

Enhancing Government Communication through Digital Media: A Study of Community Perceptions in Oihu Village, Wakatobi

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

Digital Media; Government Communication; Village Communication; Public Participation; Digital Literacy; Rural Development; Communication Infrastructure

This study investigates the use of digital media in government communication in Oihu Village, Wakatobi, and examines the community's perceptions of its effectiveness. The shift from traditional to digital communication methods, including WhatsApp, Facebook, and the village website, was evaluated based on interviews and field observations with government officials and residents. The research utilized qualitative methods, specifically content analysis, to explore key themes such as communication patterns, benefits, challenges, and strategies for further development. The findings reveal that digital media has enhanced accessibility, transparency, and public participation, although challenges related to infrastructure and digital literacy remain. Active digital users reported a positive impact on communication efficiency, while less digitally literate residents expressed concerns about exclusion from the benefits of digital tools. The study highlights the need for targeted efforts to bridge the digital divide, including improving infrastructure and promoting digital literacy. These findings contribute to the literature on digital governance and provide practical recommendations for enhancing government communication in rural areas.

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of information technology has revolutionized the way societies communicate and access information. This transformation has prompted governments worldwide to adopt digital media as a critical tool for public communication. In many parts of the world, including rural and remote areas, digital platforms offer unprecedented opportunities to reach and engage citizens, especially in regions where traditional communication methods fall short. As governments increasingly rely on digital communication, understanding the effectiveness and challenges associated with these platforms becomes crucial, particularly for community-based communication in villages. This research delves into how digital media has been integrated into government communication strategies at the village level, with a specific focus on Oihu Village in Wakatobi, Indonesia. By examining the perceptions of community members regarding the adoption and use of digital media by local governments, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital government communication.

Digital communication in government settings has been shown to enhance transparency, improve public service delivery, and foster greater public participation. According to recent studies, digital media, including social media platforms and websites, offer governments the means to engage with citizens in more dynamic, responsive, and inclusive ways (Gil-Garcia dan Flores-Zúñiga 2020; Yuan et al., 2023). These platforms allow for the rapid dissemination of information, making government

actions more transparent and accessible to the public. In turn, this increased accessibility can bolster trust and encourage participation in democratic processes. However, the transition from traditional communication methods to digital platforms presents several challenges, particularly in rural and remote areas where infrastructure limitations and low digital literacy can impede the effectiveness of these tools (Fajar Maulana et al., 2025).

The case of Oihu Village, located in a geographically isolated area of Wakatobi, offers a unique context for investigating the impact of digital communication on government performance at the village level. While Oihu Village has made strides in adopting digital tools such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and a dedicated village website, the community's response to these changes remains mixed. For some, digital media has facilitated quicker and easier access to government information, while others, particularly those with limited access to technology, continue to rely on traditional communication methods. This disparity underscores the importance of examining not only the technological implementation but also the community's perception of digital communication's effectiveness in improving governance.

Existing research on digital government communication primarily focuses on higher levels of government, such as national or regional administrations, with limited attention given to local governments in rural or island settings (Dimas dan Fahlevvi 2024). Moreover, while the adoption of digital media by governments is well-documented, studies that specifically address the community's perception of these platforms at the village level remain scarce. This research aims to fill this gap by investigating how Oihu Village's residents perceive the government's use of digital media and how this perception influences the overall effectiveness of digital communication in the village.

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the intersection between digital media adoption and public perception, which is often overlooked in existing studies. While digital media has the potential to enhance government communication, its effectiveness is contingent upon various factors, including infrastructure, literacy, and the degree of public engagement. Previous studies have acknowledged the challenges posed by digital divides in rural areas, where limited access to technology and low digital literacy hinder the widespread use of digital communication tools (Herie 2024). These challenges are particularly pronounced in island communities like Oihu Village, where geographical isolation further complicates the implementation of digital government initiatives. Therefore, addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes improving digital infrastructure, enhancing literacy, and ensuring that digital communication tools are accessible to all members of the community.

