

THE DILEMMA OF TECHNOLOGY ADAPTATION AND AUTHENTIC RURAL TOURISM EXPERIENCE: THE CASE OF HOMESTAY COOPERATION WITH ONLINE PLATFORMS IN SAMIRAN TOURISM VILLAGE, CENTRAL JAVA, INDONESIA

Umar Baihaqki^{1*}, Rusfadia Saktiyanti¹, Atik Kurniawati¹

¹Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, Universitas Negeri Jakarta

Abstract. Tourist villages are an alternative tourism destination that offer an authentic rural experience. Nonetheless, their visibility tends to be lower than that of more popular mainstream tourist destinations. On the other hand, digital technology in tourism product marketing has the potential to increase visit numbers. Moreover, more and more tourists are making their own travel plans using AI and online accommodation platforms. This text discusses the balance between the application of digital technology in homestay marketing in Samiran Tourism Village, Boyolali, Central Java, Indonesia. Partnerships between homestay owners and internet-based accommodation platforms have increased room occupancy. The relationship between homestay owners and these platforms is still asymmetric. The limited application of technology on the marketing side has contributed to the consistency with which homestays deliver authentic rural tourism experiences to visitors

1 Introduction

A tourism village is a location that holds various attractions in rural areas. This kind of tourism destination is closely linked to the local residents' economic characteristics, especially farming and animal husbandry. Therefore, tourism villages are often associated with agro-tourism. In Indonesia, especially on Java, tourism villages often offer outdoor agricultural experiences. For example, visitors can visit coffee plantations and observe the process of coffee beans from harvest to packaging. Another example is outdoor activities, such as planting and picking vegetables directly from the fields. Such

* Corresponding author: umar.baihaqki@gmail.com

activities are typical village-tour experiences that tourists can only experience by visiting the tourist village.

Although the tourist village has significant tourism potential, its attractions have not been marketed effectively. As an alternative destination, the tourist village's popularity still lags far behind mainstream natural tourist attractions. This situation makes it difficult for the tourist village to attract visitors.

Digital technology can enhance connectivity between tourists and tourist attractions. The use of artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, e-commerce, and social media can increase the visibility of attractions and local tourism services (Kazak, et al., 2020; Kosta, et al., 2025). Tourists increasingly use the internet to plan their trips, especially those from Generation Z, who have had extensive digital interactions since childhood.

Automated bots that can think and make decisions have already entered the tourism industry. Its application is expanding into travel planning, allowing individuals to plan their itineraries with AI assistance (Kosta, et al., 2025; Milutis & Pestova, 2025). This role was previously exclusive to travel agents. Although it has not completely replaced the role of travel agents, prospective travellers can still obtain accurate information about destinations of interest, including accommodations, tourist attractions, dining options, and modes of transportation (Milutis & Pestova, 2025). Beyond cost estimates, AI can also provide practical destination information, from reviews of available services to levels of visitor crowding.

Rural tourism actors also recognize the importance of online visibility for their attractions. They use various methods, such as inviting social media influencers to cover tourist attractions, managing social media accounts that regularly post real activities, and partnering with accommodation providers and online travel agencies.

This study analyses how digital technology adaptation contributes to the development of tourism villages. The case study focuses on homestay managers in Samiran village who have collaborated with internet-based accommodation service vendors, such as Traveloka, OYO, and Google Business. This study examines how increased online visibility for homestay businesses affects occupancy rates and tourist visits to village attractions. The research questions to be explored are:

1. How does digital technology adaptation contribute to the number of tourist visits?
2. How does digital technology adaptation influence tourist experience?

The data analysis will answer the main research question: how to balance the use of digital technology with delivering authentic tourist experiences for travelers. Rural tourism, associated with lush environments and strong cultural traditions, is often seen as authentic. This authenticity attracts tourists. Tourists use the internet, AI, and other reference sources to inform their decision to travel to tourist villages (Nira, R.A., 2025; Stergiou, et al., 2024). Their engagement with destination attractions shapes the tourist experience. When the experience is enjoyable, tourists form a positive image of the destination. This experience helps increase the visibility of tourist attractions by making them more popular online, including on social media.

