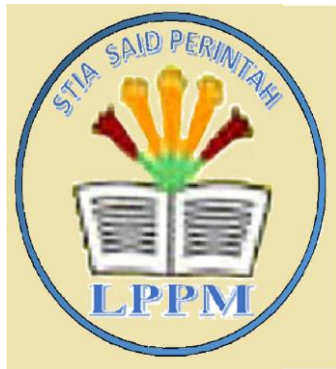


Public Policy: Jurnal Aplikasi Kebijakan Publik dan Bisnis



LPPM STIA Said Perintah

Volume 6, No. 1, Maret 2025

<https://stia-saidperintah.e-journal.id/ppj>

Received; 2025 - 05 - 13

Accepted; 2025 - 06 - 01

Published; 2025 - 06 - 09



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Tourism in the Era of Industry 4.0: Harnessing Digital Storytelling and Social Media for Effective Promotion

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Abstract

Digital technology has transformed tourism promotion, especially through digital marketing and storytelling. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the use of social media and e-commerce, with storytelling helping build emotional connections and improve destination images. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Tourism uses platforms like TikTok and Instagram for this purpose. Research in West Papua Barat Daya shows that short videos, photos, and blogs effectively raise awareness and attract tourists. Despite challenges like limited infrastructure and skills, digital storytelling remains a powerful and sustainable tool for tourism promotion.

Keywords : Digital Storytelling, Tourism Promotion, Social Media, Industry 4.0

Introduction

The advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed the tourism sector, shifting from traditional to technology-based marketing strategies. Within this evolving landscape, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in tourism are increasingly expected to utilize digital platforms such as social media and e-commerce not only to survive but also to grow sustainably. This transition became even more critical during the COVID-19 pandemic, which triggered a drastic decline in tourism demand. Consequently, the consumption of tourism services plummeted, disrupting the supply chain and compelling tourism actors to explore alternative means of reaching global audiences. Despite challenges such as limited technological access and low digital literacy, digital marketing presents substantial opportunities, particularly in expanding market reach and enabling the creation of interactive, engaging promotional content (Rafi'I et al., 2024).

One of the most promising strategies adopted to navigate these challenges is digital storytelling, which has proven effective in constructing the image of tourism destinations through emotional engagement with audiences. Studies by Wisnawa (2024) and Mau et al., (2024) suggest that digital narratives deepen the emotional connection between tourists and destinations. In various parts of Asia, digital storytelling has emerged as a central strategy in the post-pandemic recovery of tourism, replacing purely informative promotion with a more participatory and emotionally resonant approach. This method not only informs but also cultivates personal connections between tourists and destinations, thereby enhancing the overall appeal of tourism sites (Tri, n.d.; M. & Jamilati et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, storytelling-based strategies have gained increasing prominence in tourism promotion. Research by Normalasari et al., (2023) demonstrates that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), when driven by digital storytelling, positively influences tourists' intentions to visit. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) has responded by launching the Storynomics Tourism initiative, which integrates storytelling as a fundamental component of the creative economy's development in priority destinations such as Borobudur, Lake Toba, and Labuan Bajo (Nur. Lisani, n.d.). This initiative underscores the strategic role of storytelling in enhancing destination competitiveness.

In the tourism context, digital storytelling serves functions beyond mere information dissemination. Authentic narratives that reflect local cultural contexts offer

tourists deeper insights and foster stronger emotional bonds. For instance, a local guide in Bali narrating the legend of Mount Agung enriches visitors' understanding of Balinese heritage and identity. Thus, compelling narratives convey more than factual content they elevate the tourism experience, even before an actual visit occurs (Halida Nuria & Limpas, 2024).

These developments align with the broader transformation driven by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0), in which technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, and social media have reshaped tourism promotion into a more interactive and experience-based domain. This transformation enables stakeholders to engage directly with travelers, providing more personalized and meaningful experiences (Heliany, 2019; Purba & Irwansyah, 2022). In this light, digital storytelling is not merely a promotional tool but a medium for crafting experiences tailored to the needs and aspirations of prospective tourists.

