

Partnership Models to Strengthen the Promotion of Sustainable Tourism at Gunung Padang Site, Tourism Destination, West Java, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The Gunung Padang site in West Java is a cultural and historical tourism destination with great potential to attract domestic and international tourists. However, the promotion of this destination still faces several challenges, including limited infrastructure, suboptimal use of digital technology-based promotions, and a lack of strong synergy among stakeholders. This International Community Service Activity aims to develop an effective partnership model through the Penta Helix model, thereby strengthening the promotion of the Gunung Padang Site in West Java, Indonesia. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study collected data through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis, involving local government officials, site managers, local communities, academics, and tourism industry players. The results of this community service activity show that the Pentahelix-based partnership model (government, academics, business sector, community, and media) can increase synergy in the promotional strategy for the Gunung Padang site destination in West Java. Through this collaborative activity, we can optimize digital promotion and develop integrated tourism packages. At the same time, we can increase local community involvement to support destination sustainability. Implementing this inclusive partnership model effectively strengthens the competitiveness of the Gunung Padang Site as a leading tourism destination in West Java.

Keywords: Gunung Padang Sites, Sustainable Tourism, Partnership, Penta-Helix Model



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INTRODUCTION

Introduction Tourism is one sector that can have a significant impact on the country's economy (Wandini et al., 2024). The development of this sector is instrumental in generating employment opportunities and fostering the growth of diverse economic enterprises in regions surrounding tourist destinations. Tourism promotion is a series of communication strategies designed to build awareness, generate interest, and encourage tourists to visit a destination.

This strategy includes destination branding, digital marketing, and mass media outreach. More than just sales, modern tourism promotion focuses on building a strong image and delivering a unique experience to potential tourists. Utilizing digital technologies, such as social media, websites, and virtual tours, is crucial to reaching a broader audience and crafting an engaging narrative.

In Indonesia, the cultural and historical tourism sector plays a strategic role. Tourism plays a crucial role in driving a region's economy. This phenomenon is proven to be relevant and significant in the context of West Java in 2023 (Wandini et al., 2024). West Java, as one of the most populous and prominent provinces in Indonesia, possesses substantial tourism potential due to its diverse natural, cultural, historical, and culinary attractions. The Gunung Padang Site in Cianjur Regency, West Java, is undergoing rapid development as a tourist destination. This tourist destination stands out as one that holds extraordinary potential.

The Gunung Padang megalithic site in Karyamukti Village, Campaka District, Cianjur, West Java, is the largest megalithic heritage site in Southeast Asia, covering 3,132.15 square meters. The site, which is located at coordinates 6057'LS 10701'BT, approximately 50 kilometers southwest of the city of Cianjur, West Java, is in the form of a terraced pyramid consisting of five terraces (Ramadina, 2013). Gunung Padang, thought to be a stepped pyramid and claimed as the oldest pyramid in the world, is a megalithic site. Its arrangement of basaltic andesite stones and the surrounding natural panorama attract travelers from around the globe (Edi Hermawan & Hilman, 2016).



Figure 1. Gunung Padang Sites Destination (Source: Observation 2025)

The Gunung Padang site has great potential as a historical and spiritual tourism asset that can be developed sustainably. The Gunung Padang site attracts tourists and scientists because of its stone structures, which date back to 8000 BC (Marshanda et al., 2023). According to the most recent scientific study, provided by Nanang Sukmana, Coordinator of the Gunung Padang Volunteer Guards, when the Community Service Implementation Team made field observations, the site was thought to be older than the Egyptian Pyramids. Covering an area of 30 hectares, this site is believed to be an ancient place of worship with significant historical value. Efforts to preserve the Gunung Padang site require support from various parties, including the government, the community, academics, and others interested in or concerned with its existence (Edi Hermawan & Hilman, 2016).

