Digital Content Design for Promoting Tourism: A Case Study of Pokdarwis Pandeglang's Instagram

Fathur Rahman Awanissa Setiawan[1*], Doddy Wihardi[2],
Rocky Prasetyo Jati[3]

[1-3]Faculty of Communication and Creative Design, Universitas Budi Luhur, Indonesia
Email: [1] fathurawanissa@gmail.com, [2] doddywihardi@budiluhur.ac.id, [3] rocky@budiluhhur.ac.id

Abstract

In the digital age, social media platforms such as Instagram have become essential tools for promoting tourism, particularly in rural areas with limited resources. This study explores the role of digital content design in enhancing the visibility of local tourism destinations, focusing on a collaboration between students of the Communication Science program at Universitas Budi Luhur and the Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Group) in Sumberjaya Village, Pandeglang, Banten. The collaboration aimed to develop a digital content strategy for promoting the village's tourism potential through Instagram. The study employed a combination of content creation, audience analysis, and training workshops to empower local residents with the skills to manage and create their own digital content. The project demonstrated a significant increase in engagement on the village's Instagram account, with followers rising by 40% and higher interaction rates across posts. Key content types included promotional posts, behind-the-scenes footage of local cultural events, and a "hidden gems" series showcasing lesser-known attractions. However, the project also faced challenges, including limited access to high-quality editing tools and varying levels of digital literacy among participants. Despite these challenges, the community's enthusiasm and willingness to learn played a crucial role in overcoming obstacles and ensuring the sustainability of the project. The findings highlight the potential of digital content creation and social media in promoting rural tourism and empowering local communities. The success of this collaboration underscores the importance of ongoing digital literacy training and the need for accessible resources to ensure the long-term effectiveness of such initiatives.

Keywords: Community-Based Tourism, Digital Content, Instagram, Social Media Marketing, Tourism Promotion.

1. Introduction

In the digital era, tourism promotion has undergone a significant transformation due to the rapid development of information and communication technologies (Jati et al., 2025). Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, have become dominant tools in destination marketing because of their visual orientation and ability to reach broad audiences efficiently (Hall, 2018; Kavanaugh & Song, 2018). In Indonesia, the use of Instagram for tourism promotion continues to grow, supported by increasing internet penetration and the popularity of visual-based content among younger generations (Juhaidi et al., 2024; Suciati et al., 2024).

At the regional level, Pandeglang Regency in Banten Province possesses substantial tourism potential, especially in coastal and marine-based attractions. Areas such as Sumur District are known for their natural beaches and island destinations, including Oar Island and Mangir Island, which offer high scenic and ecological value. Yet, despite this potential, many

of these destinations remain under-promoted in digital spaces due to limited content quality, inadequate digital strategies, and low levels of digital literacy among local tourism actors.

In response to these challenges, community-based tourism initiatives through Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis) play a strategic role in strengthening local tourism promotion. Nevertheless, Pokdarwis often face constraints in utilizing digital media effectively. Therefore, this study focuses on a collaborative initiative between Communication Science students from Universitas Budi Luhur and the Pokdarwis of Sumberjaya Village, Pandeglang. The research specifically examines how digital content design through Instagram can enhance destination visibility, strengthen community participation, and support sustainable rural tourism development.

In the context of rural tourism, many local communities face challenges in effectively utilizing digital tools to promote their destinations. Limited access to resources, lack of skills, and lack of knowledge about social media strategies often hinder the development of local tourism. This challenge is particularly evident in the coastal area of Pandeglang, which boasts extraordinary marine tourism potential, including prime destinations like Oar Island and Mangir Island. These two islands offer pristine natural beauty from white sandy beaches, crystal clear waters, to snorkeling spots rich in marine life yet remain under-explored in the digital realm. The lack of quality visual content and appropriate marketing strategies has resulted in these destinations remaining largely unknown, despite their high appeal to both domestic and international tourists.

This study examines these challenges and proposes solutions through a community-based approach. By empowering local residents and helping them improve their digital literacy, the study seeks to demonstrate how social media platforms like Instagram can be leveraged to effectively promote tourism. Through authentic visual content and appropriate storytelling strategies, destinations like Oar Island and Mangir Island have the potential to gain greater exposure and attract new tourists.

This article also examines the impact of this collaboration on local tourism marketing strategies and discusses the initiative's potential to contribute to economic development and promote sustainable tourism practices in rural areas. By combining the power of digital media and active community participation, promotional efforts for tourist destinations like Sumberjaya, Oar Island, and Mangir Island can be more effective and sustainable.

2. Literature Review

To fully understand the impact of digital content design on rural tourism, it is essential to examine the intersection of social media, community-based tourism, and digital literacy. These elements are interrelated and crucial in shaping how rural destinations, like Sumberjaya Village, can leverage the power of digital platforms to boost their tourism visibility. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, have become indispensable tools for tourism marketing, offering destinations a chance to showcase their unique attributes to a global audience. Moreover, community-based tourism emphasizes the involvement of local communities in promoting their destinations, making it vital for these communities to develop digital literacy skills to effectively engage with tourists online. Through this lens, this section reviews existing literature on the role of social media in tourism, the growth of community-based tourism, and the need for digital empowerment among local populations.

