

Research Horizon

ISSN: 2808-0696 (p), 2807-9531 (e)

Research Horizon

Volume: 05

Issue: 03

Year: 2025

Page: 973-984

Citation:

Budiningtyas, R. R. E. S., Zega, I., Rizal, M. D., Jayanawi, B. H. O., & Dangga, S. (2025). Enhancing Tourism Destination Services and Promotion Through IT-Based Management. *Research Horizon*, 5(3), 973-984.

Article History:

Received: May 29, 2025

Revised: June 25, 2025

Accepted: June 28, 2025

Online since: June 30, 2025

Enhancing Tourism Destination Services and Promotion Through IT-Based Management

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Abstract

Baluwarti Village, Surakarta, is a cultural heritage area with tourism potential that has not been optimized due to manual marketing and lack of financial literacy. This community service activity aims to improve the quality of services, marketing, and income of micro, small, and medium enterprises through information technology and training. The methods used include training on local potential, break-even point calculation, website management, and mentoring for the Teman Solo Community. The results showed 85 percent of participants understood the tourism potential of Baluwarti, the selling price of micro, small, and medium enterprises' products decreased by 15 percent after the break-even point training, and the Baluwarti Experience website processed 50 online bookings in two months. Tourist visits increased from 30 to 70 people per month, with micro, small, and medium enterprises' income increasing by 22 percent. Tourist satisfaction also increased from a score of 3.8 to 4.3 on a scale of 5. This activity successfully empowered the community through digitization and financial literacy, supported the sustainability of culture-based tourism, and can be replicated in other destinations.

Keywords

Break-Even Point, Community-Ased Tourism, Destination Management, Micro Small Medium Enterprises, Tourism Digitalization.

1. Introduction

The Baluwarti area, located in Pasar Kliwon Sub-district, Surakarta City, is a historic traditional settlement dating back to 1745 that is part of the cultural heritage of the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace. The area is characterized by narrow streets, high walls, and a community that still upholds traditional Javanese values (Fairuzahira et al., 2020). This cultural richness, rooted in Javanese traditions, serves as a foundation for sustainable tourism development, as cultural heritage sites are key attractions for experiential tourism (Timothy, 2011). The Teman Solo community, based in Baluwarti, manages cultural tourism and MSME activities under the theme Baluwarti Experience, which offers immersive experiences such as making jamu, arranging coconut leaves, dancing, and karawitan. These activities fulfill the principle of culture-based tourism, which is to provide experiences that include something to see, do, buy, and experience (Yoeti, 2002; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2011). Such immersive activities align with the growing demand for authentic cultural experiences, which enhance tourist satisfaction and engagement (Richards, 2018). Despite its great potential as a cultural tourism destination, the management and marketing of Baluwarti Experience still face significant obstacles. This activity aims to improve the quality of services and marketing through the development of technology-based information systems, Break Even Point (BEP) calculation training, and more structured management of tourist destinations to support the sustainability of community-based tourism by empowering local communities to actively participate in tourism development (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009).

Although Baluwarti has a strong cultural appeal, the management of tourist destinations by Komunitas Teman Solo is still done manually, with marketing limited to platforms such as WhatsApp and personal relationships with tour agents. According to Budiningtyas and Sirod (2021), the limitations of technology-based information systems hamper the market reach and administrative efficiency of cultural tourism destinations such as Baluwarti. The lack of digital infrastructure often restricts the scalability of community-based tourism initiatives, particularly in rural or heritage areas (Law et al., 2015). Documentation of tourist visits, such as the number of visitors, the origin of tourists, and the variety of tour packages, has not been well organized because they still use manual records. This inefficiency in data management can hinder strategic decision-making for tourism promotion and resource allocation (Hall, 2019). In addition, MSMEs in Baluwarti often apply simple financial management without understanding the concept of BEP, which is important for determining selling prices and minimizing the risk of loss (Marhuni et al., 2017). Financial literacy is critical for MSMEs to achieve economic sustainability, particularly in tourism-dependent communities (Hsu et al., 2019). Lack of skills in utilizing information technology is also a challenge, especially in creating attractive and effective promotional content. These challenges hinder Baluwarti's potential to attract domestic and international tourists, who require easy and quick access to information through digital platforms (Sigala, 2020). The adoption of digital tools, such as websites and social media, is essential for enhancing destination competitiveness in the global tourism market (Happ & Ivancsóné Horváth, 2020).

