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Digital Mediatization of Pacu Jalur in Sustainable Tourism

Suci Yusrafitri[1*], Hamidina Fadhliani[2]

[1] *Doctoral Program in Communication Studies, Universitas Sahid Jakarta, Indonesia*
[2]*Accounting Department, Universitas Sahid, Indonesia*

[*]*Corresponding author. Email:* sucirahmahyusra@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Pacu Jalur is a traditional boat race of the Malay community originating from Kuantan Singingi Regency, Riau Province, and carries strong cultural, historical, and local identity values. In recent years, Pacu Jalur has become increasingly well known through social media and has become part of digital cultural tourism narratives, indicating changes in the way local culture is communicated, perceived, and interpreted in digital spaces. This paper aims to discuss how Pacu Jalur is represented in digital media and its implications for sustainable tourism communication. This study employs a narrative literature review approach by examining various scholarly publications relevant to issues of cultural mediatization, cultural representation, digital media, and tourism communication. This study uses mediatization of culture theory and cultural representation theory to understand how digital media logic, such as visuality, performativity, and popularity orientation, influences the way local culture is presented in tourism contexts. The discussion is directed at the relationship between increased cultural visibility through social media and the potential shift in cultural meanings within digital tourism narratives. This paper is expected to provide a conceptual understanding of the role of digital media in shaping the representation of local culture and to serve as a reflective basis for developing tourism communication strategies that are oriented not only toward promotion and popularity, but also toward the sustainability of cultural values and the preservation of local identity.

Keywords: *Pacu Jalur; cultural mediatization; cultural representation; digital media; sustainable tourism communication*

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of digitalization has brought significant changes in the way local cultures are produced, disseminated, and interpreted by society. Social media is no longer merely a communication tool, but also functions as a dynamic and open space for cultural representation. In this context, local culture does not only exist within traditional practices, but also undergoes transformation within digital spaces. This shift indicates a transition from locally bounded cultural communication to a more global and interconnected form. Such processes enable local cultures to gain broader visibility while simultaneously facing challenges related to the reinterpretation of meaning. This aligns with the view that digital media plays a crucial role in shaping social and cultural realities (Couldry & Hepp, 2017).

Pacu Jalur is a traditional long-boat racing practice originating from the Malay community in Kuantan Singingi Regency, Riau Province, Indonesia. Historically, Pacu Jalur dates back to the Dutch colonial period, when the boats were primarily used as a means of transportation along the Kuantan River. The boats, known as “jalur,” are long wooden vessels adorned with distinctive ornaments that reflect local cultural identity. Over time, their function evolved from transportation into a central element of communal celebrations and annual cultural festivals. The tradition is commonly performed to commemorate significant events, such as Indonesia’s Independence Day, and involves active participation from the local community. Therefore, Pacu Jalur serves not only as a cultural attraction but also as a symbol of social cohesion and collective identity within the Kuantan Singingi community (Yusoff, 2012).

In recent years, Pacu Jalur has undergone a transformation in the way it is disseminated and represented through digital media. Various forms of content related to Pacu Jalur are widely shared on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, reaching broader and more diverse audiences. The presence of local culture in digital spaces reflects a shift in cultural communication patterns from direct interaction to technology-mediated forms. Digital media enables more visually appealing representations through curated images and videos. However, this process often involves the selection and emphasis of certain aspects deemed more attractive to audiences. As a result, cultural representation in digital media is not entirely neutral, but rather shaped by media logic.

The concept of the mediatization of culture is essential for understanding this phenomenon. Mediatization refers to the process through which social and cultural practices are influenced by media logic, including visuality, performativity, and orientation toward popularity (Hjarvard, 2013). In the context of local culture, mediatization can alter the way cultural practices are presented and understood by the public. Cultural elements that were previously sacred or context-bound may be simplified to fit digital media formats. While this may enhance visual appeal, it can also reduce the depth and richness of cultural meaning. Therefore, examining mediatization is crucial to understanding how media reshapes local cultural practices.