The theoretical foundation for this shift is grounded in Henry Jenkins' framework, particularly the concepts of transmedia storytelling and media convergence, as introduced in *Convergence Culture*. Transmedia storytelling refers to the distribution of narrative elements across multiple media platforms, offering audiences richer, more immersive experiences. Media convergence, by contrast, denotes the integration of diverse forms of media into interconnected digital environments. Jenkins also emphasizes the importance of participatory culture, in which audiences are not passive consumers but active contributors and disseminators of content (Arif Nida Ul-Haq, 2024).

These concepts reinforce the argument that digital storytelling is not merely a message delivery mechanism but a vehicle for cultivating active, engaged communities. However, most existing studies have focused on destinations with well-established digital infrastructure and high visibility. Few have explored how digital storytelling can be adapted and implemented in regions with limited technological access and content-creation capabilities, such as Southwest Papua.

Accordingly, this study seeks to address that gap by contextualizing digital storytelling within a framework suited to regions with digital infrastructure constraints. The objective is to contribute both theoretically and practically to the discourse on inclusive and sustainable tourism development in digitally underserved areas.

Recent studies have affirmed the efficacy of digital storytelling in tourism promotion. Li et al., (2025) found that travel vlogs incorporating narrative elements increase tourists' interest in specific destinations. Similarly, Jing & Su, (2024) concluded

that digital storytelling enhances the authenticity of travel experiences. The integration of storytelling with emerging technologies, such as virtual reality, has also been shown to deepen tourists' emotional engagement with destinations (Luo & Xia, 2024). In the Indonesian context, Pasaribu et al., (2022) emphasize the role of local narratives in attracting visitors to Lake Toba, highlighting the influence of digital storytelling on tourist perceptions and decision-making.

Given that tourism constitutes one of Indonesia's major foreign exchange contributors accounting for 4.4% of GDP in 2020 and generating over USD 20.7 billion in 2019 (Setiawati & Pritalia, 2023) it holds significant potential for recovery and revitalization through technology-driven promotional strategies. Creative, adaptive, and digital-based promotion is therefore a national priority, particularly in the post-pandemic context (Dwi et al., 2023).

Within this broader national framework, Southwest Papua stands out for its exceptional natural and cultural assets. Nonetheless, tourism promotion in the region continues to face challenges of low market visibility and accessibility. It is categorized as having limited digital infrastructure and remains underrepresented in mainstream media relative to Indonesia's prominent tourist destinations (Hamizah, 2016). Without deliberate intervention, the region's tourism potential risks remaining untapped even among domestic tourists. Hence, digital storytelling is urgently needed as a context-sensitive and engaging strategy to highlight the region's cultural and natural richness.

Nevertheless, the question of how digital storytelling can be effectively implemented in digitally constrained areas remains underexplored. Unlike prior studies focused on digitally advanced settings, this research offers a novel perspective by incorporating local cultural narratives from Southwest Papua into a participatory digital storytelling framework. As such, the study provides context-specific insights for adapting global theories to local realities.

The primary objective of this research is to examine the effectiveness of digital storytelling in promoting tourism in Southwest Papua. It aims to investigate how digital narratives can meaningfully represent the region's cultural identity and natural beauty in a compelling and emotionally resonant manner. Furthermore, it seeks to provide strategic recommendations for policymakers and local tourism stakeholders to optimize narrative-based digital strategies for sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

Theory Review

Digital Marketing in Tourism

Digital marketing refers to a promotional strategy that utilizes technology and digital platforms such as social media, websites, and e-commerce to engage consumers more broadly and effectively (Sugiyanti et al., 2022). In the tourism sector, digital marketing allows destinations to showcase their unique local attractions through visually rich and interactive content, providing prospective visitors with an immersive preview of the experience (Triani et al., 2018). This approach has become increasingly relevant in the post-COVID-19 era, as mobility restrictions compelled tourism stakeholders to adopt online strategies and leverage digital tools to sustain virtual engagement with their target audiences.

Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling is a narrative technique that employs digital media to convey stories in ways that foster emotional engagement and stimulate imaginative experiences (Nicoli et al., 2022; Miller, 2019). In the tourism sector, this approach has shown significant potential in enhancing destination image and influencing tourists' intentions to visit by presenting authentic and contextually rich narratives often rooted in local history, cultural traditions, or regional myths (Halida Nuria & Limpas, 2024). By immersing potential visitors in such narratives, digital storytelling enables the formation of emotional connections with a place, even prior to any physical travel experience.

Transmedia Storytelling and Media Convergence

The concept of transmedia storytelling, as introduced by Henry Jenkins, refers to the strategic dissemination of narratives across multiple media platforms, with each platform contributing uniquely to the development of a cohesive and expansive story (Coombs, 2019). This framework aligns closely with the notion of media convergence, which entails the integration of diverse digital media forms into a unified communication ecosystem (Noventa et al., 2023). In the context of tourism promotion, this approach allows destination narratives to be conveyed through a combination of videos, blogs, social media, and virtual reality, thereby creating a synergistic and immersive experience for prospective visitors (Arif Nida Ul-Haq, 2024). Such a multi-platform strategy not only broadens message dissemination but also deepens audience engagement by providing multiple access points into the narrative experience.

Method

This study investigates the effectiveness of digital storytelling in promoting tourism in Southwest Papua (Papua Barat Daya) through a qualitative case study approach. This methodology facilitates a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena from the perspectives of tourism stakeholders, tourists, and digital platform managers. The research is descriptive and exploratory in nature, aiming not only to describe current practices but also to explore how narrative, visual, and interactive elements contribute to tourism promotion in the Industry 4.0 era.

Data collection was conducted through triangulation of in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. Informants included travel operators, accommodation providers, tourism officials, and tourists who had been exposed to digital campaigns. Observations of social media platforms and travel blogs supplemented the content and narrative analysis. A participatory element was incorporated through focus group discussions and narrative validation to ensure alignment with local cultural contexts.

Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns and assess their impact on tourism promotion (M. Ansyar Bora et al., 2025). Credibility was ensured through triangulation and member checking, while transferability, dependability, and confirmability were upheld through rigorous documentation and contextual interpretation. Conducted in Southwest Papua with purposively selected informants, this study aims to provide practical insights into inclusive and sustainable tourism promotion strategies for digitally underserved regions.

Discussions

Implementation Digital Storytelling as Tourism Promotion Tool in Papua Barat Daya in the 4.0 Industry Era

Various types and formats of digital storytelling content have been utilized to promote tourism in Southwest Papua. These include short videos on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels that highlight the region's natural beauty and cultural richness, as well as travel blog posts that incorporate personal narrative experiences. Additional visual content such as photo galleries on Instagram, live broadcasts of cultural events, 360° virtual tours, and podcasts recounting local legends also plays a significant role. This diverse range of content is disseminated across multiple digital platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, official tourism websites, travel blogs,

and online booking platforms. The selection of these platforms is strategic and tailored to suit the specific characteristics and preferences of different audience segments.

In practice, the narrative strategies commonly emphasize key thematic elements, such as adventure stories in Raja Ampat, meaningful interactions with indigenous communities, distinctive local traditions, environmental conservation efforts, underwater scenic beauty, and traditional culinary experiences. These elements are crafted to evoke strong emotional responses and foster deeper engagement with the audience. Moreover, local tourism stakeholders actively contribute to the storytelling process by participating in content creation, sharing personal stories, and collaborating with influencers. Such collaborations not only expand the reach of promotional efforts but also enhance their authenticity and effectiveness in generating interest and awareness about the tourism potential of Southwest Papua.

