

# Exploring the Role of Micro-Influencers in Influencing Tourist Perception of Arjasa Traditional Village, Jember Regency

Rusli Akhmad Junaedi<sup>\*1</sup>, Muhammad Fikri<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Nauval Ikbar<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Politeknik Negeri Jember

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Padjajaran

<sup>3</sup>Politeknik Negeri Jember

\*rusliakhmadj@gmail.com

## Abstract

Social media acts as the primary catalyst changing how travel destinations are marketed and consumed in the era of digital disruption. This study investigates how the community and managers of Arjasa Traditional Village view the role of micro-influencers in building images and drawing visits. Researchers utilize a qualitative approach with interpretive phenomenological research to capture the subjective experiences of local actors. Data was gathered through participatory observation and in-depth interviews with 9 informants including village leaders, MSME owners, and digital creators. Results show that micro-influencers provide the ability to convey authenticity and build high trust through personal communication. Using these digital agents in marketing strategies is vital for developing a positive village image and driving organic visits.

**Keywords:** Arjasa traditional village; Micro-influencer; Social media marketing; Traveler perception; Tourism communication

## Introduction

Information and communication technology acts as a primary catalyst, changing how global tourism destinations are marketed (Satriawati et al., 2022). Travelers rely on social media as a first source for trip inspiration (Junaedi, 2025). Digital platforms offer 1 way to reach audiences more efficiently than conventional media (Utomo et al., 2025). User-generated content helps build authentic images in the international market (Utomo et al., 2025). Social media creates emotional ties between destinations and visitors (Junaedi et al., 2025). Influencer-curated material plays a key role in luring tourists and shaping impressions of tourism locations (Junaedi et al., 2025).

Influencer marketing now captures the main concern of tourism industry players aiming for digital impact (De Veirman et al., 2017). Macro-influencers with over 100,000 followers previously led digital campaigns (Freberg et al., 2011). Current trends show a rising preference for creators with smaller but engaged audiences (Freberg et al., 2011). Micro-influencers typically possess 1,000 to 100,000 followers (Casaló et al., 2018). Their reach remains personal and highly relevant for local attractions (Casaló et al., 2018). Digital marketing via these agents overcomes high costs found in old-fashioned ads (Junaedi & Soekrani, 2023).

Intimate ties between creators and followers build high trust levels (Junaedi, 2024). Recommendations from these figures appear more real compared to commercial macro-influencers (Junaedi, 2024). Authenticity drives more compelling engagement than polished celebrity content (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Rural tourism faces challenges like ineffective promotion which micro-influencers can solve (Junaedi & Soekrani, 2023). Specific target markets receive more tailored narratives through niche creators (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Persuasive stories from micro-influencers motivate audiences to seek new experiences (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019).

Government initiatives in Indonesia facilitate rural tourism through designated tourist villages (Kurniansah, 2023). Every tourism village forms a vital part of the broader rural sector (Yulius et al., 2025). These locations represent a specific type of community-based tourism (Pickel-Chevalier et al., 2019). Promoting these villages requires a deep connection with local culture and people (Satriawati et al., 2022). Many villages still struggle to optimize their use of digital marketing tools (Adi, 2022). Organic approaches stay consistent with the community values of these areas (Junaedi et al., 2025).



Figure 1. Calling Media Partner Hyang Argopuro Festival IX 2025  
(Source: Instagram @hyangargopurofest, 2025)

Arjasa Traditional Village in Jember Regency is a site of rich cultural heritage (Adi, 2022). Natural beauty and green landscapes below the Argopuro Mountains offer great potential (Khristianto et al., 2025). International tourist arrivals remain low despite these unique assets (Dzulkifli et al., 2025). Selecting this village provides a clear empirical look at marketing obstacles (Dzulkifli et al., 2025). Authentic cultural richness requires a promotional style based on social proximity (Junaedi et al., 2025). Arjasa represents the struggle of traditional sites competing in a global market (Dzulkifli et al., 2025).

Research shows that promotional efforts in Arjasa currently lack originality (Khristianto et al., 2025). Limited technological infrastructure and low digital literacy cause this stagnation (Khristianto et al., 2025). Data indicate that local human resources have minimal access to sustainable marketing training (Khristianto et al., 2025). Current methods rely heavily on 1-time media partnerships for annual festivals (Khristianto et al., 2025). This reliance proves that no long-term digital strategy exists yet (Khristianto et al., 2025). Sustainable growth suffers when promotion stays tied only to specific events (Khristianto et al., 2025).

Promotion of the Hyang Argopuro Festival IX 2025 highlights a short-term marketing fix (Utomo et al., 2025). Using media partners for 1 event does not build a lasting image of the village (Khristianto et al., 2025). Our research focuses on promoting the village as a whole through sustainable means. Micro-influencers offer a bridge between 1-time events and continuous destination visibility (Peres & Silva, 2021). Authentic storytelling transforms event visitors into long-term village supporters (Chen et al., 2024). We examine how these agents sustain interest beyond the festival season (Chen et al., 2024).

Choosing Arjasa Traditional Village addresses a specific theoretical gap regarding community-based sites. Traditional villages operate on close-knit social dynamics that macro-influencers often miss (Junaedi et al., 2025). Study results from this location clarify how trust forms in rural settings (McAlexander et al., 2003). Empirical evidence from Arjasa helps refine brand community theories (McAlexander et al., 2003). Testing micro-influencer strategies here reveals unique variables for traditional destinations (Chen et al., 2024). Results provide a foundation for future research on niche cultural marketing (Chen et al., 2024).