The development of community-based tourism in Baluwarti needs to be supported by an integrated information system to increase the visibility and accessibility of the destination. Research shows that digitization, such as the use of websites with interactive features, can improve tourist experience and marketing efficiency (Ritchie & Ritchie, 2002; Ibrahim & Susanti, 2021). In Indonesia, tourism digitization has become an important trend, with projections of the tourism sector recovering to pre-pandemic levels by 2023 (Purwowidhu, 2023). However, many local tourism destinations, including Baluwarti, still lag behind in the adoption of these technologies (Buhalis & Law, 2018). In addition, skills training such as BEP

calculation and website management are needed to empower local communities to sustainably manage tourism businesses and MSMEs (Machado et al., 2020). Community-based approaches have also proven effective in creating economic and social impact while preserving local culture (Demirbag et al., 2021; Baloch et al., 2023).

This community service activity is designed to overcome these challenges through the development of a website with a chatbot system for booking and marketing MSME products, as well as training to improve community skills in designing tour packages and financial analysis. This website is expected to expand marketing reach to the global market, as well as simplify tour administration and booking (Gretzel et al., 2021). The BEP training aims to help MSMEs set competitive selling prices and better manage finances, while the website management training enables the community to manage the digital platform independently (Li et al., 2022). With this approach, the activity is expected to increase tourist visits to twice a month and MSME income by 20%, while supporting the preservation of Javanese culture. The theoretical foundation for this solution is further outlined in the *Literature Review* section, followed by the method of implementation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Tourism Destination Management

According to Butler (1991), tourist destination management is the process of planning, organizing, managing, and controlling resources to meet tourist needs while creating sustainable economic, social, and environmental value. This process is important for a destination like Baluwarti, which has a rich Javanese cultural heritage, including traditional settlements and activities such as *karawitan* and *jamu* making. Effective destination management requires the involvement of local communities to ensure cultural and economic sustainability. Research by Gössling and Hall (2019) shows that culture-based tourism destinations can improve community welfare through additional income from tourism activities. In addition, destination management should consider tourist attractions that include elements such as something to see, do, buy, and experience, as described by Yoeti (2002). This approach is relevant for Baluwarti Experience, which offers immersive experiences for tourists.

Tourism destination management should also integrate effective marketing strategies to attract domestic and international tourists. Research shows that cultural destinations often face challenges in market visibility due to a lack of organized promotion (Demirbag et al., 2021). To overcome this, destinations need to adopt a community-based approach that involves local actors, such as Komunitas Teman Solo, in management and promotion. This approach not only increases the attractiveness of the destination, but also supports the preservation of local culture, such as Javanese traditions in Baluwarti (Budiningtyas, 2018). Thus, community-based tourism destination management is an important foundation for this community service activity, which aims to improve the quality of services and marketing in Baluwarti through information technology.

2.2 Tourism Digitalization

According to Ritchie and Ritchie (2002), digitization through website-based information systems can increase tourist awareness and marketing efficiency of tourist destinations. In Baluwarti, the limitations of marketing through platforms such as WhatsApp indicate the need for more sophisticated digital solutions, such as websites with chatbot features. Research by Ibrahim and Susanti (2021) shows that websites with interactive features, such as online booking, can facilitate access to

information and improve the tourist experience. The trend of tourism digitization in Indonesia is increasingly important, with a projected recovery of the tourism sector to pre-pandemic levels by 2023 (Purwowedhu, 2023). However, many local tourism destinations still lag behind in technology adoption, as revealed by Buhalis and Law (2018), who emphasized the importance of information technology in improving destination competitiveness.

