

Social Media as a Tool of Tourism Sectors Diplomacy in Sembalun Village

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic has had a fairly serious impact, especially in the economic field of the tourism sector without exception, what happened in Sembalun Village is one of the tourism sectors in East Lombok. In this case, this study aims to determine the use of social media in an effort to recover the tourism sector economy in Sembalun Village during the Covid-19 period by using the concept of international communication and to find out the advantages and disadvantages of using it. A descriptive qualitative research method with primary and secondary data is used in this study. The data analysis technique was carried out through four stages in the form of collecting, reducing, presenting and verifying data. As for the results of the study, it was found that the use of social media had considerable power to introduce tourism in Sembalun Village to international circles with the help of young people and the cooperation that existed in the area. Thus, the economy in the tourism sector can be helped to survive during the Covid-19 period. On the other hand, international circles can get to know more about tourism in Sembalun Village through social media. However, visits to these sectors can only be carried out after the end of the pandemic period due to concerns and government regulations that prevent such departures.



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1. Introduction

The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic which began to emerge from the Wuhan area has become an epidemic and has had quite a significant impact when viewed from various aspects, in terms of health, politics, tourism, the economy, and even from an economic perspective. This does not only have an impact on the region but is endemic internationally. Without exception from an economic perspective, the IMF stated that the level of the world economy had declined globally during the pandemic ([Siagian & Cahyono, 2021](#)). Meanwhile, Indonesia has been significantly affected by all of these aspects, especially in terms of health and the tourism economy. However, there are several policies that have been issued by the state government or regional government of the local community to overcome or reduce the impact of the spread of the virus from a health perspective. On the other hand, social distancing and restrictions on community activities have been made in an effort to minimise the spread of the impact of the virus ([Yamali & Putri, 2020](#)).

In addition to having a negative impact on public health, the spread of Covid-19 has caused quite a large loss in terms of the international economy in general and Indonesia in particular. Where the country's GDP has decreased due to restrictions on economic transactions which have also caused many workers to experience layoffs, difficulty getting new jobs, to experience unemployment ([Indayani & Hartono, 2020](#)). This happened because there were shopping centres like wholesale markets which had to undergo quarantine to reduce the impact of the spread of the virus and were not allowed to carry out activities in the market so many traders suffered losses and were forced to lay off their workers ([Junaedi & Salistia, 2020](#)). Thus, many new methods or practices were found by the community to be able to survive during this pandemic.

In addition to the effects on health and the economy that have been felt since the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourism industry, which is crucial to the growth of the Indonesian economy, has also been impacted. As a result, Indonesia has developed into a nation with many tourism sectors that are typically busy with both domestic and foreign tourists in different regions. The existence of restrictions on community activities during the pandemic has also caused a decrease in the number of tourists visiting the tourism sectors in Indonesia, in terms of hotels, beaches, or other tourist areas ([Kristina, 2020](#)). Thus, many of the workers in the tourism sector started to build new jobs in an effort to survive financially during the pandemic due to the fact that basically, basic needs will still be needed even though the economy is experiencing a significant increase in the crisis. On the other hand, despite the large losses experienced by actors in the tourism sector due to a decrease in the number of visitors, there are also some positive impacts that can be obtained by these tourism actors. The existence of vulnerabilities in the tourism sector can be identified, a decline in the tourism economy can lead to collaboration between sectors or actors and can build cooperation or collaboration between tourism actors and state actors or certain stakeholders ([Nufaisa et al., 2020](#)). However, the decline in the level of the tourism economy requires new solutions so that workers in this sector can survive amidst the difficulty of financial income.

