International Conference on Sustainable Tourism and Entrepreneurship

Vol. 01 No.01 August 2026, ISSN: 3163-2912

Sustainable Community-Based Contentpreneur Model for Digital Tourism Promotion in Platform Ecosystem

Intan Fuji Lestari[1*], Arie Prasetio[2]

[1] Universitas Bina Darma, Indonesia
[2] Telkom University, Indonesia

[*]*Corresponding author. Email: intanfujilestari90@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze how the meaning of tourism destinations is constructed, negotiated, and stabilized in a platform-based digital ecosystem through the role of contentpreneurs. This study responds to the limitations of the technological deterministic approach in the study of digital tourism which tends to ignore social processes in the formation of meaning. The research uses an exploratory qualitative approach with a combination of digital ethnography, in-depth interviews, and content analysis. The Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) framework is used to examine the process of interpretative flexibility, negotiation, and stabilization in interactions between actors, namely contentpreneurs, local communities, business actors, digital audiences, and platforms. The results of the study show that digital tourism promotion is a socio-technical process that is not only determined by technology, but is formed through communication interaction and algorithmic logic of platforms. Contentpreneurs act as socio-technical mediators who bridge local cultural values with economic interests and digital visibility. The destination narrative is formed through a cycle of repetitive negotiation of meaning until it achieves stabilization through audience validation and community acceptance. Theoretically, this study expands SCOT by including platforms as non-human actors and develops the concept of contentpreneur as a socio-technical intermediary in community-based digital tourism communication.

Keywords: *Contentpreneur, Digital Tourism Communication, Social Construction of Technology, Sustainable Tourism, Creator Economy, Community-Based Tourism*

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has fundamentally changed tourism communication practices from an institution-based approach to a participatory and decentralized platform-based ecosystem [1], [2]. The development of information and communication technology, particularly social media, allows individuals to not only consume information, but also produce and distribute destination narratives widely [3]. In this context, the boundaries between producers and consumers of information are becoming increasingly blurred, in line with the concept of media convergence in the digital ecosystem [7].

The emergence of the *creator economy phenomenon* further strengthens the role of individuals as the main actors in digital communication [8]. Content creators, who in this study are referred to as *contentpreneurs*, not only function as content creators, but also as economic agents who manage visibility, engagement, and monetization in digital platforms [4], [18]. In the context of tourism, contentpreneurs play a strategic role in shaping the image of destinations, tourist experiences, and public perception of a location.

Nevertheless, most previous research has still focused on aspects of technology adoption, the effectiveness of digital marketing, and the influence of social media on travelers' decisions [3], [6], [13]. The approach tends to be deterministic, with technology as the main factor that determines changes in tourism communication. This perspective is less able to explain how the meaning of destination is formed through social interaction, negotiation between actors, and power dynamics in the digital ecosystem [5].

On the other hand, the development of digital platforms shows that technology is not neutral, but has an active role in shaping the visibility and distribution of information through algorithmic mechanisms [19]. This creates a new dynamic in tourism communication, where the narrative of destinations is not only determined by human actors, but also by the structure of platforms that govern what is and is not seen in the digital space.

To understand this phenomenon, a theoretical approach is needed that is able to explain the relationship between technology, social actors, and communication processes. *The Social Construction of Technology* (SCOT) offers a relevant conceptual framework by emphasizing that the meaning of technology is shaped through social interaction between groups, rather than being inherently determined by the technology itself [9]. SCOT identifies three main processes, namely *interpretative flexibility*, *negotiation*, and *stabilization*, which explain how meaning is formed and stabilized in social contexts.

In the context of community-based tourism, sustainability issues are an important aspect that cannot be separated from the digital communication process [10], [11]. Uncontrolled digital promotion can lead to over-tourism, cultural commodification, and an imbalance between economic interests and the preservation of local values. Therefore, a communication model is needed that is able to integrate technological, social, and cultural dimensions in one comprehensive framework.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze how the meaning of tourism destinations is constructed, negotiated, and stabilized in a platform-based digital ecosystem through the role of contentpreneurs. In particular, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do actors (contentpreneurs, local communities, business actors, and digital audiences) construct the meaning of destinations differently?
2. How does the process of negotiating meaning take place in a platform-based digital ecosystem?
3. How does destination narratives achieve stabilization in the context of digital communication?
4. How is the *Sustainable Community-Based Contentpreneur* model formed in digital tourism promotion?

This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of digital communication studies by expanding the application of SCOT into the context of digital platforms, as well as making practical contributions to the development of sustainable community-based tourism promotion strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of digital technology has significantly transformed tourism communication practices from a one-way model to a platform-based interactive ecosystem [1], [14]. Social media allows the formation of *user-generated content* that plays an important role in shaping the image of destinations and influencing tourist behavior in the decision-making process [3], [13]. In this context, tourism communication is no longer completely controlled by formal institutions, but rather a participatory process involving various actors in the digital space.

