



Contribution Of Generation Z In Accelerating The Digitalization Of Sustainable Tourism In Benan Tourism Village, Lingga Regency

Rosie Oktavia Puspita Rini¹, Yudha Wardhani², Astariadi Kurniawan³

Manajemen Kuliner, Politeknik Pariwisata Batam, Indonesia^{1,3}

Manajemen Divisi Kamar, Politeknik Pariwisata Batam, Indonesia²

Email: rosieoktavia92@gmail.com¹, yudhawardani@gmail.com²,

astariadikurniawan84@gmail.com³

Abstract

The Community Service Program (PkM) aims to optimize the contribution of Generation Z in accelerating the digitalization of sustainable tourism in Benan Tourism Village, Lingga Regency. As a leading marine destination based on Malay culture, Benan Village faces the challenge of the digital divide due to the limited technological literacy of senior tourism managers, at a time when the potential of local youth has not been channeled productively. This program uses a *participatory approach (Participatory Appraisal)* through *project-based training* methods and cross-sector mentoring that integrates two main partners, namely tourism village managers (Pokdarwis) and local school institutions. The series of activities includes needs analysis, creative content creation workshops, social media management, and digital governance assistance. The results of PkM show a significant increase in students' literacy and digital skills as a representation of Generation Z. The resulting concrete contribution is the formation of a collaborative digital working group between schools and Pokdarwis who act as local content creators. This group independently succeeded in strengthening the 3A tourism pillar (Attractions, Amenities, Accessibility) in cyberspace through a visual narrative with *the theme of eco-tourism*. The sustainability of this program has succeeded in building a social media *tourism ecosystem* that effectively attracts *niche travelers*. In conclusion, the synergy of independence between schools and tourism village managers has succeeded in transforming the role of Generation Z into agents of digital change, as well as long-term investment to maintain the competitiveness and resilience of the sustainable creative economy of Benan Tourism Village.

Keywords: Benan Tourism Village, Tourism Digitalization, Generation Z, School Partnerships, Sustainable Tourism

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of tourism services is a very strategic macro instrument in the constellation of national development. This sector not only functions as an economic growth engine that creates jobs and equalizes people's incomes, but also acts as a public education medium to introduce the richness of cultural arts, preserve the beauty of nature, and foster a sense of love for the homeland and strengthen the unity of the nation, especially for the younger generation. In the regional scope, the Riau Islands Province, whose territory is dominated by the ocean, continues to strive to optimize and revive the tourism sector after the





pandemic. This step is taken through stimulation of regional tourism actors to be able to increase the potential and uniqueness of local resources owned. Globally, marine and coastal tourism ((Rini, 2022) (Afriani et al., 2022) *marine and coastal tourism*) is recognized as one of the sectors that has experienced the most rapid and dynamic growth in the modern tourism industry. One of the areas that plays a crucial role as a pillar of marine tourism in the Riau Islands Province is Benan Island which is located in Lingga Regency. This island has strong maritime landscape characteristics, a rich marine ecosystem, and the potential for abundant fishery commodities that must be developed through measured and sustainable planning. (Putera et al., 2024)

In the context of its development, tourism activities on Benan Island cannot be separated from efforts to conserve the environment, protect coastal ecosystems, and strengthen the local identity of its people. This is in line with the global *agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) which mandates an integrated development agreement to implement sustainable development, while maintaining environmental balance in facing modernization challenges. In order to realize a complete sustainable tourism, the dimension of cultural tourism (Arya et al., 2025) must be integrated as a complementary pillar. Cultural tourism itself is defined as the activity of tourists traveling to a destination with the main purpose of seeking information, experiencing authentic experiences, and appreciating the local cultural heritage of the destination, both *tangible* such as traditional architecture and artifacts, and intangible) such as customs, rituals, dances, regional songs, to local gastronomic traditions. On Benan Island, one of the (Stuart Stuart et al., 2024) *intangible* cultural heritages that is of high value is the existence of traditional Malay culinary and distinctive local food processing techniques. One example is the use of local cod or mackerel commodities through unique traditional processing methods and the consumption of authentic local *seafood*. However, in this era of globalization, a major challenge arises in the form of threats to the resilience of the traditional culinary of Benan Island due to the strong flow of modern food penetration. If not balanced with a strong downstream and documentation strategy, the dominance of modern food has the potential to shift the existence of local food and obscure the cultural identity of the Benan people as a marine tourism village based on local wisdom.

