

Going Global: Empowering Local Tourism of Bejijong's Majapahit Heritage Village through English

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Abstract: *In the era of national digital transformation, rural communities play a crucial role in sustaining local culture while adapting to technological change. This article reports a community service project aimed at empowering the residents of Bejijong Village, Mojokerto, East Java—home to the Majapahit Cultural Heritage Village—through training in social media utilization and English for tourism promotion. A workshop involving twenty local participants introduced strategies for using Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok as promotional tools, alongside English caption writing for global reach. Findings show that the workshop not only improved participants' technical competence but also fostered mindset shifts regarding the role of digital platforms in economic and cultural development. The initiative demonstrates how digital literacy and multilingual content creation can enhance local identity visibility and economic sustainability in heritage-based tourism villages.*

Keywords:

Community-Based Education; Digital Literacy; English for Community Empowerment; Local Culture Promotion; Social Media for Tourism

Introduction

Tourism is one of the most dynamic sectors driving local economic growth, especially when supported by the integration of digital technology and community participation. The digitalization of tourism can help promote popular travel sites more effectively, enabling both visitors and business owners to benefit from improved systems (Darubekti, Hanum, Suryaningsih, & Waryenti, 2022). Previous studies have shown that digital marketing—particularly through social media—has a significant influence on travelers' decisions and destination visibility (Afren, 2024; Shahzad, Zeib, & Tariq, 2024). Online platforms such as Instagram and Facebook have also become key channels for inspiring travel plans and fostering potential travelers' engagement

(Bachtiar & Bernanthos, 2024; Restaty & Wuryanta, 2022).

In Indonesia, the growth of tourism villages (*desa wisata*) reflects a movement toward community-based and culturally grounded tourism management. However, many villages with strong tourism potential remain underdeveloped because of managerial and institutional limitations (Darubekti, Hanum, Suryaningsih, & Waryenti, 2022). Digital transformation is thus essential not only for improving marketing reach but also for strengthening local institutions, which still face operational challenges in adapting to digital systems.

Research has repeatedly emphasized the importance of digital skills in the tourism sector, including the ability to collect and process information, create multimedia content, and utilize collaboration platforms (Pranita, Kesa, & Marsdenia, 2021). However, studies in various regions reveal that while basic digital operations are fairly mastered, other abilities—particularly content creation and problem-solving—remain low (Rahma, Nasruddin, Ali, & Putri, 2025). These gaps limit local actors' ability to brand and market tourism products effectively through online platforms.

Moreover, digital competence is also intertwined with cultural sustainability and community empowerment. Kusumastuti, Pranita, Viendyasari, Rasull, and Sarjana (2024) found that digital competence and sustainability practices are key mediating factors linking local values with the development of tourism villages. Similarly, Marsdenia (2022) notes that digitalization provides an opportunity for communities to maintain wellbeing and economic resilience, while Savitri (2021) demonstrates how simple English-language content shared on social media can empower locals to become peer trainers and guides in cultural tourism.

In parallel, the integration of English for Tourism has emerged as a crucial aspect of global visibility. English proficiency tailored to local culture enables tour guides and community members to communicate their heritage more effectively (Marchelya & Dangin, 2025). Ritonga (2023) emphasizes that English literacy, digital skills, and business awareness together determine the success of tourism destination promotion, particularly in remote or developing areas. Digital marketing efforts that incorporate English content thus offer double benefits: they enhance intercultural communication and position local destinations competitively on the global market.

Against this backdrop, Bejjong Village in Trowulan District, Mojokerto Regency, East Java, stands as a relevant example. The village—famous for its Majapahit-style architecture, traditional art studios, and homestays—possesses strong tourism potential but remains underpromoted and not yet managed in line with market needs. Despite the global trend of digital transformation, many local actors in

Bejjong still rely on word-of-mouth marketing.

Building on models of digital-literacy development and English-based promotion proposed by earlier researchers (Carlisle & Ivanov, 2021; Zalukhu, Harefa, Zebua, & Zega, 2024). This community-service initiative by *Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur* sought to bridge the digital gap, improve residents' communication skills, and support the sustainable development of Bejjong as a culturally distinctive, digitally empowered tourism village.

Method

This community-service project adopted a participatory action-based approach, emphasizing collaboration, empowerment, and contextualized digital-skills learning for the local community (Pranita, Kesa, & Marsdenia, 2021). The implementation was divided into four main stages: (1) Socialization and preparation, (2) Training and workshop, (3) Mentoring and implementation, and (4) Evaluation and monitoring. This cyclical structure ensured that participants not only acquired new knowledge but also developed the confidence and competence to apply it in real contexts, reflecting the participatory education principles used in prior digital-empowerment programs.