Related to the tourism sector as one of Indonesia's largest economic income, Lombok has become a region with very beautiful natural resources with many tourist destinations such as beaches and mountains with distinctive culture and arts. This makes Lombok island the main destination for foreign and local tourists to visit after Bali, especially because it is not far from that island. In the eastern part of Lombok, there are tourist centres such as Sembalun which includes the natural attractions of Rinjani Mountain, many waterfall tours, to several dykes which have very beautiful nature ([Virgilemma & Anom, 2018](#)). The dykes at either end of the central, northern, or western portions of Lombok are each naturally occurring tourist site. Although Lombok has long been recognised as the home of the Sasak tribe's distinctive culture

and indigenous language, both are still spoken today. Thus, the existence of the Covid-19 pandemic has also had quite a serious impact not only on tourism workers in Lombok but also on the people who live in the area as well as small traders who usually make transactions in the tourist area.

The tourist centre in East Lombok, especially in Sembalun Village, has a considerable influence on the local village community, especially in the economic field. This is due to the air and views that are still pure with the mountainous region it has. Local and foreign visitors mostly travel to Rinjani Mountain for its tourist attractions, with Sembalun Village as their primary entry point. Due to the small number of visitors who remain the night in Sembalun Village, income in the tourism industry, such as hotels or hotel homestays, has decreased in this scenario. Thus, the people in Sembalun Village, the centre of the tourism sector in the East Lombok region, experienced a decline in income during the pandemic.

On the other hand, in carrying out efforts to use social media as a support for economic returns in the tourism sector, there will be problems or obstacles in implementation in the field which are both disadvantages and advantages in the use of social media. However, these obstacles can be reduced if at the beginning of planning an activity, you also think about the obstacles that will occur ([Nugraha & Saputro, 2020](#)). Nonetheless, further research is needed regarding these utilisation technicians in an effort to restore the tourism economy in Sembalun Village during this pandemic. Thus, this study aims to determine the use of social media as an effort to restore the economy of the tourism sector in Sembalun Village during the Covid-19 period by using the concept of international communication and to find out the advantages and disadvantages of using it. On the other hand, this is also a novelty in this study where there has not been any discussion related to the use of social media with the concept of international communication as an effort to restore the tourism sector's economy in Sembalun Village.

2. Research Method

This study was conducted using a descriptive qualitative research design, and the data collected was narrative. It also included literature reviews, interviews, field documentation, and observations. The interviews, social media activists and business owners from the Sembalun Village tourism industry were interviewed, and the researchers themselves conducted the interviews. In the form of secondary and primary data were obtained by going directly to the field. Data analysis techniques were carried out through four stages in the form of data collection, data reduction, presentation, and verification. On the other hand, data validation was carried out by means of triangulation and an online forum. In this case, the validation test is carried out as an effort to know the validity of the data that has been obtained. Thus, valid qualitative data can be found in finding and answering existing problems.

3. Result and Discussion

Research Result Data

In terms of interviews, there were several questions posed to the interviewees consisting of the importance of social media in Sembalun Village, the use of social media as a marketing tool for the tourism sector, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of using social media as a promotional tool for the tourism sector in the village. However, the researcher then reduced the data that had been obtained before presenting it and validating it. The data that has been presented has gone through the validation stages in accordance with the facts in the field.

In general, the people in the Sembalun Village area are dominated by farming as their main occupation so adults are often not affected by the existence of social media. The existence of social media is much favoured by young people in the village, where there are also many media activists in this circle. On the other hand, along with the Covid-19 pandemic, social restrictions, physical restrictions and mobilisation will have an impact on the economic decline

in the East Lombok tourism sector, especially in Sembalun Village. This can be seen from the results of interviews by social media activists in Sembalun Village regarding the role of social media as a promotional medium that social media can be used as a tool in conveying tourism sectors in Sembalun globally. This was later strengthened by the existence of several social media accounts on Instagram which specifically published tourist destinations in the Sembalun area which were followed by thousands of people, both local and international communities. Social media accounts have been proven to spread tourist destinations in Sembalun in the form of pictures or videos consistently and continuously, even during the Covid-19 period. However, in an effort to restore the economy in the tourism sector, social media activists in Sembalun, especially young people, continue to use social media as a promotional tool. This is done through an Instagram account by including a short message in a foreign language on each uploaded image as an effort to spread it well in international circles.