This study uses the theory of digital government communication to examine how the adoption of digital tools affects the relationship between the government and the community. It also draws on the theory of diffusion of innovations, which helps explain how new technologies, such as digital media, spread across communities and are adopted by individuals at different rates (Hanugrah Nur Muharrani Putri dan Sukmono 2025). According to this theory, the adoption process is not instantaneous but occurs in stages, with early adopters leading the way and later groups following suit. This model is particularly relevant to Oihu Village, where the introduction of digital media has not been uniformly embraced by all residents. Understanding the factors that influence the adoption of digital communication tools in such settings is crucial for developing strategies to overcome barriers and improve the effectiveness of digital government initiatives.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on how government communication can be tailored to meet the needs of diverse communities, particularly those in remote or rural areas. By focusing on the perceptions of Oihu Village residents, this study highlights the importance of considering local contexts when implementing digital communication strategies. It also provides valuable insights into the strategies that local governments can adopt to enhance digital communication's reach and effectiveness.

The primary objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of digital media in government communication in Oihu Village. By exploring the perceptions of local residents regarding the use of digital media for disseminating information, the research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the strengths and limitations of digital government communication in rural settings. The study also seeks to identify the challenges that hinder the widespread adoption of digital media in Oihu Village and propose solutions to address these challenges. This research will not only contribute to the

academic literature on digital government communication but also provide practical recommendations for improving communication strategies at the village level, particularly in similar rural and island communities.

In summary, this research aims to bridge the gap in the literature by focusing on how digital media is used by local governments in rural areas, with particular emphasis on the perceptions of the community. It contributes to understanding the complex dynamics of digital government communication in settings with limited infrastructure and low digital literacy, offering insights into how these challenges can be overcome to improve governance and public service delivery. By focusing on Oihu Village, this study provides a valuable case for other rural and island communities looking to implement or enhance their digital communication strategies. The findings will help inform future policies and practices aimed at strengthening the relationship between local governments and their communities in the digital age.

2. Method

This research employed a qualitative approach, focusing on descriptive methods to explore the phenomenon of digital government communication and its reception by the community in Oihu Village, Wakatobi. The study aimed to analyze the effectiveness of digital media as a communication tool used by the village government and how it is perceived by residents. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of complex social phenomena, which are difficult to capture through quantitative methods (Misran dkk. 2021). By utilizing qualitative methods, this study sought to gather rich insights into the experiences and perceptions of community members regarding digital government communication.

The primary objective of this research was to understand how digital media has transformed government communication and the associated challenges and strategies for improving its effectiveness in rural areas. Specifically, the study focused on examining the adoption of digital tools such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and the village's website, which are used by the local government to disseminate information to residents. The research also explored the digital divide in the village, as access to technology and the internet varies among residents. In addition, it aimed to identify potential strategies for enhancing the use of digital media in government communication.

2.1 Data Collection

Data for this study was collected using a combination of in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. These methods were chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the communication practices in Oihu Village and the perceptions of its residents.

In-depth Interviews: The primary method of data collection was in-depth interviews with key informants in the village. A purposive sampling technique was used to select informants who were knowledgeable and directly involved in the communication processes within the village. Informants included members of the village government, such as the village head, secretary, and community leaders, as well as active and non-active digital media users in the community. Interviews were conducted following a semi-structured format, allowing flexibility to explore themes that emerged during the discussions. The interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Field Observations: In addition to interviews, the researcher conducted field observations to understand how digital communication tools were used in practice. Observations were made during village meetings, digital communication activities, and other community events where government communication took place. This observational data provided insights into the real-world use of digital media and the interaction between the government and the community.

Documentation: Documentation was used as a supplementary data collection method. Official village documents, including digital content shared via the village's website and social media platforms, were analyzed. This also included content posted on WhatsApp groups used by the village government to communicate with residents. The researcher examined how these media were used to disseminate information and engaged with the community.

