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From Catalyst to Disruptors: The Delegitimization of *Tukang Ojeg* as Intermediaries in Homestay Development in Borobudur Village

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ABSTRACT

Community-based tourism (CBT) literature recognizes informal transport operators as important market facilitators, yet less is known about how digital transformation changes their legitimacy within community-owned accommodation systems. This study examines the changing role of *Tukang Ojeg* (local motorcycle-taxi drivers) as informal intermediaries in homestay marketing in Borobudur Village, Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study, data were obtained through observations, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews with village, homestay, and transport stakeholders. The findings show a shift from a previously valued facilitation role toward a contested intermediary position. As homestay owners gain access to social media, online travel agents (OTAs), and other digital channels, dependence on *Tukang Ojeg* becomes differentiated by digital capability, room capacity, and business networks. At the same time, competition among drivers and the absence of standardized intermediary arrangements contribute to disputes over commissions and room-price authority. Reported intermediary fees range from approximately 10% to 30% in particular transactions. Theoretically, the study extends Intermediary Theory by conceptualizing delegitimization as a relational and context-dependent process in which digitalization redistributes information access, bargaining power, and market control. Practically, it recommends transparent commission rules, owner-controlled pricing, inclusive digital-literacy support, and institutional integration of *Tukang Ojeg* into destination governance.

Keywords: *Controversy of Intermediaries; Homestay Development; Borobudur Village; Destination Governance; Digital Divide.*

INTRODUCTION

Informal intermediaries continue to matter in tourism destinations where local entrepreneurs have limited access to marketing resources, digital technologies, or external customer networks. Their value lies in connecting fragmented markets, reducing information gaps, and facilitating transactions between visitors and small tourism enterprises (Spallanzani, Ghadge, & Carboni, 2023). However, digital transformation is changing the architecture of tourism distribution. Social media, online travel agents (OTAs), and platform-mediated booking enable accommodation providers to reach visitors more directly, potentially reducing the informational advantage previously held by local intermediaries. Recent tourism scholarship shows that digitalization can expand market access and participation, but its benefits depend on local capabilities and institutional arrangements (Jiang & Phoong, 2023; Lapuz, 2023). Thus, digital transformation should be treated not simply as a marketing innovation but as a structural driver that can redistribute intermediary power and legitimacy.

This transformation is evident in Borobudur Village, Magelang Regency, Indonesia, where *Tukang Ojeg* serve as informal intermediaries between tourists and homestay owners. Their role is paradoxical. Historically, they helped visitors locate available accommodation and contributed to the emergence of community-based homestays. Yet some homestay owners now associate intermediary practices with inconsistent pricing, commission disputes, and competition among accommodation providers. The issue is therefore not whether *Tukang Ojeg* are useful, but under what conditions their intermediary role remains legitimate within a tourism system that is becoming increasingly digitalized.

The growth of homestays around Borobudur Temple is

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closely associated with increasing visitor demand generated by tourism events, cultural and religious activities, school holidays, and sporting events. Wedatama and Mardiansjah (2018) documented the earlier contribution of *Tukang Ojeg* to the emergence of the Borobudur homestay cluster by connecting tourists with local accommodation providers and facilitating bookings. Their work establishes the historical importance of informal intermediation. Nevertheless, the contemporary tourism environment differs because accommodation information can increasingly circulate through digital platforms, social networks, and direct communication. This creates a need to reassess how the intermediary role is negotiated when the original information asymmetry is reduced for some, but not all, homestay owners.

Digitalization does not automatically eliminate intermediaries. Platformization may create new forms of intermediation and reconfigure rather than simply remove market brokers (Capineri & Romano, 2021). In rural destinations, unequal digital competence can produce differentiated empowerment: actors who acquire digital skills gain greater autonomy and decision-making capacity, while others remain dependent on established networks (Lapuz, 2023). In Borobudur, this means that the legitimacy of *Tukang Ojeg* may vary according to homestay owners' digital literacy, room capacity, and social capital. Owners who can attract guests directly may view commissions as unnecessary, whereas owners with weaker digital access may continue to value personal referral networks.

This study draws on Intermediary Theory to explain how middlemen facilitate transactions by connecting fragmented markets and reducing uncertainty (Spallanzani et al., 2023). Intermediaries can gain bargaining power when they control access to consumers or possess information that producers lack (Judge, 2022). The study therefore treats intermediary power as relational rather than inherent: it expands when homestay owners depend on drivers for market access and contracts when owners can reach tourists through alternative channels. This perspective explains why the same actor can be perceived simultaneously as a facilitator and a source of market distortion.

The issue is also situated within Community-Based Tourism (CBT), which emphasizes local ownership, participation, empowerment, and equitable benefit distribution (Giampiccoli, Saayman, & Oliver, 2021). Homestays in Borobudur constitute a CBT mechanism because local households directly participate in tourism and retain a portion of visitor spending. Yet CBT outcomes depend on how economic benefits and decision-making authority are distributed among stakeholders. When intermediary commissions or guest allocation are determined through informal arrangements outside collective governance, the distributional objectives of CBT may be weakened. Tolkach and Pratt (2022) emphasize the importance of collective efficacy and stakeholder coordination in community tourism networks.

