

Adoption and Barriers of Social Media Marketing in Community-Based Tourism (CBT) Destination Development: A Case Study of Belitar Seberang Tourism Village

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Abstract

This article explores how social media is adopted and the particular obstacles encountered by actors of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in Kampung Wisata Belitar Seberang, Indonesia. Digital marketing is celebrated as fostering rural tourism, but when used in resource-deprived environments specific challenges emerge. Applying a qualitative descriptive model, this research employed in-depth interviews with tourism managers (Pokdarwis) and document analysis to attain empirical depth. The results demonstrate a distinctive “low-resource, high-impact” adoption trajectory centred around viral User-Generated Content (UGC) distribution through the platform TikTok to achieve impact despite resource constraints on content production. The research reveals substantial obstacles to sustainability, however. Domestically, the shift from a rural agrarian society to a digital service based one demands rapid literacy adaptation which conflicts with immediate operational responsibilities and instant digital response. Outside the country, the major challenges are those of “digital-physical gap,” as large digital visibility does not commensurate with poor physical infrastructure like road access and persistent destination stigma (in terms of safety). This study suggests that social media in this context, despite its promotional warrant, is operating as a medium of social resilience by strategically resisting pejorative stereotypes and pressuring for structural policy support in the world without infrastructures. This study contributes to the literature on technology acceptance in developing contexts by introducing the digital-physical gap and low-resource adaptive strategies.

Keywords: Community-Based Tourism, Social Media Adoption, Destination Stigma, Rural Tourism, Digital Resilience.

INTRODUCTION

Based on this, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has been identified throughout the world as a successful model of rural sustainable development particularly (Okazaki, 2008). Unlike mass tourism, which is frequently controlled by large operators, CBT is based on a sense of local participation and empowerment and ownership at the destination level with economic benefits returning directly to the local community (Suansri et al., 2003). In developing countries, such as Indonesia, CBT is one of the atoll's livelihood diversifying mechanisms that so important to conserve culture and build rural community social resilience. In the context of increasing global competition, CBT will succeed in a global tourism market only if it overcomes the associated challenges of scaling, visibility and accessibility (Manyara & Jones, 2007).

The digital age has revolutionized the way destinations are marketed, from conventional promotions in the medium to everchanging interactive world of digital marketing (Buhalis et al., 2023). While the new media in general and social media specifically have turned into an unprecedented promotional mechanism with global reach, time-sensitive communication, and brand individualization via real-life stories (Buhalis et al., 2023). As an industry, tourism also benefits from Instagram, Facebook and most recently TikTok as effective distribution channels for content and more importantly for primary User-Generated Content (UGC) sources (Hudson & Thal, 2013). Traveler generated content (UGC), including reviews, photos and videos, is generally perceived as more credible and authentic than the destination's official information therefore is significant in forming travel intentions (Xu et al., 2023). For this reason, having a social media presence is no longer an option but a strategic need for all destination types including CBT.

While the potential of social media is high, its use in relation to CBT brings its own set of challenges which are largely ignored by popular technology adoption models (Dwivedi et al., 2021). CBT, described as a destination with limited resources, confronts considerable internal and external challenges. Internally the CBT's Tourism management group (Pokdarwis or similar) is filled by the community members who are actually primarily farmers from non formal agricultural education to be trained for digital marketing and media literacy (Carlisle et al., 2023). It inevitably requires a shift to a different way of thinking and skills, with important resistances (Zielinski et al., 2021) usually creating structural barriers. This process creates a literacy gap: that is one where those who are managing working to maintain professionalism in their content generation while still understanding agile algorithms and trends which allow companies re-experimentation this digital environment such as the switch from fixed image driven formats to short timebase videography (TikTok) (Chen et al., 2023). Research has shown that the successful use of technology in rural areas

depends greatly on training and peer support, however these are not always readily available (Hanafiah et al., 2016).

On the outside, CBT regularly encounters a fierce 'Digital Divide' – when connectivity lacks behind digital ambition (Philip & Williams, 2019). Social media makes a destination look attractive and “viral,” but the reality on the ground is quite different. This is what the study refers to as the “digital-physical gap.” The expectations of quality, service and accessibility created by the social media are high, and yet many CBTs struggle due make little sense inextractable nature of policy support (broken roads high standards without appropriate physical infrastructure) or an absence of supportive policies embeddedness (Gössling, 2020). Further, in some areas, CBT encounters lineage problems or negative perception because of safety, sanitation and social vulnerability (Dimanche & Andrades, 2024). This stigma can be reinforced by poor word of mouth, as a very demanding marketing challenge for which social media is expected not only to share promotional offers but also protect the society from negative narratives whose negative effects are entrenched.