2.2 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using a qualitative content analysis approach, which involved organizing and categorizing the data into meaningful themes and patterns. The analysis followed several stages:

Data Reduction: The first step involved data reduction, where irrelevant or redundant information was filtered out. This helped focus the analysis on the key issues related to digital communication, community perceptions, and the challenges associated with digital media adoption.

Data Presentation: The next step was data presentation, which involved organizing the data into narrative summaries and matrices to facilitate understanding. The findings were categorized into major themes based on the research questions, which included: changes in communication patterns, the purpose and benefits of digital media use, challenges in digital media implementation, community responsiveness and participation, and strategies for developing digital communication in the future.

Theme Identification: The data were organized into five main themes derived from the coding process. These themes provided the framework for analyzing the effectiveness of digital media in government communication and understanding how residents in Oihu Village perceived these changes. The identified themes were:

1. **Changes in Communication Patterns:** This theme explored how the use of digital media transformed the way the village government communicates with the residents. This included shifts from traditional methods like announcements via loudspeakers and bulletin boards to more interactive and accessible digital platforms.
2. **Purpose and Benefits of Digital Media Use:** This theme examined the goals and advantages of using digital media for government communication, such as increased accessibility, transparency, and greater community participation.
3. **Challenges in Digital Media Implementation:** This theme focused on the obstacles encountered in implementing digital media for government communication, such as infrastructure limitations, low digital literacy, and unequal access to technology among residents.
4. **Community Responsiveness and Participation:** This theme assessed the extent to which the community engaged with digital communication efforts, highlighting the differences between active and non-active digital users and their respective levels of participation in village affairs.
5. **Strategies for Developing Digital Communication:** This theme explored potential solutions and strategies proposed by the village government to improve digital communication, including enhancing infrastructure, increasing digital literacy, and appointing dedicated personnel for managing digital platforms.

Conclusion Drawing: The final stage of data analysis involved drawing conclusions based on the themes identified. The analysis explored how the findings from the interviews and observations answered the research questions and provided insights into the effectiveness of digital government communication in Oihu Village.

2.3 Sampling and Informants

The study used purposive sampling to select key informants who were directly involved in government communication or who had significant experience and knowledge about the village's use of digital media. The informants were selected from different sectors of the community to ensure a diverse range of perspectives.

Village Government Informants: The primary government informants included the village head (Kepala Desa), the village secretary (Sekretaris Desa), and community leaders (Tokoh Masyarakat). These informants provided insights into the official use of digital media for government communication, the motivations behind adopting digital tools, and the challenges they faced in implementing digital communication strategies.

Community Informants: The community informants were divided into two categories: those who were active digital media users and those who were not. Active digital media users were selected from the group of residents who frequently engaged with digital platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and the village's website. These informants provided feedback on the perceived benefits and challenges of using digital media for government communication. On the other hand, non-active digital users were selected to understand the barriers they faced in accessing digital information and their reliance on traditional communication methods, such as loudspeakers and face-to-face meetings.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, ensuring that they understood the purpose of the study and their right to confidentiality. The researcher assured the participants that their responses would be kept anonymous and used solely for academic purposes. Additionally, the study adhered to ethical guidelines for qualitative research, including transparency in the research process and the avoidance of bias in data interpretation.

2.5 Location and Timeline

The research was conducted in Oihu Village, located in the Togo Binongko district of Wakatobi, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The village was selected for its efforts in adopting digital media for government communication, making it an ideal case study for this research. Data collection took place between January and April 2026, with the research process divided into several stages, including preparation, data collection, analysis, and report writing. The timeline of the research is presented in Table 2.1, outlining the activities and their corresponding months.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Presenting the Result

This section presents the key findings derived from the analysis of interviews and field observations conducted in Oihu Village, Wakatobi, regarding the use of digital media in government communication and the perception of the community toward this transformation. The findings are organized around five key themes that emerged from the data: changes in communication patterns, the purpose and benefits of digital media use, challenges in digital media implementation, community responsiveness and participation, and strategies for further developing digital communication.

