

ENHANCING TOURISM PROMOTION THROUGH DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS: A CASE STUDY IN SLEMAN, YOGYAKARTA

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ABSTRACT

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The Sleman Tourism Office plays a pivotal role in coordinating tourism development within the region. Recognizing the impact of digital technology, the office leverages digital public relations (PR) to enhance destination promotion and maximize tourism potential. This study aims to assess the effectiveness of Digital PR strategies implemented by the Sleman Tourism Office and examine the development of Digital PR practices in Sleman's tourist villages. Employing a qualitative case study approach, this research utilizes the Four-Step PR Theory to analyze collected data. The findings reveal that while the Sleman Tourism Office has adopted several strategic DPR initiatives, certain aspects require further enhancement, particularly in addressing emerging challenges and strengthening oversight mechanisms. To mitigate these challenges, the office has implemented a collaborative posting strategy. Additionally, Digital PR initiatives have been adopted by Grogol and Gamplong Tourism Villages, primarily through Instagram, to promote their unique local attractions. This study underscores the importance of optimizing digital public relations strategies to enhance tourism promotion and engagement.

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1. Introduction

Tourism is a key sector in economic development, playing a significant role in regional growth and investment attraction. Government investment in the tourism sector is a crucial driver of economic progress, as it generates substantial impacts on national and regional economic performance (Aliansyah et al., 2021). According to the Indonesian Ministry of Finance, tourism is considered one of the country's economic pillars, with a target contribution of 4.5% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the creation of 22.8 million jobs. Similarly, in Sleman Regency, the tourism sector has emerged as a vital economic

contributor, accounting for 31.28% of the total Regional Original Revenue (PAD) based on the 2023 Sleman Regency Tourism Statistics Report.

Sleman Regency boasts significant tourism potential due to its rich cultural heritage and natural attractions. Among its prominent destinations is Prambanan Temple, a priority site designated by the Ministry of Tourism. In addition, Sleman is home to 41 tourist attractions and 80 tourist villages, including Gamplong Village in Moyudan District, renowned for its traditional woven crafts made from water hyacinth. Another notable destination, Grogol Tourism Village in Seyegan District, offers diverse experiences encompassing natural tourism, cultural heritage, and outdoor activities. Despite these attractions, the proportion of foreign tourists in Sleman remains relatively low, accounting for only 2.44% of the total visitor count (Nurwanto, 2023).

The integration of digital technology is increasingly recognized as a strategic approach to enhancing regional economic growth. Research by Abdillah (2024) highlights the significant influence of the digital economy on economic expansion. As the central authority overseeing tourism development, the Sleman Regency Tourism Office plays a pivotal role in leveraging digital technology to promote tourism. In the digital era, public relations (PR) professionals must effectively utilize digital platforms to enhance destination visibility and engagement (Edlina, 2022). The strategic implementation of digital public relations (DPR) allows organizations to strengthen their presence across various media channels, thereby increasing public awareness and accessibility for both domestic and international tourists (Ardiansah et al., 2021)

The Sleman Tourism Office has undertaken various digital initiatives to disseminate tourism-related information effectively. These include leveraging social media platforms such as Instagram (@wisatasleman), an official website (<https://pariwisata.slemankab.go.id/>), and a YouTube channel (@tentangsleman) to promote tourist attractions, cultural events, and government programs. Additionally, individual tourist villages have adopted digital strategies, exemplified by Gamplong Tourism Village (@desawisatagamplongofficial) and Grogol Tourism Village, which utilizes multiple digital platforms, including an official website, Facebook (@Desa Wisata Grogol), and Twitter (@dewagrogol).

Although numerous studies have explored digital public relations, research specifically examining the DPR strategies employed by the Sleman Regency Tourism Office remains limited. This study aims to fill that gap by employing the Four-Step PR model to analyze the effectiveness of DPR in promoting tourism. Digital PR serves as an essential tool for engaging broader audiences, developing adaptive strategies in response to digital transformations, and enhancing brand awareness and organizational reputation (Meliala et al., 2020; Nadia, 2023; Windiana et al., 2022; Sekar et al., 2020). Given the potential of DPR to foster sustainable tourism development, this research seeks to assess the extent to which the Sleman Tourism Office has optimized digital public relations and how DPR is being utilized within the tourism villages of Sleman Regency.

Future research should consider conducting a larger-scale study across multiple tourism destinations in Indonesia. Expanding the scope of analysis beyond Sleman Regency would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how digital public relations influence tourism growth in diverse cultural and geographical contexts. Such an approach would also enable comparisons between regions with different levels of technological

adoption and PR strategies, leading to more robust policy recommendations for stakeholders in the tourism sector.