Existing literature often ignores the specific role of micro-influencers in rural sectors (Junaedi et al., 2025). Most studies focus on general social media use or large-scale celebrities (Satriawati et al., 2022). Factors influencing success in traditional villages remain underexplored (Junaedi et al., 2025). Scholarly work lacks depth in its examination of local stakeholders' views on digital agents (Junaedi et al., 2025). Comparisons of micro-influencers with traditional media in rural settings remain rare (Chen et al., 2024). We aim to fill this void by focusing on trust-based marketing practices.

We present a review of previous studies to locate our research position. Table 1 summarizes various focuses, methods, and findings from earlier work. Identifying limitations in prior research allows us to highlight our contribution. Some studies focus on general promotion without

considering local community trust (Dzulkifli et al., 2025). Other authors examine specific accommodations, such as homestays, rather than the whole village (Yulius et al., 2025). The following matrix details the differences between our work and existing publications.

**Table 1. Matrix of Previous Research**

No.	Author & Year	Research Focus	Methodology	Key Findings	Gap from This Research
1	Dzulkifli et al., 2025	Global promotion of Arjasa Village	Qualitative-descriptive	Strategic basis for global visibility and tourism packages	Lacks a separate theoretical framework and misses the trust aspect of digital creators
2	Yulius et al., 2025	Homestays in Wologai Village	Qualitative case study	Micro-influencers increase appeal through authentic narratives	Limited to homestays; lacks depth on cultural/educational destination dynamics
3	Junaedi et al., 2025	Social media and destination image	Qualitative case study	Influencers strengthen image through authentic experiences	Focuses on specific general destinations rather than traditional tourist villages
4	Chen et al., 2024	Micro-influencer marketing trends	Systematic Review	High authenticity improves positive perceptions of destinations	Minimal exploration of trust-based characteristics in traditional rural communities
5	Satriawati et al., 2022	Public interest in rural tourism	Google Trends analysis	Digital marketing increases interest in tourism villages	Lacks specific data on micro-influencer effectiveness in village strategies
6	Peres & Silva, 2021	Decision-making process	Quantitative	Micro-influencers influence visit intent via authentic stories	Lacks focus on the sustainability of promotion in village-specific environments

(Source: Obtained by Researcher, 2026)

Matrix data shows that most researchers use qualitative-descriptive approaches (Dzulkifli et al., 2025; Yulius et al., 2025). A recurring theme involves using authentic narratives to boost village visibility (Yulius et al., 2025). Previous works often lack a separate section for theoretical frameworks (Dzulkifli et al., 2025). Studies on global recognition frequently overlook the personal trust aspect (Dzulkifli et al., 2025). Quantitative analyses of trends provide broad data but lack stakeholder depth (Satriawati et al., 2022). Our research builds on these findings while adding a focus on stakeholder perception.

This study stands out by examining micro-influencers within traditional village structures. Factors determining the success of digital agents in rural sites are explored (Junaedi et al., 2025). We provide new views on digital marketing for the underexplored village sector. Emphasis on personal community characteristics sets this work apart (Junaedi et al., 2025).

Marketing strategies relevant to village dynamics receive special attention (Junaedi et al., 2025). Trust-based practices serve as a core element of our investigative approach.

We investigate the perceptions of stakeholders in Arjasa Traditional Village regarding digital creators. The study determines how micro-influencers impact the image of cultural destinations. Our work identifies the role of these figures in increasing tourist visits. We evaluate the effectiveness of niche marketing for attracting cultural travelers. Stakeholder views from managers and MSMEs provide a diverse perspective. Every objective aligns with the need for efficient promotional tactics (Junaedi et al., 2025).

How do community members and managers perceive the use of micro-influencers? What factors lead to successful trust-based marketing in traditional villages? How does authentic content affect the attraction of rural destinations? Can micro-influencers drive organic visits to locations with limited budgets? What specific roles do ini creators play in shaping village image? These questions guide our exploration of the phenomenon in Jember Regency.

Theoretical contributions include refining the understanding of trust in rural marketing. Practical benefits offer recommendations for village managers on digital strategies. Establishing a sustainable promotional ecosystem serves as a key outcome. Managers can use these results to implement more efficient tactics. Authenticity remains the primary selling point for future village development. This research supports the survival of traditional performing arts in a digital age (Nanita, 2025).

## Literature Review

### Relevant Previous Research

Information and communication technology acts as a primary catalyst changing how global tourism destinations are marketed across the globe. Travelers now rely on digital platforms as their 1st source for trip inspiration and making final travel decisions. Social media offers a level of cost efficiency and reach that far exceeds what 1 can achieve through conventional media channels. Initially, influencer marketing relied on macro-influencers with over 100,000 followers to lead digital campaigns. Current trends show a significant shift toward creators with smaller but more engaged audiences who offer authentic interactions. Micro-influencers typically possess 1,000 to 100,000 followers and provide a more personal marketing tactic for niche destinations. (Satriawati et al., 2022)

Studies show that micro-influencers strengthen destination images and increase interest through real experiences and trust. Research focused on traditional villages reveals that these creators can increase the appeal of homestays by telling personal narratives. Systematic reviews verify that high authenticity improves positive perceptions of destinations through personalized and relevant content. Search trends reveal that digital marketing increases public interest in alternative tourism and rural spots compared to urban areas. Digital agents play a significant role in building trust and influencing visit intent during the various stages of the tourist

decision-making process. Most existing literature misses the specific dynamics of trust within traditional communities where close-knit social bonds remain strong. (Chen et al., 2024)