The development of websites for tourist destinations enables the provision of centralized information, such as details of tour packages, costs, and facilities, which can be accessed through various channels, including mobile devices (Gretzel et al., 2021). In Baluwarti, the website is expected to expand marketing reach to the global market, as well as simplify order administration. In addition, digitalization supports the promotion of local MSME products, such as Surakarta souvenirs, which can be integrated into digital platforms (Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2023). However, successful digitization requires information technology skills training for local communities to ensure self-management. With this approach, digitization becomes a strategic solution to increase the visibility and accessibility of the Baluwarti Experience.

2.3 Financial Analysis (Break Even Point)

According to Marhuni et al. (2017), Break Even Point (BEP) calculation is an important tool for MSMEs to determine the minimum sales volume required to cover fixed and variable costs, thus avoiding losses. In Baluwarti, MSMEs often use simple financial management without understanding BEP, which can hinder business sustainability. Research by Machado et al. (2020) shows that the use of tools such as Microsoft Excel makes it easier to calculate BEP, allowing MSMEs to set competitive selling prices. Understanding BEP also helps in planning marketing strategies, such as determining sales targets for Baluwarti Experience tour packages. In addition, proper financial analysis can increase business owners' confidence in managing the tourism business (Choe & Kim, 2022).

BEP training for local communities, such as Komunitas Teman Solo, is important to empower MSME actors to manage their finances effectively. Research shows that a lack of financial literacy is often an obstacle for MSMEs in cultural tourism destinations (Mbaiwa, 2021). By understanding BEP, MSMEs can make better decisions regarding selling prices and production strategies, ultimately increasing revenue. In the context of Baluwarti, BEP training is expected to help MSMEs calculate the production costs of souvenirs and tour packages, thus supporting the economic sustainability of the community. This approach is in line with the community service objective to improve the welfare of MSME players through more structured financial management.

2.4 Community-based Tourism

According to Baloch et al. (2023), community-based tourism provides economic and social benefits while supporting the preservation of local culture, as implemented in Baluwarti through the Baluwarti Experience. This approach involves local communities in the management of tourist destinations, thus creating a sense of ownership and sustainability. Research by Demirbag et al. (2021) shows that community involvement in cultural tourism can increase local income and strengthen cultural identity, such as Javanese traditions in Baluwarti. However, successful community-based tourism requires technological support and training to overcome marketing and management limitations (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2023). In Baluwarti, the Teman Solo Community acts as the main driver in managing tourism activities and MSMEs.

Community-based tourism also faces challenges, such as lack of access to global markets and limited digital skills (Tussyadiah, 2020). Website development and

information technology training can address these challenges by increasing the visibility of MSME destinations and products. In addition, community-based tourism supports the preservation of cultural heritage, such as traditional Javanese houses and *abdi dalem* activities in Baluwarti (Budiningtyas & Sirod, 2021). By integrating technology and community-based approaches, this service activity aims to create a sustainable tourism model, which not only increases tourist visits, but also strengthens the local economy and cultural preservation.

3. Method

This community service activity, which is based on the theories of tourist destination management and tourism digitalization (Butler, 1991; Ritchie & Ritchie, 2002), was conducted in Baluwarti Village, Pasar Kliwon Sub-district, Surakarta, a 40.70 Ha cultural heritage area around the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace. Baluwarti consists of five villages (Carangan, Gambuhan, Hordenasan, Tamtaman, Wirengan) with 12 RW and 3 RT per RW. The Teman Solo community, a partner in this activity, consists of tourism actors (guides, tour planners) and MSMEs, led by Valent Carolina with members such as Ishak Wahyudi and Noor Masita. The activity runs from March to November 2024, with a community-based, information technology, and practical approach to empower communities in managing tourist destinations.