Some of the benefits of social media include its simplicity, the possibility of interactive contact, the ability to reach a community internationally, and the availability of social media that can be measured. Instagram's lack of ability to reach all demographics as a tool for marketing and advertising is where its weakness resides. This is due to the fact that certain visitors, particularly those from isolated communities, do not grasp digital sites. They achieved this by uploading the photos they had shot both before and during the Covid-19 era to their social media profiles that were dedicated to the Sembalun tourism industry. The tourist industry then drew a lot of visitors who uploaded their photos and tagged the social media accounts of the tourism sector entrepreneurs. This finally makes it easier for those with social media accounts in the tourist industry to communicate with other communities across the world. Since the tourist industry in Sembalun is essentially frequented by both the local and foreign communities, who post images of the outcomes of their trips to the industry on the social media accounts of the sector owners.

On the other hand, social media activists in Sembalun Village stated that the use of social media during the Covid-19 pandemic could have a big impact on the tourism sector. Where people who do not know the beauty of the tourism sectors in Sembalun can find out in the digitalisation era where almost everyone, especially young people, is very active on social media. Thus, after the Covid-19 pandemic, the national and international community could directly visit the tourism sector in Sembalun due to curiosity based on the social media they had browsed during the pandemic. On the other hand, the use of social media during the Covid-19 period in promoting the tourism sector in Sembalun can help with economic recovery because information related to this sector is maximally disseminated where this happens because of the fast movement of social media in disseminating information without time and location restrictions so that it can reach the global community. Since there are still just a few trips that may be made to the Sembalun tourist industry, the process of economic recovery will take a while to complete. Concerning the current issues, social media activists in Sembalun Village stated that cooperation with communities other than those in Sembalun Village would be very beneficial in promoting the tourism sector in the Sembalun area because, in general, social media users in Sembalun Village are still comparatively few.

Results of Data Analysis

Based on the data that has been obtained, there are several analysis results which prove that social media is an alternative tool that can be used as a medium for economic recovery efforts in the tourism sector by promoting tourism potential and marketing in Sembalun Village. Due to the fact that Sembalun Village's tourist industries, which are rich in natural tourism, essentially have their charm, they may turn into a paradise for nature lovers. This may also suggest that there are chances for social media to be used to revive the tourist industry in Sembalun Village, which may be aided by using social media to promote the industry and make

it more widely known. This was further strengthened by the Covid-19 pandemic, which made social media increasingly the first opponent of interaction and communication for young people. As for the advantages, social media that can reach globally can facilitate the delivery of information. Due to the fact that basically, in using social media the information obtained will take a short time and reach the whole world and can reach audiences without being geographically constrained so that they can get new people. Due to the current flaws, Instagram usage as a whole cannot be fully utilised. As a result, there is a need for more options to lessen the high level of competition, particularly in the marketing of the tourist sector. Social media users in Sembalun agree in this instance that it is appropriate to utilise social media to promote the travel and tourist industry.

On the other hand, the people who use social media in the village are young people because farming is the main occupation of the people in the village. This can indicate the existence of opportunities that social media has as a means and effort to assist in the recovery of the tourism economy in Sembalun Village which can be assisted by the use of social media as a means of marketing the tourism economy can be spread internationally. Collaboration with communities outside of Sembalun Village will therefore make it simpler for communication and promotion efforts to reach their intended audience. On the other side, by using Instagram social media, such as posting photographs and then utilising the hashtag function, cooperative efforts may be made to overcome barriers. All Instagram social media users can use this function to recognise Instagram accounts that are utilised to promote tourism in Sembalun Village. As a result, Sembalun Village's tourist industry may reach a larger audience.

