



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Smart Integration of Local Culture: A Communication Strategy Model for Sustainable Tourism Villages in Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Dec 29, 2024	<p>This research aims to analyse effective communication strategies, identify key challenges in implementation, explore the role of information and communication technology (ICT), and examine the integration of local culture in supporting the development of smart tourism-based tourist villages in South Sulawesi. Using a qualitative approach, this study involved 83 informants from various categories, including domestic tourists, foreign tourists, tourism service providers, government, media, academics, tourism village communities, and tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis). Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis, which were then analysed interactively with the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that an effective communication strategy requires a comprehensive assessment of tourist village characteristics, an in-depth understanding of tourists' needs, and data-based communication analysis to develop relevant strategies. Local culture integration is a key element in creating a unique narrative that attracts tourists, while cross-stakeholder collaboration and digital technology optimisation strengthen strategy implementation. This research produces a Smart Local Culture Integration (SLCI) model that integrates local cultural elements in digital-based communication strategies. The findings make a theoretical contribution to the development of communication models in smart tourism and offer practical recommendations for the government, tourism service providers and local communities in supporting the sustainability of tourism villages. This research confirms the importance of synergy between tradition and innovation to achieve competitiveness of smart tourism-based tourism villages.</p>
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### INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the strategic sectors in global economic development, including in Indonesia. As a country with abundant cultural wealth and natural beauty (Lemy et al., 2022), Indonesia has great potential to develop tourism villages as the main pillar of sustainable tourism (Hermawan et al., 2023; Manaf et al., 2018; Priatmoko et al., 2021). However, the transformation of tourist villages into leading destinations requires not only optimal management of natural and cultural resources (Gica et al., 2021; Sharpley, 2007), but also communication strategies that are able to answer the challenges of the digital era and meet the expectations of modern tourists (Mayangsari & Firdaus, 2023). In this context, the concept of *smart tourism*, which utilises information and communication technology (ICT), is a relevant new paradigm in developing sustainable tourism villages.

The first trend in the study, many studies have discussed the development of community-based tourism villages and local empowerment (Arintoko et al., 2020; Dolezal & Novelli, 2022; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2022; Wikantiyoso et al., 2021), a study conducted by (Prayudi, 2022) in Sleman, the study focused more on the government's communication strategy in

empowering the community without specifically highlighting the integration of local culture in *smart tourism*. While (Yasir et al., 2021) also emphasises the importance of the pentahelix communication model in the development of tourist villages, the study is limited to the involvement of universities and other stakeholders without in-depth exploration of the role of technology in encouraging innovation diffusion. Previous studies have shown the importance of cross-sector collaboration, but have not provided a holistic communication model for technology-based tourism villages and local culture.

Another trend is in Dewi and Herna's study(2024) , which discusses integrated marketing communication strategies by Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Pokdarwis). The study revealed that community-based promotions still face obstacles in comprehensive planning and have not fully utilised digital technology. On the other hand, (Reynaldi et al., 2021) emphasises the importance of group communication in collective decision-making for sustainable tourism, but does not address how technology can strengthen such collaboration. Thus, the need to integrate local cultural elements and technological innovations in the communication strategies of tourist villages remains a challenge that has yet to be fully addressed.

This research offers a unique contribution by proposing a *smart tourism-based* communication strategy model that not only focuses on technology adoption, but also makes local culture a key catalyst in the development of tourist villages. This approach extends the findings of (Purnomo et al., 2020) , which shows the successful development of tourist villages through the integration of local resources and technology, by paying special attention to how cultural elements can enhance tourist attraction while strengthening Indonesia's local identity. In addition, this research seeks to fill the gap in the literature by applying modern communication theories such as the Lasswell Model, ACADA Model, and Diffusion of Innovation Theory to devise a data-driven communication strategy relevant to the local context.

The purpose of this research is to analyse effective communication strategies in the development of *smart tourism-based tourism* villages in Indonesia, identify key challenges in their implementation, and explore the integration of local culture and technology in supporting the sustainability of tourism villages. This research also aims to develop a holistic communication model that can be used by stakeholders, such as the government, academics, Pokdarwis, and tourist village communities, to create synergies that support the success of tourist villages as flagship destinations.