The activity took place at Sanggar Bhagaskara, Bejjong Village, Trowulan, Mojokerto Regency, East Java, on 20 July 2025, involving 27 participants—including homestay owners, art-community members, and local youth. The facilitators consisted of university lecturers from *Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur*, supported by the local cultural leader Mr. Sapriyanto. Data were collected through observation, participant feedback, short interviews, and documentation of participants' draft social-media posts. The analysis focused on participants' progress in digital literacy, English use, and creative content production, using a qualitative descriptive method.

This design aligns with the Four-D model commonly used in digital-promotion research—*define, design, develop, and disseminate*—to guide social-media interventions for tourism promotion (Zalukhu, Harefa, Zebua, & Zega, 2024). In addition, the stages reflected the competencies emphasized in digital-skills frameworks for the tourism sector: (a) collecting and retrieving information, (b) understanding the importance of online presence, (c) creating text, visuals, and multimedia content, (d) interpreting and adapting information creatively, and (e) utilizing collaborative-sharing platforms (Pranita, Kesa, & Marsdenia, 2021). The implementation stages of this program consist of four main parts:

1. Socialization and Preparation

The initial stage introduced the program to community members of Bejjong Village, including art-studio managers, homestay owners, and youth representatives. A preliminary survey identified their digital-literacy levels and promotional challenges, aligned with Rahma, Nasruddin, Ali, and Putri (2025) on uneven digital-skill readiness in tourism communities.



Figure 1. Participants filled in a survey

2. Training and Workshop on Social Media and English for Tourism

The training session was divided into two major components. The first focused on optimizing social media platforms—Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok—for tourism marketing, including tips on visual storytelling, hashtags, and audience engagement. The second component introduced the basics of English for tourism promotion, such as crafting captions, short video scripts, and simple descriptions of local attractions. Participants practiced designing posts using free applications like Canva.



Figure 2. The facilitator delivering material on English for tourism promotion during the community training session at Sanggar Bhagaskara, Bejjong Village



Figure 3. The facilitator delivering material on social media use for tourism promotion during the community training session at Sanggar Bhagaskara, Bejjong Village

3. Mentoring and Implementation

After the workshop, participants applied their new knowledge through a mini-project: creating English-language promotional posts featuring Bejjong's attractions. Mentoring was carried out through both in-person consultations and online follow-up via WhatsApp groups. The mentoring aimed to provide technical assistance, feedback, and encouragement for participants as they launched their first digital promotional content (Restaty & Wuryanta, 2022).

4. Evaluation and Monitoring

The final stage included observation, participant reflection, and digital monitoring. The evaluation compared participants' confidence and digital engagement before and after the training. Qualitative feedback was gathered through short interviews to assess perceived benefits and remaining challenges. The team also reviewed participants newly created social media content to identify improvements in quality, message clarity, and use of English.

Results

The results of the program highlight significant improvements in participants' understanding of digital media as tools for tourism promotion. This aligns with the observations of Rahma et al. (2025), who emphasized that basic device operation alone is insufficient without creative content production and problem-solving abilities. Prior to the workshop, most participants viewed social media primarily as entertainment. However, post-training feedback revealed a shift in perception: participants began recognizing social media as an effective marketing platform capable of attracting visitors and preserving local culture.



Figure 4. Presentation slide introducing the topic "*Going Global: Optimizing English in Social Media to Promote Cultural Product*", highlighting the integration of language learning and digital promotion strategies

During the training session, the presentation slides were used not only to deliver theoretical input but also to guide reflective discussion among participants. The material titled "*English and Social Media in Tourism*" introduced four key subtopics: (1) Why English Matters, which explained the role of English in increasing global reach and visibility for local tourism promotion; (2) Common Language in Digital Marketing, which provided examples of persuasive and concise English expressions commonly used in online branding; (3) Responsible Use of Social Media in Tourism, which emphasized ethical communication, respect for cultural values, and accuracy in representing local heritage; and (4) *Going Global: Optimizing English in Social Media to Promote Cultural Products*, which demonstrated practical ways to adapt local narratives for international audiences.

These slides served as visual scaffolding for discussion and hands-on practice. Participants analyzed examples of tourism captions, compared Indonesian and English promotional phrases, and reflected on how language choice influences audience engagement and brand perception. The presentation, therefore, functioned as both a language-learning resource and a digital-marketing guide, reinforcing the integration of linguistic and technological literacy in community-based tourism development (Carlisle & Ivanov, 2021).