This transformation is also closely related to the development of *the concept of smart tourism*, which emphasizes the integration of technology in the travel experience and interaction between tourists, destinations, and service providers [1], [2]. However, most of the research is still oriented towards the technological aspects and system efficiency, so it tends to ignore the social dimension in the formation of destination meanings [6]. The approach shows a deterministic tendency, in which technology is considered the main factor shaping the reality of communication, without considering the complex processes of social interaction [5].

Along with the development of *the creator economy*, the role of individuals in the production and distribution of digital content has become increasingly dominant [8]. Content creators not only function as conveyors of information, but also as economic actors who build digital identities and manage visibility and engagement on platforms [4], [18]. In this study, the term *contentpreneur* is used to describe individuals who integrate creative and entrepreneurial activities in the digital ecosystem. In the context of tourism, contentpreneurs have the ability to shape the narrative of destinations through visual strategies, storytelling, and interaction with audiences.

Previous research has shown that influencers have a significant influence on travelers' perceptions and decisions [17], but most studies still place them as marketing tools, rather than as actors in the process of constructing meaning. This shows that there are limitations in understanding the role of contentpreneurs in the broader context of communication, particularly in the relationship between technology, social actors, and meaning.

To bridge these limitations, the *Social Construction of Technology* (SCOT) approach offers a relevant perspective by emphasizing that

the meaning of technology is formed through social interaction between groups [9]. SCOT identifies that meaning is not singular, but through *an interpretative flexibility* process, where various actors have different interpretations of objects or technologies. This process then develops into the negotiation of meaning through social interaction, until it finally reaches stabilization when certain meanings are widely accepted.

In the context of digital communication, this approach is becoming increasingly relevant as technology not only serves as a medium, but also as an actor that influences the communication process through algorithms and recommendation systems [19]. This shows that the construction of meaning in the digital ecosystem is the result of interaction between human and non-human actors.

On the other hand, community-based tourism emphasizes the importance of local community participation in sustainable tourism management [10], [11]. This approach aims to ensure that the economic benefits of tourism can be felt by communities without sacrificing cultural and environmental value. However, in the digital age, destination promotion through platforms often poses new challenges, such as over-tourism and cultural commodification, which can threaten sustainability.

Based on this study, it can be identified that there is still a research gap in understanding how the meaning of destinations is constructed in a platform-based digital ecosystem. Previous research has tended to focus on technology and marketing aspects, while the role of social interaction, negotiation of meaning, and dynamics between human actors and technology is still underexplored. In addition, the implementation of SCOT in the context of digital tourism communication is still limited.

Therefore, this study integrates the perspectives of digital communication, creator economy, SCOT, and community-based tourism to analyze how the meaning of destinations is constructed, negotiated, and stabilized in the digital ecosystem. With this approach, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of digital communication studies as well as practical contributions in the sustainable management of community-based tourism.

3. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative exploratory approach within a constructivist paradigm to examine how tourism destination meanings are constructed in platform-based digital ecosystems [20]. This approach is appropriate because the phenomenon under investigation is contextual, dynamic, and embedded in social interactions that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, digital ethnography, and qualitative content analysis. A total of 15 informants were purposively selected, including contentpreneurs, tourism business actors, and local community representatives. The selection criteria included active involvement in digital tourism promotion and consistent engagement with social media platforms.

Digital ethnography was conducted over a three-month period from January to March 2026, focusing on Instagram and TikTok as primary research environments. These platforms were selected due to their dominance in visual-based tourism promotion and their central role in the creator-driven digital economy [3], [19]. The study employed a non-participant observation approach, allowing the researcher to systematically observe communication practices without intervening in the interaction process.

The ethnographic procedure began with the definition of the digital field, which consisted of publicly accessible tourism-related content produced by selected contentpreneurs. Accounts were selected based on their active involvement in tourism content production, significant engagement levels, and consistent posting activity during the observation period. The units of observation included visual content such as images and videos, accompanying captions, hashtag usage, and audience interactions, including comments, likes, and shares. Data were systematically recorded using digital field notes, screenshots, and chronological documentation to ensure consistency and traceability.

The coding procedure within the digital ethnography was conducted through a structured and iterative process to ensure analytical transparency and reproducibility. The analysis began with repeated reading and examination of the collected data to identify emerging patterns in visual representation, narrative construction, and audience engagement. This initial phase employed open coding, where themes were generated inductively from the data without imposing predefined theoretical categories. Subsequently, axial coding was conducted to organize these themes into more structured categories by linking them to the core constructs of the Social Construction of Technology

(SCOT), namely interpretative flexibility, negotiation, and stabilization [9]. In the final stage, selective coding was applied to integrate these categories into a coherent conceptual framework that explains the relationships between actors, technology, and communication processes. This systematic coding procedure ensures that the analysis is both theoretically grounded and methodologically reproducible [21].