The relationship also reflects the informal tourism economy, in which actors rely on personal networks, flexibility, trust, and social capital to access economic opportunities. Informality can increase adaptability, particularly where formal market institutions are weak, but it can also generate institutional friction when informal practices meet more formalized and digitalized systems (Ngo, Lohmann, & Walters, 2023; Williams & Horodnic, 2021). In Borobudur, the commission paid to *Tukang Ojeg* is therefore not only a private transaction; it is also a mechanism through which access to tourists, pricing authority, and economic benefits are negotiated.

Stakeholder Conflict Theory provides a complementary lens because tourism destinations contain actors with different interests, resources, and levels of influence. Conflict emerges when stakeholders compete over scarce economic benefits or seek authority over market access and decision-making (Byrd, Craighill, & Evans, 2021). In the Borobudur case, disagreement over room prices and intermediary fees represents a broader contest over who has the legitimate right to determine the value of accommodation and the terms of access to guests.

Analytical synthesis of the framework: The relationship among Community-Based Tourism (CBT), the informal tourism economy, stakeholder conflict, and digital transformation can be understood as a single process of changing market access and intermediary legitimacy. CBT establishes the normative expectation that tourism development should strengthen local participation, empowerment, and equitable benefit sharing. Informal intermediation initially supports these goals by connecting tourists with community-owned homestays through local knowledge, trust, and personal networks. However, when digital platforms and community knowledge increase

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homestay providers' capabilities to market tourism products directly, the information advantage and market-access control previously held by *Tukang Ojeg* can decline. Nguyen, Pham, and Freeman (2023) emphasize that knowledge and dynamic capabilities can strengthen tourism businesses' ability to respond to changing market conditions, while Hillebrand (2022) shows that tourism ecosystems are reshaped as organizational capabilities and relationships evolve. In this case, digital transformation is therefore treated as a structural driver rather than merely a marketing innovation: it changes the outside options available to homestay owners, redistributes bargaining power, and alters expectations about pricing, commissions, and guest allocation. These changes can generate stakeholder conflict when informal intermediary practices are perceived as inconsistent with owner control or equitable benefit sharing. The resulting process is not simple disintermediation; rather, it is a reconfiguration in which homestay providers gain greater direct market access while *Tukang Ojeg* must reposition their intermediary function and negotiate a new basis of legitimacy.

Integrated conceptual framework CBT: local ownership and equitable benefit sharing establish the governance expectations against which intermediary practices are evaluated. Informal tourism economy: *Tukang Ojeg* use local knowledge, personal networks, and flexible transactions to connect tourists with homestays, while informality can also produce inconsistent rules and accountability. Digital transformation: OTAs, social media, and direct communication reduce information asymmetry for digitally capable owners, changing their dependence on local intermediaries. Stakeholder conflict and intermediary legitimacy: competition over pricing, commissions, guest allocation, and income security makes intermediary authority contested; delegitimization occurs when perceived costs or control exceed perceived market-access value. Research gap and contribution Previous research established that *Tukang Ojeg* contributed to the early growth of Borobudur's homestays (Wedatama & Mardiansjah, 2018), while recent tourism scholarship shows that digitalization can reshape market access, participation, and tourism distribution (Capineri & Romano, 2021; Jiang & Phoong, 2023; Lapuz, 2023). What remains insufficiently explained is how these processes interact at the community level: declining information asymmetry for digitally capable homestay owners, continued dependence among less digitally capable owners, and competition among informal drivers can combine to alter intermediary legitimacy. This study addresses that gap by distinguishing the historical facilitator role of *Tukang Ojeg* from their contemporary status as contested intermediaries and by conceptualizing delegitimization as a relational shift in bargaining power rather than the disappearance of intermediation.

METHODOLOGY

This study examines the evolving role of *Tukang Ojeg* as intermediaries in homestay marketing within Ngaran 2 Hamlet, Borobudur Village, Magelang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. Ngaran 2 was selected purposively because it is a concentrated homestay cluster with approximately 30 resident-owned homestays and about 150 rentable rooms, and because the *Tukang Ojeg* base near Gate 1 of Borobudur Temple is geographically close to the cluster. The site therefore provides a relevant setting for examining repeated interactions among homestay owners, informal transport intermediaries, and local tourism governance.

A qualitative case study design was used to explore perceptions, experiences, negotiations, and conflicts that could not be adequately captured through numerical measures alone (Creswell, 2018; Crowe et al., 2011). The unit of analysis was the relationship between homestay owners and *Tukang Ojeg* as an informal marketing-intermediation arrangement. The study focused on how access to tourists, digital capability, pricing authority, and commission practices shape the perceived legitimacy of the intermediary role.