The first session, attended by 20 members for 3 hours, used lectures and interactive discussions to raise awareness about the history and tourism potential of Baluwarti, such as traditional Javanese houses and cultural activities. The second session, lasting 4 hours, focused on Break Even Point (BEP) calculations with simulations using participants' business data (e.g., souvenir production costs) through Microsoft Excel, to help set competitive selling prices. The third session, lasting 5 hours, trained 15 members in the creation and management of the Baluwarti Experience website using the WordPress platform, including the creation of engaging content, SEO optimization, and digital marketing strategies.

The Baluwarti Experience website was developed by the university's IT team with an AI-based chatbot feature to automatically process tour bookings and MSME products. The website was designed to provide centralized information on tour packages, MSME products, and cultural events, with the aim of expanding global marketing reach. Mentoring was conducted for 3 months to ensure the community could manage the website independently, with weekly sessions involving content updates and website performance analysis. The success of the method was evaluated through participant satisfaction surveys, analysis of tourist visits, and increased MSME turnover, which are outlined in the results section. Figure 1 shows the geographical boundaries of Baluwarti, which helped with the logistical planning of the training and the development of the tourist destination.

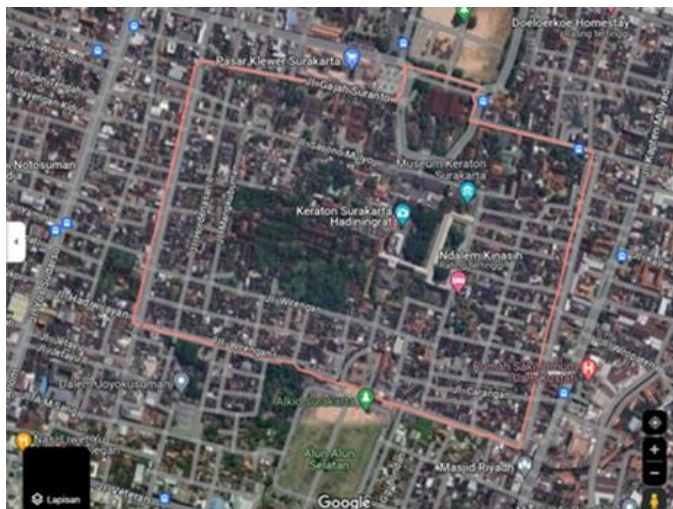


Figure 1. Boundaries of Baluwarti Subdistrict, Pasar Kliwon District

4. Results

The community service activities in Baluwarti Village, Surakarta, which took place from March to November 2024, produced objective findings based on training, website development, and mentoring for the Teman Solo Community. These findings include increased understanding of local potential, mastery of the Break-Even Point (BEP) concept, creation and management of the Baluwarti Experience website, improved service quality and digital promotion, and increased tourist visits and MSME turnover. Data were collected through participant satisfaction surveys, community reports, and website performance analysis. Figure 2 shows the flow of activity implementation, which includes the stages of training, website development, and mentoring, providing an overall picture of the process that led to these findings.

