Empowering Leuwimalang Village Through Digital Platform to Optimizing Potential Tourism Destination

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
tourism, tourism village, digitalisation, rural tourism	Leuwimalang Tourism Village, located in Cisarua Subdistrict, Bogor Regency, represents a promising model for community-based tourism, integrating cultural preservation, community empowerment, and sustainable economic growth. This research explores the transformative role of digitalization, particularly through the implementation of a dedicated online platform, in addressing the challenges faced by Leuwimalang as it seeks to optimize its potential as a tourism destination. Leveraging qualitative methods, the study identifies key areas where digital tools can enhance visibility, empower local entrepreneurs, and foster community engagement. The findings reveal that a dedicated website can significantly improve accessibility and market reach by providing comprehensive information about attractions such as agro-tourism, river rafting, and cultural experiences. Digital platforms also offer homestay operators and agro-tourism entrepreneurs the opportunity to manage bookings directly, reducing reliance on intermediaries and enhancing revenue streams. Furthermore, community-driven website management encourages local participation, enabling residents to showcase the village's unique identity while promoting sustainable and eco-friendly tourism practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism villages have become an essential model for sustainable rural development, integrating cultural preservation, community empowerment, and economic growth. The tourism industry has grown to be one that offers numerous advantages to both the host and the visitor, and it has garnered a lot of attention globally (Arintoko et al., 2020). The tourism industry is experiencing significant growth and is expected to drive economic progress. Villages, as the focal point of development, benefit from fiscally decentralized policies, providing them with opportunities to leverage these resources as capital for the tourism industry's expansion (Lubis et al., 2020). The tourism industry must adapt and transform to address challenges during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, with digital entrepreneurship emerging as a key solution to overcome obstacles and seize new opportunities (Kurniati & Suryanto, 2023).

The purpose of the tourism village is to improve the economic conditions of the local community (Sari et al., 2021). The economic advantages of tourism, particularly in developing nations, become significant when they are equitably distributed and accessible to local communities. In these regions, tourism is often regarded as a vital industry capable of delivering much-needed economic opportunities to rural and remote areas. These areas, often characterized by limited financial resources and expertise, can actively participate in tourism development, even in the absence of substantial external assistance, thereby fostering inclusive growth and self-sufficiency (Yanes et al., 2019).

A tourism village is a rural destination that showcases the authenticity of its social and cultural elements, traditions, daily activities, traditional architecture, and village layout, all presented as a cohesive tourism offering. It features attractions, accommodations, and supporting facilities, with opportunities for traditional culinary experiences and lodging that reflect the unique charm of rural life (Juliana et al., 2022).

The rapid development of the internet and new marketing modes has disrupted the tourism industry, making digital marketing a crucial trend and future driver across sectors, though establishing effective digital branding requires substantial effort from the ground up (Satya et al., 2023). As a result of this development, according to Rais et al. (2022), in the digitalization era, people's behavior is evolving rapidly, driven by the ease of accessing information within the travel industry. A key trend in the global hospitality industry is the integration of internet technology and digitalization to enhance products, services, and business processes, ensuring flexibility and simplifying service delivery to meet customer needs (Verhun et al., 2022).

Kabupaten Bogor, located in West Java, Indonesia, is a region known for its rich natural beauty, cultural heritage, and strategic economic significance. Encompassing an area of approximately 2,664 square kilometers, with a dynamic mix of rural and urban communities. Kabupaten Bogor is a region in Indonesia with substantial potential for village development, especially in the tourism sector. With around 441 villages in the area, many still struggle to improve their competitiveness. This challenge arises from limited knowledge and skills in key areas such as product development, administration, legal matters, management, and digitalization.

Leuwimalang Tourism Village, located in Cisarua Subdistrict, Bogor Regency, Indonesia. This village is one of Indonesia's many tourism villages, a key driver of the nation's economy, with 857 such villages in Java and Bali alone. Leuwimalang stands out for its serene natural beauty, featuring lush rice fields, flowing rivers, and towering mountains, all set at an altitude of 700–800 meters above sea level. Covering an area of 135.188 hectares, it is characterized by its cool climate and tranquil atmosphere, making it an ideal destination for those seeking relaxation and authentic cultural experiences. Leuwimalang Tourism Village offers a range of activities and facilities, including homestays and customizable tourist packages. Visitors can engage in agro-tourism, where they learn about local farming practices, harvest fresh produce, and immerse themselves in agrarian life. Thrill-seekers can enjoy rafting on the Ciliwung River, suitable for beginners, with professional guides ensuring safety. Educational tours are also available, emphasizing hands-on agricultural experiences. Supported by well-developed infrastructure and active community participation, Leuwimalang aims to be a sustainable and eco-friendly tourism destination, aligning with its vision of becoming a self-reliant village with professional governance.
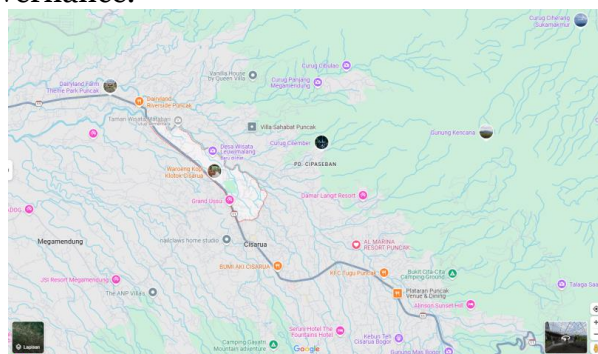