Additionally, a longitudinal study tracking the impact of digital public relations on visitor numbers over time would be valuable. By analyzing long-term trends, researchers could assess the effectiveness of various digital PR strategies in sustaining visitor engagement and economic benefits. This would help tourism authorities refine their digital marketing efforts and optimize communication strategies to maximize tourism potential.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. A qualitative approach is used to understand the natural conditions of the research object. In this method, the researcher acts as the main instrument, data collection techniques are combined, data analysis is inductive or qualitative, and the main focus of the results of qualitative research is the meaning of data (Sugiyono, 2020).

Participants in this study were purposively selected based on their roles and expertise in digital public relations within the Sleman tourism sector. The primary data were gathered through interviews with:

- The Head of the Public Relations Division of the Sleman Tourism Office (Kus Endarto), responsible for overseeing tourism promotion and digital PR initiatives.
- The Head of the Gamplong Tourism Village Management (Giyono), who plays a key role in implementing digital marketing strategies for community-based tourism.
- The Head of the Grogol Tourism Village Management (Esthi Handayani), who oversees digital PR efforts within a prominent tourist village.

These participants were chosen due to their direct involvement in managing and executing digital public relations strategies within the tourism sector, ensuring that the data collected was relevant and insightful.

The qualitative data obtained from interviews and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved transcribing interview recordings, coding the data into meaningful categories, and identifying recurring themes related to digital PR implementation. Thematic analysis was chosen to uncover patterns in communication strategies, challenges, and the perceived impact of digital PR on tourism promotion. To enhance the reliability of the findings, the researcher conducted cross-validation by comparing interview data with secondary sources, including government reports, academic literature, and statistical data.

Ethical protocols were strictly followed throughout the research process. Prior to conducting interviews, participants were informed about the study's objectives and provided with a consent form ensuring voluntary participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained to protect the identities of participants and organizations involved. The study also adhered to ethical research guidelines by ensuring that participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without repercussions. By incorporating rigorous qualitative methods and ethical considerations, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how digital public relations contribute to the development of tourism in Sleman Regency.

3. Results and Discussion

In research conducted by (Nugraha et al., 2022) which discusses how government institutions can utilize social media in campaigns in their public relations campaigns. The results of this study explain that the level of utilization of social media by an institution will depend on its respective social. In this study, the focus is on the extent to which the role of the Sleman Tourism Office is in maximally utilizing digital public relations and how far the development of digital public relations of tourist villages in Sleman Regency. In addition, Research on Digital Public Relations has been widely conducted in various places. However, based on the researcher's search, especially with research that specifically examines the Digital Public Relations of the Sleman Regency Office, it is still rarely conducted. In addition, this study uses the 4 steps PR theory in analyzing the data obtained.

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with the Sleman Tourism Office, efforts to increase knowledge about Sleman Tourism are carried out through offline and online-based approaches.

“The head of promotion is in charge of offline or direct promotion, while online is done through social media, one of which is Instagram” Interview with Kus Endarto, Thursday, October 9, 2024.

Offline-based approach in the form of direct interaction between the community and tourists through activities such as organizing the Sleman Tample Run, Tour de Merapi, and Gebyar Nusantara Expo events. This event not only functions as a means of promotion, but also becomes an educational media in introducing various destinations and tourism potentials in the Sleman area. Collaborating with tourism destination managers, through this collaboration, the Sleman Tourism Office can present more specific and interesting information because it is based on direct knowledge from tourism managers.

In addition to conducting an offline approach. The Sleman Tourism Office also conducts an online approach. Efforts to gain knowledge about Sleman tourism are realized through the concept of Digital Public Relations. Digital Public Relations is a Public Relations activity that uses online digital media to manage and at the same time improve the reputation and understanding of an organization (Rees, 2020). Digital Public Relations management carried out by the Sleman Tourism Office is done by reposting or making collaborative posts. This collaborative post is done with an account that is considered to have interesting content posts about Sleman tourism. This is done by the manager to overcome the limitations of Human Resources, especially in terms of content production.

In addition, collaborative posts are used as an alternative by the Sleman Tourism Office, due to the limited Human Resources who manage Digital Public Relations specifically. This strategy is carried out not only to save time and costs, but also allows the Sleman Regency Tourism Office to utilize content that has been proven to attract the attention of the audience. In this way, the Sleman Regency Tourism Office can reach more followers without having to create new content from scratch. Through this collaborative post strategy, the official Instagram account of the Sleman Regency Tourism Office @wisatasleman becomes a media partner for various events held in Sleman Regency. With involvement in the publication of events. This will provide fast and structured information dissemination because the @wisatasleman account plays a central role for tourist destinations in Sleman Regency.