Effectiveness of Digital Storytelling in Increasing Awareness and Tourist Interest in Papua Barat Daya Tourism in the Digital Era

Digital storytelling has proven effective in raising public awareness of Southwest Papua as a tourist destination. This is evidenced by increased engagement metrics on social media platforms, including a higher number of comments, content shares, and mentions, as well as a notable rise in visits to the official tourism website. From a theoretical standpoint, emotionally resonant and compelling narratives are particularly appealing and contribute to enhancing the memorability of a destination's brand.

Beyond generating awareness, digital storytelling also fosters interest among potential tourists. This is supported by qualitative data obtained from interviews with prospective visitors, comments and inquiries on social media, and increased traffic on travel booking platforms. The emotional connections cultivated through personalized narratives play a pivotal role in influencing tourists' decision-making processes. Compared to traditional promotional strategies, digital storytelling offers distinct advantages, including wider global reach, interactive engagement, and the ability to create emotional intimacy. These characteristics position digital storytelling as a highly adaptive and effective promotional tool within today's dynamic digital tourism landscape.

Elements of Digital Storytelling Most Influential in Attracting Attention and Building a Positive Image of Papua Barat Daya Tourism

A key component of digital storytelling is its strong visual appeal, showcased through high-quality photographs and videos featuring compelling cinematography.

These visual elements effectively capture attention on image-centric digital platforms, thereby enhancing audience engagement. Complementing the visuals, authentic narratives based on the real-life experiences of tourists and local residents serve a crucial role in fostering engagement and building trust. This approach aligns with the concept of authenticity in tourism, which prioritizes genuine and credible representations of a destination.

Additionally, the incorporation of background music, natural ambient sounds, and recordings of local conversations further deepens the emotional resonance of digital stories, offering viewers an immersive sensory experience. Interactivity also constitutes a vital feature of digital storytelling, materializing through live question-and-answer sessions, social media contests, and polls that encourage active audience participation. These interactive elements contribute to the development of a digital community centered around the Papua Barat Daya tourism brand.

Crucially, the narratives conveyed through digital storytelling consistently underscore the region's cultural heritage and environmental conservation efforts. These thematic emphases help construct an image of Southwest Papua as an authentic, distinctive, and socially responsible travel destination.

Challenges and Opportunities in Utilizing Digital Storytelling as a Tourism Promotion Strategy for Papua Barat Daya in the Era of Industry 4.0

In implementing digital storytelling for tourism promotion in Southwest Papua, several key challenges must be acknowledged. Limited digital infrastructure in certain areas results in uneven internet access, which hinders the effective production and distribution of digital content. Additionally, there is a significant shortage of skilled human resources capable of creating engaging and professional digital media. Coordination among stakeholders including local governments, tourism operators, and community members also presents challenges in developing a unified promotional strategy. Maintaining consistency in messaging and brand image across diverse digital platforms remains an ongoing issue.

Despite these obstacles, numerous opportunities exist to enhance tourism promotion. There is vast creative potential to showcase the uniqueness of Southwest Papua through innovative content formats. Moreover, the global reach enabled by digital platforms facilitates broader audience engagement. Digital storytelling not only strengthens engagement and tourist loyalty but also supports the growth of the local

creative economy by encouraging content production. Importantly, it promotes sustainable and responsible tourism practices, aligning economic development with cultural preservation and environmental stewardship.

Research Findings

Implementation of Digital Storytelling in Papua Barat Daya

In the practice of promoting tourism in Southwest Papua, short videos particularly those under one minute in length represent the most dominant form of digital storytelling content. These videos, frequently uploaded on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels, constitute approximately 55% of the total content observed. The visual focus of these videos often highlights natural landscapes like Raja Ampat, diving activities, and the everyday lives of indigenous communities. Photo-based storytelling on Instagram comprises roughly 25% of the content, typically accompanied by brief narratives in captions that reinforce the visual message. The remaining 20% consists of blog articles and virtual tours, generally published on official tourism websites or YouTube channels.

