

Integration of Local Values and Digital Technology in Empowering Tourism Village Communities in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi

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Abstract

This study examines the integration of local wisdom values with digital technology in empowering tourist village communities in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi. Bone Regency has strong cultural values such as siri' na pacce which are the foundation of collective identity, but tourism village development policies are still uniform and do not accommodate local cultural characteristics. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection through interviews, participatory observation, and documentation in several tourist villages. Thematic analysis was conducted to understand the dynamics of the meaning of local values, technology adaptation, and community participation. The results of the study indicate tension between cultural preservation and the demands of modern digitalization. Village communities adopt technology selectively with the important role of traditional leaders as curators of cultural content. Social media is an effective means of promoting and expressing cultural identity, but low digital access and literacy are obstacles. The study emphasizes the need for an inclusive and participatory digital empowerment approach, involving all community actors to make technology an instrument for preserving and strengthening culture while encouraging sustainable socio-economic transformation of tourist villages. This model is expected to bridge tradition and modernity harmoniously in the context of local tourism development.

Keywords: Integration of local values; Empowerment of tourist village communities; Digital technology

1. Introduction

Bone Regency in South Sulawesi is one of the areas that has strong cultural roots, especially in the context of local wisdom values such as the spirit of sipakatau (mutual respect), sipakainge (mutual reminder), and siri' na pacce (self-respect and social solidarity). These values have the potential to be the main foundation in building an authentic and sustainable tourist village identity. However, in practice, tourism village development policies in this area tend to be uniform and centralistic, without deeply accommodating local cultural characteristics (Asaad et al., 2025). As a result, the cultural



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potential that should be a narrative force in attracting tourists is actually marginalized by mass tourism patterns that are not adaptive to the local context.

Furthermore, the lack of integration between government programs and the social realities of indigenous communities has resulted in low levels of community participation in village tourism empowerment programs. Local culture is only interpreted as an attraction or ceremonial symbol, not as a framework of values that directs community-based social and economic transformation. In fact, an approach that positions the community as the main subject of development, by exploring and integrating local wisdom, has proven to be more effective in creating sustainability (Ay'syahtulridha & Kartika, 2025). Therefore, there needs to be a critical effort to reorganize the strategy for developing tourist villages in Bone by strengthening the role of local culture as a living and relevant social resource, not just a tourism ornament.

Advances in digital technology offer strategic opportunities to strengthen the competitiveness of tourist villages, especially in the areas of promotion, local product marketing, and destination management. Social media and digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Google Maps have proven to be effective channels in attracting the attention of domestic and foreign tourists, especially millennials and Gen Z who are highly dependent on digital experiences (Darwis et al., 2024). However, in Bone Regency, the adoption of digital technology by local tourism actors is still low. This is not only due to limited digital infrastructure, but also due to low digital literacy and the absence of contextual ongoing training. As a result, many tourist villages have lost the momentum to appear in the digital ecosystem which is now the backbone of the global tourism industry.

Even more problematic, the government's approach to digitizing tourist villages is often project-oriented, without long-term assistance that actively involves the community. Digitalization programs tend to be instructive, not transformative. In fact, as stated by Danial et al (2023), the success of technology integration in empowering village communities is largely determined by the extent to which the technology is adapted to local needs, the capabilities of residents, and deep-rooted traditional communication patterns. Therefore, a collaborative approach is needed that combines technical training with strengthening the critical capacity of the community, so that digital technology is not merely present as a tool, but as an instrument of sustainable social and economic emancipation.

The gap between tradition and modernity in the context of tourist villages in Bone Regency shows complex tensions. On the one hand, local communities hold tightly to the values and cultural practices of ancestral heritage as a collective identity and source of social legitimacy. On the other hand, the dynamics of contemporary tourism which are heavily supported by digital technology demand flexibility, innovation, and rapid adaptation. The incompatibility between these two dimensions often

gives rise to resistance to change, especially when technology is introduced without understanding the prevailing social structures, symbolic language, and customary norms. According to Rijal et al (2022), the integration of innovation in areas that still uphold tradition will only be effective if the process is dialogical and participatory, not just top-down.