Figure 1. (Example of Collaborative Posts for the Instagram Account @wisatasleman).

Sleman Tourism Office. Grogol Tourism Village and Gamplong Tourism Village are also trying to implement digitalization. This is done as an effort to increase knowledge about the potential of the two tourist villages. The management of Grogol Tourism Village is trying to follow developments related to digital content, including content creation through the Instagram and TikTok platforms. Grogol Tourism Village itself is located in Seyegan District. This tourist village combines the beauty of rural nature, Javanese culture, and interactive education. This tourist village offers local culture such as making suket puppets, batik, playing gamelan, tatah sunggih puppets, etc. In addition, visitors can also get involved in activities to learn about traditional agriculture from plowing rice fields, planting rice, to pounding rice. Grogol Tourism Village also provides outbound facilities that offer outdoor tracking routes. There are also homestays that are managed directly by residents that will provide visitors with the experience of living with local residents.



Figure 2. (Activities in Grogol Tourism Village)

Grogol Tourism Village is included in the category of Independent Tourism Village. This is because Gamplong Tourism Village has the ability to utilize digitalization as a tool for promotion, and there is participation from the local community in sustainable development.

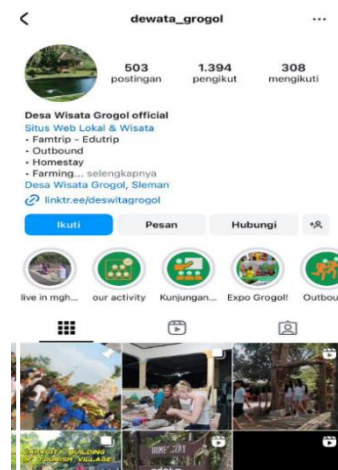


Figure 3. (Digitalization efforts of Grogol Tourism Village through Instagram).

"Yes, there is a special section that handles digitalization, but it is not focused, because friends still consider it not their main job. Then, they are also not experts in the field." Interview with Esthi Handayani. Wednesday, October 30, 2024

The management of Grogol Tourism Village has appointed a special person in charge of digitalization, this is done to support promotional efforts. However, this role still faces several obstacles such as the focus of the person in charge is still divided. Second, there are limitations in the technical skills of the person in charge in digitalization.

The utilization efforts made by the Gamplong Tourism Village management through the Instagram platform. Gamplong Tourism Village itself is a tourism village located in Moyudan District, Sleman Regency. Gamplong Tourism Village is a tourism village that highlights crafts made from water hyacinth, coconut fronds, mending, gebang, and fragrant roots.



Figure 3, Results of Craft Products from Gamplong Tourism Village.

In addition, Gamplong Tourism Village offers educational craft tourism packages for tourists. However, based on the interview results, Gamplong Tourism Village is included in the category of advanced tourism villages. The classification of advanced tourism villages refers to the role of Gamplong Tourism Village in the development of the local economy. However, the management of the Gamplong Tourism Village Instagram account is still

managed by the head of the village management, there is no special section that manages the social media of Gamplong Tourism Village. The head of the management who is responsible does not yet have adequate skills in utilizing this digitalization.

“The manager of the Instagram account @desawisatagamplong.official, yes, I am myself.” Interview with Giyono, October 1, 2024.



Figure 4, Efforts to Digitize Gamplong Tourism Village Through Instagram.

As the head of management who is also responsible as a social media admin, the head of the Gamplong Tourism Village management faces obstacles in adapting to this digitalization era. The head of the Gamplong Tourism Village management considers digitalization to be a challenge for the older generation of administrators. The involvement of local youth organizations in the management process of the Gamplong Tourism Village is still limited, only a small number of members actively participate.

Digital Public Relations plays a role that crucial in this digital era (Adawiyah, 2023). Digital Public Relations will offer many benefits for an organization, one of which is government institutions. Digital Public Relations will provide benefits in distributing information quickly through various social media (Shaleh dkk, 2020). In addition, digital public relations can also reach a wider audience. With good digital public relations management, government institutions can build a positive image (Diana dkk., 2023).