However, this site is a cultural heritage asset in Cianjur, which has an interesting history and enormous potential; in fact, it is on its way to becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site (Hamzah et al., 2021). However, behind this potential lies many challenges that require attention

from the government, so that this cultural heritage can continue to fulfill its true function, which must be well-maintained, and also become a tourist destination that provides optimal satisfaction to tourists, driving its development. Initial analysis indicates that several major challenges hinder the development of the Gunung Padang site. These challenges include limited supporting infrastructure, suboptimal use of digital technology, and weak synergy among stakeholders. Although the Gunung Padang Site Tourism Village has been named one of the 50 best tourism villages by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in 2021/2022. Digital promotion carried out by the management is still uneven and is limited to the use of social media such as Facebook (Akhirson et al., 2023). These limitations demonstrate the need for a more integrated approach and collaborative partnerships to strengthen efforts to promote this tourism destination.

Partnership and empowerment models are seen from the word partnership, and come from the root word partner. Partner can be translated as “partner, soul mate, ally, or companion. Meanwhile, a partnership refers to an association. It is a form of cooperation between two or more parties who agree to work together to strengthen their abilities in a specific business sector or goal, and achieve better results (Daraba et al., 2020). The Republic of Indonesia, Law Number 9 of 1995, defines partnership as a business collaboration between small and medium-sized businesses or large businesses, accompanied by support and development from medium or large businesses, based on the principles of mutual benefit, mutual strengthening, and mutual benefit (Priyono, 2018). Partnerships implemented in tourism development and management must have a clear concept and provide benefits to the surrounding community (Kurniawan et al., 2013). Furthermore, three key principles can be identified that must be understood in building an effective partnership, namely: the Principle of Equity, where all parties have equal standing; the Principle of Openness, which encourages transparency in every process; and the Principle of Mutual Benefit, where the partnership must provide positive benefits for all parties involved (Priyono, 2018). In the context of tourism, strong partnerships can drive productivity and sustainable development at the regional level.

Starting from these problems, a partnership model through a pentahelix-based approach is a relevant strategic solution. The pentahelix model encompasses synergy among five primary elements: government, academia, the business sector, communities, and the media (Septadiani et al., 2022). The Pentahelix model is a collaborative framework that involves five main stakeholders in the development of a sector, including tourism. Furthermore, according to Rochaeni et al. (2022), increasing visitor numbers is also a key component of tourism development efforts through the Pentahelix model. One of the strategies for developing the tourism sector that has been implemented is the application of the Pentahelix concept, which was initially initiated by the Minister of Tourism Arif Yahya and then codified in the Regulation of the Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2016 concerning Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism Destination Development. Septadiani et al. (2022) explain that the Pentahelix model aims to encourage the tourism industry and system by increasing the role of partners, such as the government, academics, business actors, communities, and the media. The objective is to generate social value and promote environmental sustainability through tourism activities. The objective is to generate social value and promote environmental sustainability through tourism activities. According to Septadiani (2022), the five partner actors according to the Pentahelix model in this Community Service activity can be described as in Figure 2.

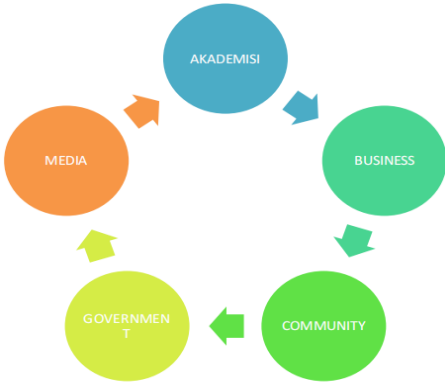


Figure 2. Pentahelix Model as Partnership Model in This Study (Source: Rochaeni et al. (2022)

Furthermore, it can be explained that the Community Service Partners involved in this activity, according to the Pentahelix Model, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Community Service Activity Partners According to the Pentahelix Model		
Partners in the Pentahelix Model	Partners in This Activity	Partner Role
Government	Cianjur Regency Government, West Java Province	Acting as a regulator, policymaker, and controller that provides a legal framework, infrastructure, and financial support.
Academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Perbanas Institute, Jakarta, IndonesiaUniversiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Johor, MalaysiaUniversity of Economics and Finance (UEF), Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam	Acting as conceptualists and sources of knowledge, they provide relevant research findings, ideas, and innovations for the development of competitive and sustainable tourism.
Business Sector	Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI)	Acting as a facilitator that creates added value through business activities, such as tourism product development, investment, and service provision.
Community	Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis is an abbreviation of Kelompok Dasar Wisata, in Indonesian) Gunung Padang Cultural Heritage Site, Karyamukti Village, Campaka District, Cianjur, West Java	Acting as accelerators and prime movers, local communities take the initiative and act as liaisons between stakeholders, while also serving as guardians of local culture and the natural environment in their areas.
Media	Pasundan Post, Cianjur	Acting as an information disseminator who publishes tourism information, builds an

	image, and carries out promotional campaigns.
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Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