Content analysis was conducted on 30 purposively selected digital content units derived from the ethnographic observation. The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation, defined as the point at which no new themes or categories emerge during the analysis [20]. Each unit of analysis consisted of visual content, caption text, and audience interaction, enabling a comprehensive examination of meaning construction in digital contexts. The analytical process followed the same coding stages as the ethnographic analysis, namely open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, with a focus on identifying patterns of destination representation, narrative strategies, and audience engagement. This approach is consistent with qualitative content analysis principles, which emphasize systematic categorization and interpretative depth over large data volumes [21], [22].

To ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, this study employed data triangulation by comparing insights obtained from interviews, digital ethnography, and content analysis. In addition, member checking was conducted with selected informants to verify the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations. Analytical transparency was maintained through systematic documentation of the coding process, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness and reproducibility of the study [20].

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that the construction of destination meaning in the digital tourism ecosystem is a dynamic process and involves complex interactions between human and non-human actors. Based on data analysis, the process can be understood through three main stages in the SCOT framework, namely *interpretative flexibility*, *negotiation*, and *stabilization* [9].

At the *interpretative flexibility stage*, it was found that the meaning of destination is not singular, but is constructed differently by each actor. Contentpreneurs tend to interpret destinations as visual spaces that have high aesthetic value and potential virality. Destination representations are focused on attractive visual elements, such as natural beauty, uniqueness of location, and experiences that can be shared on social media. On the other hand, local communities interpret destinations as social and cultural spaces that have certain values, norms, and limits. This difference shows the tension between the logic of digital representation and local values.

One of the contentpreneur informants stated that:

"It's that good content that can grab attention in the first few seconds, so we focus on strong visuals."

Meanwhile, representatives of the local community said:

"Not all places can be used as content, some have customary values and should not be freely exposed."

These findings show that the meaning of destination is the result of a plural and contextual social construction, in line with the concept of *interpretative flexibility* in SCOT [9].

At the *negotiation stage*, the study found that the meaning of destination is negotiated through interaction between contentpreneurs, communities, business actors, and digital audiences. This process occurs through various mechanisms, such as collaboration in content production, audience feedback in the form of comments and *engagement*, and community intervention against representations that are considered inappropriate. These negotiations are not only symbolic, but also reflect the power relations between economic, cultural, and technological interests.

Conflicts that arise in the negotiation process include cultural commodification, increased number of tourists due to the virality of content, as well as algorithmic pressure to produce visually appealing content. One of the tourism business actors stated:

"When content goes viral, visitors increase dramatically, but sometimes they are not prepared in terms of facilities."

On the other hand, digital audiences also play an important role in this process, as a high level of *engagement* can strengthen the legitimacy of a destination narrative. This shows that the audience is not only a consumer, but also a validator in the construction of meaning.

Another important finding is the role of digital platforms as non-human actors that influence the communication process. The platform's

algorithm determines the visibility of content based on the level of interaction, thus encouraging the contentpreneur to produce content that conforms to algorithmic logic. This reinforces the argument that technology is not a neutral entity, but rather part of the structures that shape social reality in the digital space [5], [19].

In the *stabilization stage*, the study found that the destination narrative became stable when there was content repetition, audience validation through *engagement*, and acceptance from the local community. The stabilized narrative then becomes the dominant representation that is considered the main image of the destination by the public.

An informant stated:

"If it has appeared on social media a lot, people will think of it as the main identity of the place."

This stabilization process shows that the meaning that was initially debated through negotiations eventually becomes a widely accepted reality, in accordance with the concept *of closure* in SCOT [9].

Based on the overall findings, this study identifies that contentpreneurs play the role of socio-technical mediators who bridge local cultural values, economic interests, and platform logic. This role is not neutral, but rather involves the process of selecting, adapting, and interpreting the content produced and distributed.

The resulting conceptual model shows that the construction of destination meaning in digital tourism is the result of interaction between actors (contentpreneurs, communities, business actors, and audiences), socio-technical processes (interpretation, negotiation, and stabilization), and platform mediation through algorithms. This process generates a narrative of destinations that contribute to sustainability or imbalance in community-based tourism.

Thus, the findings of this study confirm that the promotion of digital tourism cannot be understood solely as a marketing activity, but as a socio-technical communication process that involves the construction, negotiation, and legitimacy of meaning in the digital ecosystem.