2 Literature Review

2.1. Digital Technology Adaptation in Rural Tourism

Digital technology has transformed how tourists access information, select destinations, and arrange accommodation. Online platforms let tourism businesses reach potential visitors beyond their geographic boundaries. Kazak et al. (2020) discuss applying artificial intelligence in tourism, while Kosta et al. (2025) show how digital technologies support service management, customer engagement, and tourism marketing. Similarly, Gössling (2021) argues that information and communication technologies offer new opportunities for tourism development, although their benefits should also be examined alongside their social and economic consequences.

For rural tourism destinations, online visibility matters especially because local attractions often compete with more established destinations. Digital platforms give small accommodation businesses opportunities to reach wider tourism markets. However, technological adaptation does not necessarily establish equal relationships between local businesses and platform providers. Digitalisation may improve market accessibility while introducing new forms of dependency concerning pricing, reservations, and business management (Gössling, 2021). Therefore, assess digital technology's contribution not only through market expansion but also through local tourism actors' ability to maintain control over their businesses.

2.2. Authenticity and Local Interaction in Rural Tourism

Authenticity remains an important characteristic of rural tourism. Unlike mainstream accommodation services, rural homestays offer tourists opportunities to experience everyday local life, traditional architecture, and direct interaction with residents. MacCannell (1973) explains that tourists often seek experiences associated with local communities' everyday lives. Nevertheless, authenticity is not necessarily a fixed characteristic of a destination. Cohen (1988) argues that authenticity can be negotiated and that tourism commercialisation does not automatically eliminate the cultural meanings associated with local experiences.

These perspectives suggest that authentic rural tourism is shaped not only by physical attractions but also by social relationships between tourists and local residents. Although digital platforms facilitate travel planning and accommodation selection, the actual experience develops through direct encounters with the destination. Technology may shape tourists' expectations before arrival, while local hospitality and cultural interaction remain central to the experience itself.

2.3. Balancing Digital Visibility and Authentic Tourism Experiences

The relationship between digital technology and authenticity presents a particular dilemma for rural tourism. Digital platforms increase access to local accommodation businesses, yet the commercial arrangements they entail may limit homestay owners' autonomy. At the same time, online information shapes tourists' expectations, which may not always match their actual experiences.

Existing studies have discussed technological development and tourist decision-making (Kosta et al., 2025; Stergiou & Nella, 2024), while the literature on authenticity

emphasises the importance of cultural meanings and local encounters (Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1973). However, the relationship between digital platform cooperation, local business autonomy, and authentic rural tourism experiences requires further examination. The case of Samiran Tourism Village offers an opportunity to investigate how homestay owners negotiate digital market participation while maintaining the local characteristics that attract tourists.

3 Methods

This text is based on observational data in Samiran Tourism Village, Selo, Boyolali. The initial research was conducted through observation and interviews with several homestay owners who collaborated with the Pokdarwis Guyub Rukun. However, data collection is not yet complete, including efforts to inventory how many homestays have adopted digital technology and in what form.

4 Research and Discussion

4.1 Digital platforms bring together guests and the local

Initial observations in the village of Samiran have identified dozens of active homestays. About 30 homestays are affiliated with the Guyub Rukun tourism awareness group. Guyub Rukun encourages homestays to use Google Business or other online accommodation platforms. Digital technology adoption remains at the data-collection stage. Still, it can be confirmed that several homestays affiliated with Guyub Rukun have been affiliated with digital platforms. However, most homestays are yet to cooperate with internet-based accommodation service providers.