Following this conceptual grounding, participants demonstrated measurable progress in identifying appropriate social-media platforms, designing simple visuals, and composing English-language captions. This improvement mirrors findings that digital competence and online engagement are foundational elements in developing smart-tourism villages (Kusumastuti, Pranita, Viendyasari, Rasull, & Sarjana, 2024). Although many participants initially lacked confidence in producing digital content, structured mentoring gradually increased their autonomy and creativity in using visual and textual media for promotion—an outcome similar to Zalukhu et al. (2024),

who reported sustained improvements through continuous mentoring in digital promotion.

The integration of English into promotional activities also produced positive outcomes. Through guided exercises, participants produced short captions such as *“Explore the spirit of Majapahit in Bejjong Village”* and *“Stay with us and experience the beauty of our culture.”* These examples reflect early development of English-for-tourism proficiency, as emphasized by Marchelya and Dangin (2025). Incorporating English not only enhanced clarity and appeal but also extended the reach of local tourism messages to potential international visitors, corresponding with Ritonga’s (2023) findings that combining digital literacy and English training enhances rural destination visibility.

The collaborative format of the training further strengthened community empowerment. Youth participants supported older members in navigating mobile applications and creating visual content, creating learning dynamics similar to those identified by Darubekti, Hanum, Suryaningsih, and Waryenti (2022) and Savitri (2021). Women—particularly homestay managers—were also actively engaged, illustrating how digital skill development can broaden gender participation in tourism-based entrepreneurship, echoing Marsdenia’s (2022) observations on digital empowerment.

Despite these clear improvements, some participants reported difficulty maintaining posting consistency and generating varied content. This challenge aligns with Rabah (2025), who noted that digital transformation requires ongoing guidance and infrastructure support to become sustainable. Thus, the results suggest a need for continued facilitation focusing on advanced content strategies, analytics, and financial digital literacy, aligning with the staged smart-tourism development model that emphasizes literacy building and e-business development (Kusumastuti, Pranita, Viendyasari, Rasull, & Sarjana, 2024).

Interviews with Mr. Sapriyanto and several participants further revealed that the workshop reshaped how the community perceives technology. According to Mr. Sapriyanto, *“Social media is not only for fun—it is a bridge to the world.”* Participants also noted that English captions increased their confidence in communicating cultural identity beyond local audiences. The enthusiasm—especially among women who manage homestays—demonstrates how integrated digital literacy and English training can empower rural communities, support entrepreneurship, and strengthen local efforts in cultural preservation.

Discussion

The community service program in Bejjong Village demonstrated how digital literacy training integrated with English for tourism can transform rural communities into active agents of cultural promotion. These findings are consistent with research emphasizing that successful technology adoption in rural tourism requires both technical competence and a shift in mindset toward digital engagement and community collaboration. Similar to the digital-empowerment model proposed by Darubekti, Hanum, Suryaningsih, and Waryenti (2022), this initiative highlights that awareness, mentorship, and motivation are the true foundations of sustainable digital transformation in rural areas.

Before the workshop, many participants—especially homestay managers and local artisans—perceived social media merely as entertainment rather than a promotional tool. Through structured training and mentoring, they gained a clearer understanding of its potential as a platform for marketing, networking, and cultural storytelling. This aligns with studies showing that digital awareness is an essential starting point for community-based tourism development.

Furthermore, the participatory nature of the program fostered collaboration among different groups within the village. The process of creating English-language promotional posts encouraged intergenerational learning, where younger participants supported older members in using applications such as Instagram and Canva. This reinforces Kusumastuti, Pranita, Viendyasari, Rasull, and Sarjana's (2024) assertion that digital inclusion must involve both skill transfer and social collaboration to build sustainable smart-tourism practices. It also echoes Savitri (2021), who found that peer-mentoring helps local communities expand digital literacy and take on training roles themselves.