3.1.1 Changes in Communication Patterns

The introduction of digital media has led to significant changes in the way the village government communicates with its residents. Prior to the digitalization efforts, communication was largely based on conventional methods such as meetings, loudspeakers, and bulletin boards. As noted by Sawiun (Kepala Desa), the head of the village, "Before the information communication system, we struggled to publish what we were doing in the village." This reflects the difficulty the village faced in disseminating information to a broader audience using traditional methods.

With the introduction of digital tools such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and the village website, communication has become more accessible and efficient. Pak Yanto, a resident who is active in using digital media, stated, "I usually get information from Facebook, and there is a website specifically for Meritaju." These digital platforms have made it easier for people, especially those familiar with digital tools, to access timely information, reducing the barriers that were once posed by more traditional forms of communication (Suherman et al., 2020). However, the combination of digital and conventional methods remains prevalent in Oihu, as some residents still rely on loudspeakers and face-to-face meetings for information dissemination, indicating the incomplete shift from traditional to digital communication.

3.1.2 Purpose and Benefits of Digital Media Use

The village government has adopted digital media with the primary aim of improving accessibility to information, transparency, and public participation. According to Sawiun, "We in the village

initially received information from the center, and it was mandated that village activities should be monitored by the center. So, we took the initiative to implement a communication tool or digitalization in the village." This adoption of digital tools was seen as a means to streamline communication and improve the flow of information between the government and residents.

Pak Yanto, an active digital media user, highlighted the benefits of digital media, stating, "Digital media allows village residents to access information and government services anytime and anywhere." This reflects the convenience that digital communication offers in enabling faster access to important information, which enhances the efficiency of government communication efforts. The convenience of having information readily available through digital channels has contributed significantly to increasing public engagement with the village government's activities.

3.1.3 Challenges in Digital Media Implementation

Despite the clear benefits, the implementation of digital media has encountered several challenges, particularly in relation to infrastructure and digital literacy. Jaharudin (Sekretaris Desa) pointed out that one of the main challenges is the limited digital literacy among the residents, saying, "The village government needs to improve the digital literacy of the community by providing training and education on the use of digital technology." This indicates that many residents, particularly the older generation, struggle to engage with digital media effectively.

Moreover, Pak Darmin, a community leader, mentioned, "Some residents still find it difficult to access digital media, especially the older ones or those who do not have digital devices." This highlights a digital divide in the village, where some members of the community, particularly those without access to digital devices or internet connections, remain excluded from the benefits of digital communication. This issue is further compounded by infrastructure limitations such as unstable internet connectivity, which prevents the full utilization of digital media.

3.1.4 Community Responsiveness and Participation

The community's response to digital communication has been largely positive, particularly among those who are active users of digital media. Pak Yanto noted, "The information shared is clear and accurate. It's good that the technology has been applied." This suggests that digital media has contributed to improving the clarity and efficiency of communication between the government and the public. However, this positive response is not universal. Some residents who are not active in using digital media expressed concerns about their exclusion from the information loop. Ibu Nona, a resident who is not familiar with digital media, said, "I get information through meetings and loudspeakers." This indicates that a portion of the population still depends on traditional communication methods, which may hinder their ability to fully engage with the village's digital communication efforts.

The disparity in engagement between digital media users and non-users points to the unequal distribution of benefits that digital communication brings. While those with digital access feel more involved in the decision-making process and the village's activities, those without access remain disconnected. This highlights the importance of addressing the digital divide to ensure equitable participation from all community members.

3.1.5 Strategies for Developing Digital Communication

To address the challenges and improve the effectiveness of digital communication, the village government has planned several strategies for the future. These strategies include strengthening digital infrastructure, improving digital literacy, and appointing a dedicated administrator to manage the village's digital platforms (Herman Lawealai, Nastia, dan Hastuti 2021). Sawiun (Kepala Desa) emphasized, "We are enhancing the quality of digitalization in the village so that all residents can access information effectively, without further digitalization disruptions." This initiative aims to ensure that all residents, regardless of their digital proficiency, can access important information in an equitable and timely manner.