In the analysis conducted based on observations on Digital Public Relations efforts carried out by the Sleman Tourism Office through the Instagram account @wisatasleman, Grogol Tourism Village through the Instagram account, and Gamplong Tourism Village through the Instagram account @desawisatagamplong.official. In this section, the researcher will answer the problem formulation questions related to what extent is the role of the Sleman Tourism Office in utilizing Digital Public Relations optimally and to what extent is the development of tourist villages in Sleman Regency. Researchers use a 4-step PR analysis consisting of several stages including research at this stage the researcher identifies how the Sleman Tourism Office and Sleman tourism managers understand digital trends. The second stage is planning through this stage the researcher wants to know how the Sleman Tourism Office and tourism managers design such as content strategies and digital channel selection. The next stage is action at this stage the researcher wants to know how the

Tourism Office and tourism managers implement the planned program. At the evaluation stage the researcher will analyze the factors that influence the success of what has been done.

Research Stage

The researcher found that the Sleman Tourism Office, Gampong Tourism Village, and Grogol Tourism Village had increased knowledge related to Sleman Tourism by conducting promotions through offline and online media. This offline-based approach is carried out through organizing events, local publications, and direct interaction at tourist locations. The offline-based approach is aimed at community groups who are less able to adapt to digitalization. This approach seeks to ensure that information related to tourist destinations can still be accessed by various segments of society. Meanwhile, the online approach is carried out by the Tourism Office through social media. Promotion through online media itself is targeted at the young generation who have a high level of technological adaptation. This is based on the results of an interview with the head of the marketing section of the Sleman Tourism Office:

"Tourism marketing does 2 ways with different percentages. Online marketing targets Gen Z while offline targets the previous generation" Interview with Kus Endarto, Thursday, October 9, 2024.

In addition, Grogol Tourism Village and Gamplong Tourism Village also strive to promote the potential of tourism villages through social media. Through social media, it is possible for both tourism villages to showcase the potential of the tourism village. Such as cultural richness, unique traditions, and superior handicraft products. Grogol Tourism Village and Gamplong Tourism Village also collaborate with various parties in increasing the number of visitors.

"We collaborate with various parties, this is done with the aim that the Grogol tourist village gets visitors" Interview with Esthi Handayani. 30, October 2024.

Through a network of cooperation with external parties, tourist villages can reach audiences by utilizing various communication channels (Kusuma & Eviana, 2022). Cooperation with partners, such as the Tourism Office, Travel Agents, and various local communities, allows information related to the potential and attractions of tourist villages to be disseminated more effectively.

Planning stage

The Tourism Office tried to promote tourism through social media Instagram, Youtube, and Website. However, over time due to limited Human Resources and capabilities owned by the Tourism Office, the management of the Youtube account @tentangsleman finally looked less than optimal. This is because the frequency of posts on the Youtube platform is very rarely done compared to the Instagram account @wisatasleman which is active with a posting frequency of 7 to 10 posts a day. As for the Grogol Tourism Village, which maximizes the use of the Instagram platform as part of the promotional strategy in introducing the potential of the tourist village it has.

"So far, Instagram has the most impact, usually prospective visitors ask about tour packages through Instagram accounts" Esthi Handayani Interview. October 30, 2024.

In this case, the manager of Grogol Tourism Village considers that Instagram has the greatest impact compared to other platforms in reaching potential tourists. Because through Instagram, potential tourists can use Instagram to find information related to tour packages available in Grogol Tourism Village. The use of the Instagram platform is also

carried out by Gamplong Tourism Village in promoting the potential in Gamplong Tourism Village. This aims not only to attract the attention of potential tourists, but also to increase public awareness of the potential in the tourist village. By utilizing the features available on the Instagram platform such as posting interesting photos, videos, reels and content consistency, both the Sleman Tourism Office and the two tourist villages can attract tourists. This is in line with research by Andry dkk (2025) that the higher the frequency of posts, the more effective the content.

Action stage

Sleman Tourism Office. Sleman Tourism Office understands that social media user audiences tend to be more interested in short video content lasting 30 seconds to 1 minute that displays a little narrative that conveys information briefly but concisely. With attractive video visuals, it will be easier to absorb amidst the high flow of information on social media. Through a strong visual approach and minimal use of text, short videos can build emotional appeal and invite a more spontaneous response from the audience.(Natsir et al., 2024). The Sleman Tourism Office uses a collaborative posting strategy or reposting content that has been created