Defining Research Results

For tourists, the use of social media can be used as a new alternative to get information or an overview of tourist places they want to visit with the help of the current technological era where the majority of people use gadgets or smartphones, so people can easily access via the internet to look for tourism potential in East Lombok Regency ([Liana et al., 2016](#)). Many social media apps may be employed in this situation to advertise and promote Sembalun Village's tourist industry, particularly with the advent of new social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Line, and WhatsApp. Due to the many types of applications, each has benefits and drawbacks, and the qualities that each type of application possesses are tailored to its purpose. As a result, there are various ways to promote the potential of the current tourist industry ([Manik Pratiwi, 2020](#)).

The use of social media can not only be for promotional media but can also be created as virtual media, sharing video and audio because social media can have the power to promote directly the response of its users ([Marta, 2020](#)). The pattern of public communication can change with the development of social media by writing comments regarding issues that occur both personally and socially in which these writings can be written in the network and will quickly spread throughout the world ([Hamzah et al., 2013](#)). In this instance, teamwork is key to using social media as a tool for promoting tourism. Hence, in order to get the best outcomes, the collaboration process between linked parties that exists to promote tourism destinations must be appropriately promoted. This also applies to the process of dissemination and marketing of tourist destinations in Sembalun Village. Because in essence, a collaboration that is used to achieve shared aims will be able to result in end goals that may be produced to be enjoyed jointly as well ([Larita et al., 2020](#)).

As the Covid-19 pandemic has progressed, the progress of the globalisation era and digitalisation has provided many conveniences in conveying messages and in communicating. Various kinds of social media such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and others social media have become the main means of communication, especially for generation Z as part of international communication tools. Yet, unlike social media, traditional media has one-way

qualities that help them generate more answers. Regarding social media's quantifiable nature, every community with an internet connection can use it to gauge the usefulness of messaging as a tool for communication, as can be done on Facebook or Instagram applications, which can inform each user of the number of comments, likes, or even followers that the community has provided in cyberspace ([Puspawati & Ristanto, 2018](#)). However, although social media has numerous benefits, it also has drawbacks. One such drawback is the high incidence of cybercrime, which makes it possible for specific systems to sustain harm. False information or fake news might appear on social media at any time ([Adhanisa & Fatchiya, 2017](#)).

Instagram is currently frequently utilised as a promotional medium since it does not cost a lot of money to maintain and simply requires an internet connection to be channelled into other apps. Instagram makes it easy for its users and increases people's interest in utilising it by presenting it as a high-speed medium. Instagram allows users to simply submit photos or videos, provide likes, and describe places, allowing them to effortlessly convey tales about their experiences in the tourist industry in order to meet marketing goals. Hashtags can be utilised in these uploads because Instagram is a promotional medium with high ease of use in promoting the tourism sector. In its use as a medium for tourism promotion, producers can use the Instagram social network to promote tourist attractions and enable it to reach the community easily. As with customers, the Instagram social network may be utilised to locate both suggested items and what they desire. Thus, in essence, social media using simply internet capital may make it simpler to market tourism attractions, particularly in Sembalun Village. Two dimensions can make Instagram superior in the field of marketing. From the social dimension, it will include interesting content that can be owned by everyone, as well as special attention for tourists who can be interested in visiting through the content they see. The dimensions of creativity, include the creativity to create new choices in the world of promotion, interesting results on images, creativity to write short messages on images, to editing that must be made attractive so that it can be embedded in the memories of potential visitors to the tourism sector through social media.

However, behind the many advantages that support promotion using Instagram social media, there are weaknesses in promoting the tourism sector that must be considered. As negative evaluations that aren't necessarily accurate can't be prevented in the digital age, their influence on the reputation of these tourist locations is unavoidable. Yet, by employing sponsorships for the tourist sectors in particular prominent figures or figures where they may reach more people with better evaluations through their social media, it is also possible to predict the drawbacks or unpleasant possibilities that might emerge through social media marketing. Basically, because in-person encounters were limited during the Covid-19 outbreak, individuals spent a lot more time on social media. Thus, the tourism sector can be assisted at the economic level through the simultaneous use of social media until the pandemic ends and the public can immediately visit the tourism sector.