Informants were recruited through purposive, role-based sampling. Eligibility required direct involvement in homestay development, accommodation marketing, local tourism governance, or *Tukang Ojeg* services in the study area. The sample comprised 19 informants: the Village Head; the Chairperson of the Ngaran 2 Homestay Association; representatives of homestay owners; and *Tukang Ojeg* representing both the Jasa Antar Wisata (*Jawis*) association and independent/non-*Jawis* drivers. The inclusion of both organized and independent drivers was intentional.

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Table 1. Number and Grouping of Informants

Stakeholder category	Informant role	Number	Basis for inclusion
Village government	Village Head	1	Direct knowledge of village tourism governance
Homestay association	Chairperson of Ngaran 2 Homestay Association	1	Represents collective homestay interests
Homestay owners	Representatives of homestay/rental owners	5	Direct experience with intermediary marketing and pricing
Tukang Ojeg – *Jawis*	Members of Jasa Antar Wisata (*Jawis*)	6	Organized intermediary perspective and code-of-ethics practices
Tukang Ojeg – *independent*	Independent/non-*Jawis* drivers	6	Independent intermediary perspective and commission practices
Total		**19**	Total informants reported in the original manuscript

Source: Researcher, 2024

Each in-depth interview lasted approximately 45–90 minutes. The interview records were organized for analysis according to stakeholder role and topic. The research materials available for this revision specify interview duration but do not document a standardized audio-recording protocol; therefore, no unsupported claim about audio recording is introduced.

Participant recruitment and stakeholder coverage were purposive and role-based. Eligibility required direct involvement in homestay development and/or tourism activities in Borobudur Village. For the FGD, participants were invited because of their roles in the local homestay ecosystem, including representatives of the tourism-related local government institution, village government (including village and hamlet leadership and representation of Village-Owned Enterprises/BUMDes), homestay owners, local food and souvenir businesses, and a tourist car-rental business. For the in-depth interviews, the study selected the Village Head, the Chairperson of the Ngaran 2 Homestay Association, homestay/rental owners, and *Tukang Ojeg* from both the Jasa Antar Wisata (*Jawis*) association and independent/non-*Jawis* drivers. Including both organized and independent drivers was intended to capture differences in intermediary rules, fee practices, and perceptions of legitimacy. No gender-based selection criterion was imposed. The resulting composition reflected the local stakeholder pattern, with most representatives of other stakeholder groups being men, while women predominantly owned or operated homestays, food establishments, and souvenir businesses. Because the study was designed around stakeholder roles, interests, and positions in the tourism ecosystem rather than demographic comparison, role-based grouping is retained as the principal profile of the 19 informants.

The coding process was inductive and thematic. The researchers first identified meaningful segments in interview and FGD material related to intermediary functions, digital capability, dependence, commissions, pricing authority, competition, and legitimacy. These initial codes were compared across stakeholder groups and then consolidated into broader categories. Themes were generated from recurring issues, contrasting experiences, and explanatory relationships across interviews, FGDs, observations, and documents. Differences between stakeholder groups were retained as analytically relevant evidence rather than treated as noise. The resulting themes were then compared with the conceptual framework to examine how CBT, the informal tourism economy, digital transformation, and stakeholder conflict interacted in shaping intermediary legitimacy. Ethical procedures included voluntary participation and informed consent, protection of confidentiality and privacy, and minimization of identifying information in reporting; the formal ethics approval is reported in the Ethical Approval section.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), observations, and literature reviews. The FGD was conducted once by engaging tourism stakeholders, including local government representatives, village officials, tourism business operators, community leaders, and homestay owners. In-depth interviews were conducted over four months from July to October 2024 with purposively selected key informants, including representatives from two groups of Tukang Ojeg, homestay/rental business owners, hamlet and community representatives, and village heads.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014): data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Interview and FGD material was first organized around initial codes

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concerning intermediary functions, digital marketing, dependence, commissions, pricing authority, competition, and legitimacy. Related codes were grouped into broader categories and compared across stakeholder groups. Themes were generated by identifying recurring patterns, contrasts, and relationships across sources and methods and then comparing them with the conceptual framework.
Data preparation organize interview/FGD material and combine it with observations and documents.Initial coding: identify segments concerning intermediary function, digital capability, dependence, fees, pricing, competition, and legitimacy. Category development: compare related codes across homestay owners, drivers, association representatives, and village government. Theme development: identify recurring patterns and explanatory relationships and compare them with CBT, informal-economy, digital-transformation, and stakeholder-conflict concepts. Triangulation and verification: compare sources and methods and retain meaningful disagreement as evidence.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Homestay Growth and Tourist Demand

In the area around Borobudur, tourists can choose various types of lodging according to their tastes and abilities, from 5-star hotels to jasmine class hotels. Outside the hotel, there are 20 Village Economic Centers (Balkondes) managed by Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) with lodging businesses. However, the various existing lodging facilities currently available are still unable to meet the overall demand for accommodation services, especially when in Borobudur Temple there are events such as Vesak Day celebrations, school holiday season other activities, such Borobudur Marathon. At such times, all types of lodging are fully booked. This phenomenon encourages the development of homestays operated by the community. In line with the increasing number of promotions and events organized by the Ministry of Tourism and the management of Borobudur Temple, more and more tourists are visiting. The following is data on the trend of visitors to Borobudur Temple during 2020-2024 (the year after Borobudur Temple was designated as Super Priority Destination/SPD).