by other parties such as those that are interesting and considered to be able to attract the attention of the audience. This collaborative posting strategy was carried out due to the manager's limitations in producing daily content on the @wisatasleman Instagram account. By utilizing content that is already available from other users, the Sleman Tourism Office can maintain the sustainability of digital promotional activities without sacrificing the effectiveness of communication with the audience. This means that the Sleman Tourism Office still has the ability to continue to carry out promotional efforts even though it has limited human resources in the ability to produce content. Consistency of content, through collaborative posts, can create follower interaction as an important component in expanding reach(Firmansyah et al., 2024). The management of Gamplong Tourism Village and Grogol Tourism Village tries to follow the trending content that is currently popular on the Instagram platform. Such as making short videos or reels, publications about the potential of tourism villages, and various activities carried out in both tourism villages. By following trending content, tourism village managers can take advantage of the moment of popularity on a particular theme. This can attract attention because the audience tends to be interested in trending content(Harahap et al., 2024). However, what distinguishes the management of Gamplong Tourism Village and Grogol Tourism Village content is that Grogol Tourism Village content shows consistency in posting content on the @dewata_grogol account compared to the Gamplong Tourism Village Instagram account. This not only reflects the commitment of tourism village managers to promoting tourism potential, but also maintains audience engagement. In addition, although in practice it is not yet optimal, Grogol Tourism Village also has a special person in charge of digitalization or content publication. Meanwhile, in Gamplong Tourism Village there is no special section that is responsible for publishing promotional content because the person in charge of the Instagram account is still handled by the head of the Gamplong Tourism Village management.

Evaluation stage

The researcher found that both the Tourism Office, Grogol Tourism Village, and Gamplong Tourism Village realized that Digital Public Relations in today's era has a crucial role in developing tourism in the digital era. Digital Public Relations not only acts as a

promotional tool, but also becomes a communication bridge between tourism managers and audiences (Roker dkk, 2025). By utilizing digital public relations optimally through digital platforms, both the Sleman Tourism Office and tourist villages can reach a wider audience. However, the Tourism Office, Grogol Tourism Village and Gamplong Tourism Village have challenges faced, namely limited Human Resources in managing Digital Public Relations. The Grogol Tourism Village Manager faces difficulties because the manager lacks specific expertise in managing technology and information. Although in Grogol Tourism Village there is a special digitalization manager, the manager's focus is still divided with other jobs, because members consider this job not to be the main job. Meanwhile, in Gamplong Tourism Village there is no special digitalization management section, even the official account is still handled by the head of the tourism village manager. As the manager of the Instagram account, the head of the Gamplong tourism village faces obstacles in adapting to digital. This is because the head of the Gamplong tourist village considers that digitalization adaptation is a challenge for the older generation. He feels that the digitalization part should be the responsibility of the younger generation. This is also conveyed in research conducted by Salsabilla & Zainuddin (2021) that the development of technology and information is dominated by young people, so there is a possibility that the older generation experiences technological stuttering.

As the center of Sleman tourism coordination, the Tourism Office has been responsible for designing and implementing tourism development programs in Sleman Regency. These efforts are realized through the implementation of socialization of the importance of digitalization for the development of sustainable tourism villages. In addition, the Sleman Tourism Office also collaborates with various experts and related parties who have specific competencies. Such as the Communication Office which plays a role in the development and implementation of digital marketing strategies, the Cooperative and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Office which plays a role in strengthening the MSME sector around tourist villages. As well as collaboration with universities in supporting the development of tourist villages through community service programs. As one example, the manager of the Grogol Tourism Village who utilizes the role of academics in fields that the manager does not have expertise in, such as website creation. In addition, the Gamplong Tourism Village also holds guide, English, and product design training by one of the universities that is currently doing community service in the Gamplong Tourism Village. By collaborating with various parties, the Sleman Tourism Office strives to create a comprehensive improvement in quality of management and competitiveness of tourist villages.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and analysis conducted, it can be concluded that the use of digital public relations carried out by the Sleman Tourism Office has implemented several strategic digital public relations steps, but there are several steps that need to be improved and, to carry out more supervision of the obstacles that occur. The Sleman Tourism Office implemented a collaborative posting strategy in dealing with these obstacles. The Sleman Tourism Office and the two tourist villages implemented an offline and online-based approach in increasing knowledge and promotion of Sleman tourism. With a collaborative posting strategy, the official Instagram account of the Sleman Tourism

Office can overcome the limitations of human resources in content production. The use of digital public relations has also been carried out by both Grogol Tourism Village and Gamplong Tourism Village. Through the Instagram platform, these two tourist villages promote their local potential. Although in practice, these two tourist villages also have obstacles related to the limited Human Resources who have expertise in the field of digital management. Overall, the efforts of the Sleman Tourism Office and tourist village managers have realized the importance of Digital Public Relations in tourism development. However, both the Sleman Tourism Office and tourist village managers need to improve the quality of Human Resources, especially in managing digitalization. In addition, it is important for the tourism office to conduct monitoring and evaluation in improving the competence of tourism management human resources. Although there are still challenges that need to be overcome regarding technical skills and digital management. Collaboration with various parties shows a commitment to increasing the attractiveness of tourism in Sleman Regency.

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