By adopting a qualitative approach, this study involved a diverse range of informants to provide a comprehensive view. This study not only contributes to the development of local culture-based communication theory in the context of *smart tourism*, but also provides practical recommendations to improve cross-sector collaboration and encourage technology adoption by village communities. In addition, this study seeks to address the challenges identified by (Chamidah et al., 2020) , namely the need for more transparent and interactive communication patterns to create sustainable tourism.

This study is expected to find a communication strategy model that is able to strengthen local cultural identity, increase community involvement, and maximise the potential of technology in the development of tourist villages. Thus, this research not only provides practical solutions for the management of tourist villages in Indonesia, but also opens new insights in the study of technology and culture-based tourism. In the long term, the findings of this research are expected to contribute significantly to the development of *smart tourism* theory and practice in Indonesia and other developing countries.

## LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

### a. Digitalization and local culture preservation

Research related to digitisation and local culture preservation in the context of tourism villages shows great challenges in balancing modernisation with efforts to preserve traditions. Prayudi and Susilo (2022) identified that sustainable tourism village development requires a change in the mindset of the community to adopt technology without sacrificing cultural values. However, the findings of Bramasta Reynaldi et al. (2021) highlighted that local culture is often only used as a complement in tourism promotion. This finding is in line with this study which emphasises the importance of technology-based training to document local traditions, such as the use of QR codes

in Tompo Bulu Tourism Village which successfully integrates technology with local cultural narratives.

#### **b. Holistic communication strategy for smart tourism-based tourism villages**

Many studies highlight the importance of cross-sector communication strategies in the development of tourism villages. Yasir et al. (2021) pointed out the vital role of the pentahelix communication model, which involves the government, community, academia, media and the business sector. However, this study extends that view by highlighting the lack of written strategic guidelines that can effectively guide cross-sector communication. This study emphasises the importance of strengthening the communication capacity of tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) to improve the competitiveness of tourism villages in attracting domestic and international tourists.

#### **c. Stakeholder collaboration for tourism village sustainability**

Stakeholder collaboration models are the focus of much research. Chamidah et al. (2020) showed that the success of a tourism village programme depends on transparent and interactive communication patterns between the pentahelix elements. However, this study found gaps in the implementation of the model, particularly regarding the different priorities between the local government and local communities. By highlighting the importance of a strategic document that outlines the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder, this study offers practical solutions to improve cross-sector collaboration.

#### **d. Technology adoption in village management**

The study (Santoso et al., 2023) highlights the importance of technological infrastructure to support digital-based tourism village management. This study reinforces those findings by revealing that low digital literacy and limited network infrastructure are key barriers to technology adoption. In addition, this study emphasises the importance of incentives for tourism village managers to encourage technology adoption and improve the quality of digital-based services through collaboration with technology providers.

#### **e. The role of local culture in smart**

Previous research shows that local culture has strategic value in tourism development. Reynaldi et al. (2021) identified that local culture is a valuable asset that is often overlooked in communication strategies. This study reinforces this view by showing how cultural training for Pokdarwis can enhance the integration of local culture into smart tourism models. This research proposes a technology-based local culture integration model that is capable of creating authentic narratives to attract tourists.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a prescriptive research type that aims to provide strategic solutions for the development of smart tourism-based tourist villages in South Sulawesi. The case study method was applied to explore the phenomenon in depth in a real-life context by utilising various sources of evidence. Three research locations were selected, namely Kambo Tourism Village (Palopo City), Tompo Bulu Tourism Village (Pangkep Regency), and Balla Barakkaka Ri Galesong Tourism Village (Takalar Regency). These three villages have distinctive advantages, both in terms of culture, nature, and artificial innovation, and have received awards from Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia (ADWI) in 2022 and 2023. The selection of this location aims to understand the role of digital technology and the integration of local culture in creating an effective communication strategy. Data collection techniques were conducted using in-depth interviews, participatory observation, document analysis, and focus group discussions (FGDs). Interviews were conducted with 83 informants consisting of domestic and foreign tourists, tourism service providers, government, media, academics, tourism village communities, and tourism awareness groups (pokdarwis).

