting season feels like, what changed for a household once homestay income began arriving. Community members are accustomed to being documented during tourism activity. Still, no structure—training, a content workflow, an explicit invitation—has been built through which their own words and framing would become part of what gets published.

This finding aligns with Arnstein's (1969) distinction between participation that is substantive and participation that is decorative: residents are visibly present in the destination's tourism activity and in its imagery, but decisions about what story that imagery tells, and in whose words, remain elsewhere. Authenticity, in the sense increasingly valued by digital travel audiences, depends on precisely the kind of first-person voice this gap forecloses.

The evaluative gap: communication without measurement

Neither the interview data nor the content analysis turned up evidence of defined key performance indicators for the village's digital communication—no stated targets for reach, engagement, follower growth or conversion of online interest into actual visits. Analytics tools already built into the platforms the village uses were not consulted during any routine review. When asked how the team knew whether a particular post had worked, respondents pointed to informal impressions rather than to any tracked metric.

The absence of measurement compounds the two gaps already described. Without a feedback loop connecting published content to audience response, there is no mechanism by which the destination could learn whether the administrative narration style described above is less effective than a more

personal, resident-voiced alternative, because no one is comparing the performance of different content types. Communication remains a one-way broadcast rather than a managed practice that adapts to audience response.

This gap also carries a policy dimension. ADWI's own assessment criteria include a digital readiness category, evaluated at a single point during the competition cycle (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif RI 2024). Nothing in the scheme, as it currently operates, requires or incentivises ongoing measurement of digital communication performance after the award is granted. A certification scheme built to reward a snapshot of readiness rather than sustained capacity may be poorly positioned to close the very gap this paper documents.

Discussion

Convergent patterns across developing countries

The three gaps documented at Ampiang Parak—strategic, representational, evaluative—reproduce constraints documented independently across multiple CBT contexts over nearly two decades: Sebele's (2010) finding that conservation and governance capacity outpaced marketing capacity in Botswana; Manyara and Jones' (2007) finding that Kenyan community enterprises were limited less by product quality than by promotional reach; and the more recent finding that institutional readiness, rather than technology access, remains the binding constraint on tourism digital marketing adoption in several African and Asian countries (Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2021; Nyatsambo et al., 2022). That broadly the same pattern surfaces in Southeast Asia and across southern Africa, in destinations with no contact with one another and under different policy regimes, is itself evidence that the mechanism generating the gap is structural rather than incidental to any one country's tourism administration.

The mechanism, as this paper reads it, runs as follows. Certification and grading schemes are designed to assess and reward what a destination already has—its attractions, amenities, and institutional resilience—measured at a single point in time. They are not built to fund or mandate the ongoing communicative labour that would let a destination act on that recognition once it is granted. Certification is treated as an output of the development effort. In contrast, in the digital era, it functions better as input to a separate, subsequent audience-building process that requires its own dedicated capacity, role, and budget. Where that subsequent investment does not follow—and the evidence here, and in the wider literature, suggests it usually does not—the destination wins the award and then goes quiet.

The five-component community-narrated communication model

Drawing on the findings and on the literature reviewed above, this paper proposes a five-component model of community-narrated digital communication, intended as a practical framework that destinations and certifying bodies could apply after, not only before, certification. Table 1 summarises the model.

Table 1
The five-component community-narrated communication model.

Component	Description
Anchor narrative	A single, stable story core around which all content is organised. For Ampiang Parak, this is sea turtle and mangrove conservation. Posts accumulate into a recognisable identity rather than scattering across unrelated topics.
Narrator pool	A deliberately built and rotated group of community members trained and invited to narrate content in their own words: the beach patroller, the homestay host, the planting-group leader. The destination's voice becomes plural.
Content cadence	A planning rhythm tied to the destination's own calendar (conservation seasons, festivals, school-visit periods) rather than to incidental events, giving the audience a predictable reason to return.
Relational loop	Deliberate use of platform features—replies, polls, direct messages, comment engagement—to convert one-way broadcast into two-way relationship.
Evaluative feedback	A minimal set of tracked indicators (reach, engagement rate, enquiry-to-visit conversion) reviewed on a fixed schedule, so the destination can learn which narrator, topic and cadence actually work.

The model is deliberately built from low-cost components, because the destinations it is meant to serve—village-scale, resource-constrained, frequently managed by volunteers—are exactly the destinations least able to absorb an expensive digital marketing apparatus. Applying it in other developing-country contexts would require adaptation rather than direct transplant. Multilingual and multi-ethnic destinations would need a narrator pool deliberately built across language groups. Lower mobile data infrastructure would push the content-cadence component toward lighter formats—text and low-bandwidth images rather than video. Moreover, in destinations where multiple ethnic or clan groups share governance of a single CBT enterprise, the narrator-pool component would need explicit attention to equitable representation across those groups.