In addition, cultural representation theory provides a framework for understanding how cultural meanings are constructed and circulated through media. Representation does not merely reflect reality, but actively shapes how audiences perceive cultural phenomena (Hall, 1997). In digital media environments, cultural representation is often influenced by audience preferences and platform algorithms. This can lead to the dominance of certain narratives while marginalizing others that are less visually or emotionally engaging. Consequently, there is a risk of simplification and distortion of cultural meanings. Thus, analyzing representation becomes essential in examining how Pacu Jalur is constructed and understood in digital contexts.

On the other hand, the development of digital media also offers significant opportunities for strengthening sustainable tourism communication. Cultural-based tourism should not only focus on increasing visitor numbers, but also on preserving cultural values and local identity. Social media can serve as an effective tool to promote local culture to global audiences rapidly and extensively. However, without proper communication strategies, such promotion may lead to excessive commodification of culture. This condition may threaten the authenticity and sustainability of local traditions. Therefore, a balanced communication approach is needed to align promotional goals with cultural preservation (UNWTO, 2018).

Based on this background, this study aims to examine how Pacu Jalur is represented in digital media and its implications for sustainable tourism communication. This study is important to understand the relationship between increased cultural visibility on social media and potential shifts in cultural meaning. Furthermore, it contributes conceptually to the fields of cultural communication and digital tourism studies. By employing a literature review approach, this research integrates various relevant theoretical perspectives. The findings are expected to serve as a reflective foundation for developing more sustainable tourism communication strategies. In this way, local culture is not merely positioned as an object of promotion, but also preserved in terms of its values and identity in the digital era. This study contributes to the literature by offering an integrative analysis of cultural mediatization and digital tourism communication within the context of local cultural practices, specifically Pacu Jalur, which remains underexplored in existing research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on digitalization in the context of culture and tourism have shown significant growth in recent years. Digitalization not only transforms the technical aspects of communication but also reshapes broader social structures and cultural practices. In the tourism context, digital technologies play a crucial role in creating more interactive and personalized travel experiences. This transformation includes changes in tourist behavior, marketing strategies, and destination management. Research indicates that digitalization has become a key driver of innovation in the global tourism industry. This is reflected in the increasing integration of digital technologies within modern tourism systems (Bekele & Raj, 2024; Sigala, 2020).

The development of social media as part of the digital ecosystem has further reinforced changes in tourism communication. Social media has become a primary platform for shaping destination images and influencing tourists' decision-making processes. User-generated content plays a significant role in constructing public perceptions of destinations. In addition, visually appealing content and strong digital narratives enhance the attractiveness of local cultures. Studies show that social media significantly contributes to destination image formation and tourist loyalty. However, this phenomenon also raises issues related to cultural commodification and overtourism (Christou et al., 2025; Leung et al., 2022).

In the context of tourism marketing, social media functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a space for the production of cultural meaning. Studies indicate that digital content often combines commercial elements with representations of local culture. This is evident in how cultural products are packaged into visually engaging narratives for global audiences. Research on cultural and gastronomic tourism shows that social media constructs symbolic meanings through visual aesthetics and experiential storytelling. These representations often emphasize sensational aspects rather than historical or contextual values. Therefore, social media plays a crucial role in shaping cultural perceptions in tourism (Fusté-Forné & Filimon, 2025; Mkono, 2020).

The concept of the mediatization of culture serves as an important theoretical foundation for understanding this transformation. Mediatization explains how media not only act as intermediaries but also shape social and cultural practices. In the digital era, media logic—such as visuality, popularity, and performativity—dominates cultural representation. Studies show that mediatization can lead to the standardization and simplification of cultural practices in digital spaces. This is evident in how cultural content is adjusted to align with algorithmic preferences and audience expectations. Thus, mediatization contributes to changes in how culture is produced and consumed in digital society (Akyüz, 2023; Hepp, 2020).

In addition, cultural representation theory provides a critical framework for understanding how meaning is constructed in digital media. Representation does not merely reflect reality but actively shapes it through processes of selection, framing, and narration. In digital environments, cultural representation is heavily influenced by platform algorithms and global audience preferences. This often results in more homogeneous representations oriented toward popularity. Studies suggest that social media algorithms can reinforce certain biases in cultural representation. Therefore, it is essential to examine how cultural meanings are constructed and circulated within digital ecosystems (Hall, 1997; Napoli, 2021).