Furthermore, the failure to bridge tradition and modernity has the potential to give rise to new forms of social exclusion, where only a small number of village actors—usually younger and digitally literate—are able to benefit from the digital ecosystem. Meanwhile, older or less technologically exposed groups are marginalized in the production and distribution of tourism value. This emphasizes that integration is not only a technical matter (e.g. digital training or infrastructure), but also concerns the reconciliation of traditional ways of life with modern, fast-paced and efficient work patterns. In this context, the empowerment model for tourism villages must be designed as a space for value encounters: where technology does not eliminate tradition, but rather strengthens it in a new, adaptive and inclusive format (Nur, 2025).

The urgency of implementing a contextual and inclusive empowerment model in Bone Regency is not only related to program effectiveness, but also to social justice and sustainable development. Many village tourism empowerment programs that have been implemented so far are uniform and based on external assumptions that are not always relevant to local socio-cultural conditions. This causes an imbalance in participation between local actors who have access to information and resources, with indigenous peoples who are actually the legitimate owners of local values. As expressed by Muhlis et al (2024), development models that do not take into account the socio-cultural context tend to fail to empower, and even risk strengthening relations of dominance and dependence on external actors.

Within this framework, the integration of local values and digital technology must be developed as a dual approach that is mutually reinforcing, not mutually negating. Empowerment based on local values must be the ethical and epistemological foundation of every technology initiative, so that digitalization does not strip away the meaning of tradition, but expands its reach in the modern public space. For example, the creation of digital content that represents Bone's local narrative, such as the Passure tradition and the wisdom of siri' na pacce, can be an educational instrument as well as a marketing tool for community-based tourism. This is in line with the idea of Kandowangko et al (2024) who emphasizes the importance of co-creation between local communities and technology facilitators in producing a fair, participatory, and contextual empowerment model. Thus, empowerment not only creates a society that is “involved,” but also “sovereign” over its identity and future.

2. Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of understanding in depth how the integration of local values and digital technology is applied in community empowerment programs in tourist villages in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi. This approach was chosen because it is able to capture social, cultural, and technological realities in a complex context, and provides space for exploration of meaning from the perspective of local communities.

The research location was determined purposively in several tourist villages in Bone Regency that have implemented tourism-based empowerment programs, both facilitated by the government and local community initiatives. The research subjects included traditional figures, local tourism business actors, village youth, village government officials, and empowerment program assistants. Data collection techniques were carried out through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of digital promotional media and local cultural artifacts utilized in tourism.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques that include stages of data reduction, categorization, and interpretation based on main themes, such as the meaning of local values, forms of digital technology adaptation, and social dynamics in the implementation of empowerment programs. Data validity is maintained through triangulation of sources and methods, as well as confirmation of results to key informants to ensure the accuracy of interpretation. Thus, this study is expected to provide a complete and critical picture of the integrative practice between local culture and digital technology in the development of empowerment-based tourism villages.

3. Result and Discussion

Dialectics of Local Values and Digital Technology in Community Empowerment Practices

1. Tension between Preserving Local Cultural Values and Demands for Digitalization

In the tourist villages of Bone Regency, the tension between preserving local cultural values and the demands of digitalization is increasingly evident along with the rapid development of technology. Local cultural values, especially the principle of *siri' na pacce* which emphasizes self-esteem, social solidarity, and collective responsibility, are central points that need to be maintained for their authenticity by traditional leaders. One traditional leader expressed his concerns,

"We are afraid that our culture will only be displayed on social media, without any deep understanding. Culture that used to live in everyday life, can now lose its meaning because it is only used as a spectacle."

This concern reflects concerns about the potential for cultural commodification that reduces the spiritual and socio-cultural values to mere visual products without context. This also shows how the older generation tends to view culture as something sacred and inseparable from the social life of society, so that rapid changes due to digitalization are considered to threaten the sustainability of these values (Hafid et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, the village youth group responded to digitalization with optimism as a tool to preserve and introduce culture to the wider public. A village youth explained,

"Digitalization gives us a new space to record and share traditions that have previously only been passed down orally. With video and social media, we can introduce our culture to the younger generation and the outside world, without losing the roots of the tradition itself."