### Current Research Context

Arjasa Traditional Village in Jember Regency serves as a potential tourism hub facing various digitalization hurdles. Rich history and natural beauty below the Argopuro Mountains offer unique assets that demand effective digital visibility. International tourist arrivals remain limited despite the village's cultural wealth and natural exoticism found in green landscapes. Local human resources encounter difficulties in optimizing marketing tools due to limited technological infrastructure and low digital literacy. Sustainable marketing training remains a rare opportunity for MSME actors and village managers in this specific region. Short-term solutions like using media partners for the Hyang Argopuro Festival IX 2025 provide a temporary boost to village visibility. (Khristianto et al., 2025)

### Theoretical Framework and Thematic Inquiry

Brand community theory explains how destination promotion succeeds through relationships built between managers and visitors. Success in marketing tourism locations depends on the level of trust established through shared digital experiences. Micro-influencers act as effective connectors because of the personal closeness and the real stories they share with followers. Tourists seek reliable experiences from credible sources when searching for deep cultural encounters in rural areas. Real experiences shared by these creators build a sense of belonging that conventional ads cannot replicate easily. High engagement rates among niche creators make their recommendations more persuasive than polished celebrity content. (McAlexander et al., 2003)

User-generated content (UGC) is a major component in modern marketing because consumers trust reviews from fellow users. Content produced organically by peers feels more honest than firm-generated content produced directly by companies or destinations. Micro-influencer activities encourage the creation of authentic UGC which strengthens the credibility of a destination over time. Authentic narratives are the main selling point for destinations that rely on community- and culture-based characteristics. Recommendations from these creators feel like a personal suggestion from a friend rather than a paid commercial announcement. Persuasive stories from digital agents motivate audiences to seek new experiences in locations with limited promotional budgets. (Zahir, 2025)

Digital storytelling serves as a communication tool that strengthens cultural resilience in traditional tourism environments. Empowerment mechanisms through social media help communities adapt and preserve intangible cultural heritage for future generations. Collaborative governance and creative content development are vital for the survival of traditional performing arts in Indonesia. Authentic cultural images are shaped by local elements inherited from ancestors which harmonize with modern digital trends. Using micro-influencers to promote traditional villages aligns with the requirement for organic approaches that respect

local values. Creating a sustainable promotional ecosystem calls for long-term relationships between village managers, digital creators, and tourists. (Nanita, 2025)

Our investigation seeks to determine how community members and managers perceive the role of digital creators. Identifying factors that lead to successful trust-based marketing in village environments is a primary goal of this work. Questions for 9 informants focus on comparing the credibility of micro-influencers against commercial macro-celebrities in the field. Stakeholder views from MSME actors provide a diverse perspective on the economic impact of digital recommendations. Variables like social closeness and personal relationships serve as metrics for evaluating the effectiveness of niche agents. Results link back to existing literature to provide a clear picture of rural marketing dynamics in Arjasa Traditional Village. (Junaedi et al., 2025)

## Method

Qualitative techniques provide the backbone for exploring complex social dynamics within rural tourism sites (Creswell, 2014). Researchers adopt an interpretive phenomenological design to capture the lived experiences of village stakeholders (Mulyana, 2006). Such a framework allows for a profound exploration into how people assign meaning to digital marketing interactions. Subjective views from local actors remain the primary focus of this investigative effort. Every participant shares a unique perspective regarding the role of digital creators in their daily operations. Authentic narratives emerge through a rigorous qualitative lens rather than through rigid statistical figures.

Arjasa Traditional Village in Jember Regency serves as the primary location for this field investigation. Selection of the site occurred because it represents a potential tourism hub facing significant digitalization hurdles (Adi, 2022). Rich cultural heritage and natural landscapes require a promotional style based on high trust (Khristianto et al., 2025). The village acts as a living laboratory for testing how micro-influencers impact traditional community structures. Data collection occurred over a 6-month period from July to December 2025. Fieldwork included attending the Hyang Argopuro Festival IX 2025 to observe real-time promotional activities (Utomo et al., 2025).

Purposive sampling techniques ensure that only the most relevant individuals participate in the study. Researchers identified 9 key informants who possess direct experience with village tourism and digital promotion. The group consists of 1 Pokdarwis head, 2 village managers, 2 MSME owners, 2 micro-influencers, and 2 tourists. Specific criteria required managers and MSME actors to have at least 1 year of active involvement. Micro-influencers needed a minimum of 1,000 followers on platforms like Instagram or TikTok (Casaló et al., 2018). Selecting diverse stakeholders guarantees a balanced view of the marketing ecosystem in Arjasa.

Operationalizing the research requires a focus on specific dimensions of influencer effectiveness (De Veirman et al., 2017). Interview questions target 4 main areas including

promotional costs, trust levels, audience reach, and content authenticity. Variables like social closeness and personal relationships serve as indicators for measuring influencer impact (Junaedi, 2024). Inquiries look at how content based on real experiences compares to commercial advertisements (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Another metric is the engagement rate that triggers a traveler's intention to visit the village (Cahyani, 2023). Such factors provide a structured way to gather data on perceptions without losing qualitative depth.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews constitute the primary method for gathering rich verbal accounts (Kriyantono, 2021). Researchers used predetermined questions while allowing for spontaneous follow-up inquiries. Audio recordings and field notes preserved the accuracy of every conversation during the sessions. Meetings took place in natural settings, such as village offices and local MSME shops, to ensure comfort. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes depending on the informant's availability. Digital records were later converted into written formats via verbatim transcription.