While the literature has reported common barriers to the adoption of tourism technologies, there is still a profound ignorance on the dynamics of particular adoption and coping mechanisms applied by Pokdarwis toward CBT which are significantly resource-constrained like in Indonesia. Belitar Seberang Tourism Village in Bengkulu Province of Indonesia is a model for such cases. The village stands as a typical case of CBT attempting to harness the power of viral marketing over social media for tourism promotion while suffering from profound Pokdarwis resource constraints, digital literacy divides and hard-core physical infrastructure problems. This research aims to generate rich qualitative insight upon: The Pokdarwis in Belitar Seberang on social media, how they adopt it uniquely, including the move of their content strategy (from official TO UGC/TikTok). Discover and investigate the internal (literacy adaptation gap) and external (digital-physical gap, negative stigma) barriers which are preventing them from promoting through digital marketing.

RQ 1: "How are the CSM content adoption patterns and strategies (including TikTok and User-Generated Content) operationalized by Community-Based Tourism (CBT) actors at Belitar Seberang Tourism Village in the context of constrained resources - low-resource setting or not?"

RQ 2: What are the main internal (adaptation literacy) and external factors (digital-physical gap and destination stigma) in CBT digital marketing, and how does social media serve as a social resilience mechanism to counter these inhibitors?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptualising Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and Rural Destination Marketing

Community-based Tourism (CBT) is a form of sustainable tourism that is characterised by being governed and managed wherein the community has greater responsibility for tourism development, benefit-sharing and empowerment at the local level (Okazaki, 2008). Unlike to be activism-oriented as in a corporate model of CBT, at the core of CBT is authentic experience and agency (Suansri et al., 2003). But the relatively remote position of CBTs and a lack of funding frequently render them unable to compete with traditional tourist destinations (Manyara & Jones, 2007). The result is that rural destination marketing requires strategies which are based around cultural and natural beauty, with the implication being a reliance on the creation of engaging stories and accessibility (Hudson & Thal, 2013). Research suggests that CBT tourists will remain aloof from commercially slick promotions but they are keen to know about the everyday life and values of our communities (Carlisle et al., 2023).

Use of Social Media: From Traditional Content to User-Generated Content (UGC) Among Tourism Stakeholders

The use of social media by tourism destinations is also supported by a number theoretical models, including: TAM (Technology Acceptance Model) and DOI (Diffusion of Innovation), that focus on the concept; Perceived Ease of Use and P.U. (Perceived Usefulness) (Dwivedi et al., 2021). In the tourism domain, the value of social media is based on promoting awareness and engagement (Buhalis et al., 2023).

Recent advances in the field of digital tourism marketing reveal a change in focus as to the type of valuable content (Buhalis et al., 2023). First, destinations often have posted 'official' content that is controlled and produced by the destination. But the platform has changed, and trust of travelers is gravitating more toward User-Generated Content (UGC) (Xu et al., 2023). This user-generated content (UGC) inferences by tourists has the potential to serve as an impartial social proof, and has a substantial impact UVC on intention to visit GOIs (Hudson & Thal, 2013).

This transition is sped up by the rise of short video platforms like TikTok. Absent from the literature Good research that compares visuality, music and compact characters based content platforms indicate about greater level of engagement when destination are portrayed in an informal and authentic light than it is on static imagebased platform (Tavitiyaman et al., 2021). For CBT, the pivot to UGC and TikTok is interesting because it enables them to leverage "low resource" in that there's no production budget but rather authenticity of experience, not professionalism of the content while opening up opportunities for new forms of engagement (consistent with their initial findings).

Challenges to Technology Use in CBT

While the digital space including social media as a playing field is more democratized (Philip & Williams, 2019), in CBT this potential has yet to be realized due to systemic challenges that represent the discrepancy between potential and reality. Based from the previous review, those barriers can be categorized into internal and external; those most applicable in the Indonesian context:

Internal Resource Limitations (Adaptation Literacy)

Poor digital literacy, and a lack of technical capacity are the main obstacles at the community level. People in settings with CBT often do not possess skills to use, monitor and analyse social media platforms (Carlisle et al., 2023). This is not only a matter of the use of smartphones but also adapting literacy to new practices of becoming providers and marketers in an increasingly digital world and economy that often contradicts traditional agrarian beliefs (Zielinski et al., 2021). The lack of sustaining the content or not responding to the reviews in time can have a huge negative effect on digital branding and community involvement (Hanafiah et al., 2016). What is more, due to the absence of focused training and sustained institutional support, the diffusion of innovation within the community also becomes sluggish.