This view shows how digital technology is not considered a threat, but rather an opportunity to maintain cultural relevance in the modern era. Young people use technology to document traditional dances, traditional rituals, and various other cultural activities so that they not only live in memories, but can also be accessed and appreciated by the wider public. This difference in attitude indicates a gap between generations in interpreting change, where the younger generation is more adaptive to technological innovation while the older generation is more conservative and protective of original values.

In scientific studies, this phenomenon has received serious attention from various cultural and communication researchers. Shan (2024) emphasized that cultural digitization must be carried out with great care and sensitivity so as not to reduce cultural values to mere commodities. He reminded that digitization without proper management has the potential to produce shallow representations that eliminate the social context and deep meaning of the culture. Hayat et al (2024) added that the success of cultural preservation through digitization is highly dependent on the active involvement of local communities in the process of documenting and representing their culture. Globalization and digitization can cause cultural 'disembedding', namely the release of cultural values from their social and historical contexts, so that these values become easily exchanged and commercialized without

considering their original meaning. However, Siregar et al (2025) in his book provides a more optimistic perspective by emphasizing that digitization can also be a means of cultural revitalization if communities are able to control the narrative and representation of their culture in the digital world.

Therefore, dialogue and collaboration between village actors including traditional figures, youth, tourism actors, and local government are very important to achieve a balance between preserving authentic cultural values and effective use of digital technology. An inclusive and participatory approach is needed so that digitalization is not just a marketing tool that promotes a superficial cultural image, but also becomes a profound educational medium and a means of cultural learning for current and future generations. Through this process, local values contained in siri' na pacce and other traditions can continue to live and develop, without losing their spiritual and social essence, so that village tourism remains sustainable and ethical. Thus, digitalization is not only a tool of modernization, but also a bridge connecting the past and future of local culture in Bone Regency.

2. Cultural Adaptation Strategies in the Use of Digital Technology

The Bone tourist village community shows a unique and selective form of cultural adaptation in dealing with the presence of digital technology in their environment. Instead of accepting technology in its entirety without consideration, they carry out careful filtering so that the use of digital technology does not conflict with the norms and customary values that they uphold. For example, in the context of promoting tourist villages through digital media, the community consciously avoids the use of background music or narration that is not in accordance with their customs. This is a concrete manifestation of the efforts to preserve culture that are actively carried out by the community. As expressed by Mr. A, one of the customary figures,

“We want technology to help promote culture, but not to the point of changing or destroying our customs. So, we always make sure the content we create is in accordance with traditional values.”

The role of traditional figures here is not merely symbolic, but very strategic as curators of cultural content that ensures that digital technology is used as a preservation tool, not as a threat to local identity. Thus, the Bone tourist village community shows a cultural negotiation attitude that is not passive, but rather very selective and full of awareness, placing technology as a complement that complements existing cultural values, not as a substitute.

The adaptation strategy implemented by the Bone community is in line with Nurjanah & Srihilmawati's (2025) view on cultural negotiation, where technology and culture do not run linearly

but interact and shape each other dynamically. The community does not accept digital technology raw, but interprets and reconstructs its meaning according to the local cultural context. This is also supported by Hymes' (1974) ethnographic communication theory which emphasizes that the meaning of communication including the use of digital technology is always within the social and cultural structures that surround it. In the context of Bone tourism villages, the use of digital technology cannot be separated from the norms and values inherent in society so that technology functions not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for preserving cultural identity. This study is also in line with the theory of innovation diffusion put forward by Rogers (2003) in Sutjipto & Pinariya (2019), which states that the success of adopting innovation is highly dependent on how the innovation can be adapted to the social and cultural context of the recipient. The Bone community has succeeded in making digital technology an adaptive innovation, not an impositive one, so that technology can be accepted and utilized sustainably.