There are several supporting factors for social media as a means of promoting the tourism sector in an area, these supporting factors are the presence of communicators, channels, messages, communicants, and feedback that can be obtained ([Nurjanah, 2018](#)). In this case, visual aids can also be used as an effort to facilitate the communication process with communication channel media. The information conveyed can be explained in the form of message content using tools or facilities in the form of channels and communication media which will certainly facilitate the delivery of information. Social media plays a significant role in the distribution of messages since it offers a variety of capacities for doing so, particularly in the tourist industry. When the target party's comprehension and acceptance of the messages or information delivered is the primary goal of communication.

From the perspective of communication recipients, they can then easily obtain different information without any specific restrictions because, in general, regional social media users

do not have any restrictions in terms of promoting tourism potential for particular people to visit the places where they go. As for dissemination, uploading certain images with short messages can be done as an effort to provide information. In this case, the spread of the tourism sector using social media can be widely accessed without any restrictions, even at the national or international level ([Galuh, 2016](#)). The dissemination of information through images is an important aspect of visualisation in transmitting existing natural phenomena so that they can be used as certain moments to be immortalised both from experiences on tourist trips to certain tourist objects aimed at the community. As the end of the advantages and disadvantages of using social media for the tourism sector, any feedback or responses contained on social media can be seen by all members of the public who comment and communicate with other media users through uploaded images or writing. In addition, social media users can comment or ask questions about regional tourism uploaded by the communicator. Thus, the feedback obtained by social media users can be a reference and input to be able to provide much better results in the future.

Social Media as Tourism Economic Recovery in Sembalun

Behind the advantages of using social media in promoting the potential that exists in the tourism sector, there are also weaknesses or deficiencies that can become obstacles to promoting the potential that exists in the tourism sector. The disadvantage of internet marketing is that there may be a lot of rivals, making it harder to consistently promote. In other words, advertising in distinctive methods with clear objectives or missions might be the secret to success. Regarding nature, the occurrence of natural catastrophes and variable and unpredictable weather might also be barriers to completing this procedure. On the other hand, the lack of awareness in the surrounding community of the importance of maintaining and protecting tourism objects in the area is still relatively minimal so the promotion carried out has not been optimal because basically, the Sembalun Village area which is part of Lombok Island is one of the areas prone to natural disasters such as mild earthquakes ([Fatimatuzzahra et al., 2020](#)).

Nonetheless, Sembalun Village features a number of well-known tourism industries that are renowned for their attractiveness. In this instance, these sectors include the Rinjani Mountain, which is the primary climbing location on Lombok, as well as several waterfalls, strawberry-picking excursions, and the Pusuk Sembalun tourist park, which is elevated so that visitors can directly take in the natural panorama in the form of cliffs and lush vegetation from the park's highest point. As for the tourism area in Sembalun Village, many facilities have been provided which are quite complete as an effort to give appreciation to the tourists who attend. In this case, lodging such as hotels or homestays, restaurants, to small supermarkets has been provided exclusively by the Sembalun people. On the other hand, as a support for the visitors' preferences, special places have been provided for taking pictures with beautiful backgrounds and attracting the attention of both local and foreign tourists. In this case, the era of digitalisation has supported the perpetuation of moments in an image or in other forms of visualisation.

It may be claimed that a pandemic does not always have a negative impact on the tourism sector, but it can also have a positive one if it allows for the use of social media to educate those who have never visited Sembalun Village through a variety of existing sites. Nonetheless, the Sembalun region's tourist industry has seen a sharp downturn in terms of its economic standing, which was followed by a drop in current visitors, as is the case internationally. In an effort to raise the level of the economy once the Covid-19 epidemic stops, social media can thus be used in conjunction with a collaborative system. Because the government has implemented additional laws to limit the spread of the virus, the number of

visitors visiting has decreased, which is mostly due to both fear of the illness and the regulations themselves.