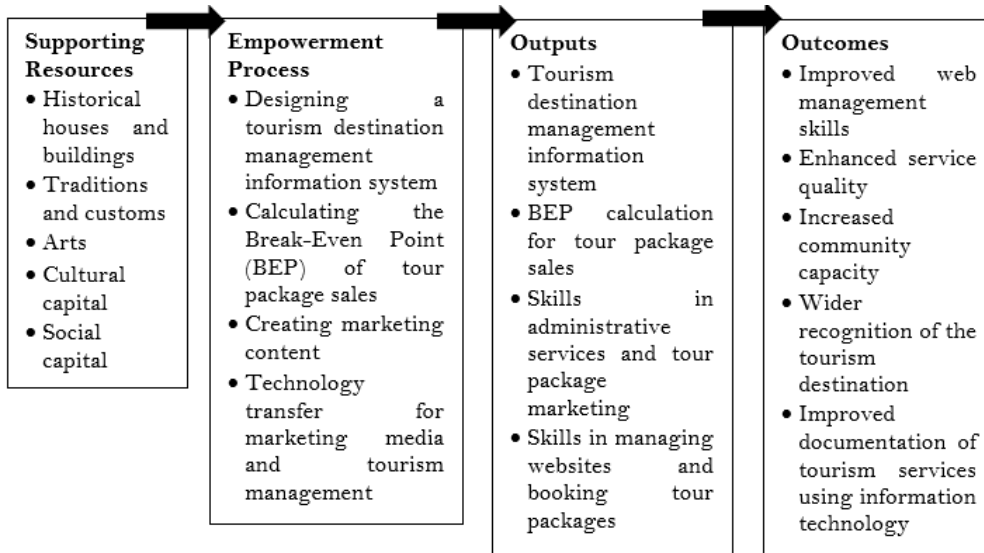


Figure 2. Activity Implementation Flow

The first training session at the Carangan community hall in RT 1 RW 9 was attended by 20 members of the Teman Solo Community, consisting of tour guides and MSME players. The session, which lasted three hours, aimed to increase understanding of Baluwarti's history and tourism potential, such as traditional

Javanese houses, karawitan activities and jamu making. A post-training survey showed that 17 out of 20 participants gave an average score of 4.5 on a scale of 5 for their understanding of Baluwarti's cultural values. A total of 18 participants reported readiness to develop culture-based tour packages, such as interactive tours to the abdi dalem's house. In addition, 90% of participants stated that the training increased their awareness of the importance of preserving local cultural heritage. These findings suggest that the training was successful in building a knowledge foundation for tourism destination management.

Table 1. Partner Satisfaction Survey on BEP Materials

Likert Score	Description	Percentage
4	Agree	60%
5	Strongly Agree	40%
1	Strongly Disagree	0%
2	Disagree	0%
3	Neutral	0%

Based on Table 1, the second training focused on the concept of Break Even Point (BEP) and was attended by 15 MSME players for four hours. Participants were trained to calculate the break-even point using their business data, such as the cost of producing souvenirs (e.g., wooden keychains) and tour packages. Table 1 shows the survey results, where 60% of participants (9 people) strongly agreed and 40% (6 people) agreed that the BEP training helped them determine competitive selling prices. The BEP simulation using Microsoft Excel resulted in an average 15% reduction in selling prices compared to before the training, allowing MSMEs to offer products at more affordable prices without sacrificing profits. A total of 12 participants successfully completed the BEP simulation for their business, with an average calculation accuracy of 85%. This data shows a significant improvement in the financial literacy of MSME players.

Table 2. Partner Satisfaction Survey on Website Optimization

Likert Score	Description	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	0%
2	Disagree	0%
3	Neutral	0%
4	Agree	60%
5	Strongly Agree	40%

The Baluwarti Experience website (<https://www.baluwartiexperience.com>) was developed as a digital platform to promote Baluwarti's tourism destinations and MSME products. The website has 10 pages that include information on 12 tour packages (e.g. cultural tours and jamu making classes), 20 MSME products (such as batik and wooden souvenirs), and 5 monthly cultural events. The AI-based *chatbot* feature processed 50 online bookings in the first two months after launch (October-November 2024). The website management training, which was attended by 15 members for five hours, covered content creation, SEO optimization, and digital marketing strategies. Table 2 shows that 60% of participants (9 people) strongly agreed and 40% (6 people) agreed that the training improved their ability to manage digital content, including article updates and photo galleries. A total of 13 participants successfully uploaded new content to the website, with an average of 3 articles per participant during the mentoring period.