Participatory observation involves recording the actual interactions between village managers and digital creators. Investigators also conducted non-participatory observation by analyzing social media posts on Instagram and TikTok. Analysis included scrutinizing the narrative style and visual elements used to showcase Arjasa's cultural assets. Secondary data collection included gathering visitor statistics and reviewing official marketing channels. Documentation from mass media provided additional layers of evidence for the study (Kriyantono, 2021). Such diverse procedures help identify discrepancies between digital content and actual village life.

Thematic analysis allows for the systematic classification of raw data into meaningful clusters (King, 2004). Verbatim transcripts underwent a coding process to label recurring units of information. Overarching themes eventually emerged to reflect the roles of micro-influencers. Triangulation across different data sources and methods ensures the reliability of the findings (Yin, 2018). Comparing stakeholder interviews with social media observations strengthens the final arguments. Results link back to existing literature to provide a clear picture of rural marketing dynamics (Satriawati et al., 2022).

Qualitative techniques provide a foundation for examining complex social interactions through an interpretive phenomenological design. Investigators explore the personal experiences and meanings shared by members of the community, along with village managers and visiting tourists. Stakeholder perspectives serve as core data for determining the impact of digital creators on local tourism. Researchers selected 9 key informants through purposive sampling to ensure that every viewpoint remained relevant to the rural environment. Gathering rich descriptive accounts offers insight into the nuances of authenticity built by micro-influencers in a traditional setting. Local narratives serve as a bridge to analyze how trust forms between creators and audiences within Arjasa Traditional Village. (Mulyana, 2006)

## Results and Discussion

### Stakeholder Perception of the Role of Micro-Influencers



Figure 2. Interview with Stakeholders of Arjasa Traditional Village, Jember Regency  
(Source: Obtained by Researcher, 2025)

“To supplement the qualitative insights gathered from stakeholders, secondary data analysis of visitor statistics was conducted to measure the empirical impact of micro-influencer collaborations. While the interview with the Pokdarwis Chair (Figure 2) highlights the perceived authenticity of these creators, the quantitative data provides a concrete baseline for this effectiveness. As shown in Table 2, there was a measurable surge in visitor arrivals during the promotional window of the Hyang Argopuro Festival IX 2025, which coincided with the activity of the digital creators involved.” (Interview results, 2025).

Table 2. Visitor Growth and Engagement During Micro-Influencer Campaigns (2025)

Period	Promotional Activity	Visitor Count	Percentage Increase (%)
Pre-Campaign	Conventional Media Only	1,250	-
During Festival	Micro-Influencer Content	2,875	130%
Post-Festival	Organic UGC Shares	3,460	20.3%

(Source: Data Processed by Researchers, 2026)

The findings show consensus that micro-influencers’ main strength lies in their ability to offer authenticity and build trust through personal communication, which is often considered lacking in promotions by macro-influencers or conventional media. The managers of Arjasa Traditional Village greatly appreciate micro-influencers’ ability to portray village life as it truly is.

Stakeholders believe that original material is less commercial, making it more effective in attracting travelers seeking a genuine cultural experience. Sugianto, Chair of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) of Arjasa Traditional Village, Jember Regency, and one of the key informants (Figure 2), shared his thoughts:

“We see that the content created by micro-influencers is authentic. They (micro-influencers) don't just come, take aesthetic pictures, and then leave. They (micro-influencers) truly experience and describe how cold the air is in Arjasa Traditional Village, how it feels to be part of the tourist experience here. This is different from big influencers who charge high fees but often produce narratives that feel contrived. This authenticity is what we need for Arjasa Traditional Village.” (Interview results, 2025).

This view is reinforced by a local MSME actor who has felt the direct impact of authentic promotion. MSME actors in Arjasa Traditional Village, Jember Regency, have noted that tourists who come on the recommendation of micro-influencers tend to have a better understanding of local values and products.

“After one micro-influencer stopped by and posted about our specialty food (Nas Gudhug), many tourists came and immediately sought out the food. They (tourists) came because they believed the influencer's story, not just because they saw a nice photo. They (tourists) knew the story behind the culinary specialties of Arjasa Traditional Village. So, the content was more connected to the essence of our village.” (Interview results, 2025).

In addition to authenticity, another crucial factor identified is the social closeness and personal relationship between micro-influencers and their followers. Tourist informants explicitly stated that they tend to trust recommendations from micro-influencers more because they feel a closer, more relatable relationship with them.

“I follow several micro-influencers because they often travel to places that match my interests, namely cultural tourism and tranquil natural surroundings. Their follower counts aren't too large, so it feels like a personal recommendation from a friend. When they mention that Arjasa Traditional Village in Jember Regency is peaceful and rich in culture, I immediately trust their word. With macro-influencers, it feels more like paid advertising, so the level of trust is lower.” (Interview results, 2025).

This phenomenon aligns with the characteristics of micro-influencers, who are known to have high engagement rates despite their limited reach, thereby making their recommendations more persuasive. One micro-influencer who collaborated with Arjasa Traditional Village acknowledged that this personal connection is a major asset.

“We always try to interact directly with followers in the comments section or through private messages. We answer their questions about routes, ticket prices, or accommodation in Arjasa. It is this personal connection that makes them feel comfortable and ultimately motivates them to visit. We don't just sell place, but we sell experiences that we ourselves have enjoyed.” (Interview results, 2025).