A data triangulation approach was applied to enhance the validity and validity of the findings, including method triangulation, inter-researcher triangulation, data source triangulation, and theory

triangulation. Participatory and non-participatory observations were conducted to document relevant behaviours and interactions, while policy documents and reports related to tourism villages were used as secondary data to complement the analysis. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman approach, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The data obtained were reduced to focus on information relevant to smart tourism-based communication strategies. Data presentation was done systematically using narrative text, tables, and diagrams that facilitate the identification of patterns and main themes. Conclusions were drawn iteratively to ensure that the data were consistent with the research theories and concepts, such as the Lasswell Model, ACADA Model, and Diffusion of Innovation Theory. This process enabled the development of a communication strategy model that focuses on the integration of local culture and the optimisation of technology in the development of sustainable tourism villages.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tourism has become one of the strategic sectors in supporting economic and social development in various countries (Cavalheiro et al., 2020; Shubtsova et al., 2020; Stec & Grzebyk, 2022), including Indonesia. With abundant natural and cultural wealth, tourism villages are one of the solutions in developing sustainable tourism that involves local communities. In this context, smart tourism emerges as a new paradigm that integrates information and communication technology to improve the efficiency of tourism management, promotion, and experience. However, the implementation of smart tourism in Indonesia faces various challenges, especially in balancing digitalisation with the preservation of local culture as the main attraction.

In the literature, various approaches have been proposed to improve the effectiveness of smart tourism-based tourism village management. The pentahelix communication model, as outlined by Yasir et al. (2021), emphasises the importance of collaboration between government, academia, business sector, media and local communities. However, the implementation of this model is often limited to surface-level coordination without clear strategic guidance to ensure the active engagement of each stakeholder. In addition, low digital literacy among local communities is also a major obstacle in adopting technology for tourism village management.

This research aims to address these challenges by exploring holistic communication strategies that not only support technology adoption but also integrate local cultural elements as the core of tourist village development. Using a qualitative approach, this study reveals how the synergy between technology, culture, and cross-sector communication can create a sustainable tourism village management model. The results of this study make an important contribution to the development of smart tourism theory and provide practical recommendations for stakeholders in managing tourism villages in Indonesia.

**Table 1: Interviews with 5 key informants**

<b>Informant</b>	<b>Stepment</b>	<b>Coding</b>
Prof Dr Aminuddin Salle	"Actively developing local culture-based tourism villages through various initiatives such as cultural training and promotion."	Culture and promotion training
Abdul Jalil Mattewakkang	"Playing a role in preserving local culture, establishing reading parks, and leading Pokdarwis to support tourism village management"	Pokdarwis empowerment and literacy
H. Suardi Mangka	"Encouraging social change in villages through education, improved religious facilities, and infrastructure support"	Social and infrastructure changes
Darwis, S.Pd, MM	"Managing tourism village promotion with cross-sector collaboration strategies and MSME empowerment"	Cross-sector collaboration and promotion of MSMEs

Ulpan, S.AN	"Advancing Kambo Tourism Village through infrastructure development, homestay training, and digital promotion"	Infrastructure development and digitalisation
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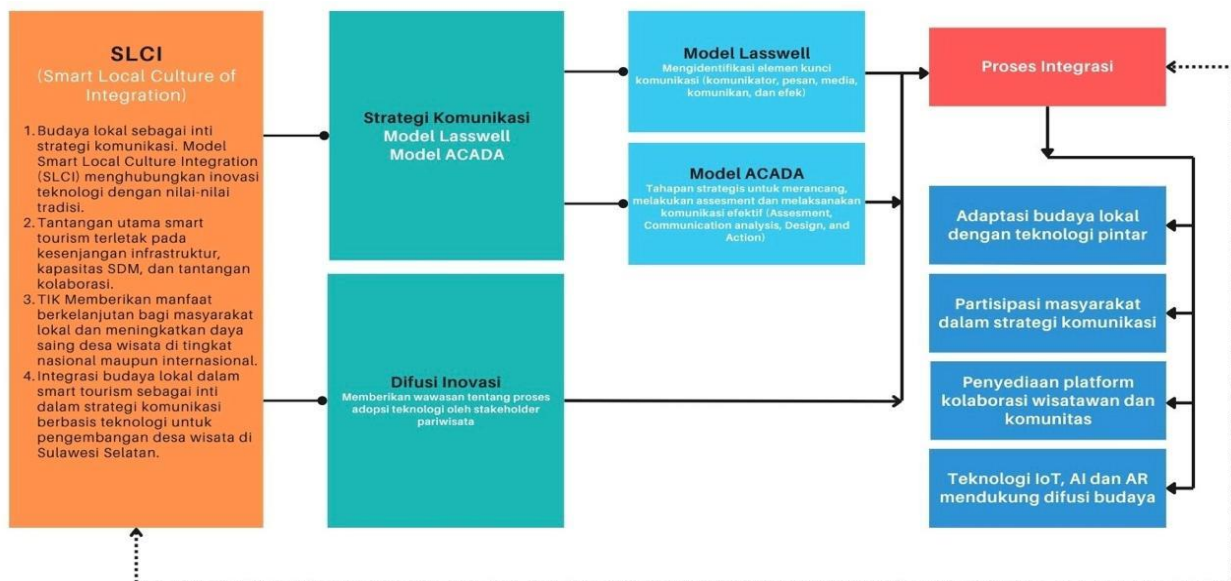
Source: Results of researcher data tabulation, 2025