Table 2. Number of Visitors to Borobudur Temple by Tourist Origin and Month in Magelang in 2020-2023

Month	Domestic Tourist				International Tourist			
	Year				Year			
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2020	2021	2022	2023
January	395.175	30.394	131.561	121.138	15.603	52	127	6.278
February	234.28	18.641	89.203	87.706	11.506	37	170	6.241
March	111.908	34.624	111.54	67.52	4.213	33	348	8.52
April	-	30.713	23.89	93.561	-	64	618	9.51
May	-	38.369	324.135	126.41	-	55	2.175	14.438
June	2.235	54.589	191.81	158.43	2	70	4.341	16.696
July	16.858	-	125.266	127.271	29	-	1.184	29.166
August	45.571	-	51.906	58.9	39	-	15.55	34.092
September	23.591	5.892	44.552	63.997	19	9	9.853	24.852
October	43.159	30.285	76.461	77.455	38	93	7.688	18.18
November	32.449	51.485	74.253	86.941	26	106	4.941	12.291
December	60.473	127.938	198.709	211.897	76	155	6.941	12.789
Magelang Regency	965.699	422.93	1.443.286	1.281.226	31.551	674	53.936	193.053

Source: BPS in 2022 and 2023 based on data from the Magelang Regency Tourism, Youth and Sports Office, processed

From table 2 above, it appears that Borobudur Temple is quite visited by tourists, but there is a period (several months) in 2020-2022 that Borobudur Temple does not receive tourist visits (due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the government stipulates that tourist attractions must be closed (lock down). The table above also shows that in certain months many tourists - domestic and foreign - visit Borobudur Temple. During the celebration of Vesak Day (commemorated on the full moon in the lunar month, usually in April-June) and the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, school holidays (June-July), at the Borobudur Marathon event (November-December), school holidays and Nataru (late December-early January) there are many visitors to Borobudur Temple. While many foreign tourists visit in May-September, generally because they take advantage of summer vacations. At a time when Borobudur Temple has no events and there are no visits, some homestay owners rely on their marketing to Tukang Ojeg.
The increasing number of events organized by the management of Borobudur, PT TWC encourages in tourists go to Borobudur and creates a domino effect that encourages more and more people around Borobudur Temple to establish a homestay business. Currently in

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Ngaran 2 Hamlet, Borobudur Village there are around 30 homestays owned by residents with a total of about 150 rooms for rent, as follows:

Table 3. Aggregate Profile of Homestay Capacity in Ngaran 2 Hamlet

Room capacity	Number	%	Profile
1 room	3	10.0%	Aggregate
2 rooms	7	23.3%	Aggregate
3 rooms	8	26.7%	Aggregate
4 rooms	7	23.3%	Aggregate
5–10 rooms	1	3.3%	Aggregate
>10 rooms	4	13.3%	Aggregate
Total	30	100%	19 men; 11 women

Source: compiled from interview records and the homestay association's information; individual names omitted for confidentiality.

The table above indicates that most of the residents only rent out 2-4 rooms, but there are some residents who have more than 10 rooms for rent and it also seems that the homestay manager is mixed, there are men and women.

2. Divergent Perspectives of Homestay Owners on Tukang Ojeg

The findings reveal that homestay owners in Ngaran 2 Hamlet hold contrasting perceptions regarding the role of *Tukang Ojeg* as marketing intermediaries. These differing perspectives are primarily influenced by the owners' marketing capabilities, the number of rooms they manage, their level of digital literacy, and the strength of their personal business networks.

For homestay owners with limited marketing capacity, particularly during the low season when tourist arrivals decline significantly, *Tukang Ojeg* are perceived as indispensable marketing partners. Informants explained that *Tukang Ojeg* drivers often serve as the primary channel connecting tourists with available accommodations. According to several respondents, *Tukang Ojeg* are capable of bringing guests on a daily basis, thereby helping homestay owners maintain occupancy rates and sustain household income. This dependence is particularly evident among owners who manage larger properties with more than ten rentable rooms, as vacant rooms represent substantial financial losses. During periods such as the fasting month, when tourist activity decreases considerably, many owners rely heavily on the marketing efforts of *Tukang Ojeg* to generate bookings and maintain operational cash flow.

In contrast, another group of homestay owners expressed a more critical view of intermediary dependence. Owners who possess adequate digital literacy and marketing skills prefer to promote their accommodations independently through social media platforms and Online Travel Agents (OTAs). These owners argue that direct marketing provides greater financial benefits because they are not required to share commissions or provide additional incentives to intermediaries. Direct bookings also allow them to exercise greater control over pricing strategies and customer relations. Several informants noted that an increasing number of members of the homestay association have begun utilizing digital platforms independently, reducing their reliance on *Tukang Ojeg* as marketing agents.