Conceptual Use of Social Media

Tourism Economic Development is a concept that makes culture, customs, regional food, and other distinctive values assets that need to be emphasised through empowering certain groups or communities. This is due to the fact that tourist attractions can arise through the existence of existing assets from typical values in the area. The idea enables each member of the group to develop and focus their abilities in order to provide services or products that have a commercial quality. This might become a tourist attraction and provide advantages for local artisans who originate from the community as a whole ([Hasan & Hermawan, 2018](#)). On the other hand, this concept makes a system of collaboration, integration and group empowerment a tool for marketing local products. Thus the mobilisation of development in the tourism sector can be realised by the community and the results will return to the community as well, starting from planning to the results obtained ([Eugenio-Martin et al., 2008](#)). This concept is basically used to support the existence of a culture that has existed for generations in the local community where they are worried about the loss of this culture from their area, as an effort to develop a sustainable tourism economic system.

The concept of International Communication has become one of the concepts that are derived from international relations where this happens based on the relationship between background, race, or even culture. Economic and political activities have become the main focus in the discussion of international communication. However, there are aspects of the discussion that are just starting to emerge along with the existence of relations between countries that are experiencing complexity. On the other hand, along with the development of the globalisation era, international communication is increasingly being expanded with the division of understanding. Where international communication which is usually carried out from one country to another becomes a narrow understanding, then cross-country communication carried out by non-state actors to achieve the desired goals becomes a broad understanding. Thus, the use of media as an international communication tool began to be applied and focused on various fields including the spread or introduction of culture to its commodification ([Malik, 2017](#)). So, in essence, social media's breadth of coverage as an international communication tool may give huge benefits in practically every subject and scenario.

In this case, the concept of tourism economic development and international communication is implemented as the main foundation for solving existing problems. Where the use of social media can reach the international community globally and can help the community, especially owners of the tourism sector in marketing and introducing the beauty of these sectors through the media. This is assisted by the existence of social media activists in Sembalun Village who collaborate and at the same time increase relations with people from other regions. While this may not only bring economic advantages to the owners of the tourist industry in Sembalun Village but can also promote Indonesia's name in terms of natural beauty to the international community. Since the world population is mostly unaware of the beauty of nature and even the existence of the Indonesian state itself ([Yuza, 2016](#)). On the other hand, the use of social media by holding events such as travelling online, whether paid or not, can also be a separate effort in marketing the tourism sector in the Sembalun area, especially to the international community. Good foreign language skills are needed to facilitate communication between the owners of the tourism sector and tourists. Thus, the two concepts are in line with the existing problems and can provide their own value in community service as an effort to restore the economic level that occurs in the tourism sector, especially in the Sembalun Village area.

4. Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that the use of social media in the tourism sector in Sembalun Village can help economic recovery through the movement of young people who spread tourist destinations through social media accounts, especially Instagram which has proven to be able to reach globally. This is a component of the idea of worldwide communication being put into practice, and social media plays a significant part in introducing and connecting Sembalun Village's tourist industry digitally to the rest of the world. Because many local and foreign visitors have encountered barriers to visiting the tourist industry due to vigilance against the spread of Covid-19 and due to the government's rigorous rules, the introduction process can be carried out efficiently during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, a pre-introduction might be done to get a visit rate that will likely rise following the Covid-19 epidemic. When it comes to benefits, using social media as a marketing tool and introducing Sembalun Village's tourism industry to the world may be very advantageous for both business owners in the industry and both domestic and foreign tourists. Yet, because young people are the only social media users in Sembalun Village, there is a need for cooperation or collaboration between Sembalun Village's young social media activists and those in neighbouring villages. As a result, social media use can operate more smoothly and accomplish the desired outcomes, namely economic recovery in the village's tourist industry both during this Covid-19 period and in the years after the Covid-19 epidemic.

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