Table 3. Partner Satisfaction Survey on Digital Promotion/Marketing

Likert Score	Description	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	0%
2	Disagree	0%
3	Neutral	0%
4	Agree	60%
5	Strongly Agree	40%

Service quality and digital promotion improved after the training and website launch. The tourist satisfaction survey showed an average score of 4.3 on a scale of 5, up from 3.8 before the activity, based on 100 tourist respondents who visited Baluwarti between September and November 2024. This increase reflects the participants' ability to provide clearer information and more professional services to tourists. Table 3 shows that 60% of participants (9 out of 15) strongly agreed and 40% (6 people) agreed that digital promotion through the website increased sales of MSME products.

MSMEs, such as batik and specialty foods, within three months of the website launch. A total of 10 out of 15 participants reported a 20% increase in the number of online orders compared to the previous period. Digital promotion also increased the visibility of MSME products on social media, with an average of 500 monthly visits to the website from external channels.

Table 4. Partner Turnover Increase Survey

Likert Score	Description	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	0%
2	Disagree	0%
3	Neutral	40%
4	Agree	40%
5	Strongly Agree	20%

Tourist visits to Baluwarti increased significantly after the implementation of this community service activity. Data from the Teman Solo Community report shows that tourist visits rose from an average of 30 people per month before the activity to 70 people per month in October-November 2024. As many as 60% of tourists came from outside Surakarta, including 20% from foreign countries, such as Malaysia and the Netherlands. The most popular tour packages included a cultural tour to the abdi dalem house and a jamu-making class, with 25 and 15 groups of tourists participating during the period, respectively. Table 4 shows that 20% of participants (3 people) strongly agreed and 80% (12 people) agreed or were neutral that MSME turnover increased, with an average increase in turnover of 22% for products such as wooden souvenirs and specialty foods. Total MSME revenue from sales of tourism products increased from IDR 15 million per month to IDR 18.3 million per month. This increase shows the positive impact of training and digitization on the local economy.

5. Discussion

The results of community service activities in Baluwarti show success in improving understanding of local potential, financial literacy through Break Even Point (BEP), website management, service quality, and economic impact through increased tourist visits and MSME turnover. According to Butler (1991), effective tourist destination management relies on the involvement of local communities to ensure cultural and economic sustainability, which is reflected in the involvement of Komunitas Teman Solo in the training and management of the Baluwarti Experience. The 85% participants' increased understanding of Baluwarti's tourism

potential, such as traditional Javanese houses and karawitan activities, shows that local cultural awareness can strengthen destination identity, as described by Budiningtyas and Sirod (2021). This understanding is important to create an authentic tourism experience, which is in line with the principle of something to see, do, buy, and experience (Yoeti, 2002; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2011). Thus, the first training session successfully built a foundation for culture-based destination management, which supports the preservation of Javanese heritage.

The BEP training, which improved the ability of 15 MSME players to calculate the break-even point, reflects the importance of financial literacy in community-based tourism. Marhuni et al. (2017) confirmed that BEP helps MSMEs set competitive selling prices, as shown by a 15% reduction in selling prices for products such as wooden souvenirs. Research by Choe and Kim (2022) showed that financial literacy improved strategic decision-making, as seen from the 85% accuracy of BEP calculations by participants. This improvement allows Baluwarti MSMEs to compete in a wider market, especially through digital promotion. This result is also in line with the findings of Machado et al. (2020), which stated that simple tools such as Microsoft Excel can empower MSMEs in financial management. Thus, the BEP training not only improves business efficiency, but also supports local economic sustainability, which is one of the main objectives of this service.

The development of the Baluwarti Experience website, with 50 online bookings in two months and an 18% increase in MSME sales, underscores the role of digitization in increasing the visibility of the destination. According to Ritchie and Ritchie (2002), web-based information systems expand market reach, as seen from the 500 monthly visits to the website from external channels. Ibrahim and Susanti (2021) emphasize that interactive features such as chatbots enhance the tourist experience, as demonstrated by automated bookings in Baluwarti. Indonesia's tourism digitization trend, which is projected to reach pre-pandemic levels by 2023 (Purwowidhu, 2023), suggests that this website puts Baluwarti at the forefront of digital transformation. Research by Gretzel et al. (2021) highlights that digitization not only improves promotion, but also empowers local communities through digital skills, as achieved through the website management training for 15 participants. The website thus became a strategic tool to strengthen global marketing and destination administration.