Overall, stakeholders' perspectives indicate that micro-influencers play an important role in shaping the image of Arjasa Traditional Village as a genuine cultural and educational destination, thereby naturally raising the interest of tourists seeking personal encounters. The image of Arjasa Traditional Village as an authentic cultural and educational destination is shaped by local elements inherited from ancestors, which harmoniously blend into a noble

value that keeps the culture of Arjasa Traditional Village, Jember Regency alive (Yusrifa et al., 2016).

The communication carried out by micro-influencers is considered capable of “bridging” the gap between the potential of Arjasa Traditional Village and potential tourists, transforming potential appeal into actual intent to visit. Although macro-influencers offer wide reach, micro-influencers are able to provide specific and efficient reach for tourism villages. Table 2 contrasts micro-influencers with macro-influencers and traditional media marketing.

**Table 3. Comparison of Influencer Perceptions in the Context of Arjasa Traditional Village**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Micro-influencer</b>	<b>Macro-influencer</b>	<b>Perceptions of Stakeholders in Arjasa Traditional Village</b>
Promotional Costs	Low-priced and affordable (cost-effective)	Extremely high (Premium Price)	Preferring the lower option for sustainability
Confidence Level	High, feels personal, like a friend's recommendation	Moderate, often considered commercial and impersonal	Trust is key in promoting traditional villages
Audience Reach	Specific, close-knit community (niche market)	Wide, general public (mass market)	Enables targeting of relevant cultural markets
Content Authenticity	Very High, based on real experiences	Moderate, tends to be polished and lacks depth	Authenticity is the main selling point of Arjasa Traditional Village
Engagement	High Engagement Rate	Low to Moderate (Lower Engagement Rate)	Stronger interaction with the audience, triggering the intention to visit

(Source: Obtained by Researcher, 2026)

“The integration of micro-influencers serves as a strategic 'low-priced and affordable' solution for Arjasa Traditional Village, which often operates with limited promotional budgets. Unlike macro-influencers who demand premium pricing, these digital agents provide high engagement rates by leveraging social closeness with their niche audiences. By comparing the minimal budget allocated for these collaborations against the significant percentage increase in visitor arrivals (as seen in Table 3), it is evident that this strategy yields a high Return on Investment (ROI). This cost-effective approach allows the village to maintain long-term sustainability in its marketing ecosystem without exhausting financial resources”. (Interview results, 2025).

“This transition from purely qualitative perceptions to quantitative evidence strengthens the claim that micro-influencers are not merely 'image builders' but active drivers of organic visits. The correlation between authentic storytelling and actual visitor attendance proves that for community-based destinations like Arjasa, personal trust is a more potent, and cheaper, catalyst for tourism growth than polished commercial advertisements”. (Interview results, 2025).

Micro-influencers in our study are digital creators with between 1,000 and 100,000 followers on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Our analysis specifically examines 2 creators who have collaborated with village managers to promote cultural events like the Hyang Argopuro Festival IX 2025. Such individuals characterize digital agents who focus on niche cultural markets rather than broad mass audiences. Stakeholders view these figures as credible connectors who share real experiences instead of polished commercial advertisements. Authentic storytelling is a primary tool for engaging audiences seeking cultural and educational travel. Every creator involved must actively engage with followers through comments and private messages to maintain high trust.

Micro and macro-influencers perform a variety of roles in the tourism industry, each contributing uniquely to marketing efforts. Micro-influencers, who have smaller but more engaged followers, are often perceived as more genuine and personal, making them effective at reaching niche markets. Macro-influencers, on the other hand, have a broader reach and are more effective at increasing awareness and engaging big populations. Both types of influencers play an essential role in the evolving landscape of tourism marketing, shaping perceptions and encouraging interaction through their platforms.

Table 2 compares the attributes of micro and macro-influencers based on local stakeholder perceptions. Promotional costs for niche creators remain affordable, enabling long-term sustainability in village budgets. Confidence levels remain high among followers because recommendations feel personal, like a suggestion from a friend. Audience reach targets specific cultural markets instead of the general mass population typical of macro-influencers. Content authenticity stays very high because narratives rely on real visits and genuine encounters within the village. High engagement rates drive strong interactions, motivating potential tourists to visit Arjasa.

This finding is in line with Sinolungan & Chan (2025), who revealed that influencers play various roles in increasing consumer interest in purchasing and reaching audiences with authentic content, while macro-influencers provide reliable educational reviews and mega-influencers expand brand visibility to a larger audience, resulting in an effective approach that increases engagement, builds trust, and drives product sales. Digital storytelling serves as a communication tool and an empowerment mechanism that strengthens cultural resilience and helps communities adapt and preserve intangible cultural heritage. As a result, digital literacy, collaborative governance, and creative content development are crucial for the survival of traditional performing arts in Indonesia's digital tourist environment (Nanita, 2025).

According to Benhaida, Safaa, & Perkumiené (2024), the expansion of digital platforms and the emergence of influencer culture have drastically altered tourists' impressions of tourist locations. Influencers now play a key role, leveraging both authentic and superficial credibility in certain fields. Travel influencers positively affect the choice of sustainable destinations, but their use of geo-location data does not increase travelers' intentions to select these destinations (Kilipiri, Papaioannou, & Kotzaivazoglou, 2023).