A third perspective emerged from owners who have successfully developed alternative marketing networks outside both digital platforms and intermediary channels. These owners leverage personal and professional relationships to attract guests. One respondent described how connections with employees and reception staff at luxury hotels in the Borobudur area generated accommodation referrals, particularly when hotels experienced excess demand. Such network-based marketing strategies provide an alternative source of guests while minimizing dependence on both digital platforms and Tukang Ojeg.

Homestay owners with limited digital skills and weak business networks tend to view *Tukang Ojeg* as essential economic actors who facilitate market access. Conversely, owners who possess stronger technological capabilities or broader social networks increasingly perceive intermediary services as unnecessary and economically inefficient. Therefore, perceptions of *Tukang Ojeg* are shaped by the varying levels of digital literacy, market access, and social capital possessed by homestay owners. This situation creates a division between those who remain structurally dependent on informal intermediaries and those who have begun transitioning toward more autonomous and digitally enabled marketing strategies.

3. Growth and Organization of Tukang Ojeg Services

In line with the increasing number of events carried out by

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the management of Borobudur Temple, the number of tourists visiting is also increasing and the number of *Tukang Ojeg* around Borobudur Temple is also increasing.

Several *Tukang Ojeg* bases operate around Borobudur Temple. In each of these bases, there are about 20 people who gather daily at their respective bases while waiting for customers to serve the demand for delivery services and most of them work from morning to evening. The Ojeg artisans in the 5 bases do not have any institution that accommodates their activities.

Outside of the 5 locations, there is one more place for the *Tukang Ojeg* community base, which is in front of the Sinar Minang Restaurant. The location is strategic, in front of Gate 1 of Borobudur Temple, so that the *Tukang Ojeg* base in front of Sinar Minang Restaurant is the closest to the location of the homestay in Ngaran 2 Hamlet. In this location, you can find 2 types of Tukang Ojeg, namely *Tukang Ojeg* who are organized in a community (Paguyuban *Tukang Ojeg* Jasa Antar Wisata / *Jawis*) and freelance Ojeg Tukang (Non *Jawis*). *Tukang Ojeg* who are organized in association namely Jasa Antar Wisata / *Jawis*) have an agreement of code and ethics as a standard in relation with homestay owner and fee, while independent *Tukang Ojeg* (non-association), they stated that the amount of the fee varies depending on the agreement that they made depending on the agreement reached whenever a guest arrives.

4. Contested Intermediary Fees and Pricing Authority

The findings reveal that disputes over intermediary service fees are closely related to increasing competition among *Tukang Ojeg* operating around Borobudur Temple. The growth of tourism activities has attracted more individuals into the *Tukang Ojeg* sector, intensifying competition for both transportation and accommodation-related services. As a result, *Tukang Ojeg* have expanded their role beyond transportation by helping tourists find accommodation, providing local information, and connecting visitors with homestay owners.

Despite the growth of tourism, many drivers reported unstable incomes, particularly during low tourist seasons. At the same time, technological developments have reduced their traditional role as accommodation intermediaries. Many tourists now obtain information through Online Travel Agents (OTAs), social media, and other digital platforms before arriving in Borobudur. Consequently, opportunities for *Tukang Ojeg* to earn commissions from homestay referrals have declined, forcing many drivers to seek additional income from informal occupations outside tourism.

The controversy is further shaped by the existence of two groups of Tukang Ojeg: organized drivers who belong to the Jasa Antar Wisata (*Jawis*) association and independent freelance drivers. Members of *Jawis* generally follow agreed rules regarding service fees and interactions with tourists and homestay owners, whereas freelance drivers operate independently and negotiate commissions directly with accommodation providers and guests. These differences create diverse pricing and commission practices within the local tourism market.

Several informants indicated that some drivers prioritize homestays offering higher commissions or additional incentives. This practice increases competition among accommodation providers and creates perceptions of unfairness. Furthermore, freelance drivers sometimes exercise considerable discretion in determining room prices offered to tourists, occasionally charging rates above those established by homestay owners. Accommodation providers view this practice as reducing transparency and weakening their authority over pricing decisions. In contrast, drivers justify such actions as compensation for their marketing efforts and as a strategy for maintaining income in an increasingly competitive tourism environment.

Overall, the controversy over intermediary service fees reflects a broader struggle over pricing authority, market control, and economic survival within Borobudur's tourism economy. The expansion of digital booking systems has weakened the traditional intermediary role of Tukang Ojeg, while increasing competition among drivers has intensified disputes over commissions, customer access, and accommodation pricing.

5. Changing Legitimacy of Tukang Ojeg as Intermediaries

The findings indicate a significant shift in the social legitimacy of *Tukang Ojeg* within Borobudur's homestay sector. Historically, they were widely regarded as catalysts for community-based tourism development. In the early stages of homestay growth, *Tukang Ojeg* played an essential role in connecting tourists with local households, helping residents generate income from accommodation services and contributing to the expansion of the local tourism economy.