The relationship between digital technology and space in tourism has also become a key concern in recent literature. Digital technologies not only influence communication but also shape spatial experiences and perceptions of place in tourism. The concept of smart tourism highlights how technology enhances the quality of tourist experiences. However, research also indicates that digitalization can blur the boundaries between authentic and digitally constructed experiences. This condition may reduce the authenticity of local cultures. Therefore, it is important to understand how technology mediates tourism experiences (Gretzel et al., 2020; Braunerhielm, 2025).

In the Indonesian context, several studies have shown that social media plays an important role in promoting local culture and regional tourism. National-level research indicates that digital platforms are utilized by local governments and communities to enhance cultural visibility. However, studies also reveal a tendency toward cultural simplification in digital content. This is often driven by the need to adapt content to audience preferences and platform algorithms. Additionally, there are challenges in maintaining a balance between cultural promotion and preservation. Thus, the Indonesian context provides an important perspective in this field of study (Putra et al., 2021; Sari & Nugroho, 2023).

Studies on sustainable tourism indicate that digitalization plays a dual role as both an opportunity and a challenge. On one hand, digital technologies can enhance efficiency, accessibility, and inclusivity in tourism. On the other hand, digitalization may intensify cultural commodification and the exploitation of local resources. Research shows that digital platforms can support sustainable tourism development when used responsibly. However, issues such as unequal access, platform dominance, and cultural exploitation remain significant challenges. Therefore, a critical approach is needed to integrate digitalization with sustainability principles (Zeqiri, 2025; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Furthermore, recent studies emphasize the importance of communication approaches in sustaining cultural values within digital tourism. Communication functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a means of education and cultural preservation. Narratives constructed in digital media influence how audiences understand and appreciate local culture. Therefore, culturally sensitive communication strategies are essential. Research indicates that value-based communication approaches can enhance cultural awareness and support sustainable tourism. This highlights the strategic role of communication in the context of digital tourism (Font & McCabe, 2022; Kurniawan et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the emergence of short-form video platforms such as TikTok has significantly transformed the landscape of cultural and tourism communication. Short video content enables the rapid, concise, and visually engaging dissemination of local culture. Studies indicate that TikTok's algorithm promotes entertaining and highly shareable content, thereby influencing how culture is represented. As a result, local culture is often presented in a more performative and dramatized manner. Recent research highlights that TikTok plays a crucial role in shaping tourism trends and increasing the visibility of local destinations. However, there is a risk of

cultural meaning reduction due to the pressure to conform to the logic of virality (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2021; Abidin, 2022).

Moreover, the development of the digital-based creative economy has also influenced the representation of culture in tourism. Local culture is no longer positioned solely as heritage but also as an economic commodity with significant market value. Research shows that digitalization creates opportunities for local actors to transform culture into innovative creative products. However, this process also raises concerns regarding the excessive commodification of cultural symbols and practices. Such dynamics may shift cultural meaning from intrinsic values to purely economic ones. Therefore, a critical approach is necessary to manage the relationship between culture, economy, and digital media (UNESCO, 2021; Duxbury et al., 2021).

On the other hand, participatory approaches in digital communication have gained increasing attention in tourism and cultural studies. The involvement of local communities is essential in maintaining cultural authenticity and sustainability. Studies show that community participation in digital content production can strengthen more authentic and diverse cultural narratives. In addition, participatory approaches can reduce the dominance of narratives shaped by external actors or commercial interests. This allows local communities to act as subjects rather than merely objects of cultural representation. Thus, digital participation becomes an important strategy in balancing cultural visibility and sustainability (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2022; Pratama & Putri, 2023).

Overall, the literature demonstrates that digitalization, mediatization, and cultural representation are interconnected aspects in shaping modern tourism. These elements collectively influence how local cultures are presented, understood, and consumed in digital spaces. Although many studies have examined these aspects individually, integrative studies remain limited. This indicates a significant research gap that warrants further exploration. This is particularly relevant in the context of local cultural practices such as Pacu Jalur, which embody strong historical and identity values. Therefore, this study aims to contribute by offering a more integrative and contextualized approach.

3. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method to analyze the phenomenon of cultural mediatization in digital spaces. This approach is selected because the study aims to conceptually understand how local culture is represented in digital media and its implications for sustainable tourism communication. In a literature review, the researcher not only collects sources but also synthesizes existing findings, as emphasized by Snyder (2019). This approach also allows the researcher to critically examine the development of contemporary academic discourse rather than merely summarizing it. Creswell and Creswell (2018) highlight that qualitative research provides space for deeper exploration of meaning and interpretation. Therefore, this study is directed toward generating a comprehensive and reflective understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The data sources in this study were obtained from various scientific publications relevant to the research topic, focusing on the intersection between digital media, cultural representation, and tourism communication. To ensure methodological rigor and transparency, the literature selection process was guided by clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criter

ia consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Scopus or SINTA, publications within the last five years (2020–2025) to reflect recent developments, and studies that specifically address issues related to cultural mediatization, digital media logic, cultural representation, and sustainable tourism communication. In addition, both conceptual and empirical studies were included to provide a comprehensive theoretical and analytical foundation for this research.

Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria were applied to filter out sources that did not meet academic standards or relevance, including non-peer-reviewed publications such as blogs, news articles, and opinion-based writings, as well as studies that lacked clear methodological or theoretical grounding. Articles that were not directly related to the core themes of digital media and cultural representation were also excluded from the analysis to maintain focus and consistency. The literature search was conducted through academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and ScienceDirect using keywords including “cultural mediatization,” “cultural representation,” “digital media,” and “sustainable tourism communication.” The initial search identified approximately 52 articles, which were then screened based on relevance, duplication, and academic quality. After the screening process, a total of 30 articles were selected and analyzed in depth, ensuring that the review is both comprehensive and academically robust in line with established literature review methodologies (Tranfield et al., 2003; Kitchenham, 2020).

The data analysis technique employed in this study is thematic analysis to identify patterns and meanings within the reviewed literature. This approach allows the researcher to organize data into themes that are relevant to the research focus. The analysis process involves several stages, including data collection, data reduction,

categorization, and interpretation. Each source is examined critically to identify patterns, concepts, and relationships among variables relevant to the study. This approach enables the development of an integrated conceptual framework. Thematic analysis is considered effective in identifying patterns of meaning in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

In the analytical process, this study applies two main theoretical frameworks: the theory of cultural mediatization and the theory of cultural representation. The mediatization theory is used to understand how media logic influences cultural practices and representations in digital spaces. Meanwhile, representation theory is used to analyze how cultural meanings are constructed and disseminated through media. These two theories are applied complementarily to provide a more comprehensive understanding. In addition, the concept of sustainable tourism communication is used as a supporting perspective to analyze the implications of the findings. This integrative approach aligns with qualitative research that emphasizes the importance of multi-theoretical perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

To ensure the validity and credibility of the study, the researcher applies a rigorous source selection strategy by prioritizing peer-reviewed literature. Source triangulation is conducted by comparing findings from different studies and contexts to obtain a more comprehensive understanding. The researcher also maintains consistency in interpretation by adhering to the selected theoretical frameworks. Transparency in the analytical process is emphasized to enhance the reliability of the study. Although this research does not involve direct field data, the literature review provides significant contributions to conceptual and theoretical development. This approach has been widely used in communication and tourism studies to produce strong conceptual syntheses (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that digitalization has significantly transformed the way local culture is represented in the public sphere. Cultural practices that were previously confined to local contexts can now be accessed globally through digital media. This shift has expanded audiences beyond geographically bounded communities. In the case of Pacu Jalur, social media enables this tradition to reach wider and more diverse publics. The visualization of culture through digital content becomes a primary means of attracting public attention. This transformation reinforces the argument that digitalization plays a crucial role in shaping contemporary cultural communication (Sigala, 2020).