In short, Maharani et al.,(2020) also stated that to realize sustainable tourism development, synergistic collaboration is needed between five main components, namely the government as a regulator and facilitator, academics as a source of knowledge and innovation, the private sector as a supporter of investment and business development, communities/associations as representatives of community interests, and the media as a means of communication and promotion. Sustainable tourism is a tourism development concept that is not only oriented towards economic profit, but also considers socio-cultural and environmental aspects. This principle emphasizes the importance of involving local communities in destination management and the conservation of cultural and natural resources. Tourism management and development require coordination and collaboration between the government, tourism businesses, communities, academics, and the media to develop tourism potential. This collaboration is known as the Pentahelix partnership model (Aribowo et al., 2018).

This study conducts a comparative analysis of the implementation of the Pentahelix partnership model across multiple case studies in Indonesia, providing a comprehensive understanding of its application.

The Case of Nglanggeran Tourist Village, Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta (Sumarni et al., 2020):

The implementation in Nglanggeran is known as a bottom-up model. The initial initiative came from the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis, its Indonesian acronym), which is passionate about destination management and environmental conservation. It is this community's readiness and seriousness that then builds trust and attracts support from other parties, including the government, which provides facilities and grants, academics who offer mentoring, and the business sector, which distributes CSR funds. The Nglanggeran model shows that successful collaboration can start from strong grassroots initiatives.

The case of Lerep Tourism Village, West Ungaran, Central Java (Esariti et al., 2023):

In contrast, implementation in Lerep Tourism Village shows a top-down approach, where the government is the most dominant actor. The government acts as an initiator, policy maker, and main liaison with third parties. This partnership has produced positive results, such as job creation and cultural preservation. However, the research also highlights challenges, including stakeholder conflicts and greater community reliance on external parties.

The Case of Perlang Tourist Village, Bangka Belitung (Maulana et al., 2023):

The implementation of the Pentahelix model in Perlang Village is considered to have run optimally. Collaboration between actors has been well-established, and each party has maximized its role. Academics act as conceptualizers through the Community Service Program (KKN), businesses act as enablers, increasing economic value, the community acts as an accelerator, the government acts as a regulator, and the media acts as an expander for publication.

The Case of Malela Waterfall, West Bandung Regency, West Java (Suherni et al., 2022):

Research at Curug Malela revealed that collaboration between pentahelix actors has not been optimal. Although academics have the knowledge to know the tourism potential, their role has not been active due to a lack of government-initiated collaboration. This demonstrates the crucial importance of government initiatives to involve all stakeholders.

These case studies provide important lessons. The success of the pentahelix model depends heavily on a balance of roles and initiatives. The Nglanggeran model, which relies on community initiatives, demonstrates the power of a bottom-up approach. Meanwhile, Lerep

demonstrates that a top-down, government-dominated model has the potential to create new challenges. This experience is particularly relevant to the Gunung Padang site, which is now facing a major government initiative in the 2025 restoration project. Careful planning is needed to combine the strengths of government initiatives. With local community empowerment, we can create a synergistic and sustainable hybrid model.