Figure 1. Map of leuwimalang

In 2023, the village achieved a significant milestone by winning first place in the Village Profile Video Competition at the Bogor Regency level. This prestigious recognition reflects not only the creative capabilities of the community but also their ability to effectively promote the village's unique potential. Leuwimalang is classified as a self-sufficient village with an intermediate development status, indicating that while progress has been steady, there is still vast room for further growth and enhancement. The overarching goal for Leuwimalang Village is

to transform itself into a competitive and thriving tourist destination that can generate increased income for its residents. The village can focus on initiatives such as improving community skills, creating sustainable tourism products, and effectively managing its natural and cultural resources. Efforts to develop the village as a tourist hub may include providing training in tourism management and digital marketing, designing attractive tourism packages such as eco-tourism or cultural experiences, and utilizing digital platforms to expand its reach and visibility. Furthermore, establishing partnerships with local governments, educational institutions, and private sectors can play a vital role in supporting the village's sustainable growth.

Leuwimalang Village faces various challenges that hinder its development and potential as a tourist destination. One significant issue is the lack of knowledge and skills in promoting and marketing its products, including tourism-related offerings. This is further exacerbated by limited access to and understanding of information technology, which could be utilized to manage businesses and market products more effectively.

Another pressing challenge is the inadequate awareness and understanding of environmental management, which is crucial for maintaining a sustainable tourism area. Additionally, there is a lack of knowledge and skills in management and administration, including financial reporting, human resource management, production management, and ensuring the legal compliance of business activities.

The village also struggles with insufficient capital to expand businesses and increase market access. This is compounded by limited access to information and guidance from relevant stakeholders, which could otherwise support the growth of local enterprises and help them reach wider markets. Addressing these challenges is vital for the village to unlock its full potential and achieve sustainable development.

Community empowerment in Leuwimalang Village can begin by providing insights on digitalization, tourism, and environmental management during the first year. This step aims to enhance the economic capabilities of the villagers while encouraging them to be more creative in identifying job opportunities. The goal is to support initiatives such as distributing agricultural products from the community to the wider public. This effort is essential, considering that globalization and the economy are now inseparable aspects of community life.

Based on the discussion above, it is evident that Leuwimalang Tourism Village requires further development to enable the local community to fully capitalize on its potential. One effective approach to achieving this is by utilizing digital media to promote the village. Through digital platforms, Leuwimalang can showcase its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique tourism activities to a broader audience, enhancing its visibility and appeal. Empowering the community with skills and knowledge in digital marketing will not only attract more visitors but also create sustainable economic opportunities for the village.

2. METHOD

The research method employed is qualitative, focusing on descriptive studies and relying on data analysis processes without the use of formulas or numerical calculations. Instead, the data is derived from literature reviews, relevant institutions, or observations from previous research. This data is then integrated with theoretical foundations for analysis.

The participants involved in this research consist of homestay owners and agro-tourism entrepreneurs based in Leuwimalang. These individuals play a crucial role in the local tourism ecosystem, contributing to the village's appeal as a destination through the services and

experiences they provide. By targeting these key stakeholders, the training aims to enhance their capabilities in managing and promoting their businesses effectively, ensuring a higher standard of service and customer satisfaction.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Leuwimalang Village, situated in the Cisarua subdistrict of Bogor Regency, stands as a promising tourism destination, boasting stunning natural landscapes, cultural authenticity, and community-driven attractions. Despite its significant potential, the village faces challenges in maximizing its reach and appeal to modern travelers. Digitalization, particularly through the development of a dedicated website for online booking and information dissemination, offers an innovative solution to these challenges. This research explores the potential impacts of such digitalization efforts on the village's tourism industry.

Enhancing Visibility and Accesibility

The creation of a website for Leuwimalang Village would significantly boost its visibility among domestic and international tourists. Currently, travelers often rely on digital platforms to discover and plan their trips. A website offering comprehensive information about attractions such as agro-tourism, river rafting, and homestay options would position the village as a competitive destination. Furthermore, integrating online booking capabilities simplifies the process for visitors, making the destination more accessible.

The development of a dedicated website for Leuwimalang Village represents a transformative step in enhancing its visibility and accessibility, both domestically and internationally. In the digital age, tourists increasingly rely on online platforms to gather information, compare destinations, and plan their itineraries. By establishing an online presence, Leuwimalang can tap into this trend, ensuring that its unique offerings are effectively showcased to a broader audience. The website can serve as a central hub, providing detailed information about the village's attractions, including its agro-tourism packages, river rafting adventures on the Ciliwung River, and homestay options that immerse visitors in the local culture.