The representation of Pacu Jalur in digital media reflects the operation of digital media logic, particularly through the mechanisms of visuality, performativity, and popularity orientation. Visuality functions as a primary mechanism by prioritizing visually striking and aesthetically engaging elements, where dynamic racing scenes, synchronized rowing movements, and colorful boat decorations are selectively highlighted to capture audience attention. This process results in the amplification of spectacle over context, as visual attractiveness becomes the dominant criterion in content production and circulation.

Furthermore, performativity operates as a mechanism that encourages the staging and dramatization of cultural practices to fit platform expectations and audience engagement patterns. In the case of Pacu Jalur, cultural performances are not only documented but are often re-presented in ways that emphasize excitement, speed, and emotional intensity, aligning with the short-form and entertainment-driven nature of platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. This performative shift indicates that cultural expressions are increasingly shaped by anticipated audience reactions rather than their original social and cultural contexts.

In addition, popularity orientation functions through algorithmic amplification, where content that generates high engagement such as likes, shares, and comments is more likely to be widely distributed. This creates a feedback loop in which certain representations of Pacu Jalur are continuously reproduced, while less visually appealing or more complex cultural aspects are marginalized. As a result, cultural representation becomes standardized and aligned with platform-driven metrics of visibility, reinforcing the argument that digital media not only mediate but actively construct cultural reality (Hepp, 2020; Napoli, 2021).

Moreover, social media algorithms play a significant role in shaping cultural representation in digital spaces. Content that generates high engagement is more likely to be amplified and distributed widely. This dynamic leads to the emergence of standardized forms of cultural representation aligned with popular trends. In this context, cultural representation is influenced by algorithmic preferences. Local culture such as Pacu Jalur may undergo simplification to fit digital trends. This condition supports the view that media not only mediate but also construct cultural reality (Napoli, 2021).

The findings also reveal that the mediatization of culture leads to changes in how culture is practiced and understood. Cultural expressions are no longer produced solely for local communities but also for digital audiences. This shift encourages adjustments in how cultural performances are presented. In some cases, cultural elements are modified to enhance visual appeal.

Such transformations indicate a shift from contextual meaning toward performative meaning. This aligns with the concept of mediatization as discussed by Hepp (2020).

From a representation perspective, Pacu Jalur is not only portrayed as a cultural tradition but also as a tourism product. This representation shapes how audiences perceive the culture. Local culture is positioned as something exotic and attractive to visit. This demonstrates that cultural representation contributes to the construction of destination image. However, there is a risk that cultural meaning becomes simplified in the process. This supports the argument that representation actively shapes social reality (Hall, 1997).

Social media also contributes to increasing the visibility of Pacu Jalur as part of cultural tourism. Viral content can attract tourists and stimulate travel interest. This indicates that digital media has significant potential in tourism promotion. However, increased visibility is not always accompanied by deeper cultural understanding. Many audiences engage only with visual aspects without grasping broader cultural contexts. This reflects a gap between visibility and cultural comprehension (Leung et al., 2022).

In the context of sustainable tourism, digitalization presents both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, digital media facilitates broader cultural promotion. On the other hand, it raises the risk of excessive cultural commodification. Culture may be reduced to a consumable object for tourism purposes. This condition threatens the sustainability of cultural values. Therefore, communication strategies must balance promotion and preservation (Zeqiri, 2025).

The commodification of culture is also evident in how Pacu Jalur is packaged within digital content. Cultural elements are often presented in attractive formats for commercial purposes. This indicates a shift from cultural value toward economic value. Within the creative economy, culture becomes a marketable product. However, without proper management, this may diminish cultural meaning. This aligns with findings on cultural commodification in digital media (Duxbury et al., 2021).

Furthermore, platforms such as TikTok play a significant role in shaping trends in cultural representation. Short-form video content allows culture to be presented quickly and engagingly. However, this format often requires simplification of messages. As a result, culture is presented in a more entertaining and accessible manner. Consequently, the complexity of cultural meaning tends to be reduced. This phenomenon is consistent with studies on platform influence in cultural representation (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2021).