As a commitment to cultural and scientific preservation, Perbanas Institute held an international Community Service Student Creativity Program (PKM) activity at the Gunung Padang megalithic site. In the PKM activity, which was supported by BRI, Perbanas Institute students presented various strategic ideas for the development of the area. The main focus includes improving community welfare, optimizing the potential of tourist villages, utilizing productive waqf, and strengthening the creative economy based on local culture. "We are focusing on efforts to improve community welfare, optimize tourist villages, utilize waqf, and develop sustainable creative economy strategies," said Hardy Hermawan, a student participating in the PKM. Patria Laksamana, Director of Research and Community Service at Perbanas Institute, expressed his hope that this program would be the beginning of the institution's long-term contribution to site preservation and empowerment of the surrounding community. Local village officials also welcomed this initiative. Muhammad Samsul, a village representative, expressed his appreciation for the support from Perbanas and BRI. "We are committed to continuing to develop Gunung Padang for the welfare of the residents," he said. Interestingly, the activity was also attended by eight international students from Malaysia and Vietnam who are currently undergoing a study exchange program at the Perbanas Institute. They learned firsthand about the history and legends of Gunung Padang and are committed to introducing the site to the international academic community. This activity is a clear demonstration of the synergy between higher education, the business world, and the community in preserving cultural heritage while promoting inclusive and sustainable local development.

This International Community Service activity aims to develop a partnership model to strengthen sustainable tourism promotion for the Gunung Padang site destination in West Java.. The targets of the activities carried out include:

- 1) Identifying the challenges and opportunities for promoting the Gunung Padang Site Destination
- 2) Conducting Focus Group Discussions to examine the role of partners according to the Pentahelix Model in strengthening the promotion and development of sustainable tourism.

This International Community Service activity is expected to provide benefits, both academically and practically. Academically, these findings will contribute to the existing literature on partnerships and the promotion of tourism destinations in Indonesia. Practically, this research provides strategic partnership-based recommendations for stakeholders and supports local governments in sustainable tourism planning.

METHOD

This International Community Service activity was attended by academics from representatives of three universities in Southeast Asia, namely lecturers and students from Universiti Teknologi Mara, Johor, Malaysia, several students from the University of Economic and Finance, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, as well as lecturers, Doctoral Program students, and undergraduate program students from Perbanas Institute, Jakarta, Indonesia.

The event, which was held on September 18, 2025, was organized by the Directorate of Research and Community Service of Perbanas Institute Jakarta, Indonesia, with the full support of activity partners from BRI, the Cianjur Regency Government, and the Gunung Padang Cultural Heritage Site Tourism Awareness Group, Karyamukti Village, Campaka District, Cianjur, West Java, as well as an electronic mass media Pasundan Post, Cianjur.



Figure 3. International Community Service Team for Gunung Pada Sites Destination

The implementation of this Community Service Activity was carried out using direct observation methods in the field. The Directorate of Research and Community Service of Perbanas Institute-Jakarta, as the organizer of this activity, provided its views on the results of the identification of opportunities, challenges, and promotion of the Gunung Padang tourist destination. Furthermore, focus group discussions (Creswell & Creswell, 2023) were conducted with these community service partners to develop a partnership model based on the pentahelix model (Septadiani et al., 2022) for sustainable tourism at the Gunung Padang tourist destination site. The activity was closed with the provision of trash bins as a form of BRI's concern for a tourist environment that is clean from trash.

Data analysis was conducted specifically to discuss the results of the partner group discussions in a focused manner regarding the development of a partnership model using the Pentahelix Model. The proposed partnership model for the Gunung Padang Site must prioritize synergistic and integrated partnerships. This model should not rely solely on the initiative of one party but should also balance the strengths of each actor, thus achieving success in promoting the Gunung Padang Site destination.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the targets that have been set in the International Community Service activity plan, the results of this community service activity and its discussion are as follows:

1. Results of the Presentation at the Start of Community Service Activities regarding the Identification of Opportunities and Challenges in Promoting the Gunung Padang Site Destination

In the initial stage of this activity, the Directorate of Research and Community Service, Perbanas Institute, represented by Patria Laksamana, PhD, gave a presentation to the participants about the importance of this tourist destination related to the results of the identification of opportunities, challenges, and promotion of the Gunung Padang Site tourist destination.

This tourism potential offers opportunities that encompass archaeological, historical, and spiritual aspects, appealing to travelers seeking an educational and meaningful experience.

The Gunung Padang site is located in Karya Mukti Village, Campaka District, Cianjur Regency, West Java, at an altitude of 885 meters above sea level. This destination is renowned for its distinctive terraced pyramid formations and basaltic andesite rocks, making it one of the most significant archaeological sites in Indonesia.