Although Benan Island is endowed with its exotic marine potential and rich traditional culinary heritage, the destination is faced with a fundamental obstacle





in the form of limited adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in tourism management, record-keeping, and marketing systems. . The use of ICT in the tourism sector or known as tourism digitalization (*e-tourism*) is a necessity, which is a form of structural transformation from conventional management patterns to digital systems that prioritize efficiency, accuracy, and data readability. In the current era of digital interactivity, the spread of information access is highly dependent on the optimization of social media to introduce the advantages of destinations to the wider community. This is due to the characteristics of social media as a channel for disseminating information that has an unlimited reach, is efficient in terms of financing, and is very useful in building two-way interactions with potential tourists. In the big concept of marketing management, especially in tourism products, social media is no longer just a supporting tool, but has occupied a position as a determining factor in the tourism marketing mix, specifically in the promotion sub-mix. (Sahidin et al., 2024) (Trihayuningtyas et al., 2018) Digital marketing has several examples, namely marketing through the internet and social media (Rini, 2024) The lack of digital literacy and the limitations of professionally managed digital promotion platforms on Benan Island have caused various superior potentials—both the beauty of the underwater and the uniqueness of traditional culinary processing—to be widely known by the domestic and international markets. As a result, the fulfillment of the need for access to information services for tourists has been hampered and regional tourism competitiveness has slowed down.

In order to overcome the digital *gap*, the existence of Generation Z, which is a demographic group born between 1997 and 2012, is a very potential asset and driving actor. Generation Z grew and developed as (Sabandiyah & Puspita Sari, 2025) *digital natives*, a group of people who since birth have coexisted with the development of advanced technology, have high flexibility in adapting gadgets, and have a close psychological attachment to the virtual world. Media data released on the official *Sprout Social* page shows a very massive empirical indicator of this group's digital behavior, where Generation Z who actively use the Instagram platform reaches 91% and those who actively use the TikTok platform reach 86%. This statistical figure confirms that the two visual-based platforms and short videos have transformed into the main channels for Generation Z to find information, get entertainment, and interact intensively with various parties, including in exploring lifestyle trends, brands, and preferences of new tourist





destinations. The typical characteristics of Generation Z who are creative, adaptive, and have a wide digital network are social *capital* that is very valuable if directed to conserve and promote their own regional tourism.

The younger generation is the frontline who knows the potential of the region and also understands the development of the times and technology. (Prabawati, 2019) Through a targeted strategy, the digital potential of Generation Z can be mated with a community-based approach (*Community-Based Tourism / CBT*). This participatory approach essentially aims to increase the understanding and capacity of local communities in order to be able to reduce negative impacts and maximize the positive impact of tourism activities for the welfare of the local economy. (Darmayanti et al., 2023) Generation Z grew up to be intelligent, creative, critical and skilled individuals in using technology. (Pratiwi et al., 2024) Actively engaging local Generation Z in formulating creative content—from making short videos about the aesthetics of Benan Island's marine tourism to visualizing the process of processing traditional *seafood*—will create an authentic and far-reaching tourism digitalization acceleration movement. Social media such as Instagram and TikTok can be optimized as digital fortresses to campaign for traditional culinary resilience while inviting tourists to visit. Based on the background and urgency of these problems, the Community Service (PkM) activity program was carried out with the aim of providing technical training, content management assistance, and strengthening digital capacity for Generation Z on Benan Island, Lingga Regency. Through this program, it is hoped that local youth will be able to make a real contribution in accelerating the digitalization of sustainable tourism that balances technological advances, the preservation of the coastal environment, and the preservation of local local wisdom. This innovation shows that environmental conservation efforts can go hand in hand with community empowerment and the improvement of the community tourism-based economy. (Esha Nanda Vebryna et al., 2025) In realizing the development of good tourist destinations, it is necessary to improve the quality and quality of these destinations in order to create a good destination image in the eyes of visitors and the community. (Rini et al., 2022)

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Benan Tourism Village, located in Katang Bidare District, Lingga Regency, Riau Islands Province, is one of the leading marine destinations located on the front





porch of the archipelago. Geographically, the village is surrounded by a stretch of white sand beach, a rich coral reef ecosystem, and a mangrove area that is still sustainable. Accessibility to this village is highly dependent on sea transportation modes, which makes it an exotic destination but at the same time has its own challenges in terms of equitable distribution of information coverage. As a developing tourist village, Benan relies on the preservation of coastal Malay cultural customs and the wise use of natural resources as the main attraction for domestic and foreign tourists.