Furthermore, from a cultural anthropology perspective, Alsaleh (2024) states that culture is a complex system of symbolic meaning, so that every technological innovation that enters a community must take into account the symbolic context and established values. The application of digital technology in Bone tourist villages, which is carried out with great care and selectivity, shows deep respect for the cultural meaning system. The community manages technology by paying attention to symbolic aspects so that there is no erosion of cultural values. This strategy indirectly protects cultural integrity while allowing digital technology to become an effective medium for economic and social empowerment, especially in the development of tourism based on local wisdom. By involving traditional figures as content curators, the community strengthens the role of cultural guardians while becoming a bridge connecting tradition with modernity. This approach also prevents the community from identity conflicts that often arise when technology is adopted without considering local wisdom.

These findings have important implications for the development of technology and digitalization in areas with high cultural wisdom such as Bone tourism villages. The successful adaptation of digital technology demonstrated by the Bone community confirms that technology cannot be viewed solely as a mechanical tool, but must be treated as part of a living social and cultural system. Therefore, every digitalization program must involve the active participation of traditional leaders and local communities so that technology can be integrated harmoniously without eroding cultural values. This approach not only optimizes the benefits of technology for community empowerment, but also maintains the sustainability of culture which is the main capital for the development of tourism villages. Overall, digital technology functions as a complement and empowerment tool that strengthens the cultural

identity of the Bone village community, so that digitalization can run sustainably and contextually with local values.

The Role of Digital Technology in the Socio-Economic Transformation of Tourism Villages

1. Optimizing Social Media as an Instrument for Promotion and Collective Identity

The use of social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube by young people in tourist villages in Bone Regency has become an effective strategy in increasing the exposure and appeal of these tourist destinations. Through attractive visual content, ranging from stunning natural scenery to authentic traditional art performances, these tourist villages are able to attract the attention of local and foreign tourists. One of the content managers said,

“We want the world to know that our village is not only beautiful in nature, but also rich in culture. Through the videos and photos we make, we can show who we really are” (Interview with Fj, 2025).

This shows that social media is not only used as a promotional tool, but also as a medium for local communities to express their collective identity. By utilizing the power of visual narratives, communities have succeeded in elevating cultural values and local wisdom that are their pride, while strengthening their sense of ownership of the cultural heritage they maintain.

The success of using social media as a promotional instrument and expression of local identity is highly dependent on the digital skills of young people in managing content and reaching a wide audience. Adequate digital literacy allows content managers to create interesting, interactive, and relevant materials with current digital marketing trends. However, limited access to technological devices and internet networks is still a real obstacle in several areas of Bone Regency. This condition creates inequality in the quality and quantity of content produced, so that the potential of social media as a tool for developing tourism is not yet fully optimal. This is in line with the findings of Afriansyah et al (2025) who highlighted the problem of the digital divide as the main obstacle in the use of technology in communities that are underserved by digital infrastructure. Therefore, increasing digital capacity through training and technical assistance, as well as improving access to technology, is an important need so that social media can function optimally in supporting village tourism development.

From the perspective of theory and scientific research, the use of social media as a digital public space provides new opportunities for society to form and widely disseminate their collective social identity. According to El Qudsi & Syamtar (2020), public space is an important arena for the exchange

of ideas and the formation of opinions based on open communication, which in the digital context has been mediated by social media platforms. Sari et al (2025) added that social media not only functions as a marketing tool, but also as a medium for local communities to express and maintain their cultural identity, while interacting with a global audience. Social media is able to create emotional involvement and active participation of users in creating content, thereby strengthening loyalty and connection between tourist destinations and their visitors. This approach proves that social media is not only an economic tool, but also an important instrument in preserving culture and developing local community identity.

However, structural challenges in the form of digital divides and uneven infrastructure are still significant obstacles that must be overcome. Ho.TL & Ho, TH (2025) stated that inequality in access to technology and digital literacy has the potential to exacerbate socio-economic disparities, especially in less developed areas. Therefore, intervention from the government and stakeholders is needed to provide wider internet access and sustainable digital training. Thus, tourist villages in Bone Regency can be more optimal in utilizing social media as a promotional instrument as well as a means of articulating cultural values and collective identities of the community. Overall, social media has changed the paradigm of village tourism development from mere marketing to a process of cultural preservation that integrates digital technology, social identity, and the local economy into one synergistic unit.