Despite its strong appeal, the promotion of this destination still faces several significant challenges. First, local government attention to accessibility remains limited, hindering large tourist visits. Second, this destination lacks strong, coordinated branding and synergy with the business sector to effectively communicate its unique value. Third, the use of digital technology for promotion is still minimal, and mass media support is still lacking. Fourth, there is a lack of improvement in tourism performance by the local community to attract attention, although some efforts have been made by the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis, its Indonesian acronym). Fifth, surveys and studies also indicate that the managers of the Gunung Padang tourist attraction still rely on Facebook as their primary medium for digital marketing. There is a lack of other electronic media to promote this cultural tourism.



Figure 4. Initial Activities of International Community Service in Gunung Padang Sites Destination

2. Results of Focus Group Discussions Regarding the Role of Partners in the Pentahelix Model for Strengthening the Promotion of the Cultural Tourism Destination of the Gunung Padang Site

Strengthening the Promotion of the Gunung Padang Cultural Tourism Destination. The partnership model and synergy between partners within the pentahelix model are key to overcoming these challenges. Currently, each partner has fulfilled their respective roles, albeit with varying levels of contribution in the focus group discussions.



Figure 5. Focus Group Discussion Activity in International Community Service
Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

(1) Government Partner:

Cianjur Regency Government, West Java Province

Group Representative:

Hadi Sutrisna, SE, MM, CHA, Tourism Expert

Discussion results:

The Cianjur Regency Government plays a role in policymaking, infrastructure provision, and official promotion. It is the initiator of the Gunung Padang Site destination project in 2025. The government plays a key role as a catalyst in cross-sector coordination.

(2) Academic Partners:

Perbanas Institute Jakarta, Indonesia, UEF Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and UiTM Johor, Malaysia

Group Representatives:

- Raka Pahlevi, mahasiswa Sistem Informasi Perbanas Institute, Jakarta, Indonesia.
- Haniza Mahadi, Mahasiswi Fakultas Business dan Econonis, UiTM Johor, Malaysia
- Trần Trương Thanh Trang, UEF, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Discussion results:

Academics (lecturers and students) carry out this international community service and create related research ideas and concepts. It is also hoped that academic researchers from outside the country can participate in studying this cultural destination.

(3) Business Partner:

Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI)

Group Representative:

Budi Santosa, Public Service staff, BRI

Discussion results:

BRI, as an enabler and investor, can support the performance of this cultural tourism or special sponsorship in this activity.

(4) Community Partner:

Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) of the Gunung Padang Cultural Heritage Site, Karyamukti Village, Campaka District, Cianjur, West Java

Group Representative:

Zenal Aripin, Head of Pokdarwis and Manager of the Gunung Padang Site

Discussion results:

Act as a local guide and manager of local cultural offerings and MSMEs. Develop bottom-up initiatives to balance government initiatives.

(5) Community Partner:

Pasundan Post-Cianjur, West Java

Group Representative:

Jan Supriatna, Journalist for Pasundan Post

Discussion results:

Publication of digital information and promotion through electronic media. Creating a coordinated and integrated promotional campaign for this cultural tourism development project.

Discussion

The implementation of the partnership model (Priyono, 2018; Alfiani et al. 2024) to strengthen the promotion of the Gunung Padang site destination using the Pentahelix model will certainly be different from other tourist destinations. Comparison of the Implementation of the Pentahelix Model: Case Study of Mount Padang vs. Other Destinations can be shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of Pentahelix Model Implementation:
Case Study of Mount Padang vs. Other Destinations