Extending Scheyvens to the communicative dimension

The findings support extending Scheyvens' (2002) four-dimensional empowerment framework with a fifth, communicative dimension. Ampiang Parak's residents are economically engaged through homestay and guiding income, psychologically invested through visible community pride in the conservation programme, socially organised through the Pokdarwis structure, and at least partially consulted in destination decisions. However, the representational and evaluative gaps documented above show that none of this is currently legible to an external digital audience in the residents' own voice. The four original dimensions can be substantially present inside a community while remaining almost entirely invisible outside it, if the fifth dimension is missing.

This matters for how empowerment is typically measured in CBT research. A community-based tourism evaluation that stops at the original four dimensions—checking whether revenue is shared, whether residents feel pride, whether the community remains cohesive, and whether residents are consulted—would likely have rated Ampiang Parak's empowerment outcomes reasonably well, and would have

missed entirely the gap that determines whether any of that empowerment becomes visible to the market, on which the destination depends. Adding a communicative dimension offers a way to connect a well-established empowerment literature to a newer set of concerns—destination branding, social media strategy, certification design—that has so far developed as a separate research stream.

Conclusion

This paper has made three contributions. Empirically, it documents the recognition–visibility gap in a certified Indonesian village through three specific, interlocking failure modes: strategic, representational and evaluative. Conceptually, it extends Scheyvens' (2002) empowerment framework with a communicative dimension and proposes a five-component, community-narrated communication model. Practically, it offers destination managers, local government and certification bodies a concrete account of where digital communication breaks down after an award is won, and what a low-cost remedy could look like.

For destination management organisations, the central implication is that communicative capacity should be built into a destination's operating structure before the marketing need becomes urgent: a narrator pool and a content cadence can be established with existing staff and modest training. For policymakers overseeing grading and certification schemes, digital criteria currently assessed at a single point in the certification process could be reframed as a continuing obligation tied to a simple annual reporting requirement, so that certification functions as an ongoing relationship rather than a one-time audit. For village-level managers, the five-component model offers an operational checklist that requires no external consultants or a significant budget.

The study has limitations that should be acknowledged. It is a single case study, and the analytic generalisation it supports should not be read as a statistical generalisation to all certified village destinations. The Indonesian institutional and cultural context—relative language homogeneity within the village, the specific structure of the ADWI scheme, Indonesia's pattern of mobile and social media adoption—means some findings will transfer more readily than others to settings with different linguistic, infrastructural and governance conditions. The observation period, concentrated within a single research year, also limits the ability to track whether the gaps identified here persist, narrow or widen over a longer post-certification horizon.

Three directions for future research follow naturally. A systematic comparative study that places certified village destinations from different developing countries side by side would test whether the recognition–visibility gap operates the same way across regions or diverges in ways a single case cannot detect. The five-component model would benefit from direct testing through action research that implements it and tracks change relative to a baseline. A longitudinal study following destinations from the point of certification onward would establish whether the gaps documented here represent a temporary post-award lull or a stable, self-reinforcing pattern.

Declarations

Ethical approval

This study involved human participants through in-depth interviews and field observation. At the time all data were collected (March-June 2025), Universitas Andalas did not yet have a university-wide research ethics committee covering non-medical social research; the Komite Etik Penelitian Universitas Andalas was constituted on 15 October 2025 under Rector's Decree No. 2481/UN16.R/KPT/PT.01.07/2025 (see https://kep.unand.ac.id/profil) and does not accept retrospective review. LPPM Universitas Andalas confirmed that no institutional ethics review mechanism for non-medical social research was available to the researchers at the time of data collection and **granted an exemption from formal ethics review on 7 September 2026, on the basis that the study posed minimal risk to participants** (Exemption Letter No. B/102/UN16.19/PT.01.02/KS/2026).

Under Indonesian law, Article 39 of Law No. 11 of 2019 on the National Science and Technology System (available at https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/117023/uu-no-11-tahun-2019) requires all research activities to adhere to the code of ethics of the relevant discipline. The implementing regulation, BRIN Regulation No. 22 of 2022 on Research Ethical Clearance (available at https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/267888/peraturan-brin-no-22-tahun-2022), classifies social-science research involving human participants into three risk categories; the national ethics commission's published procedures (https://klirensetik.brin.go.id/prosedur) define the low-risk ("yellow") category as research whose subjects and topics are not "sensitive." This study falls within that category: all participants were adult professionals acting in their professional capacity, no vulnerable populations were involved, and the interview topics concerned tourism management practices rather than personally sensitive matters. The research was conducted in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Informed consent

All participants were informed of the purpose of the research, the intended use of the data, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to decline any question and to withdraw at any time without consequence, and provided verbal informed consent before interviews and observation. Verbal rather than written consent was chosen because in a small rural community where tourism roles rest on informal, trust-based relationships, a request for written signatures risked introducing a formality that could undermine participant trust; verbal consent was documented in the interview records. All participants' names have been anonymised, and interview data are attributed only by role. No participants were in a position of dependency vis-à-vis the researchers, and no remuneration was offered. Data are stored securely and are accessible only to the research team.