The increase in tourist visits from 30 to 70 people per month, with 60% of tourists from outside Surakarta, shows a significant impact on the economy and visibility of Baluwarti. Baloch et al. (2023) asserted that community-based tourism can increase local income while preserving culture, as seen from a 22% increase in MSME turnover. This finding is supported by Mbaiwa (2021), who found that community involvement in cultural tourism creates a sustainable economic impact. The increase in tourist satisfaction scores from 3.8 to 4.3 also reflects an improvement in service quality, which is consistent with Buhalis and Law's (2018) findings on the importance of professional services in digital tourism. This improvement suggests that a combination of training, digitization, and mentoring can create a competitive tourism model.

The implications of these findings are significant for the management of community-based tourism destinations. First, this approach can be replicated in other cultural destinations in Indonesia to improve the financial and digital literacy of local communities, as supported by Scheyvens and Biddulph (2023). Second, the increase in visitation and turnover demonstrates Baluwarti's potential as a sustainable tourism model, which is aligned with sustainable development goals (Gössling & Hall, 2019). Third, the preservation of Javanese culture through the Baluwarti Experience can be strengthened by broader digital promotion, such as integration with global social media platforms (Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2023). The sustainability of this activity depends on continuous mentoring to ensure the

community can manage the website independently, as well as local policy support for the promotion of cultural tourism.

6. Conclusion

The community service activities in Baluwarti, Surakarta, successfully achieved the goal of improving the quality of services, marketing, and income of MSMEs through training, website development, and mentoring. The first training session improved 85% of Teman Solo Community members' understanding of Baluwarti's cultural tourism potential, such as traditional Javanese houses and karawitan activities. Break Even Point (BEP) training enabled 15 MSME players to calculate a 15% more competitive selling price, with calculation accuracy reaching 85%. The Baluwarti Experience website, with 10 pages and a chatbot feature that processed 50 bookings in two months, increased destination visibility and MSME sales by 18%. Tourist visits rose from 30 to 70 people per month, with MSME turnover increasing by 22%, showing significant economic impact. Traveler satisfaction scores also increased from 3.8 to 4.3 on a scale of 5, reflecting improved service quality.

This finding is in line with the initial objective of empowering the Teman Solo Community through information technology and financial literacy. According to Baloch et al. (2023), community-based tourism supports the preservation of local culture and economy, which is reflected in the success of the Baluwarti Experience in promoting Javanese heritage. Digitalization through websites, as described by Ritchie and Ritchie (2002), expands market reach, which is evident from foreign tourist visits and increased turnover. Increased financial literacy also supports the sustainability of MSMEs, in accordance with the findings of Marhuni et al. (2017) on the importance of BEP in business management.

For sustainability, ongoing assistance is needed so that Komunitas Teman Solo can manage the website independently and update content regularly. Development of website features, such as integration with global social media platforms, can further increase visibility. Continued training on digital marketing and visit data analysis is also recommended to maximize economic impact. This model can be replicated in other cultural destinations in Indonesia, with the support of local policies for sustainable tourism. This activity demonstrates that a combination of technology, financial literacy, and community engagement can create competitive and sustainable tourism destinations.

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Acknowledgment

We would like to thank Komunitas Teman Solo for their cooperation and enthusiasm in this community service activity. Appreciation is also extended to the Baluwarti Village Government and the university IT team who supported the website development. Funding support from the university and the active participation of tourists were instrumental in the success of this project. Hopefully this cooperation will continue to advance community-based tourism in Baluwarti.

Funding Information

This research did not receive any funding.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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