2. Inconsistency in Digital Access and Capacity as Barriers to Inclusive Empowerment

Although digital technology has brought great opportunities for the development of MSMEs and the expansion of market networks in tourist villages, in reality, digital access and capacity in the field are still very uneven. Youth groups and those who have undergone digital training tend to adapt faster and are able to utilize technology effectively, while elderly groups, women without formal education, and indigenous communities tend to lag behind. One of the training participants said,

“I find it easy to learn how to use social media to sell, but many of the mothers in this village don’t know how to use it and are afraid to try.”

This statement illustrates the real gap in digital literacy skills that is not just about the availability of devices and internet networks, but also related to mental readiness and basic knowledge in using technology. Geographical factors and limited infrastructure are additional obstacles that make internet access still uneven, especially in remote areas. This condition directly impacts the inequality in the use

of digital technology, so that the economic opportunities offered by technology cannot be enjoyed evenly.

This digital divide contributes to the widening socio-economic inequality in tourist villages. Groups that are already technologically literate are able to maximize the use of digital platforms to expand their markets and increase their business income, while other vulnerable groups are actually alienated from this economic progress. This phenomenon is in accordance with the concept of the digital divide put forward by van Dijk (2020), who emphasized that digital inequality is not only about physical access to devices and internet connections, but also involves dimensions of skills, motivation, and social support for effective use of technology. Zulpan et al (2025) also emphasized that the digital divide is a multidimensional phenomenon that includes aspects of technology, usage skills, and the social environment that affect a person's opportunities to optimally utilize technology. Thus, digitalization without attention to aspects of inclusivity and user capacity can actually strengthen existing social inequalities, especially in communities with limited access and literacy.

Therefore, digital empowerment in tourism villages must be designed with an inclusive approach and oriented to the specific needs of vulnerable groups. Affirmative and sustainable interventions are essential to ensure that groups such as the elderly, women without formal education, and indigenous communities can receive training that is appropriate to their context and abilities. Firdaus et al (2024) emphasize that the success of digital transformation is highly dependent on recognizing the local socio-cultural context and implementing strategies that are responsive to the unique barriers and needs of each community group. A participatory approach that involves communities in the planning and implementation of digital empowerment programs is key to ensuring that interventions are accepted and have a real impact. In addition, collaboration between the government, private sector, and civil society institutions must be strengthened to provide adequate infrastructure and support the sustainability of the program. This not only increases physical access but also builds an inclusive and efficient digital ecosystem.

With an inclusive and local needs-based digital empowerment strategy, it is hoped that digital transformation in tourism villages can run fairly and sustainably. An approach that takes into account social, economic, and cultural dimensions will help reduce the digital divide gap that has been the main obstacle to community empowerment. In addition, sustainable and contextual interventions can also encourage increased digital literacy capacity of vulnerable groups so that they are not only consumers of technology, but also active players in the digital ecosystem. In the long term, this will create more equitable socio-economic changes and encourage the development of tourism villages as inclusive and digitally productive areas. Therefore, digital empowerment must be viewed as a holistic process that

integrates aspects of technology, education, and social empowerment to achieve equitable and sustainable development goals.

Conclusion

In the tourist villages of Bone Regency, there is tension between the preservation of local cultural values, especially the principle of siri' na pacce, and the demands of digitalization. The older generation is worried that culture will become just a meaningless spectacle, while the younger generation sees digital technology as an opportunity to preserve and introduce culture more widely. Village communities carry out cultural adaptation by selectively using technology so as not to damage traditional values, involving traditional figures as curators of cultural content. Social media is used as a promotional tool as well as an expression of collective identity that strengthens the sense of cultural ownership. However, obstacles to access and digital literacy still hinder the optimal use of technology. Therefore, cross-generational collaboration and digital infrastructure support are needed so that digitalization can run sustainably and maintain cultural authenticity while empowering communities socially and economically.

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