In the Indonesian context, social media has become a primary tool for promoting local culture. Local governments and communities utilize digital platforms to enhance cultural visibility. This reflects a transformation in cultural communication strategies. However, studies show a tendency toward simplification of culture in digital content. This is driven by the need to adapt to audience preferences and platform logic. Thus, maintaining cultural authenticity remains a key challenge (Sari & Nugroho, 2023).

Community participation emerges as an important factor in sustaining cultural representation. The involvement of local communities helps ensure authentic cultural representation. It also enables the emergence of more diverse cultural narratives. This can reduce the dominance of commercially driven representations. In this way, communities act as subjects rather than objects of representation. This aligns with participatory approaches in sustainable tourism (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2022).

From a communication perspective, narratives constructed in digital media significantly influence cultural meaning. The way culture is presented shapes how audiences interpret it. Therefore, it is important to develop narratives that are both engaging and informative. Value-based communication can help sustain cultural meaning. This highlights the strategic role of communication in digital tourism. Such approaches are supported by research on sustainable tourism communication (Font & McCabe, 2022).

Further findings indicate a strong relationship between digital visibility and shifts in cultural meaning. The greater the visibility of a culture, the higher the potential for reinterpretation. This is driven by interactions between local culture and global audiences. In this context, culture becomes open to multiple interpretations. This condition reflects the dynamic nature of cultural meaning. It is consistent with the concept of social construction in digital media (Couldry & Hepp, 2017).

Additionally, the integration of media, culture, and tourism reflects a structural transformation in public communication. Digital media serve as a new space for cultural and economic interaction. This creates new opportunities for developing culture-based tourism. However, these changes also pose challenges in balancing cultural values and economic interests. Therefore, a critical and reflective approach is necessary. This underscores the importance of interdisciplinary perspectives in understanding digital culture.

The mediatization of Pacu Jalur in digital spaces indicates that transformation is not only technological but also affects the structure of cultural meaning. Repeated

representations in specific visual formats tend to shape simplified audience understanding. Cultural practices with deep historical and social values risk being reduced to mere visual spectacles. In this context, culture shifts from a social practice to a form of entertainment consumption. This condition calls for a balance between visual appeal and cultural depth. Therefore, cultural representation should aim to convey both attractiveness and contextual meaning.

On the other hand, digital tourism communication should move toward a more sustainable and inclusive approach. Communication strategies should not focus solely on increasing visibility but also consider cultural sustainability. The involvement of local communities is essential in maintaining authentic representation. Providing space for community participation enables more diverse cultural narratives. It also prevents the dominance of purely commercial narratives. Thus, tourism communication can function both as promotion and cultural preservation.

Overall, the findings and discussion indicate that the mediatization of culture in digital spaces has complex implications for sustainable tourism communication. Cultural representation, such as Pacu Jalur, is shaped not only by cultural factors but also by media logic and economic interests. Digitalization offers significant opportunities to enhance cultural visibility. However, challenges remain in maintaining authenticity and cultural meaning. Therefore, balanced communication strategies are essential. In this way, local culture can be sustained in the digital era.

In addition, digitalization has also transformed the way audiences interact with local culture. Audiences are no longer merely passive viewers but also act as producers and distributors of cultural content. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as user-generated content, strengthens the circulation of culture in digital spaces. In the context of Pacu Jalur, various user-uploaded content contributes to shaping public perceptions of the tradition. However, not all content reflects the cultural meaning in its entirety. This indicates that digital participation brings both opportunities and challenges in cultural representation.

Interactivity in digital media also influences how culture is understood by audiences. Features such as comments, likes, and shares enable ongoing dialogue among users. In this process, cultural meaning is no longer fixed but continuously negotiated. Audiences may offer different interpretations of the same cultural practice. This demonstrates that digital spaces function as dynamic arenas for meaning construction. Consequently, local culture such as Pacu Jalur undergoes continuous reinterpretation.

Furthermore, the visualization of culture in digital media is often shaped by platform aesthetics. Each platform has distinct visual characteristics that influence how content is produced. For example, Instagram tends to emphasize visual aesthetics, while TikTok prioritizes dynamism and speed. As a result, cultural representation is adapted to fit the format of each platform. In this context, culture undergoes transformation in order to align with digital media logic. Consequently, certain cultural aspects are highlighted more than others.