Regarding platform distribution, Instagram accounts for 35% of content dissemination, followed by TikTok at 30%, and YouTube at 20%, with the remainder distributed across Facebook, official websites, and travel blogs. The narratives commonly emphasize the natural beauty of Southwest Papua especially Raja Ampat the warmth and hospitality of local communities, authentic adventure experiences, and the rich cultural heritage of the region. Recurring quotations from analyzed content include expressions such as "We were welcomed with traditional dances and heartfelt folk tales" and "Exploring the waters of Raja Ampat felt like entering another world full of wonders," illustrating the emotional and immersive storytelling approach.

Local tourism stakeholders actively contribute to this digital storytelling ecosystem. Approximately 40% of analyzed accounts represent content created independently by local actors, while others collaborate with national influencers. Moreover, some participate in digital campaigns organized by local tourism agencies, showcasing effective synergy between the community and official institutions in cultivating a cohesive and compelling destination image.

Awareness and Tourist Interest in Papua Barat Daya Tourism through Digital Storytelling

Public awareness of Southwest Papua as a tourist destination has increased

significantly alongside the rise of digital storytelling activities. Tourism-related social media accounts have experienced notable growth; for example, the Instagram account @visitrajaampat reported a 23% increase in followers over the past six months. Concurrently, the use of hashtags such as #ExplorePapuaBaratDaya and #RajaAmpatAdventure has surged, accompanied by a 17% rise in traffic to the official tourism website, as evidenced by site analytics data.

Interviews reveal that many respondents who were previously unaware of Southwest Papua discovered new information through exposure to digital content. There has also been a marked increase in inquiries via direct messages and comment sections, particularly on video posts highlighting unique travel experiences. Such content generates higher engagement, with likes and shares doubling compared to static posts. Several respondents expressed strong intentions to visit the region following exposure to digital storytelling, exemplified by statements like: "I immediately looked for travel packages to Raja Ampat after watching the video on TikTok; it was so inspiring!" This evidence underscores that digital narratives not only facilitate information dissemination but also play a crucial role in shaping tourists' decision-making processes.

Dominant Elements of Digital Storytelling that Received Positive Responses

In the analysis of circulating digital storytelling content, visual elements emerged as the most dominant and positively received feature. Content utilizing cinematic techniques such as drone shots that emphasize island clusters, white sandy beaches, and crystal-clear blue waters garnered the highest levels of user interaction. The use of vivid colors and high-definition imagery effectively captured and sustained the attention of social media audiences.

Beyond visuals, the strength of the narrative was equally significant. Personal stories shared by tourists, recounting authentic experiences or local cultural traditions in an engaging manner, attracted more engagement than formal, detached narratives. For instance, a post depicting a tourist's participation in the traditional "Sasi" ceremony accumulated over 15,000 likes on Instagram and hundreds of positive comments, illustrating the appeal of genuine storytelling.

From an auditory perspective, content incorporating ethnic Papuan music, natural ambient sounds, or narratives delivered in local dialects elicited strong emotional responses from viewers. Respondents valued these audio elements for adding depth and a sense of "liveliness" to the content. Additionally, interactive features served as unique

engagement tools; for example, Instagram Stories polls such as “What’s your favorite spot in Raja Ampat?” or quizzes about Papuan culture encouraged active audience participation.

Finally, the predominant messages conveyed through digital storytelling centered on the breathtaking natural beauty, rich and distinctive cultural heritage, and the warmth of the local people. These thematic messages contributed to shaping a positive audience perception and reinforced the image of Southwest Papua as an attractive and deserving tourist destination.

Challenges and Opportunities in the Utilization of Digital Storytelling

Several significant challenges impact the implementation of digital storytelling for tourism promotion in Southwest Papua. Limited internet connectivity in remote areas restricts the consistent creation and dissemination of digital content. Additionally, many local tourism stakeholders lack the necessary technical expertise in areas such as video editing and social media management. Coordination among governmental bodies, private enterprises, and community groups remains fragmented, while financial constraints further impede the scope and effectiveness of promotional activities.