Figure 1. Introduction and Synergy of Service Partners
Source. Documentation Results of the Community Service Team

The demographic condition of the people of Benan Village is mostly dominated by the Malay tribe who depend for their livelihood on the capture fisheries sector, processing of marine product derivatives, and tourism services such as the management of *homestays* and local guides. In the midst of this social structure, the existence of Generation Z—a group of school-age youth to early productive age—shows an increasingly significant growth in quantity. In contrast to the previous generation who tended to be active in the conventional sector, this youth group has unique characteristics in the form of high adaptability to information technology and smart device ownership. The basic digital literacy that they mastered is self-taught, making Generation Z in Benan Village a potential human resource asset as well as an agent of change at the forefront.

The digital potential inherent in Generation Z is unfortunately not in line with the pace of sustainable *tourism* development that is being promoted in Benan Village. Until now, the management of promotional aspects, reservation management, and digital content narratives is still experiencing obstacles due to the digital *divide*. Tourism villages and local business actors dominated by the senior generation have limitations in optimizing digital platforms strategically. Meanwhile, local youth



groups and Generation Z tend to only use internet and social media access only for personal entertainment consumption, not yet directed productively to raise the potential of their own villages.

Seeing the gap between the potential of youth and the need for village digitalization, the Community Service (PkM) program places the youth community of Benan Village as a crucial strategic partner. This Generation Z group needs interventions in the form of knowledge transfer, structured training, and intensive mentoring so that their digital capacity can be channeled productively. Through this empowerment, it is hoped that Generation Z will be able to take an active role in accelerating tourism digitalization, packaging local wisdom into cyberspace, and driving the wheels of an environment-based creative economy to realize the sustainable independence of Benan Tourism Village.

METHODOLOGY

The implementation of this community service activity applies a participatory approach (*Participatory Appraisal*) that integrates academic education methods, *project-based training*, and cross-sector mentoring. In order to ensure the accuracy of the targets, the initial stages of the activity began with the preparation and *needs assessment phase* simultaneously with two main partners, namely the management of the Benan Tourism Village and the local school institution. This initial step was carried out through field observation and structured interviews with school principals, teachers, and village administrators to map the initial digital literacy level of Generation Z students/adolescents, align activity schedules so as not to disrupt school learning, and identify what sustainable tourism promotion materials are most urgent to be digitized.



Figure 2. Interactive Training Activities
Source. Documentation Results of the Community Service Team

Based on the results of the need mapping, the activity was continued to the core stage in the form of the implementation of workshops and interactive training that bridged the roles of the two partners. The school facilitates the means of venue





and mobilization of students as a representation of Generation Z, while the training materials are directly synchronized with the real needs of bookings and promotions faced by the Tourism Village managers. In this session, the service team provided comprehensive briefings on the concept of sustainable tourism, creative content creation techniques, and digital platform management. The delivery method is packaged in an attractive and applicable way through *hands-on practice sessions*, where students are trained to produce visual narratives, photos, and videos promoting tourist attractions, Malay culture, and *homestays* under the auspices of the management of Benan Tourism Village.

After the training session at school is over, the service stage moves to the collaborative mentoring phase to test the students' digital works into the real ecosystem. In this phase, a joint working group was formed that brought together representatives of creative students, accompanying teachers, and Tourism Village administrators. The service team assists this group in managing Gen Z social media accounts, uploading content made by students, and integrating digital information into various tourism village accounts. This cross-partner mentoring process is an important instrument to build long-term synergy, where schools function as incubators for young digital talents, while tourism village managers act as a forum for productive use of this capacity.



Figure 3. Evaluation Activities with All Parties
Source. Documentation Results of the Community Service Team

This series of methodologies was closed with the impact evaluation stage and the preparation of a program sustainability draft to assess the effectiveness of the interventions that have been implemented. The evaluation was carried out



quantitatively through *pre-test* and *post-test* instruments to measure the improvement of students' digital skills, as well as qualitatively through a focus *group discussion forum* with the school and the management of the Tourism Village regarding the functioning of the digital content that has been created. The results of this evaluation are then formulated into a recommendation for a sustainable partnership program, which is expected to be adopted by the school as part of extracurricular activities or projects based on strengthening student profiles, as well as becoming a pillar to strengthen independent digital promotion for the management of Benan Tourism Village.