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However, this positive perception has gradually weakened. As homestay owners gained experience, developed broader business networks, and adopted digital marketing platforms, dependence on *Tukang Ojeg* began to decline. At the same time, increasing competition among drivers encouraged more aggressive intermediary practices, transforming what was once a mutually beneficial relationship into a source of tension and distrust.

A major source of conflict concerns control over accommodation pricing. Several homestay owners reported that some drivers, particularly independent operators, increasingly influence or determine room prices during negotiations with tourists. According to accommodation providers, these practices undermine their authority, create inconsistencies in room rates, and intensify competition among homestays. Consequently, some owners no longer view *Tukang Ojeg* as facilitators of business growth but as actors who contribute to market instability and internal conflict.

The growing distrust toward informal intermediaries has encouraged many homestay owners to adopt alternative marketing strategies through OTAs, social media, and direct customer engagement. These channels are perceived as offering greater transparency, stronger pricing control, and more predictable business outcomes. Nevertheless, dependence on *Tukang Ojeg* has not disappeared entirely. Many owners still rely on their services during periods of low tourist demand when digital channels alone are insufficient to maintain occupancy rates.

This situation creates a paradoxical relationship characterized by simultaneous dependence and dissatisfaction. While *Tukang Ojeg* continue to provide valuable market access and remain important actors within the local tourism economy, their involvement in pricing and commission arrangements increasingly generates mistrust among accommodation providers. As a result, their legitimacy has shifted from being universally recognized as tourism catalysts to becoming contested stakeholders whose contributions are both valued and criticized.

Overall, the delegitimization of *Tukang Ojeg* reflects broader changes in tourism governance, digitalization, and stakeholder power relations. Their changing role illustrates how competition over market access, pricing authority, and economic benefits can transform previously cooperative relationships into ongoing sources of conflict within community-based tourism destinations.

6. Variation in Homestay Room Rates

In general, the price of renting a homestay room in Kampung Homestay Ngaran 2 varies, starting from IDR 250 thousand to IDR 350 thousand, while the rental price of a homestay unit is priced from IDR 500 thousand to IDR 750 thousand which can be filled in excess of the room capacity. The price difference is influenced by the availability of facilities and infrastructure/ supporting facilities provided by homestay owners such as air conditioning (air conditioning or fans), toilets (sitting or squatting) and breakfast.

A good homestay owner usually charges between Rp75-80,000 (and share about 30% for *Tukang Ojeg* fee) for guests who rent a non-air-conditioned room (with a rental rate between Rp200-250,000) and Rp100,000 (about 30% of the room rate for *Tukang Ojeg* fee) for guests who rent a room with air conditioning (with a rental rate between Rp300-350,000) (interview with Asrofi, *Tukang Ojeg* Non *Jawis*). In an interview with the author, *Tukang Ojeg* join in Association (Paguyuban) insisted that they do not specify a specific tariff related to their services of bringing guests to homestay owners. However, this resource person admitted that once he brought guests to a homestay that rented a Non-AC room, he sometimes got a tip of Rp25,000-50,000 from the rental price of Rp250,000 (about 10-20%), while for guests who stayed with air conditioning, he often got a fee of Rp50-100,000 (around 15-30%) from the room rental rate of Rp350,000/night. The resource person of *Tukang Ojeg* Non Paguyuban admitted that he prefers to bring his guests to the homestay owner who likes to tip him more, a reason that feels natural. This reflects a purely pragmatic economic motivation.

DISCUSSION

The Results section reports empirical patterns observed in the field, whereas this Discussion section interprets those patterns through Intermediary Theory, Community-Based Tourism, the informal tourism economy, digital transformation, and stakeholder conflict.

1. From Catalyst to Contested Intermediary

The historical role of *Tukang Ojeg* illustrates the enabling function of informal intermediation in an emerging CBT destination. In the early development of Kampung

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Homestay Ngaran 2, drivers connected visitors who needed accommodation with households that had rooms to sell, helping overcome information and access constraints documented by Wedatama and Mardiansjah (2018). The present findings do not negate that contribution. Instead, they show that legitimacy is conditional: when digital channels reduce information asymmetry and homestay owners acquire alternative routes to consumers, the same intermediary practices may be judged against higher expectations of price transparency and owner control. Delegitimization therefore describes a change in the social and economic basis of legitimacy, not the disappearance of the intermediary function.

2. Changing Marketing Preferences of Homestay Owners

The movement toward self-managed marketing reflects a redistribution of market access. Recent research identifies digitalization as a major force shaping tourism participation and economic sustainability (Jiang & Phoong, 2023), while community empowerment in rural tourism can increase when residents develop digital capabilities (Lapuz, 2023). In Borobudur, owners who use social media, OTAs, and direct customer networks can reduce transaction dependence on Tukang Ojeg. Conversely, owners with weaker digital capabilities continue to value personal referral networks. The resulting differentiation means that intermediary legitimacy is increasingly uneven across the same community.