## The Role of Micro-Influencers on the Image and Attractiveness of Arjasa Traditional Village.

The advancement of digital technology and social media has made micro-influencers an important part of tourism destination marketing strategies, particularly for locations that promote authenticity and community values, such as Arjasa Traditional Village, Jember Regency. This study found that micro-influencers play a critical role in building a positive image and increasing the tourist appeal of Arjasa Traditional Village. This position entails not only disseminating information but also fostering deep, trusting relationships with prospective tourists.

One of the study's primary results is that micro-influencers can effectively convey authenticity and develop trust in Arjasa Traditional Village through personalized communication. Arjasa Traditional Village, with its rich culture, customs, and historical heritage, requires an honest, organic promotional approach to ensure its message is accepted by tourists seeking a deep cultural experience. One informant from the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) of Arjasa Traditional Village revealed:

“We realize that we don't have the capital to invite famous artists or influencers. But we have stories, we have strong customs. When micro-influencers come, they don't just take photos, stay, eat, and interact with the locals. They bring our story as it is. That's what's valuable that authenticity. The trust from their followers is what makes people brave enough to come to our village, seeking the same experience.” (Interview result, 2025)

Micro-influencers have a closer relationship and higher trust with their followers than macro-influencers, who tend to be more commercial. The content they produce is perceived as more personal and authentic because it reflects real experiences, thus increasing credibility as a source of travel information. The advantage of micro-influencers also lies in their ability to deliver niche content that aligns with followers' interests, as well as in their use of interactive formats that encourage engagement and a sense of community (Chan et al., 2023).

Micro-influencers act as 'connectors' who embody the authenticity of villages, both in terms of natural beauty and cultural richness. Micro-influencers serve as catalysts for forming communities around destinations, enabling the real experiences and personal stories they share to evoke strong emotions in their audience. These emotions, combined with convincing narratives, significantly increase the intention to visit and positive perceptions of Arjasa Traditional Village, Jember Regency. This is in line with findings from Juniarti (2025) demonstrates that nano and micro influences play a crucial role in altering people's views. Nano and micro influencers, who have fewer followers but are more connected to their audience, tend to cultivate more intimate and real relationships, resulting in a high level of trust.

Marketing through micro-influencers is highly effective in the tourism industry because it significantly influences customers' interest and intention to visit tourist destinations based on their preferences (Cahyani, 2023). For community-based destinations, such as tourist villages, a personal, organic promotional approach is essential. Micro-influencers can reach local

communities and specific target markets that may be overlooked by conventional media or macro-influencers. Micro-influencers help communicate Arjasa Traditional Village's unique value proposition in a more targeted and convincing way.

The personal, organic approach built through micro-influencers closely aligns with the role of *user-generated content* (UGC) in tourism marketing strategies. UGC is an important component in modern marketing because consumers tend to trust reviews and experiences shared organically by fellow users rather than content produced directly by companies or firm-generated content (FGC) (Zahir, 2025). Through micro-influencer activities, the promotion of Arjasa Traditional Village is conveyed more persuasively and encourages the creation of authentic UGC, thereby strengthening the destination's credibility and attractiveness to potential tourists.

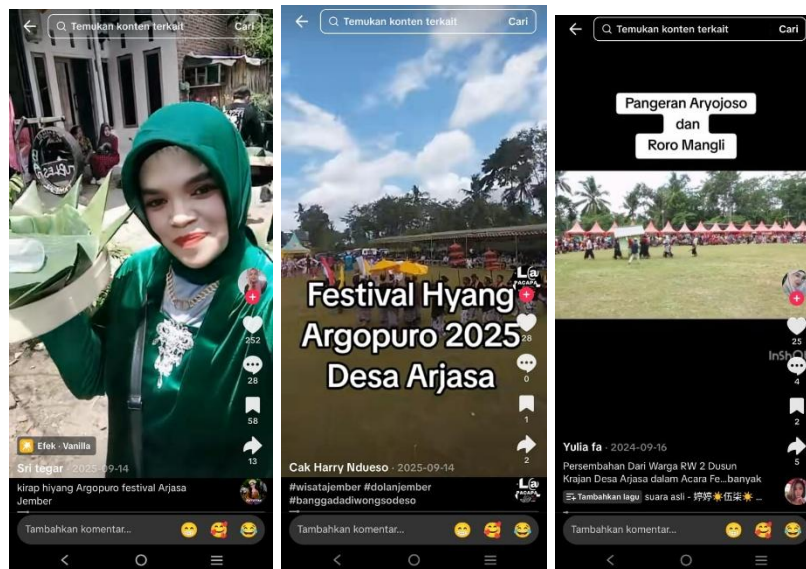


Figure 3. Content Generated by Micro-Influencers on TikTok  
(Source: TikTok, 2025)

Short-term collaborations with online media and micro-influencers, such as those carried out during the Hyang Argopuro IX Festival 2025 (Figure 3), provide a quick alternative solution while long-term strategies are being formulated. Micro-influencers help overcome the weaknesses of Arjasa Traditional Village's digital promotion by increasing the visibility and accessibility of information through interactive dissemination on digital platforms, curating commercial perceptions, and building a sustainable promotional ecosystem by creating mutually beneficial long-term relationships between village managers, micro-influencers, and tourists, which supports a sustainable promotional ecosystem.

The role of micro-influencers in shaping the image and appeal of Arjasa Traditional Village is transformative. Micro-influencers transmit the village's true ideals and foster trust through social proximity and individual contact. Micro-influencers' success is heavily influenced by their ability to share authentic experiences that traditional tourism destinations based on community and

culture require, so tourism managers in Arjasa Traditional Village, Jember Regency, must incorporate micro-influencers into their digital marketing strategy.