To amplify its appeal, the website should include high-quality visuals, such as photos and videos, that capture the breathtaking landscapes and cultural richness of Leuwimalang. These elements not only entice potential visitors but also establish the village as a destination that stands out in a competitive tourism market. Additionally, the inclusion of customer reviews and testimonials can build credibility and trust among prospective travelers, further strengthening the village's online reputation.

Integrating online booking features into the website is crucial for simplifying the visitor experience. Tourists can seamlessly browse available packages, check accommodation options, and confirm bookings without the need for third-party platforms or intermediaries. Such functionality not only reduces barriers to entry but also provides a streamlined and convenient process for travelers.

Moreover, incorporating features like an event calendar, virtual tours, and multilingual support would further enhance the website's usability and global reach. An event calendar can inform visitors about seasonal or cultural events, encouraging them to plan their trips during peak activity periods. Virtual tours can

provide a preview of the village's attractions, enticing travelers who prefer to explore destinations digitally before committing. Multilingual support ensures that international tourists feel welcome and can navigate the site with ease, eliminating language barriers that may deter them from visiting.

In sum, a well-designed website not only elevates Leuwimalang's profile but also transforms the visitor experience, making it easier for tourists to connect with and access the village's unique offerings. This digital initiative aligns with global trends in tourism and positions Leuwimalang as a modern, accessible, and competitive destination in the evolving travel landscape.

Strengthening Local Economic Impact

Digitalization serves as a catalyst for empowering local entrepreneurs in Leuwimalang Village, providing them with the tools to reach broader audiences and expand their market presence. Currently, the village offers various tourism options, including affordable homestays as well as agro-tourism activities. However, these offerings remain underutilized due to the lack of a centralized platform to showcase them effectively. A well-designed website can bridge this gap by acting as a comprehensive promotional and booking tool for these services..

Homestay operators in Leuwimalang stand to benefit immensely from the visibility provided by an online platform. By featuring high-quality images, detailed descriptions, and transparent pricing, the website can highlight the uniqueness and affordability of these accommodations. For instance, travelers seeking an authentic rural experience could easily view and book a homestay, drawn in by visuals showcasing cozy rooms, scenic surroundings, and the immersive village lifestyle. Reviews and ratings from previous guests can further boost trust and credibility, making it easier to convert interest into bookings.

Moreover, digital booking systems eliminate intermediaries, enabling homestay owners to manage reservations directly. This reduces reliance on third-party agents, ensuring that a larger portion of the revenue flows directly to the community. Additionally, automated booking systems save time and resources, allowing operators to focus on enhancing their services rather than managing logistical complexities.

Fostering Community Engagement

Digitalization aligns with the principles of community-based tourism by emphasizing local participation. A village website managed by community members ensures that the content reflects their voice and authenticity. Training programs for residents in website management and digital marketing can foster skills development, creating opportunities for sustainable community-driven tourism.

A community-managed website ensures that the content accurately reflects the village's identity, traditions, and aspirations. Local residents can highlight the most cherished aspects of their culture, such as traditional farming methods, artisanal crafts, or culinary heritage, through articles, videos, and photo galleries. For example, showcasing the vibrant experience of agro-tourism in Leuwimalang, where visitors can engage in vegetable harvesting or learn traditional farming techniques, creates a narrative that is both authentic and engaging. Such narratives resonate more deeply with potential tourists than generic promotional materials, as they

provide an insider's perspective on the village's way of life.

The integration of digital tools also paves the way for more sustainable, community-driven tourism. By directly managing the website, residents can prioritize and promote activities that align with the village's values and long-term goals. For instance, eco-tourism initiatives, such as guided nature walks or sustainable farming workshops, can be highlighted prominently on the platform, attracting eco-conscious travelers and reinforcing the village's commitment to environmental preservation.

Moreover, the digital platform can be used to educate visitors about responsible tourism practices, such as minimizing waste, respecting local customs, and supporting community businesses. These efforts ensure that tourism growth does not come at the expense of the village's cultural and environmental resources but instead contributes to their preservation and enhancement.

4. CONCLUSION

Digitalization, through the development of an online booking and information platform, holds transformative potential for Leuwimalang Village. It not only enhances the visibility and accessibility of the destination but also empowers the local community, fosters economic growth, and supports sustainable tourism practices. By addressing the challenges and leveraging digital tools effectively, Leuwimalang can emerge as a model for community-based tourism in the digital age.

An online platform for Leuwimalang serves as a gateway to the global tourism market, allowing the village to reach audiences far beyond its immediate geographical boundaries. The website becomes a virtual brochure, highlighting its unique attractions such as agro-tourism activities, river rafting adventures, and cultural immersion opportunities. High-quality visuals, testimonials, and dynamic storytelling through videos or blogs can captivate potential tourists, driving interest and bookings.

Additionally, integrating social media into the platform extends its reach even further. Regularly updated content on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, or YouTube ensures that Leuwimalang remains visible to an audience accustomed to discovering destinations through digital channels. For instance, featuring Instagram-worthy spots in the village, such as lush green fields or scenic river views, encourages user-generated content that can organically promote the village.

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