SUSTAINABLE RESULT AND POTENSIAL

The success of this community service program is not only measured by the completion of the training series, but also by the creation of sustainable results that integrate the role of school institutions and tourism village managers in the long term. One of the concrete outputs of this program is the formation of a collaborative digital working group filled with trained students as representatives of Generation Z under the guidance of accompanying teachers and direct supervision from the Benan Tourism Village. This group now functions as a driving force for village digitalization that consistently produces, quantifies, and uploads tourism promotion content based on the environment and local culture through the village's official social media platform, so that the village's dependence on outside parties in terms of digital publications can be cut independently.

1. Tourism 3A (Attractions, Amenities, and Accessibility)

The sustainability of the results of this service program is fundamentally able to strengthen the main pillars of the Benan Tourism Village destination, namely the Attractions, Amenities, and Accessibility (3A) component through the touch of digitalization. In terms of attractions, digitalization driven by Generation Z has succeeded in documenting and packaging the rich coastal Malay culture and marine beauty that was initially temporary into a digital attraction that can be enjoyed at any time by potential tourists in cyberspace. Meanwhile, in terms of amenities, the joint assistance of the tourism village management has opened up the potential for digitization of the governance of supporting facilities, such as the creation of an information system and catalog of *local homestays* and typical culinary online that makes it easier for tourists to assess the comfort of the destination before visiting. Finally, in terms of accessibility, the geographical





limitations of Benan Village as an archipelago area have been successfully bridged through the provision of accurate information on sea transportation access, ship schedules, and travel route guides that are digitally accurate, thereby creating transparent "information accessibility" and cutting off tourists' doubts due to the uncertainty of transportation modes to the location.

2. Tourism Digital Creator Content

The long-term sustainability potential of this program rests on transforming the role of students in partner schools from mere social media consumers to a group of Tourism Digital Content Creators based at the local level. Through the project-based training that has been organized, these Generation Z teenagers have the independent capacity to produce visual narratives in the form of short videos, cinematic photos, and local storytelling articles that highlight sustainable tourism values, such as coral reef protection and beach cleanliness. The existence of local content creators has great potential for schools to develop into multimedia student activity units or citizen journalism, which will naturally regenerate abilities (*peer-to-peer learning*). As a result, Benan Tourism Village now has a community-based creative public relations team that is ready to promote the village's potential voluntarily and sustainably, while minimizing village investment costs for the services of marketing agencies from outside the region.

3. Nichemarket Traveler & Social Media Tourism Ecosystem

The results of creative publications produced consistently by Generation Z have great potential to attract specific market shares, especially *niche market traveler* groups such as marine special interest tourists, ecological researchers, and *eco-tourism* lovers. The characteristics of this type of tourist rely heavily on authentic digital reviews and environmental information disclosure, which can be met through educational content produced by school partners and Pokdarwis.