Case study	Initiative Type	The Role of Dominant Actor	Main Challenges	Key Results/Impact
Nglanggeran. Gunungkidul Regency (Sumarni et al., 2020)	Bottom-up	Local communities (Pokdarwis)	Initially, communication with external parties was not intensive.	Increasing attractiveness, gaining trust from investors and donors, and realizing sustainable tourism.
Lerep, Ungaran Barat Regency (Esariti et al., 2023)	Top-down	Government	Potential for conflict and community dependence on third parties.	Job creation, cultural preservation, and improving the quality of life of the community.
Perlang Tourist Village, Bangka Belitung (Maulana et al., 2023)	Top-down	Collaboration Actors	Efforts to strengthen partnerships between the actors involved	The government encourages partnership efforts to jointly strengthen the local economy.
Malela Waterfall, West Bandung Regency, West Java (Suherni et al., 2022)	Top-down	Government	Partnerships are not optimal due to a lack of initiative from the Government	The importance of government initiatives to involve all stakeholders to optimize pentahelix actors
Gunung Padang, Cianjur Regency (This study.,2025)	<i>Hybrid</i> (now Top-down from the government)	Government & Academics	Weak synergy and uneven digital promotion.	A great opportunity for integrated synergy through the momentum of the 2025 site restoration.

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

An effective partnership model for the Gunung Padang Site must combine the strengths of top-down government initiatives with bottom-up empowerment of local communities.

Digital Marketing Integration:

Digital promotions need to be integrated beyond just Facebook (Akhirson et al., 2023). This strategy should include the creation of engaging digital content, such as professional promotional videos, virtual tours, and comprehensive website optimization. Social media campaigns should be coordinated across government, media, and the community to build a

consistent and compelling narrative.

History-Culture Based Destination Branding:

Branding for the Gunung Padang site should highlight its unique historical, archaeological, and cultural significance (Hamzah et al., 2021). Promotional narratives can highlight the “site preservation journey” through restoration projects, attracting tourists with a particular interest in history and conservation.

Local Community Empowerment:

As demonstrated by the success of Nglanggeran (Sumarni et al., 2020) Local communities must be empowered as leading "tourism ambassadors." Capacity building through training in tourism management, communication, and MSME management is essential to ensure they can manage tourism activities professionally and independently.

Sustainability Strategy:

Promotion must be closely linked to conservation efforts and local economic development (Yuliawan et al., 2025). This model ensures that the benefits of tourism not only increase the number of visits but also provide real positive impacts for the community, such as increased income and cultural preservation.

CONCLUSION

In short, this International Community Service Program aims to emphasize the development of a partnership model through the application of the Pentahelix model to strengthen the promotion of the Gunung Padang tourist destination in West Java. The implementation of this community service activity is based on an initial study from the Directorate of Research and Community Service-Perbanas Institute Jakarta, which stated that there are opportunities, challenges, and promotions that must be carried out through the Pentahelix Partnership model, which is an effective strategy model to strengthen the promotion of the Gunung Padang Site.

The Focus Group Discussion results indicate that the Cianjur Regency Government in West Java Province catalyzes cross-sector coordination. Academics from both domestic and international universities have committed to ongoing research and community service activities for this cultural destination. The community, represented by Pokdarwis, accelerates the development of local culture and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The business sector, exemplified by BRI, contributes to strengthening promotional efforts. Additionally, the media functions as a publicizer, enabling more integrated and sustainable promotion of the Gunung Padang Site through collaborative efforts. When compared to implementation in other tourist destinations, an effective partnership model for the Gunung Padang Site must combine the strengths of top-down government initiatives with bottom-up local community empowerment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To implement an effective partnership model, this study provides several policy recommendations:

1. Government: Collaborative and inclusive promotional policies need to be developed. The government must ensure that restoration projects focus not only on the physical aspects of the site but also serve as a platform for empowering local communities and businesses.
2. Academics and BRIN: Expected to continue multidisciplinary research and disseminate the results to the public and stakeholders. Valid, data-based information from research results will form the foundation for education-based promotion.
3. Community: The capacity of local communities needs to be strengthened so they can

function as competent "tourism ambassadors" ("PokDarWis" or Tourism Awareness Groups). Bottom-up initiatives from communities should be encouraged to maintain balance with top-down initiatives from the government.

4. Business and Private Sector: It is expected that Community Social Responsibility (CSR) from various business companies will take a more active role through public-private partnership schemes to invest in infrastructure and develop integrated tourism packages, including digital promotions.
5. Media: It is necessary to optimize digital promotion beyond existing platforms and create campaigns that are integrated with the site's preservation narrative, which can attract the interest

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