Data availability

The data supporting the findings of this study consist of semi-structured interview transcripts and field notes in Bahasa Indonesia, participatory observation records, and a corpus of digital content drawn from the village's publicly accessible social media accounts and its listing in the national Jadesta village-tourism database. The interview guide, the observation protocol, the content-analysis protocol, and the thematic codebook used in the analysis are provided in full as Supplementary Information accompanying this article. The digital content analysed remains publicly accessible on the platforms cited. Full interview transcripts and field notes are not publicly available because the study site is a small community in which the professional and community roles of the eight informants make them readily identifiable, and public release of full transcripts would compromise the confidentiality participants were assured of when consenting to the study. De-identified interview data are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request, subject to the confidentiality conditions under which consent was obtained. A fuller account of the fieldwork is documented in the underlying research report.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Funding

This research was funded by the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Andalas. The funder had no role in study design, data collection and analysis, decision to publish, or preparation of the manuscript.

Author Contribution

R.M conceptualised the study, designed the research, conducted fieldwork and data collection, performed data analysis, and wrote the main manuscript. Y.D supervised the research design, contributed to the theoretical framework, and provided critical revisions. A.R contributed to the policy analysis dimensions of the study and reviewed the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

References

1. Adeola O, Evans O (2019) Digital tourism: mobile phones, internet and tourism in Africa. Tour Recreat Res 44(2):190–202. https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2019.1582216
2. Arnstein SR (1969) A ladder of citizen participation. J Am Inst Plan 35(4):216–224. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225
3. Braun V, Clarke V (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qual Res Psychol 3(2):77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
4. Brito SM, Ferreira FS, Holanda LA (2023) The benefits of tourism for rural community development. Humanit Soc Sci Commun 10:137. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01610-4

5. Bungin B (2013) Metodologi penelitian sosial dan ekonomi: format-format kuantitatif dan kualitatif untuk studi sosiologi, kebijakan publik, komunikasi, manajemen, dan pemasaran. Kencana Prenada Media Group, Jakarta
6. Chamboko-Mpotaringa M, Tichaawa TM (2021) Tourism digital marketing tools and views on future trends: a systematic review of literature. Afr J Hosp Tour Leis 10(2):712–726
7. Damanik J (2015) Membangun pariwisata dari bawah. Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta
8. Jiang C, Phoong SW (2023) A ten-year review analysis of the impact of digitisation on tourism development (2012–2022). Humanit Soc Sci Commun 10:665. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02150-7
9. Kavita E, Saarinen J (2016) Tourism and rural community development in Namibia: a review of policy issues. Fennia 194(1):79–88. https://doi.org/10.11143/46331
10. Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif RI (2024) Siaran pers Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia (ADWI) 2024. https://kemenparekraf.go.id. Accessed 15 March 2025
11. Kriyantono R (2006) Teknik praktis riset komunikasi. Kencana Prenada Media Group, Jakarta
12. Kurniawati D (2023) Digital marketing communication model for encouraging tourism visits in Langkat Regency, Indonesia. Stud Media Commun 11(7):67–76. https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v11i7.6199
13. Manyara G, Jones E (2007) Community-based tourism enterprises development in Kenya: an exploration of their potential as avenues of poverty reduction. J Sustain Tour 15(6):628–644. https://doi.org/10.2167/jost723.0
14. Marta R (2025) Model komunikasi pemasaran digital Desa Wisata Ampiang Parak, Kabupaten Pesisir Selatan (final research report, unpublished manuscript). Universitas Andalas, Padang
15. Millan-Anaya A, Gabriel-Campos E, Romero-Subia JF (2025) Community-based rural tourism: a mapping technique analysis study from 2005 to 2023. Humanit Soc Sci Commun 12:555. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-04746-7
16. Nyatsambo M, Phiri M, Mashingaidze M (2022) Usage of mobile marketing strategies in Zimbabwe's tourism and hospitality sector. Afr J Hosp Tour Leis 11(4):1564–1578
17. Prayudi P, Susilo ME (2022) Sustainable tourism in Sleman, Indonesia: government communication strategy in empowering community through the development of tourism village. Indones J Commun Stud 15(2):87–104
18. Saarinen J (2010) Local tourism awareness: community views in Katutura and King Nehale Conservancy, Namibia. Dev South Afr 27(5):713–724. https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2010.522833
19. Scheyvens R (2002) Tourism for development: empowering communities. Prentice Hall, Harlow
20. Sebele LS (2010) Community-based tourism ventures: benefits and challenges at the Khama Rhino Sanctuary Trust, Central District, Botswana. Tour Manag 31(1):136–146. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.01.005

21. Tosun C (2000) Limits to community participation in the tourism development process in developing countries. Tour Manag 21(6):613–633. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(00)00009-1
22. Yin RK (2014) Case study research: design and methods, 5th edn. Sage, Thousand Oaks

Supplementary Files

This is a list of supplementary files associated with this preprint. Click to download.

- HSSCSupplementaryInformation.docx