Based on the results of interviews with five key informants, this study highlights the various strategic efforts made to develop local culture-based tourism villages. The findings illustrate that the success of tourism village management lies in the diversity of initiatives involving aspects of training, empowerment, infrastructure, and cross-sector collaboration. The first informant, Prof. Dr. Aminuddin Salle, emphasised the importance of developing tourism villages through cultural training and active promotion. This approach aims to strengthen local cultural identity as the main attraction. Meanwhile, Abdul Jalil Mattewakkang focuses on empowering tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) and strengthening literacy through the establishment of reading parks. These efforts not only enrich the horizons of local people, but also create a community that is more responsive to the needs of travellers.

H. Suardi Mangka highlighted the social change dimension by emphasising education, improved religious facilities, and infrastructure development. These initiatives illustrate the close relationship between physical development and social transformation in tourism villages. Furthermore, Darwis, S.Pd., MM, highlighted the promotion strategy through cross-sector collaboration and empowerment of MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises). This shows that the involvement of various stakeholders is key to creating effective and sustainable promotion.

Finally, Ulpan, S.AN, paid attention to tourism village infrastructure development, homestay training, and digital promotion. These strategies reflect the importance of utilising technology in supporting the attractiveness of tourist villages, so that the tourist experience becomes more modern and integrated with market needs. This research reveals that the development of local culture-based tourism villages not only requires the preservation of cultural values, but also requires a multidimensional approach. The integration of community empowerment, infrastructure strengthening, promotion strategies, and digitalisation is an important foundation for creating sustainable tourist villages that are competitive in the modern era. The findings confirm that the success of tourism village management depends on the synergy between tradition and innovation, with local communities as the main actors driving change.

**Communication model framework for smart local culture integration**



**Figure 1: Communication model framework for smart integration of local culture**

Source: Results of researcher's data processing, 2025

This research framework offers an innovative approach to integrating smart technology with local culture preservation in tourism villages. Drawing on the diffusion of innovation theory, the model illustrates how the adaptation of local culture with cutting-edge technologies such as IoT (Internet of Things), artificial intelligence (AI), and augmented reality (AR) can drive the transformation of the tourism experience. The process involves the active involvement of local communities in every stage of the communication strategy, from design to implementation, ensuring that cultural elements are not only preserved but also strengthened through collaboration with travellers. The provision of digital platforms becomes a key pillar that enables interaction and collaboration between local communities and travellers, creating an inclusive and dynamic technology-based tourism ecosystem.

This model resulted in four main significant achievements. Firstly, local cultural identity is not only preserved, but also strengthened as a key attraction that differentiates tourist villages amidst global competition. Second, tourism attractiveness is significantly enhanced with more interactive tourism experiences, allowing tourists to enjoy the value of local culture in a more engaging format. Third, sustainability of the tourism village is achieved through the active participation of local communities, who are not only the subjects but also the main agents in managing culture-based tourism. Fourth, efficiency in communication is achieved by using smart technology to promote tourist villages widely, allowing for more effective and rapid dissemination of information.

The success of this model lies in the implementation of structured strategic stages. The first stage, assessment, serves to evaluate local cultural potential and technological needs in depth, ensuring that the innovations implemented are relevant and contextualised. The second stage, communication analysis, enables the identification of target audiences and their specific needs, making the designed communication strategy more effective. The third stage, design, focuses on designing communication content based on local cultural values, using smart technology as a reinforcement tool. Finally, the action stage involves the implementation of strategically designed technologies and in-depth impact evaluation to ensure sustainability of results.