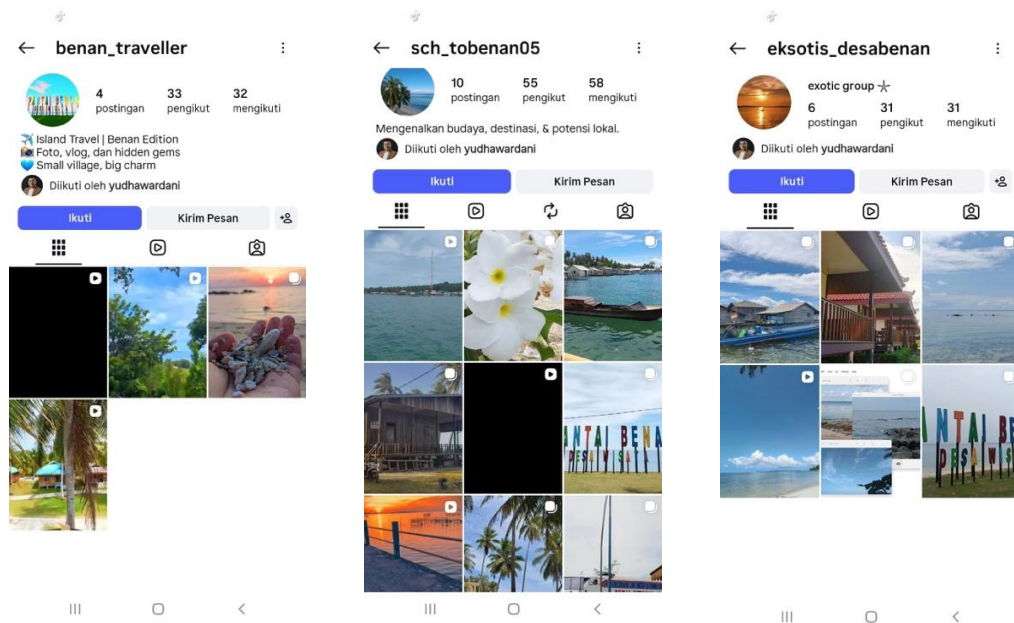


Figure 4. Participants' Work
Source. Documentation Results of the Community Service Team

On a broader scale, the interconnectedness of content on various digital platforms will gradually form an independent *Social Media Tourism Ecosystem* in Benan Village. This ecosystem not only functions as a one-way promotional tool, but also as a two-way interaction space where information circulation, positive reviews (*user-generated content*) from tourists who have visited, to an integrated digital marketing network that connects school accounts, tourism village accounts, and local MSME actors in harmony to maintain the resilience of the village's creative economy.



Figure 5. Focus Group Discussion Activities
Source. Documentation Results of the Community Service Team

In addition to the results that have been underway, the program has a very broad development potential to be integrated into more formal and macro-impactful



systems. For the school, this tourism social media content creation and management activity has great potential to be adopted into the local curriculum, such as student profile strengthening projects or creative digital-based extracurricular activities. Meanwhile, for tourism village managers, the existence of these young talents opens up opportunities to expand digitalization to more complex domains, such as the development of *e-ticketing* systems, automation of integrated *homestay* reservations, to the creation of digital catalogs of Benan's typical Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) products. This synergy has the potential to make Benan Tourism Village a role *model* for an archipelago-based digital-based tourism village that is economically independent and environmentally sustainable in Lingga Regency.

CONCLUSION

The community service program that focuses on the contribution of Generation Z in accelerating the digitalization of sustainable tourism in Benan Tourism Village has been successfully implemented and achieved the set targets. Through a participatory approach that brings together schools and tourism village managers, this program has proven effective in bridging the digital divide that has been hindering destination promotion. The active involvement of school students as representatives of the local Generation Z has changed the pattern of the use of smart devices from being consumptive-entertainment to productive-creative in order to support economic, social, and environmental sustainability in their own villages.

Academically and practically, workshop activities to intensive mentoring have succeeded in improving partners' understanding and technical skills in producing high-quality visual narrative content and managing digital marketing platforms. The results of the evaluation showed a significant increase in digital literacy among the participants, as evidenced by the birth of new digital assets belonging to the village that were managed collaboratively. In conclusion, strengthening digital capacity for local Generation Z is not just an instant solution for tourism promotion, but a crucial human resource investment to maintain the resilience and competitiveness of Benan Tourism Village in the digital era without having to lose its coastal Malay cultural identity.

SUGGESTION

Based on the dynamics of program implementation and the results that have been achieved, there are several strategic suggestions that are recommended to maintain the sustainability of the program's impact in the future. The manager of the Benan Tourism Village is advised to provide a more formal space for appreciation and legitimacy for this youth digital working group, for example through the issuance of a management Decree (SK) or their official involvement in village planning meetings, so that the work motivation of these teenagers is maintained consistently. In addition, the village government needs to allocate part of the village budget for improving infrastructure to support digitalization, such as





providing stable public Wi-Fi points in the secretariat area or youth creative activity centers.

On the other hand, the school institution is expected to be able to institutionalize this tourism digital skills into a structured annual activity agenda, so that the process of knowledge transfer from the older to the younger class can run naturally (*peer-to-peer learning*) and is not interrupted when the first batch of students graduate from school. Finally, for the next service team or academics who want to conduct further research and service, it is recommended to expand the scope of material on aspects of digital legality (*cyber law*), *Search Engine Optimization* (SEO) optimization for village websites, as well as social media statistical data analysis training to help tourism village managers map tourist market behavior and preferences more precisely.

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