3. Dependence and Digital Autonomy

The dependent–independent distinction is cen-tral to the framework. Intermediary power in-creases when access to customers is scarce and the intermediary possesses information or rela-tionships that the producer cannot easily re-produce (Judge, 2022; Spallanzani et al., 2023). In Ngaran 2, owners with larger room inventories or weaker marketing capabilities have stronger incentives to accept intermediary terms because occupancy has immediate fi-nancial value. By contrast, digitally capable owners can bypass the intermediary and retain greater pricing authority. Digital transformation therefore changes the bargaining structure by altering the outside options available to homestay owners.

This finding extends Intermediary Theory in two ways. First, intermediary power is dynam-ic and capability-dependent rather than fixed. Second, digital channels do not simply elimi-nate local intermediaries; they change the con-ditions under which their services are valued. Platformization research similarly suggests that digital systems create new configurations of intermediation rather than a simple movement from intermediated to direct markets (Capineri & Romano, 2021).

The persistence of *Tukang Ojeg* despite digital growth demonstrates why digital transfor-mation should not be equated with universal disintermediation. Digital access, skills, and confidence are uneven. Lapuz (2023) shows that digital transformation can strengthen local empowerment when residents acquire relevant capabilities. In Borobudur, owners who cannot use digital channels effectively may remain dependent on local brokers and consequently have less control over price and customer rela-tionships. The governance challenge is there-fore not to remove informal intermediaries but to reduce involuntary dependence while pre-serving useful local market-access functions.

The dual perception of *Tukang Ojeg* as both useful and problematic is best interpreted as contested legitimacy. Delegitimization is ana-lytically useful because it explains why a stakeholder can remain economically relevant while simultaneously losing normative ac-ceptance. It occurs when the intermediary's perceived value in solving access problems is increasingly outweighed by perceived costs as-sociated with commissions, inconsistent prices, or loss of owner control. This relational inter-pretation links digital transformation to stake-holder conflict and explains the coexistence of dependence and resistance.

4. Contested Pricing and Commission Authority

The conflict over fees is fundamentally a con-flict over pricing authority. Homestay owners generally seek to preserve the right to set room prices according to facilities and service stand-ards, while some drivers seek compensation that reflects their effort, time, and customer access. Where commission rules are not stand-ardized, the transaction can shift from a trans-parent referral arrangement to a negotiation over the final price paid by the tourist. Control over information and customer contact can consequently translate into influence over the distribution of value.

From a CBT perspective, the problem is not that a local intermediary receives compensa-tion. A fair referral fee can be compatible with equitable benefit sharing. The governance problem arises when the fee is opaque, when owners cannot predict the net price they will receive, or

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when guest allocation rewards higher payments rather than service quality. Such practices can create distributive conflict among homestay owners and weaken collec-tive efficacy within the destination network (Giampiccoli et al., 2021; Tolkach & Pratt, 2022).

The drivers' perspective also deserves analyti-cal recognition. Their income is affected by seasonal demand, competition, and changes in tourist mobility. Independent drivers may therefore view flexible pricing as a survival strategy, whereas *Jawis* members operate un-der more explicit norms. The divergence indi-cates that *Tukang Ojeg* should not be treated as a homogeneous stakeholder category. Gov-ernance interventions need to recognize dif-ferent institutional positions while establishing minimum standards that protect both interme-diary livelihoods and homestay owners' pric-ing authority.

The absence of standardized arrangements turns a bilateral transaction into a multi-stakeholder governance problem. Owners seek stability, drivers seek adequate compensation, and the destination needs consistent visitor in-formation and service quality. A transparent commission mechanism can reduce uncertain-ty without eliminating the intermediary func-tion. This would align the informal economy with CBT principles while preserving the flex-ibility that made local intermediation valuable in the first place.

5. Competition Among Tukang Ojeg

Increasing competition among *Tukang Ojeg* in-tensifies the incentive to secure scarce cus-tomers and commissions. This adds an im-portant dimension to delegitimization: it is not driven only by homestay owners becoming digitally capable, but also by competitive pres-sure among intermediaries themselves. When more drivers compete for fewer referral op-portunities, the economic value of each guest becomes more contested. Digital channels compound this pressure because tourists can increasingly search for accommodation before arriving, reducing the intermediary's traditional information advantage (Jiang & Phoong, 2023).

The coexistence of *Jawis* and independent drivers illustrates an institutional transition from informal practice toward partial self-regulation. *Jawis* provides a collective mecha-nism for behavioral standards, while inde-pendent drivers retain greater flexibility. The destination therefore need not choose between complete formalization and unregulated in-formality. A hybrid governance model could recognize the association as a partner in desti-nation management while applying common principles of transparency, non-discriminatory referral, and owner-controlled pricing to all in-termediaries.