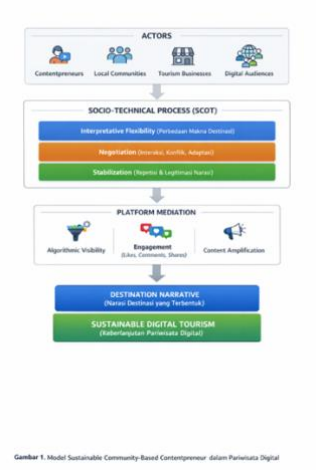


Figure 1. Sustainable Community-Based Contentpreneur Model in Digital Tourism

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the promotion of digital tourism in a platform-based ecosystem is a socio-technical social construction process, where the meaning of the destination is not determined solely by technology, but is formed through interaction between contentpreneurs, local communities, business actors, digital audiences, and the algorithmic structure of the platform. Through the framework of Social Construction of Technology (SCOT), this study shows that the meaning of destination is formed through the stages of interpretative flexibility, negotiation, and stabilization, which reflect the dynamics of differences in interpretation, negotiation processes between actors, and the formation of narrative legitimacy in the digital space. Key findings indicate that contentpreneurs act as socio-technical mediators who bridge the cultural, economic, and logical interests of the platform, thus having a strategic position in determining the representation of destinations. In addition, digital platforms have been shown to function as non-human actors that actively influence the visibility and dominance of narratives through algorithmic mechanisms. Theoretically, this research contributes by expanding the application of SCOT into the context of platform-based digital communication and developing a Sustainable Community-Based Contentpreneur model that explains how tourism sustainability is formed through a repetitive process of negotiation of meaning. Thus, this study confirms that the sustainability of digital tourism can only be achieved through a balance between digital exposure, local cultural values, and community-based communication management.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank Bina Darma University and Telkom University for the academic support and research facilities that have been provided in the implementation of this study. Appreciation was also expressed to all research informants, especially contentpreneurs, tourism business actors, and local community representatives who were willing to take the time and share experiences and perspectives that were very valuable for the development of this research. In addition, the author also appreciates the contributions of various parties who have indirectly supported the process of data collection, analysis, and preparation of this article so that it can be completed properly.

REFERENCES

[1] U. Gretzel, M. Sigala, Z. Xiang, and C. Koo, "Smart tourism: foundations and developments," *Electronic Markets*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 179–188, 2015. doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/s12525-015-0196-8

[2] J. Neuhofer, D. Buhalis, and A. Ladkin, "Technology as a catalyst of change: Enablers and barriers of the tourist experience and their consequences," *Tourism Management*, vol. 36, pp. 170–180, 2013. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2013.05.005

[3] Z. Xiang and U. Gretzel, "Role of social media in online travel information search," *Tourism Management*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 179–188, 2010. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.02.016

[4] S. Abidin, *Internet Celebrity: Understanding Fame Online*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing, 2018. doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/9781787560795

[5] N. Couldry and A. Hepp, *The Mediated Construction of Reality*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017.

[6] R. Schegg and B. Stangl, "Information technologies in tourism: A challenging relationship," *Tourism Review*, vol. 72, no. 1, pp. 1–5, 2017. doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-03-2017-0053

[7] H. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Colide*. New York, NY, USA: NYU Press, 2006.

[8] S. Cunningham and D. Craig, *Social Media Entertainment: The New Intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley*. New York, NY, USA: NYU Press, 2019.

[9] T. J. Pinch and W. E. Bijker, "The social construction of facts and artifacts: Or how the sociology of science and the sociology of technology might benefit each other," *Social Studies of Science*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 399–441, 1984. doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/030631284014003004

[10] G. Moscardo, *Building Community Capacity for Tourism Development*. Wallingford, UK: CABI, 2008.

[11] UNEP and UNWTO, *Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policy Makers*. Madrid, Spain: UNWTO, 2005.

[12] C. Hine, *Virtual Ethnography*. London, UK: Sage Publications, 2015.

[13] A. M. Kaplan and M. Haenlein, "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media," *Business Horizons*, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 59–68, 2010. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003

[14] D. Buhalis and A. Amaranggana, "Smart tourism destinations enhancing tourism experience through personalization of services," in *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2015*, Springer, 2015, pp. 377–389. doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-14343-9_19

[15] OECD, *Tourism Trends and Policies 2020*. Paris, France: OECD Publishing, 2020.

[16] UNWTO, *Digital Transformation in Tourism*. Madrid, Spain: World Tourism Organization, 2019.

[17] M. De Veirman, V. Cauberghe, and L. Hudders, "Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude," *International Journal of Advertising*, vol. 36, no. 5, pp. 798–828, 2017. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035

[18] S. Khamis, L. Ang, and R. Welling, "Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of Social Media Influencers," *Celebrity Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 191–208, 2017. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292

[19] J. van Dijck, T. Poell, and M. de Waal, *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018.

[20] N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: Sage Publications, 2018.

[21] K. Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 4th ed., Sage, 2018.
https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071878781

[22] R. Kozinets, *Netnography: Redefined*, Sage, 2015.
https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/netnography/book249970