Homestays and accommodations that tourists frequently visit have generally adopted digital technology. This adaptation takes the form of Google Business, lodging, and other accommodation platforms such as OYO and Traveloka. Homestays that have not used internet technology can still receive guests. Nevertheless, their occupancy rates are far below those of homestays partnered with digital platforms. Guests who come are incidental, such as mountain hikers who want to store personal belongings before camping, or overflow guests from other homestays that cannot accommodate the whole group.

Increasing occupancy rates through partnerships with online platforms is also problematic. Undeniably, partnerships with online platforms increase the visibility of homestay businesses for tourists who use the internet in their travel planning (Kazak, et al., 2020; Kosta, et al., 2025;

Suryana, et al. 2025). However, such partnerships are not necessarily equal, as homestay owners must also comply with the platform's terms and conditions, especially regarding the platform's lock on room availability and pricing.

For example, some homestay owners shared the challenges they faced when partnering with an online accommodation platform 'Y'. This platform ties homestay owners to an agreement for a certain number of rooms that can be marketed online, including at the lowest price in the room offers. The dilemma for homestay owners arises when the demand for accommodation services is high during the holiday season. Often, platform 'Y' still offers promotional or lowest prices. During that holiday season, homestay owners are also unable to offer the rooms listed on the platform 'Y' to guests. Feeling at a loss, the homestay owners eventually withdraw from the agreement with platform 'Y' and are willing to forfeit the deposit. According to them, it is better to lose the deposit than to receive negative reviews from tourists.

The problem in adapting information technology for marketing also occurs in the guest-owner relationship. Nowadays, many travellers plan their trips using online platforms. They look at reviews, photos, and other information about various homestays before deciding where to stay. In one case, a guest refused to stay and cancelled their booking on-site. The guest complained that the photos on the platform did not match what they saw in person. This guest then looked for other accommodations and decided to stay at another homestay.

Homestay owners also want to maintain their image. Not only in front of customers but also in front of neighbours. Homestay owners use online platforms to screen potential guests who might misuse their facilities for immoral acts. Homestay owners can verify guests who come directly to the homestay by checking each guest's ID and address to determine whether they are a married couple. Many homestay owners consider this method effective. However, a similar method cannot be applied to guests who book through online platforms. Therefore, homestay owners always include the word "sharia" in the description. The hope is that potential guests understand that the homestay is not a place for shameful behavior.

4.2 An authentic travel experience from a homestay

Homestays' advantage over other rural tourism accommodation options lies in their authentic local atmosphere. This atmosphere comes

from the house's architecture, which reflects local traditions, and from hosts who live with guests under one roof. Staying in a homestay offers tourists opportunities to interact directly with local residents, observe their daily habits firsthand, and sample local traditions. Whether tourists choose a homestay through a digital platform or by coming directly, they have the same opportunity to engage with these local experiences.



Figure 3.1 A group of tourist enjoy the traditional architecture of a local homestay

Staying in a homestay or only gazing at the architecture of the design can stimulate an authentic experience, as depicted in Figure 3.1. For example, a tourist may explain why they prefer a homestay over other accommodations. The main consideration is the more competitive price. Nevertheless, the tourist also experiences the friendliness of the homeowners who are willing to help with their needs. In addition to the host's hospitality, they also receive local stories about the village's tourist attractions. More intimate interactions with local people enrich an authentic travel experience (Nira, R.A., 2025).

5 Conclusion

The initial findings from Samiran Tourism Village suggest that digital technology adaptation increases homestay visibility and creates opportunities for higher occupancy. However, cooperation with online platforms also presents challenges concerning pricing arrangements, room availability, and the bargaining position of local homestay owners. While digital platforms connect tourists with local accommodation providers, authentic

rural tourism experiences remain rooted in direct interactions with residents, local traditions, and everyday village life. These findings suggest that digital technology and authenticity are not necessarily contradictory. The challenge is to balance digital market access with local business autonomy while preserving the social and cultural characteristics of rural tourism. Further research is needed to examine these relationships through more comprehensive data on homestay operations and tourist experiences.

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