Angusali (Sekretaris Desa) also highlighted the importance of digital literacy training, stating, "We are improving the quality of digitalization in the village so that all residents can make full use

of it." These statements underline the village government's commitment to overcoming the barriers of digital illiteracy and infrastructure limitations. The appointment of a dedicated digital media administrator is another key strategy to ensure that the communication process remains consistent and well-managed, improving both the reach and accuracy of the information shared.

3.2 Create a Discussion

The study aimed to examine the role of digital media in government communication at the village level, specifically in Oihu Village, Wakatobi, and to assess the community's perceptions of its effectiveness. The results of this research provide significant insights into how digital media has transformed communication in the village, as well as the challenges that need to be addressed to ensure equitable access and participation for all residents. In this discussion, we will analyze the findings in relation to the literature on digital governance, communication strategies, and community engagement.

3.2.1 Changes in Communication Patterns

The adoption of digital media in Oihu Village marked a substantial shift in the way the village government communicates with its residents. Prior to the digitalization of communication, the government relied on conventional methods such as face-to-face meetings, loudspeakers, and bulletin boards. These methods, although effective in certain contexts, were limited by geographical constraints and the inability to reach all residents consistently. As highlighted by Sawiun (Kepala Desa), "Before the information communication system, we struggled to publish what we were doing in the village," pointing to the difficulties the village faced in disseminating information effectively.

The introduction of digital media, including WhatsApp, Facebook, and the village website, brought about a significant improvement in communication. Digital tools provided a platform for instant communication and information dissemination, as noted by Pak Yanto, a community member who actively uses digital media: "I usually get information from Facebook, and there is a website specifically for Meritaju." This shift in communication methods aligns with the findings of Yuan et al. (2023), who argue that digital communication platforms enhance the transparency and accessibility of government actions. However, the persistence of conventional methods, such as loudspeakers and community meetings, indicates that the transition to digital media is still in progress. This finding suggests that while digital media has been successful in some areas, the hybrid communication approach remains relevant in the village, especially for those without access to technology.

3.2.2 Purpose and Benefits of Digital Media Use

The government's adoption of digital media was driven by the need to enhance the accessibility of information, increase transparency, and encourage greater community participation, as emphasized by Sawiun (Kepala Desa). These objectives align with the broader goals of digital governance, which aim to improve the efficiency and transparency of government services (Gil-Garcia dan Flores-Zúñiga 2020). Pak Yanto's statement, "Digital media allows village residents to access information and government services anytime and anywhere," highlights one of the key benefits of digital media—its ability to provide residents with timely access to information.

This increase in accessibility reflects the findings of studies on digital government communication, which emphasize the role of digital media in overcoming geographical and temporal barriers to communication (Yudarwati dan Gregory 2022). By enabling residents to access information at their convenience, digital tools reduce the reliance on scheduled meetings and physical notices, making the communication process more efficient and inclusive. However, as noted in the findings, the success of digital media in improving accessibility depends on the residents' ability to use and engage with these platforms, which varies significantly across the community.

3.2.3 Challenges in Digital Media Implementation

Despite the clear benefits, the implementation of digital media in Oihu Village has faced several challenges, primarily related to infrastructure and digital literacy. As Jaharudin (Sekretaris Desa) mentioned, "The village government needs to improve the digital literacy of the community by

providing training and education on the use of digital technology." This reflects a common issue in rural areas where limited access to technology and inadequate digital skills hinder the effective use of digital media in governance .