This model not only addresses the challenge of integrating culture with technology, but also provides a strategic blueprint for the development of sustainable culture-based tourism villages. With a focus on local community collaboration, technology engagement, and cultural value reinforcement, the framework presents a comprehensive approach that can be replicated in a variety of other tourism contexts. An in-depth analysis of the results shows that innovation coupled with respect for local values can create synergies between technological advancement and cultural preservation, making it a strong foundation for future community-based tourism development.

### **The imbalance between digitalization and local culture preservation in tourism villages**

The results show that the application of digital technology in tourism villages often faces challenges in maintaining local cultural values. One of the key findings is that digitalisation provides great opportunities for promotion, but often neglects aspects of cultural preservation. In Balla Barakkaka Tourism Village, for example, the use of social media for promotion is still dominant without a sufficiently in-depth narrative about the richness of local culture. This has led to the neglect of an important aspect of smart tourism, namely maintaining cultural authenticity. However, efforts to integrate technology and culture have begun, such as through the use of QR codes in Tompo Bulu Tourism Village that provide information about local history and traditions. However, there is still a need to increase the capacity of local communities to better understand how to utilise technology without compromising their cultural values. One approach that can be taken is to provide training to encourage communities to use technology as a tool to document and promote their local culture. Support from the government and related institutions is needed to create a communication strategy that is not only oriented towards digitisation but also puts local culture as the main attraction. Collaboration between academics, local communities and tourism service providers is important to design a communication model that is balanced between technology and cultural preservation.

### **Lack of holistic communication strategy for *smart tourism*-based tourism villages**

The research revealed that communication strategies implemented in tourist villages are often not holistic and lack integration with smart tourism elements. For example, despite social media being the main promotional tool, data shows that the content presented is often not orientated towards the needs of diverse audiences. Foreign travellers, for example, find it difficult to access information in

English that is relevant to their needs. Kambo Tourism Village has shown some strides forward through the integration of digital communications and the involvement of tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis). However, a key challenge still lies in the lack of written strategic guidelines for tourism village communications. Pokdarwis who are directly involved in management often work without clear direction in designing and delivering messages to their audiences. A collaborative approach is needed to develop a more comprehensive communication strategy. Academia and government can play a role in providing strategic guidance, while tourism service providers can focus on technical training to improve the ability of tourism village managers to deliver effective messages.

### **Challenges in stakeholder collaboration for tourism village sustainability**

Collaboration between stakeholders such as the government, local communities, academics and businesses is a key element in the development of sustainable tourism villages. However, this research identified a lack of effective communication between these parties. For example, in Tompo Bulu Tourism Village, coordination between the local government and Pokdarwis was often hampered by different priorities and a lack of shared understanding of tourism development goals. In some cases, such as in Balla Barakkaka Tourism Village, there have been attempts to build collaboration through the pentahelix model. However, the implementation of this model still faces obstacles in ensuring all elements play an equal role. Tourism service providers often feel excluded from strategic decision-making, while local communities express a lack of access to information and training. Overcoming these challenges requires an inclusive approach that allows all stakeholders to actively contribute. The creation of a strategic document that outlines the roles and responsibilities of each party can be a first step to improving the effectiveness of collaboration.

### **Low technology adoption in tourism village management**

The adoption of technology in the management of tourism villages in South Sulawesi still faces various obstacles, including limited infrastructure, low digital literacy of the community, and lack of technical training. This research shows that in Kambo and Tompo Bulu Tourism Villages, the use of technology such as digital payments and information applications is still very limited. One of the main obstacles is the lack of adequate network infrastructure, which makes the use of technology not optimal. In addition, the low understanding of the benefits of technology among tourism service providers is also a barrier to wider adoption of technology. Efforts to increase technology adoption need to focus on strengthening infrastructure, digital literacy training, and incentives for tourism service providers to integrate technology in their operations. Collaboration with technology providers can be one way to accelerate the implementation of smart tourism.