Figure 5. Local cultural leader Mr. Sapriyanto, founder of Sanggar Bhagaskara, sharing his perspective on the importance of digital empowerment for promoting Bejjong's cultural heritage

In addition to digital skills, the integration of English into content creation provided an important bridge to international audiences. Although participants initially found tourism-specific English challenging, guided practice in writing captions and simple promotional texts increased their confidence and awareness of global communication needs. This aligns with previous research demonstrating that English proficiency is essential for expanding rural tourism visibility (Marchelya & Dangin, 2025). Several participants successfully produced bilingual posts such as *“Explore the spirit of Majapahit in Bejjong Village”* and *“Stay in our homestay and experience the warmth of local culture.”* These examples illustrate the potential of combining English-for-tourism literacy with digital promotion, consistent with Ritonga (2023). The results also correspond with Carlisle and Ivanov (2021) and Afren (2024), who argue that language and digital-marketing integration are among the most essential future skills for tourism actors in the digital era.

Mentoring played a critical role in maintaining enthusiasm and reinforcing learning outcomes. Continuous online discussions via WhatsApp groups enabled participants to share progress, troubleshoot issues, and receive immediate feedback. This approach reflects the sustained-engagement models identified by Restaty and Wuryanta (2022), where ongoing support helps community members develop self-efficacy in using digital tools.

Despite these positive outcomes, some participants faced challenges in maintaining posting consistency and generating varied content. These challenges mirror findings from Rahma et al. (2025), who noted that while communities may quickly acquire basic digital operations, creative content development requires long-term guidance. To address this, future initiatives should adopt continuous mentoring models and designate local “digital champions” who can act as facilitators within the community, a strategy recommended by Zalukhu, Harefa, Zebua, and Zega (2024).

Beyond immediate skill improvements, the initiative carries broader cultural and economic implications. By promoting local heritage through digital platforms, Bejjong residents help preserve Majapahit cultural identity while enhancing tourism visibility. This aligns with Marsdenia’s (2022) findings that digitalization strengthens both economic resilience and community identity. In many respects, Bejjong’s experience reflects what Kusumastuti et al. (2024) describe as the early development of a post-smart tourism village—where technology, locality, and sustainability interact to form a distinctive tourism brand.

Finally, these findings underscore the importance of partnerships between universities and local communities in fostering inclusive development. Academic institutions act as catalysts in translating theoretical knowledge into practical community applications (Darubekti, Hanum, Suryaningsih, & Waryenti, 2022; Rahma, Nasruddin, Ali, & Putri, 2025). As Rabah (2025) noted, the tourism industry's increasing reliance on social networks significantly reshapes destination visibility and traveler decision-making. Effective long-term collaboration between universities and rural communities will therefore remain essential to ensuring that digital literacy, English-language proficiency, and tourism promotion evolve with global trends.



Figure 6. Group photo of the community service team from Universitas Pembangunan Nasional “Veteran” Jawa Timur and community members of Bejjong Village at Sanggar Bhagaskara, taken after the completion of the digital-literacy and English-for-tourism training program.

Conclusion

This community service program has demonstrated that digital literacy and English-language training can meaningfully empower rural communities to participate in modern tourism promotion. The initiative in Bejjong Village successfully shifted participants' perceptions of social media from a recreational space to a strategic tool for marketing, cultural storytelling, and global communication. Through guided practice, mentoring, and collaborative learning, villagers gained the confidence to design digital content, write simple English tourism captions, and utilize social media platforms more purposefully in showcasing the uniqueness of their Majapahit heritage.

The findings reflect broader research that highlights how digital competence, language skills, and intergenerational collaboration contribute to the development of smart and sustainable tourism villages. The program's emphasis on hands-on training

and ongoing mentoring proved effective in building community readiness, fostering peer support systems, and encouraging women and youth to take more active roles in digital promotion. These outcomes underline the potential of integrated digital-literacy and English-for-tourism programs to enhance local identity, economic resilience, and cultural preservation.

While significant progress was observed, the results also indicate the need for continued support to ensure long-term digital engagement. Challenges related to content consistency, creative production, and limited infrastructure suggest that future initiatives should focus on advanced digital strategies, analytics-based decision-making, and the development of local “digital champions” who can sustain community learning independently. Strengthening institutional partnerships between universities, local organizations, and village leaders will also be essential for maintaining momentum and aligning digital efforts with broader tourism development goals.

Overall, the Bejjong Village program illustrates that technological empowerment does not diminish cultural authenticity; instead, it provides a platform through which local wisdom can be shared with wider audiences. Each caption, visual, and online story produced by the community contributes to a living, evolving narrative of Majapahit heritage—one that is creative, adaptive, and ready to engage with the global tourism landscape. With continued support and strategic follow-up, Bejjong has the potential to become a model of how rural communities can blend tradition with innovation to build a sustainable and globally connected tourism identity.

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in sustaining its growth as a creative and globally connected tourism destination.

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