The findings of this study corroborate those of previous research on the digital divide, which underscores the importance of addressing infrastructure limitations and improving digital literacy in rural communities (Dimas dan Fahlevvi 2024). In Oihu Village, while some residents have embraced digital tools, others, especially the elderly or those without access to digital devices, remain excluded from the benefits of digital government communication. As Pak Darmin (Tokoh Masyarakat) noted, "Some residents still find it difficult to access digital media, especially the older ones or those who do not have digital devices," which highlights the need for more inclusive communication strategies that cater to all members of the community.

3.2.4 Community Responsiveness and Participation

The study found that the response to digital government communication in Oihu Village is largely positive among those who are active digital media users. Pak Yanto's statement, "The information shared is clear and accurate. It's good that the technology has been applied," illustrates the positive perception of digital media among those who actively engage with these platforms. This is consistent with the findings of (Aji dkk. 2023), who argue that the use of social media by governments improves the speed and clarity of communication, enhancing public trust and participation.

However, the study also revealed that the benefits of digital communication are not universally experienced across the community. Some residents, particularly those who are less digitally literate or lack access to digital devices, continue to rely on traditional methods, such as loudspeakers and face-to-face meetings. Ibu Nona (Masyarakat Tidak Aktif Digital) expressed, "I get information through meetings and loudspeakers," underscoring the digital divide that still exists within the village. This finding aligns with the concept of the digital divide, which suggests that the benefits of digital communication are often unevenly distributed within communities, depending on factors such as age, income, and access to technology (Fahmi dan Mendrofa 2023).

The differences in responsiveness and participation highlight the importance of considering the digital literacy and access levels of all community members when designing communication strategies. As noted by (Meijustika dkk. 2025), effective digital governance requires strategies that account for the varying capabilities and needs of different population groups.

3.2.5 Strategies for Developing Digital Communication

To address the challenges associated with digital media implementation, the village government has planned several strategies for improving the effectiveness of digital communication. These strategies include strengthening digital infrastructure, enhancing digital literacy, and appointing a dedicated administrator for managing the village's digital platforms. Sawiun's statement, "We are enhancing the quality of digitalization in the village so that all residents can access information effectively," reflects the government's commitment to improving digital communication and ensuring that it reaches all members of the community.

Jaharudin's emphasis on digital literacy training, "We are improving the quality of digitalization in the village so that all residents can make full use of it," is an important step in overcoming the barriers to digital media adoption. These strategies align with the recommendations made by scholars on the need to invest in digital infrastructure and literacy to ensure that digital governance can be effectively implemented (Basyo dan Anirwan 2023). By addressing these challenges, the village government can increase the effectiveness of digital communication and ensure that all residents can benefit from it.

4. Conclusion

This study has explored the use of digital media in government communication in Oihu Village, Wakatobi, with a particular focus on community perceptions. The findings indicate that the adoption of digital communication methods, including WhatsApp, Facebook, and the village website, has

significantly improved communication between the government and the residents. These digital tools have made information dissemination faster, more accessible, and transparent, fostering greater public participation. However, the study also highlighted challenges, particularly regarding infrastructure and digital literacy, which have resulted in uneven participation across the community.

The research further emphasizes the role of digital literacy as a crucial factor in determining the effectiveness of digital communication. While active digital users have a positive perception of digital media's ability to facilitate communication and engagement, those who are less digitally literate or lack access to technology continue to rely on conventional methods like loudspeakers and community meetings. This gap in digital access underlines the importance of ensuring that communication strategies are inclusive and cater to all segments of the community. The village government's future strategies, such as improving digital infrastructure and providing digital literacy training, are vital steps in overcoming these barriers.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital governance, particularly in rural and island communities, where digital media adoption faces unique challenges. By focusing on Oihu Village, the research provides valuable insights into the dynamics of digital government communication at the village level, offering recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of such initiatives in similar contexts.

Further research could explore the impact of digital communication on long-term community development and governance in rural settings, examining how digital media influences decision-making processes, accountability, and trust in government. Moreover, a comparative study across different rural villages in Indonesia could provide a broader understanding of the factors that shape the adoption and success of digital government communication strategies.

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