Physical (Infrastructure and Negative Social) Barriers

Infrastructure Gap: Digital marketing work needs reliable and fast internet. Living in rural areas where CBT is established Many rural locations housing CBT face difficulties related to low-physical and digital infrastructure capacities (Gössling, 2020). This disparity, where the destination that looks great on-screen contrasts starkly with a physical reality of potholed roads or weak signals, represents a “digital-physical gap.” Such a void can result in disappointment among tourists and poor reviews, which quickly counteract digital advertising.

Destination Stigma and Reputation Management: Certain rural destinations are labelled with negative stigma (eg, unsafety, unhygiene, health risk) which is difficult to shed (Dimanche & Andrades, 2024). In this example, social media is seen as a battlefield where communities actively set out to build social resilience through the use of platforms and educative measures, using them as medium not only for informing the public, opposing bogus narratives but also demonstrating engagement with service enhancement and not being product led (Buhalis et al., 2023) (Buhalis et al., 2023).

METHODOLOGY

The current study uses a qualitative descriptive design to explore social media adoption dynamics and the nuanced barriers faced by

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) actors (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). With this method it was possible to grasp the phenomenon in its context as members of a real-life community, without intervening by changing variables or aiming for statistical generalization the emphasis instead remained on understanding the subjective meanings and strategies developed by participants themselves.

The study was carried out in the Belitar Seberang Tourism Village, as a CBT site in Bengkulu Province, Indonesia. Because it is a strategic context for research purposes, this site was chosen as an illustrative instrumental single case study (Stake, 1995). Findings, in particular, showcases the village's "good news" of adaptation toward social media (such as TikTok and Instagram) intertwining with a distinctive duality of resource constraints alongside external infrastructure challenges. This would be a great setting to test the concept of "the digital physical gap".

Sampling The informants of this study were chosen by purposive sampling, giving preference to the interviewees with a direct participation and considerable understanding about tourism administration in the village and about DMI. Informants were the management of Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) such as a chairman, secretary, organizational members in the marketing division and content execution along with community actors who provided socio-cultural context, also local governments from the Tourism Office (Dinas Pariwisata) for validation. Recruitment of informants proceeded until reaching data saturation, the point after which no new and noteworthy information was found in additional interviews about adopting social media (or barriers).

through triangulation of three major means, data collection tried to guarantee the empirical depth. Initially, semi-structured in-depth interviews were undertaken to investigate the "low-resource, high-impact" patterns of utilization and the innate literacy related barriers. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Secondly, and having conducted non-participant observation of the working day of Pokdarwis managing digital accounts and interacting with tourists, to substantiate claims about physical infrastructure quality. Thirdly, an official Pokdarwis strategic plan and the village social media were reviewed for documents and digital content analysis. This examination concentrated on the frequency of posts, as well as the proportion of content provided by officials and User-Generated Content (UGC) contributors, and user engagement to confirm destination stigma and interview results.

Qualitative analysis was guided by (Miles et al., 2014) Interactive Model that involves three concurrent activities interacting with each other. A first step in this process was data reduction, where interview transcripts were reduced to specific themes on adoption strategies and barriers. Then came the display of data – gist messages and comparison tables designed to help compactly sort signal from noise. The process finished with drawing/verifying

the conclusions, which entailed generating a first pattern of results and validating it against other sources to strengthen the findings.

In order to enhance research rigour, Trustworthiness criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were used. Credibility was established through triangulation of the sources, cross verification of mediated data with direct observation and digital content analysis. Transferability was supported with a “thick description” of the Belitar Seberang context that enabled readers to determine whether findings might apply or not to other CBT contexts similar. Lastly, trustworthiness was established via a comprehensive audit trail recorded from data collection through to analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The findings of this study are presented based on qualitative analysis from in-depth interviews with Pokdarwis members and social media content analysis of Belitar Seberang Tourism Village. Field data consistently confirm the existence of a unique pattern of adaptive social media adoption, accompanied by a significant set of internal and external barriers.