Local culture profoundly shapes the formats of digital storytelling employed. Traditional folktales, indigenous visual elements such as ikat textile patterns, and local languages are intricately woven into narratives, thereby enhancing their authenticity. Performative components, including ritual dances and oral chants, influence both the pacing and auditory elements of the content. Community participation through collective decision-making processes fosters a sense of ownership and ensures alignment with shared cultural values.

Despite these challenges, considerable opportunities are evident. Digital storytelling has the potential to engage global audiences through content uniquely grounded in local traditions. Collaborations with influencers who respect and understand indigenous knowledge help maintain narrative authenticity. Involving village communities in content production supports the growth of the creative economy and contributes to cultural heritage preservation. Moreover, storytelling serves as a vehicle for promoting sustainable tourism by highlighting traditional practices like sasi, thereby educating visitors about environmental stewardship. Overall, digital storytelling empowers local communities while attracting tourists who are conscientious and respectful of cultural and ecological sustainability.

Conclusion

This study confirms that digital storytelling functions as a highly effective promotional tool for tourism in Southwest Papua within the framework of Industry 4.0. Digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook have enabled the region to showcase its distinctive attractions from the marine biodiversity of Raja Ampat to the rich local cultural heritage through engaging short-form visual content. This approach has considerably broadened audience reach and deepened emotional engagement, as evidenced by increased social media interactions, hashtag proliferation, and tourist inquiries.

The findings are strongly aligned with Jenkins' theory of participatory culture and transmedia storytelling. Tourists actively engage with, disseminate, and contribute to the digital narratives of the region across multiple media platforms. This participatory model not only enhances the visibility of the destination but also cultivates a sense of community ownership in tourism promotion efforts. Despite facing challenges such as limited digital infrastructure and gaps in technical expertise, Southwest Papua exhibits significant potential for sustainable digital tourism development by prioritizing authentic storytelling and fostering collaborative partnerships among local stakeholders.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that the local government prioritize increased investment in digital infrastructure and the enhancement of human resource capacities in digital storytelling to ensure sustainable and effective tourism promotion. Tourism stakeholders should be actively encouraged to create digital storytelling content, either independently or through strategic collaborations with influencers and local communities. Furthermore, leveraging data analytics tools will enable more precise measurement of campaign effectiveness and deeper insights into audience behavior and preferences.

Effective tourism promotion also necessitates strengthened collaboration and coordination among the diverse range of stakeholders to implement a cohesive and comprehensive promotional strategy. Future research endeavors should emphasize quantitative methodologies, comparative analyses, and investigations into the influence of user-generated content on the outcomes of digital storytelling initiatives. These recommendations collectively aim to support the development and refinement of tourism

promotion strategies for Southwest Papua within the Industry 4.0 paradigm.

Limitations and Future Research

This study presents several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the research predominantly employs qualitative descriptive analysis and lacks extensive examination of quantitative data regarding the direct impact of digital storytelling on tourist arrivals in Southwest Papua. The sample is confined to tourism industry stakeholders and social media audiences, which may not comprehensively represent the wider population or the full spectrum of the tourism destination. Additionally, infrastructural challenges and the existing digital divide in certain areas potentially limit the reach and effectiveness of digital storytelling initiatives.

For future research, it is recommended to incorporate quantitative measures to assess the tangible effects of digital storytelling on tourist visitation. Broadening the scope to encompass a more diverse array of audience segments and tourism destinations especially those with limited digital infrastructure would improve representativeness. Further investigation into the impact of user-generated content, as well as comparative analyses of audience engagement between content produced by tourism industry actors versus tourists, could offer deeper insights. Moreover, comparative studies evaluating digital storytelling against traditional promotional methods would provide valuable assessments of their relative efficacy within the region.

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