## Conclusion

This study reveals that micro-influencers have a significant impact on tourists' perceptions of Arjasa Traditional Village, Jember Regency. Micro-influencers' main strength is their ability to present the authenticity of the village experience while also building high trust with their followers through personal communication and social proximity, making them more effective and cost-effective promotional agents for community and culture-based destinations than macro-influencers or traditional media. Theoretically, these findings reinforce the literature on the importance of trust and personal closeness in traditional tourism marketing strategies, highlighting that the credibility of authentic narratives is the main selling point. Practically, the implication is that the managers of Arjasa Traditional Village should integrate micro-influencers as a core element of their digital marketing strategy to strengthen their cultural image, increase their appeal, and form a sustainable promotional ecosystem based on real relationships and stories, in line with the needs of modern tourists who seek honest and trustworthy experiences. Further research is needed to quantify the economic impact, compare the effectiveness of micro- and nano-influencers in cultural heritage preservation, and develop an ethical and sustainable long-term collaboration model.

## Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the Arjasa Traditional Village Government and the Arjasa Traditional Village Tourism Awareness Group, Jember Regency, for their support throughout the research process, including dissemination and publication of the results.

## Conflict of Interest Free Statement

There is no conflict of interest in the writing, reviewing, and editorial process of the article entitled "Exploring the Role of Micro-Influencers in Influencing Tourist Perception of Arjasa Traditional Village, Jember Regency". The authors declare that this manuscript is free of all forms of conflict of interest and was processed in accordance with the journal's provisions and policies to avoid deviations from publication ethics.

## References

- Adi, D. P. (2022). Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Desa Arjasa dalam Mengembangkan Ekonomi Kreatif melalui Program Desa Wisata Sejarah. *Islamic Management and Empowerment Journal*, 4(2), 217-228. <https://doi.org/10.18326/imej.v4i2.217-228>
- Benhaida, S., Safaa, L., & Perkumiené, D. (2024, January). Influencers And Tourism: Story of A Recent and Revolutionary Phenomenon: What Does Bibliometric Analysis Reveal. In *ENTER e-Tourism Conference* (pp. 421-433). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

- Berhanu, K., & Raj, S. (2020). The Trustworthiness of Travel and Tourism Information Sources of Social Media: Perspectives of International Tourists Visiting Ethiopia. *Heliyon*, 6(3), e03439. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e03439>
- Cahyani, D. (2023). The Influence of Instagram Micro-Influencers Factor Toward Customer's Interest and Intention to Visit in Tourism Sectors. *Jurnal Syntax Transformation*, 4(9), 186-202. <https://doi.org/10.46799/jst.v4i9.810>
- Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2020). Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and Consequences of Opinion Leadership. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 510-519. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.005>
- Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). *Digital Marketing*. Pearson UK.
- Chan, T., Hung, K. H., & Tse, D. K. (2023). Comparing E-Commerce Micro- and Macroinfluencers in Tiktok Videos: Effects of Strategies on Audience Likes, Audience Shares, and Brand Sales. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 23(3), 307–322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2023.2273253>
- Chen, J. S., & Gursoy, D. (2001). An Investigation of Tourists' Destination Loyalty and Preferences. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 13(2), 79-85. <https://doi.org/10.1108/095961101110381870>
- Chen, J., Zhang, Y., Cai, H., Liu, L., Liao, M., & Fang, J. (2024). A Comprehensive Overview of Micro-Influencer Marketing: Decoding The Current Landscape, Impacts, and Trends. *Behavioral Sciences*, 14(3), 243. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14030243>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Pendekatan, Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan Mixed*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing Through Instagram Influencers: The Impact of Number of Followers and Product Divergence on Brand Attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798-828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035>
- Djafarova, E., & Trofimenko, O. (2019). Instafamous'–Credibility and Self-Presentation of Micro-Celebrities on Social Media. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(10), 1432-1446. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1438491>
- Dzulkifli, M., Milawaty, M., Rizka, H., Nasir, F., Qastalano, R. I., Harliansyah, A., ... Agustianto, K. (2025). Enhancing Tourism Promotion in Arjasa Village: Towards Global Recognition as a Traditional Tourism Village. *International Journal of Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities (IJOSSH)*, 2(2), 146–166. <https://doi.org/10.25047/ijossh.v2i2.6689>
- Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who Are The Social Media Influencers? A Study of Public Perceptions of Personality. *Public Relations Review*, 37(1), 90-92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.11.001>

