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Virtual Tour: Supporting Tourism Promotion in Benteng Alla' South Sulawesi

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ABSTRACT

Benteng Alla is one of the historical sites that needs to be developed as an international tourist destination. It is located in Benteng Alla Utara Village, Baroko District, Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi. This historical heritage has a beautiful panorama, historical value, and strategic location to visit as a tourist destination. Virtual tourism as an online interactive system is one of promotion strategies that could attract tourists to visit or even provide them some information needed before visiting Benteng Alla. The collection data in this community service employed observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. The document process was carried out by taking picture and videos that highlight the main sites and access to the location of Benteng Alla. These documentation footages then edited and packaged into a virtual tour video which could be widely accessed through YouTube platform. This online tour video is a digital media supporting virtual tours to promote Benteng Alla tourist destination nationally and internationally.

1. Introduction

Tourism has a great potential to build the national economy. As claimed by [Lubis & Osman, \(2014\)](#), "tourism is able to generate economic growth in Indonesia, countries in Southeast Asia and even in Asia". The tourism sector can create business opportunities and jobs, improve income levels, encourage equitable distribution of population income, and increase state revenue from tax sector. The tourism sector can stimulate various production sectors as well as contribute directly to projects of cultural facilities and environmental preservation which might provide benefits to both the local community and tourists ([Soebagyo, 2012](#)). The rapid development of tourism in Indonesia, include in South Sulawesi, has brought many changes, especially in the concept and purpose of traveling. Tourists are no longer merely enjoy the natural beauty of tourist attractions with all those facilities. Nowadays, many tourists also want to enjoy the freedom of traveling by directly interacting with the environment and local communities. This change has encouraged the emergence of rural tourism concept which is marked by the emergence of "tourist villages" in many provinces in Indonesia ([Suyanti, 2013](#)).

Enrekang Regency has a lot of tourism potential that needs to be developed and managed professionally by local government or third parties. One of the existing tourism potentials, especially in Enrekang Regency, is *Benteng Alla*, which has tourism potential and strategic value with beautiful scenery and city view to Tana Toraja. However, these natural potentials have not been widely known by the public because there is no promotional media depicting the tourist attraction of *Benteng Alla*. As a result, potential tourist, both domestic and foreign, do not being maximally familiar with this tourist attraction. The historical site of *Benteng Alla* is located in *Benteng Alla Utara* village, Baroko District, Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Benteng Alla Utara village was chosen as the location for community service because this village has natural resources that have the potential to be marketed at national and international levels such as plantation products. Coffee, one of plantation products of this area, has been widely known nationally. Unfortunately, potential tourism destinations especially *Benteng Alla* has not widely known yet. In fact, it has a beautiful panorama, historical value, and strategic location which is directly adjacent to Tana Toraja as an internationally renowned tourist destination. *Benteng Alla* as a cultural heritage, which has an important role for cultural and historical development, needs to be well protected and preserved. As the nation's cultural wealth, the cultural heritage of *Benteng Alla* can be utilized for religious, social, tourism, educational, scientific, and cultural purposes for the young generation.

Tourism is currently being a very large industrial sector and has strategic roles in economic development. Global tourism development is experiencing a very rapid growth and providing large contribution to economy for the community welfare ([Abdillah, 2017](#)). The lack of tourism management in *Benteng Alla* has an impact on the hampered development and value of promotion, resulted in no significant increase of local income. Moreover, unempowered local human resources, weak public relations, and stagnant marketing have caused this tourism potential to not maximally develop.

One effective way to introduce *Benteng Alla* as tourist destination is utilizing digital promotion. Technological advances have remarkably created vast changes to our cultural patterns. The increase in the number of tourists is caused by the needs of youth communities who prioritize vacations as part of their lifestyle to unwind from daily routine. Digital era makes it easier for tourists to get all the information about tourist destination needed on their vacation. In addition, the tourism ecosystem has changed significantly, especially for millennial generation who use digital and social media to find all tourist destination information. Millennial travelers tend to choose "instagrammable" tourist destinations. Taking selfies or good photos has become an important part of traveling ([Lo & McKercher, 2015](#)). This trend encourages the emergence of a digital destination development concept, where a tourist destination is deliberately created through digital approach with a selfie spot destination concept ([Imam, 2017](#)). Therefore, the digital and social media currently becomes a very potential factor to promote tourist destinations.

Virtual tourism might become the most strategic way to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of tourism destination promotion (Huang *et al.*, 2017; Sigala, 2018; Vichivanives & Ralangarm, 2015; Xiang, 2018). Therefore, virtual tourism also could be implemented as a modern strategy to promote and provide updated information about *Benteng Alla* as well as other potentials tourist destinations in the *Benteng Alla Utara* village. This promotion concept offers convenience and easiness for tourist to get information before visiting *Benteng Alla* which might increase the number of visitors.