The distinction between organized and inde-pendent drivers also supports the stakeholder-conflict perspective. Different rules create dif-ferent expectations of fairness, and those ex-pectations affect relations with homestay own-ers. Institutionalization of intermediary prac-tices should therefore address both vertical re-lations (drivers–owners) and horizontal rela-tions (competition among drivers and among homestays).

Overall, the evidence indicates that the contro-versy is a governance issue created by the in-tersection of three changes: tourism growth has increased the number of actors seeking in-come; digitalization has reduced some forms of information asymmetry; and local regula-tion has not fully standardized intermediary transactions. The result is a reconfiguration of power rather than a simple decline of Tukang Ojeg. This interpretation strengthens the argu-ment that intermediary legitimacy is continu-ously negotiated as destination institutions and market technologies change.

6. Institutionalization of Intermediary Fees

The emergence of service-fee controversy can therefore be interpreted as an institutionalization gap. Informal transactions that were workable during the early growth of homestays become increasingly problematic when the number of intermediaries rises and digital alternatives change the market. Increased competition, pressure to sustain driver income, and competition between earlier and newer drivers help explain why informal norms are insufficient to maintain shared expectations of fairness.

The formation of the *Jawis* association can be understood as an early form of collective governance. Association-building creates shared norms among drivers, but the remaining conflict with independent drivers demonstrates that self-regulation is incomplete when not all actors participate. A destination-level mechanism is therefore required to connect driver associations, homestay owners, village government, and tourism management in a common governance arrangement.

The principal theoretical contribution is the extension of Intermediary Theory from a relatively stable transaction-facilitation perspective toward a relational account of legitimacy under digital transformation. The study shows

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that an intermediary can remain economically functional while becoming normatively contested.

"*Delegitimization*" represents a process in which changing digital capabilities, alternative channels, and stakeholder expectations reduce the accepted authority of an intermediary over pricing and customer allocation. This contributes to CBT and informal-tourism scholarship by linking digital capability to the redistribution of intermediary power rather than treating digitalization as a neutral marketing tool. For destination governance, the findings support a hybrid model rather than the removal of Tukang Ojeg. The village or destination management body should facilitate transparent referral-fee rules; homestay owners should retain authority over published room prices; digital-literacy programs should prioritize owners with limited digital capability; and both *Jawis* and independent drivers should be represented in stakeholder forums with common minimum standards for transparency and non-discriminatory guest referral.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes a relational explanation of why a locally valued tourism intermediary can become contested without becoming irrelevant. In Borobudur Village, *Tukang Ojeg* historically reduced information and access barriers for emerging homestays, but digital marketing, uneven digital capabilities, and intensified competition have changed the conditions under which their services are evaluated. Delegitimization is therefore not equivalent to disintermediation; it is a shift in the perceived legitimacy and bargaining authority of an intermediary within a changing destination economy.

The study extends Intermediary Theory by showing that intermediary power depends on the distribution of information, digital capability, and alternative routes to consumers. It also connects this mechanism to CBT and stakeholder conflict: when commissions and pricing authority are perceived as opaque or inequitable, intermediary practices can undermine collective benefit sharing and trigger conflict among local actors. The case demonstrates that digital transformation redistributes intermediary legitimacy unevenly rather than eliminating informal intermediation altogether. Local tourism authorities and the homestay association should develop transparent commission standards, preserve owner control over room prices, strengthen digital literacy among less digitally capable operators, and institutionally integrate both *Jawis* and independent *Tukang Ojeg* into destination-management dialogue.

For tourism-village governance, the implication is that strengthening community digital capability should be accompanied by institutional adaptation for existing intermediaries. Direct market access can improve homestay autonomy, but it may also unintentionally marginalize *Tukang Ojeg* if governance arrangements do not recognize their changing role. A more inclusive destination-governance model should therefore establish transparent referral-fee standards, maintain homestay owners' authority over published room prices, expand digital-literacy support for less digitally capable operators, and include both *Jawis* and independent *Tukang Ojeg* in stakeholder dialogue. This approach preserves the useful local knowledge and service functions of intermediaries while reducing opaque practices that can undermine trust and equitable benefit sharing.

This study is limited by its focus on a single homestay cluster and a purposively selected group of stakeholders; the findings should therefore be interpreted as contextually grounded rather than statistically generalizable. The study also relies primarily on stakeholder accounts and field observations. Future research should compare multiple tourism villages, examine tourist perceptions of intermediary services, and evaluate commission-governance and digital-literacy interventions over time. Future studies should also document stakeholder demographics, interview duration, coding procedures, and saturation decisions systematically so that qualitative comparisons can be strengthened.

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DECLARATIONS

The authors state that they have no conflict of interest whatsoever in this research and publication.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study was approved by the Universitas Tidar Ethics Committee under approval number 10/DST/UN57.L1/B/PT.01.05/2026. Participants provided informed consent, and participation was voluntary. Confidentiality and privacy were protected in reporting.

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Identifying information was minimized in the revised manuscript, and aggregate reporting is used where individual identification is not analytically necessary.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data used in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author. Access to the data may be subject to ethical or legal restrictions.

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