This phenomenon also indicates the existence of cultural selection in the process of digital representation. Not all elements of culture are equally represented in digital media. Elements that are visually appealing tend to be more frequently displayed. Meanwhile, more complex or less visually engaging aspects are often overlooked. This leads to fragmentation in cultural representation. As a result, audiences are exposed only to partial meanings of the culture.

In the tourism context, digital representation also shapes tourists' expectations. Content circulating on social media often constructs specific images of a cultural practice. These expectations can influence tourists' experiences during actual visits. When reality does not match digital representation, perception gaps may occur. This highlights the importance of accuracy in cultural representation. Therefore, tourism communication must balance attractiveness with cultural authenticity.

Moreover, digitalization opens new opportunities for innovation in presenting local culture. Technology enables culture to be packaged in various creative forms, such as videos, storytelling, and interactive content. These innovations can enhance the appeal of culture, particularly among younger audiences. However, innovation must still consider cultural values. Without careful management, innovation may lead to distortion of cultural meaning. Therefore, a balanced approach is needed in integrating technology and culture.

On the other hand, digital creators play an increasingly important role in shaping cultural representation. Creators have significant influence in determining how culture is presented to the public. Their narrative style, visual choices, and storytelling techniques affect audience perception. Therefore, creators carry responsibility in maintaining accurate cultural representation. In this context, collaboration between creators and local communities becomes essential. Such collaboration can produce more authentic and responsible cultural content.

Furthermore, the dynamics of cultural representation in digital media indicate a shift in authority over meaning production. Previously, cultural meaning was largely defined by local communities. Today, it is also

influenced by global audiences and digital interactions. This creates a space for negotiation between local values and global perspectives. In some cases, tensions emerge between original meanings and new interpretations. This condition shows that culture is dynamic and continuously evolving.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that digitalization has fundamentally transformed the way local culture is represented and understood in the public sphere. Cultural practices that were once locally bounded have expanded in meaning through interaction with global audiences. In this context, Pacu Jalur is no longer merely a cultural tradition, but has become part of a broader digital narrative. This transformation highlights the strategic role of digital media in shaping contemporary cultural realities. However, these changes also bring consequences in terms of shifts in cultural meaning. Therefore, digitalization should be understood not only as a tool, but as a process that influences the very structure of culture.

Furthermore, the mediatization of culture in digital spaces demonstrates that media logic significantly shapes how culture is presented and consumed. Cultural representation tends to follow the principles of visuality, popularity, and performativity that characterize digital media. This condition leads to the simplification and selective presentation of certain cultural elements. As a result, complex and contextual aspects of culture often receive less attention. Consequently, audience understanding of culture becomes more superficial and partial. This confirms that cultural representation in digital media is not neutral, but actively constructed.

On the other hand, digitalization also offers significant opportunities for the development of culture-based tourism communication. Digital media enables the rapid and widespread visibility of local culture. This creates potential to attract tourists and strengthen the position of local culture within the tourism industry. However, increased visibility must be balanced with efforts to maintain cultural authenticity and sustainability. Without proper management, culture risks becoming excessively commodified. Therefore, communication strategies must integrate both promotional and preservation aspects of culture.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of a critical and reflective approach in understanding the relationship between digital media, culture, and tourism. Cultural representation in digital spaces should not be driven solely by popularity, but also by the need to preserve cultural values and identity. The involvement of local communities is essential to ensure authentic and sustainable cultural representation. In addition, collective awareness among stakeholders is necessary to develop more balanced and responsible cultural narratives. Through this approach, local culture such as Pacu Jalur can remain sustainable in the face of digital transformation. Ultimately, tourism communication in the digital era must be able to harmonize innovation, visibility, and cultural sustainability. This study emphasizes that sustainable tourism communication in the digital era requires not only technological adaptation but also critical awareness of how media logic reshapes cultural meaning. Therefore, future research is encouraged to explore empirical approaches to further examine the dynamic interaction between digital media, cultural representation, and local community participation.

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