Therefore, one of the outputs of this community service is to create virtual tours which can be easily accessed on social media such as YouTube platform. This virtual tourism is expected to be a good strategy to promote *Benteng Alla* nationally and internationally. Eventually, *Benteng Alla Utara* village can also become a tourist village as well as a tourist destination for tourists before visiting Tana Toraja.

2. Methods

This community service was carried out in two main stages: collecting data at service program location and developing virtual tour videos as product. In the first stage, observation, interviews, and documentation techniques were employed to collect the data. Observation is the process of gathering open-ended firsthand information by observing people and places/locations at a research field (Creswell, 2009). Observation activities were carried out by conducting a direct review of the research object and noting relevant phenomena under study to obtain the required information. In this community service activity, researchers directly observed to service program location: historical site of *Benteng Alla*, which is located in the *Benteng Alla Utara* village, Baroko District, Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi. In observation activities, researchers visited and observed service object to obtain data related to the conditions and tourism potential of *Benteng Alla*.

To obtain more in-depth information, the next data collection process was carried out by conducting direct interviews with subdistrict head and community leaders of *Benteng Alla Utara* village. Using semi-structured interviews, the researchers collected data about condition of the historical site of *Benteng Alla*, tourism potential in *Benteng Alla Utara* village and its surroundings, as well as promotion aspects of these tourist destinations. In addition, researchers also collected document in the form of photos and videos of *Benteng Alla* historical site using a camera and video recorder. The videos do not only highlight the main locations of *Benteng Alla* historical site, but also contain its road access, tourist sites around the main historical site area, as well as some interesting areas in *Benteng Alla Utara* village that also have the potential to become tourist attractions.

Qualitative data from observations and interviews were then analyzed using several analysis stages: data reduction, data display, as well as drawing conclusions and verification (Miles *et al.*, 2014). In addition, the photos and video footages documents were then collected, edited using “after effect” software and packaged into a video product. This promotional video was uploaded to the YouTube platform as a form of digitizing the historical site of *Benteng Alla* and the potential of the surrounding tourist area. The video product was published as a digital media supporting virtual tours to promote *Benteng Alla* tourist destination.

3. Results and dicussion

The synergy between universities and the local community will make it easier for communities and villages to grow into villages that are tourism-minded and have selling points for local culture values. The existing potentials enable a village to be able to develop as a tourist destination. Tourism is an important and meaningful source of foreign exchange for development, but in fact activities in the tourism industry can have a negative impact, such as declining environmental quality, shifting local culture and socio-economic disparities between communities. This is the background for making virtual tours because they are very helpful and have a good impact on the village government, with virtual tours,

people will realize that village-run tourism is also able to compete with other tours developed by the private sector.

To develop the tourist villages, especially in *Benteng Alla*, there should be the formation of a tourism awareness group, which is carried out in stages through a process involving all existing stakeholders, be it the community itself, the village government and even the district government. The stages carried out in the socialization of tourism village development activities include:

3.1. Preparation Stage

Development of an agro-tourism-based tourism village in Baroko District, *Benteng Alla Utara* Village. The stages of preparation carried out include:

- a. It is merely in the form of potential draft that will be developed to become a tourist destination
- b. The development of tourism facilities and infrastructure is still very limited
- c. There are still very few visitors who visit the agro-tourism village
- d. There is no awareness of the surrounding community about developing into an agro-tourism village or growing
- e. Assistance is totally needed
- f. The management is still carried out by local communities
- g. Designing virtual tours to help promote tourism to the wider community.

3.2. The Implementation of Socialization

Judging from the results of the previous review, digital-based advice and infrastructure are needed, so that agro-tourism villages become more known by the surrounding community and broadly by the public. Socialization is a place to motivate the community to develop *Benteng Alla Utara* village into a tourist area based on agro-tourism.

3.3. Evaluation of Target Achievement

After the implementation of this service activity, it is expected that the objectives of the activity are:

- a. The village government understands the importance of developing a tourist village through the formation of a tourism awareness group
- b. The growing motivation of the community to do agro-tourism branding for *Benteng Alla Utara* village.
- c. The village government applies agro-tourism village branding through social media.
- d. There is a virtual tour to make it easier and spread widely about the agro-tourism of *Benteng Alla Utara* village.

The success key of a tourism village is the readiness of all residents and local communities to accept and open themselves to change. There are several positive impacts in making virtual tours to the local community. The role in taking photos and videos of Fort Alla Utara made the community recognize and learn about the importance of multimedia. In addition, virtual tour technology is expected to be able to support the promotion process and become a motivation for tourism managers.

4. Conclusions

Benteng Alla Utara has great potentials to become a globally recognized tourist village destination. There several stages needed to develop a tourist village, namely: preparation stage, implementation of socialization, and evaluating of target achievement. Socialize the potential of *Benteng Alla Utara* as a tourist village can be started through virtual tours project. Online media such as YouTube platform could be utilized as a digital media supporting virtual tours to globally promote *Benteng Alla* as tourist destination.

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