### **Gaps in research on the role of local culture in smart tourism**

This study found a gap in research on how local culture can be effectively integrated into smart tourism models. Most tourism village development programmes still focus on economic aspects without giving adequate attention to the preservation and promotion of local culture. However, some initiatives have been undertaken to address this gap. For example, a local culture training programme for Pokdarwis in Balla Barakkaka Tourism Village successfully improved their understanding of how local culture can be a major attraction. On the other hand, the integration of local culture in digital communication strategies still requires a more systematic and data-driven approach. To address this gap, further research is needed on local culture integration models in smart tourism. Academics can collaborate with tourism village managers to design programmes that are not only oriented towards economic benefits, but also cultural preservation as the main attraction of tourism.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **The imbalance between digitalization and local culture preservation in tourism villages**

The findings of this study show that digitalization in South Sulawesi tourism villages, such as Balla Barakkaka Tourism Village, still focuses on the promotion of tourism without deep integration with local cultural preservation. This is in line with the findings of Prayudi and Susilo (2022), who stated that the main challenge in the development of sustainable tourism villages is changing the mindset of the community to adopt sustainable development without compromising cultural values. However, this research approach makes an additional contribution by highlighting the need for technology-based training involving local communities to document their traditions using digital

media. Initiatives such as the use of QR codes in Tompo Bulu Tourism Village can be a practical example of balancing digitalisation with cultural preservation.

### **Lack of holistic communication strategy for smart tourism-based tourism villages**

The study found that communication strategies in tourist villages are still fragmented, as seen in the lack of focussed content for international audiences in Kambo Tourism Village. Research by Yasir et al. (2021) also pointed out the importance of the pentahelix communication model, which involves actors such as universities and mass media. However, this study extends that view by proposing the need for written strategic guidelines to guide more effective cross-sector communication. With the active involvement of Pokdarwis and the strengthening of their communication capacity, tourism villages can improve their competitiveness and attract more tourists.

### **Challenges in stakeholder collaboration for tourism village sustainability**

This research identified challenges in building synergies between stakeholders, particularly in Tompo Bulu Tourism Village, where coordination between local government and local communities is often uneven. This supports the findings of Nurul Chamidah et al. (2020), which mentioned gaps in communication patterns between pentahelix elements. However, this study adds a new perspective by highlighting the importance of strategic documents that contain the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder, in order to create alignment of tourism village development goals.

### **Low technology adoption in tourism village management**

The results of this study reveal that limited network infrastructure and low digital literacy are the main barriers to technology adoption in tourism villages, as is the case in Kambo Tourism Village. Hudi Santoso et al. (2022) also found that technology-based management requires adequate infrastructure support. The findings of this study add that the provision of incentives for tourism village managers can be an important driver to increase technology adoption. These measures involve co-operation with technology providers to improve the quality of digital-based services.

### **Gaps in research on the role of local culture in smart tourism**

This research shows that local culture is often just an additional element in promotional strategies, without being the main focus. This is relevant to the findings of Reynaldi et al. (2021), who mentioned local culture as a valuable asset in tourism. However, this study offers a new approach by integrating local culture into the smart tourism model through cultural training for Pokdarwis. This finding reinforces the importance of further research to explore technology-based models of local culture integration, in order to create authentic and attractive narratives for domestic and foreign tourists.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research is motivated by the need for an effective communication strategy in supporting the development of smart tourism-based tourist villages in Indonesia. The main issue raised is how to integrate local cultural elements with digital technology to create effective and sustainable communication. By involving 83 informants from various stakeholders, this research highlights the theory-based approach of Lasswell's Communication Strategy Model, ACADA Model, and Diffusion of Innovation Theory to analyse the challenges and opportunities in the development of tourism villages. The results show that an effective communication strategy begins with an initial assessment of the characteristics of the tourist village and the needs of tourists. At the design stage, the integration of local culture becomes a key element in creating a unique attraction that is in accordance with the traditional values of the local community. Strategy implementation involves cross-sector collaboration and optimisation of digital technology to expand communication reach. In the perspective of innovation diffusion theory, local culture acts as the main catalyst in increasing technology adoption, both by local communities and tourists, thus creating a unique diffusion pattern. The significance of these findings lies in the development of the Smart Local Culture Integration (SLCI) model, which offers a strategic approach to the integration of local culture with digital technology in the management of tourist villages. However, this research has limitations in that the scope of the study area is limited to South Sulawesi and has not explicitly addressed the economic impact of the strategies implemented. For future research, further exploration of technology adoption in tourism villages in other regions is recommended as well as testing the SLCI



model in a global context to measure its validity across different cultures and technologies. These findings are an important first step in designing sustainable tourism villages based on tradition and innovation.

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