Adaptive Adoption Patterns: "Low-Resource, High-Impact" Strategy

Faced with very limited human and financial resources, Pokdarwis Belitar Seberang intervening of social media by “low-resources high openers” approach. This is very much a different content strategy. In the beginning, Pokdarwis attempted making official and a neat content but that was not realistic since they had limited skill and resource. In recent years, management teams have been adapting their strategies to utilize UGC and make the most of the TikTok platform. This trend is aimed to reduce the demand of Pokdarwis to spend time and money at very high cost, since they find that original and simple tourist content by themselves has a significantly faster outreach and wider impact in fact. As one of the informants conceded, “Now it’s all TikTok. It’s faster across the reach,” and “We had to change how we were doing marketing in terms of, at first, we just used to create content all the time. Now that’s it. Just reposts.” This approach implies that, for CBT UGC’s authenticity is the most efficient resource and not necessarily formal content professionalism.

Internal Barriers: Adaptation Literacy and Team Sustainability

Internally, the primary obstacles are social role conflict and team sustainability. The technological obstacles faced by Pokdarwis are more than the use of application as a reflecting Adaptation Literacy, to which the agrarian majority community had to change in digital service immediate works. It is a conflict that up to a point becomes still more acute if we bring in the question of team sustainability (sustainability). At the initial stage of development,

Pokdarwis members are confronted with experiencing “time, energy, thoughts and eyes” sacrifice throughout the process without financial compensation but there were some “Rp 20.000 to Rp 30.000 per month” in pioneering phase. This fact causes a “natural selection” and requires management relying on team spirit, as well as very strict financial transparency to maintain an excited and solid teams members since there are no money interests.

External Barriers: Digital-Physical Conflict and the Function of Social Resilience

Finally, the greatest obstacle is external in nature as it is not within the reach of the community and strongly associated with absence of structural support. “The stunning extent of the difference between the image of destinations promoted on social media and the reality on the ground in terms especially of bad accessibility by road, and poor basic infrastructure.” Key findings define what some have referred to as a “digital-physical gap” between viral images that led tourists to visit and were viewed tens of millions of times across China on social media. Pokdarwis’ disappointment with the lack of interest from the local government is crystallized in, “We even forced to bring the minister here... What are we daring for if all still dirty? Where do they focus?” This dichotomy between digital Poularity and the truth of physical infrastructure is turning negative reviews that directly affect their aspirations towards branding in the digital world.

But such findings also indicate that social media is (taken up) with at least two functions amid a kind of social-resilience mechanism. The first way they use is via social media to resist stigmatization by outsiders (in the form of negative discourses/security problem/begal). If slots are bad for London, why isn’t such a successful company willing to be transparent about the deals that will lock it into being there as part of its fundraiser? The second mechanism through which non-formal political advocacy is enabled is social media. Social media’s power of virality is used to get both, to grab public attention and force local governments to find a way out of infrastructure default. And so social media in Belitar Seberang is a site for promoting, but also a weapon of defence and an instrument of calling for structural changes.

Discussion

The purpose of this section is to interpret the qualitative findings of this Belitar Seberang Tourism Village by relating with available theoretical and empirical research frameworks on community-based tourism (CBT) and digital marketing. We addressed four themes related to adaptive adoption, internal sustainability barriers, external infrastructure interruptions, and social media as a dual face of social resilience.

Adaptive Adoption of Social Media and Strengthening Authenticity

Our results concerning the strategic transformation of Pokdarwis Belitar Seberang towards User-Generated Content (UGC) and TikTok as part of a “low-resource, high-impact” strategy highlight that there is an appropriate call for less rigid technology adoption model in low-resource environments (Ghani et al., 2020). Traditional adoption models tend to presume resources available for professional content production (Buhalis et al., 2023). In Belitar Seberang, resource constraints in terms of finance and technology led the Pokdarwis to develop shortcuts. They are able to reduce costs by reposting and promoting UGC, while at the same time increasing levels of authenticity, a key factor in GBT marketing (Suansri et al., 2003).

UGC and TikTok This pivot to UGC and TikTok is consistent with literature, as recent studies found that user-generated content (UGCs) are perceived more trustworthy... in shaping travel intention compared when juxtaposed against official promotions (Xu et al., 2023). Specifically, utilisation of the short video format found on TikTok is consistent with contemporary tourism trend (Tavitiyaman et al., 2021) and enables Belitar Seberang to reach high impact despite limited resources. By taking this approach while easily need only maintain a small service (high service, low resource) for Pokdarwis the survival option not imitating corporate levels of production and never being relevant in the digital market.

This section aims to interpret the qualitative findings of the Belitar Seberang Tourism Village by referring to the existing theoretical and empirical research frameworks regarding community-based tourism (CBT) and digital marketing. The discussion focused on four key areas: adaptive adoption strategies, internal sustainability challenges, external infrastructure conflicts, and the dual role of social media as a tool of social resilience.