- Junaedi, R.A., & Soekrani, T. S. (2023). Pengaruh Implementasi Strategi IMC terhadap Keputusan Mendaftar Siswa di SMK Telkom Sidoarjo Tahun Ajaran 2022/2023. *Komunikatif: Jurnal Ilmiah Komunikasi*, 12(1), 62–79. <https://doi.org/10.33508/jk.v12i1.4478>
- Junaedi, R.A. (2024). Analysis of Integrated Marketing Communication Strategy for Surabaya Medical Tourism. *Journal of Language, Communication, and Tourism*, 3(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.25047/jlct.v3i1.5441>
- Junaedi, R.A. (2025). *Manajemen Produksi Iklan: Dari Pra Produksi Hingga Pasca Produksi*. PT. Mafy Media Literasi Indonesia.
- Junaedi, R.A., Rahmatullah, M.A., Anggoro, A.D., & Safira, J.Z. (2025). Peran Media Sosial dalam Membentuk Citra Destinasi Pariwisata Kabupaten Bondowoso. *Jurnal Al Azhar Seri Ilmu Sosial*, 6(1), 45–55. <http://dx.doi.org/10.36722/jaiss.v6i1.3933>
- Junaedi, R. A., Kamal, M., Diartika, F., Rizka, H., & Indartin, T. R. D. (2025). Sleep Tourism as a Strategic Marketing Communication Tool for Attracting Wellness-Oriented Travelers in Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi UHO: Jurnal Penelitian Kajian Ilmu Komunikasi dan Informasi*, 10(4), 746-761. <https://doi.org/10.52423/jikuho.v10i4.1619>
- Juniarti, N. (2025). Peran Nano dan Micro Influencer dalam Membangun Citra Positif Kuliner di Kota Bengkulu. *Jurnal Entepreneur dan Manajemen Sains*, 6(2). 946-970. <https://doi.org/10.36085/jems.v6i2.8390>
- Kilipiri, E., Papaioannou, E., & Kotzaivazoglou, I. (2023). Social Media and Influencer Marketing for Promoting Sustainable Tourism Destinations: The Instagram Case. *Sustainability*, 15(8), 6374. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15086374>
- King, N. (2004). Using Templates in The Thematic Analysis of Text. In C. Cassell & G. Symon (Eds.), *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research* (pp. 256–270). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446280119.n21>
- Khristianto, W., Oktawirani, P., Utama, P. S., Mastika, K., & Windradini, D. (2025). Penguatan Kewirausahaan Berbasis Potensi Lokal dalam Mendukung Pengembangan Desa Wisata Adat Arjasa. *Dedication: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 9(1), 125-138. <https://doi.org/10.31537/dedication.v9i1.2268>
- Kurniansah, R. (2023). Pengembangan Desa Wisata Menggunakan SOAR Model: Studi Kasus Desa Sekaroh Lombok Timur. *Journal of Regional and Rural Development Planning*, 7(3), 299–309. <https://doi.org/10.29244/jp2wd.2023.7.3.299-309>
- Kriyantono, R. (2021). *Teknik Praktis Riset Komunikasi Kuantitatif dan Kualitatif*. Kencana
- McAlexander, J. H., Kim, S. K., & Roberts, S. D. (2003). Loyalty: The Influences of Satisfaction and Brand Community Integration. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 11(4), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2003.11658504>

- Mulyana, D. (2006). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif (Paradigma Baru Ilmu komunikasi dan Ilmu Sosial Lainnya)*. PT. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Nanita, E. T. (2025). Digital Storytelling for Cultural Resilience: Revitalizing the Can Macanan Kadduk Performance in Arjasa Tourism Village. *Journal Governance Society*, 2(2), 123-133. <https://doi.org/10.69812/jgs.v2i2.181>
- Peres, R., & Silva, M. (2021). The Role of Micro-Influencers in The Consumer Decision-Making Process in The Hospitality Field. *European Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation*, 11(1), 102-112. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ejthr-2021-0010>
- Pickel-Chevalier, S., Bendesa, I. K. G., & Putra, I. N. D. (2022). The Integrated Touristic Villages: An Indonesian Model of Sustainable Tourism?. In *Island Tourism Sustainability and Resiliency* (Pp. 262-286). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2019.1600006>
- Satriawati, Z., Prasetyo, H., & Irawati, N. (2022). Kajian Minat Masyarakat terhadap Pariwisata Alternatif dan Wisata Pedesaan Melalui Google Trends. *Kepariwisata: Jurnal Ilmiah*, 17(1), 18-26. <http://dx.doi.org/10.47256/kji.v17i1.198>
- Sinolungan, M., & Chan, A. (2025). Analisis Peran Mega, Macro, dan Micro Influencer dalam Promosi Produk Kecantikan (Studi pada Konten Influencer di Tiktok). *Jurnal Lentera Bisnis*, 14(1), 69-83. <https://doi.org/10.34127/jrlab.v14i1.1292>
- Sugiyono. (2019). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Utomo, D. T., Rizka, H., Indartin, T. R. D., Qastalano, R. I., Junaedi, R. A., Kamal, M., ... & Qomariah, D. U. N. (2025). Pengembangan Video Promosi Hyang Argopuro Festival IX 2025 untuk Peningkatan Potensi Wisata Desa Adat Arjasa, Kabupaten Jember. *Jurnal Pengabdian Literasi Digital Indonesia*, 4(2), 95-105. <https://doi.org/10.57119/abdimas.v4i2.154>
- Yin, R.K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. Sage Publications.
- Yulius, K. G., Sianipar, R., & Pramono, R. (2025). Functionality, Limitation, and Future of Homestays in Kampung Adat Wologai. *Gajah Mada Journal of Tourism Studies*, 7(2), 99–112. <https://doi.org/10.22146/gamajts.v7i2.107123>
- Yusrifa, F., Ikhsan, M. F. N., Junaedi, R. A., & Khair, M. R. (2016). Meneropong Strategi Kebudayaan melalui Kesadaran Historis “Pantang Melupakan Leluhur” Islam Wetu Telu. *Jurnal Filsafat*, 26(2), 249-271. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jf.12785>
- Zahir, M. R. (2025). Analisis Efektivitas Konten Buatan Pengguna (UGC) dan Konten Buatan Perusahaan (FGC) dalam Membangun Kepercayaan Konsumen terhadap Merek di Era Digital. *Jurnal Ekbis (Ekonomi & Bisnis)*, 13(1), 165–174. <https://doi.org/10.56689/ekbis.v13i1.1951>