Challenges of Literacy, Adaptation, and Internal Sustainability

Standpoint about role conflicts and low economic incentives in the early stages of Pokdarwis as an extended analysis of digital literacy is found in the literature. The challenge of the Pokdarwis is not only a technical barrier, but also as an adaptation barrier to sociocultural transition where Pokdarwis has been accustomed to offline community identity as peers' credibility and trust-based manner into digital service culture require them to respond instantly for reputation management (Zielinski et al., 2021). An example of the digital and role conflict is the inability for farmers to respond in a timely manner to SM reviews due to time constraints placed upon them by their on-farm work that requires immediate attention (Carlisle et al., 2023).

Furthermore, these results also justify the sustainability of teams as core in CBT development (Manyara & Jones, 2007). Money is scarce in a startup, and with little more than equity as incentive at this stage the team's trust and camaraderie are priceless. It highlights that the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) in CBT is not only a concern for technology usability, but

also depends on individual's preference of loss and community-based trust management while ignoring social authentication limitations rather than the increased interest discussed in the individual based technology adoption model.

Digital-Physical Gap and Infrastructure Support Failure

Thus, we situate the concept of "digital-physical gap" as the paradoxical relationship between the success of social media and unrealized digital expectations in physical infrastructure. In Belitar Seberang, such virality that transported the minister and spectators numbering in thousands also crashed with the poor state of access roads and connectivity. This disconnect can be attributed to the discrepancy between fast digital uptake and a lack of primary infrastructure support provided from lower-tiered governments, which is necessary for sustainability of rural tourism (Gössling, 2020).

In theory, the digital-physical divide extends the dialogue on the digital divide (Philip & Williams, 2019). While the traditional digital divide refers to the difference in access to technology, the digital-physical gap refers to a lack of correspondence between a digital product and actual quality physical service received by tourists. This gap is particularly damaging because it can lead to negative UGC that spreads rapidly, counteracts promotional efforts and may be a cause for destination reputation crisis (Dimanche & Andrades, 2024).

Social Media as a Mechanism of Social Resilience

The greatest finding of this study is the double roll of social media in Belitar Seberang as a medium for Social Resilience. Scholarly works are also available that illustrate how vulnerable communities engage with social media not just for promotional purposes, but as an intentional tool to resist external pressures and preserve visibility during times of crisis (see Ketter & Avraham, 2021). This study offers an empirical indication that this function may apply for the management of destination images as well, enabling community to refute negative stereotypes and maintain tourist interest under infrastructure constraints.

In particular, Pokdarwis actively uses the platform as an antithesis to negative stigma narratives surrounding security issues that surfaced through 'black campaigns,' or mudslinging tactics from the past. Their tactics embrace the use of orthodox social proof in the form of favourable testimonials and ties with law enforcement/SPN to overcome trust concerns. Moreover, social media serves as a virtual advocacy channel for the community. When local governments neglect their infrastructure needs, Pokdarwis uses its powerful social media reach to capture the public eye and mobilizes informal pressure. In the case of Belitar Seberang, social media is a battle field to fight for its imagination and also to call for structural change, thus bring about community as an active subject in shaping regional development discourse.

CONCLUSION

This research is an attempt to explore the dynamics of adopting social media and barriers encountered by actors in Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in a community tourism, Belitar Seberang Tourism Village, Indonesia. Findings from the qualitative study reveals that the adoption of social media in Belitar Seberang is not a linear process but an iterative one fraught with severe internal and external challenges, leading to three key findings.

First, Pokdarwis Belitar Seberang is involved in social media with a strategy, namely "low-resource, high-impact", as reciprocal to the limitations of resources. This approach is implemented through a radical transition from the costly creation of an own official content and to the use of User-Generated Content (UGC) produced on the TikTok platform, which has proven to be more efficient in generating high visibility at low production costs.

Second, team internal challenges are clustered around Adaptation Literacy and team sustainability. The community members wrestle with a conflict between their identity as agriculturalists and cultures that demand such digital services (immediate response). This problem is aggravated by low financial incentives in the early-stage of development, requiring trust and team spirit as its major social capital to support long-term operations.

Third, the research suggests a "digital-physical gap," that is marked by the sharp difference between digital saliences and destination virilities on one hand and what exist physically: scant physical infrastructure like bad access roads, unstable communication signals among others. This discrepancy of expectations leads to tourist displeasure that may spoil the destination image. Against this backdrop of external pressures, social media serves as a tool for social resilience. Pokdarwis utilize it for more than just promotion; they are also used it in response to negative stigma (security issues) and as non-formal advocacy tools to demand infrastructure from local governments.

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