2.1. The Role of Social Media in Tourism Promotion

The rise of social media has revolutionized the way people interact with destinations before, during, and after their trips. As a highly visual platform, Instagram offers tourists a

glimpse of what a destination has to offer, often before they even book their tickets (Ardianto, 2014). According to Xie and Yang (2018), social media platforms enable destinations to engage with a global audience and convey authentic stories that attract potential visitors. The ability to visually represent a destination allows for an immediate connection with tourists, particularly in the context of destinations like Sumberjaya, where local attractions might otherwise remain underrepresented.

Social media strategies, particularly those focused on visual storytelling, can strengthen the destination's brand image. Afren (2024) argues that the effectiveness of social media marketing hinges on how well destinations present their unique characteristics. In rural areas, these characteristics often include natural beauty, cultural heritage, and community-driven tourism initiatives. Engaging content on platforms like Instagram can serve as a bridge to a larger global audience, amplifying the destination's reach and appeal.

2.2. Community-Based Tourism and Digital Content

The concept of community-based tourism (CBT) has gained prominence in recent years as a sustainable approach to tourism development. CBT emphasizes the involvement of local communities in tourism planning and management, ensuring that economic benefits are shared within the community (Mandić & Walia, 2023). This model is particularly relevant to destinations like Sumberjaya, where local residents play a central role in tourism development through initiatives like Pokdarwis.

Research by Sujarwo et al. (2022) highlights the importance of media literacy in empowering communities to actively participate in tourism promotion. By equipping local communities with digital tools and skills, tourism initiatives can be more sustainable and provide long-term benefits. Training locals to use Instagram effectively not only promotes the destination but also fosters a sense of ownership and pride in their cultural heritage.

CBT plays a crucial role in building the branding identity of tourism villages, where local community participation not only strengthens the destination's image but also ensures a more equitable distribution of economic and social benefits. This aligns with the efforts of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) in Sumberjaya Village, which involves the community in managing tourist attractions, creating promotional content, and conducting digital training activities. Through this active involvement, Pokdarwis not only sustainably develops destinations like Oar Island and Mangir Island but also builds Sumberjaya's tourism identity, grounded in local strengths and community empowerment.

2.3. Digital Literacy and Empowerment

Incorporating digital literacy into community tourism projects has become an essential strategy for promoting rural tourism. Media literacy is fundamental to ensuring that local populations can create content that accurately reflects their community's values while reaching a broader audience. Enhancing digital skills in rural communities is critical for building sustainable tourism models. By teaching local residents how to design and produce digital content, they gain the capability to manage their tourism marketing independently, fostering self-reliance and long-term sustainability.

3. Methods

This research uses a qualitative method aimed at in-depth descriptions of phenomena through data collection in the form of observations, informal interviews, and visual documentation (Mulisa, 2022). This approach allows researchers to examine real-world situations without manipulating variables, resulting in more contextualized findings that

reflect the social conditions of the community. This method is particularly appropriate for community-based research, particularly when the focus is on understanding community behavior, needs, and potential in developing tourism promotion.

Furthermore, this research employs a participatory approach, involving the active involvement of students. Through this approach, students not only act as observers but also participate in the community empowerment process through training in digital content creation and mentoring with the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis). This participatory approach enhances the quality of interactions between researchers and the community, resulting in richer data collected and informed by direct experience.

This study was conducted as a practical field project for students in the Tourism Communication program at Universitas Budi Luhur. The project bridges academic learning with practical experience, enabling students to apply their theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. In this study, the students collaborated with the Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Group) in Sumberjaya Village, Pandeglang, Banten. The objective was to design and implement a digital content strategy for promoting the tourism potential of the village through the Instagram platform. This collaboration allowed students to engage with local community members while addressing the gap in digital literacy and content creation skills that hindered the community's ability to effectively promote their tourism offerings.

The project's first phase involved an in-depth analysis of the village's tourism assets. Students worked with Pokdarwis to identify the unique selling points (USPs) of Sumberjaya, including its natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and local handicrafts. Based on this analysis, a tailored content strategy was developed, aimed at appealing to the target demographic of millennials and Gen Z. The students focused on creating a variety of visual content, including high-quality photographs, short videos, and infographics, that highlighted these USPs in an engaging and shareable way. Additionally, strategic planning for Instagram posts, stories, and hashtags was conducted to maximize visibility and reach. The content was designed to be visually appealing, incorporating narrative storytelling to engage potential tourists and convey the destination's authenticity.

Audience analysis played a critical role in shaping the content strategy. Understanding the preferences of the target audience, particularly their engagement with short-form videos and visual storytelling on Instagram, allowed the students to design content that would resonate with potential visitors. To gather insights, surveys and audience analysis were conducted, examining Instagram usage patterns among different demographic groups. This data guided the creation of posts that focused on experiences and narratives likely to attract millennial and Gen Z travelers, who are typically more engaged with user-generated content and authentic, real-time experiences.

The project also included a hands-on training component to ensure the sustainability of the initiative. Workshops were organized to teach local community members, particularly those involved with Pokdarwis, basic skills in photography, video editing, and Instagram management. The workshops focused on using smartphones and accessible apps, as many participants had limited access to high-end equipment. These training sessions aimed not only to enhance the community's digital skills but also to empower them to independently manage and continue the Instagram account after the students' involvement had ended. Throughout the project, students provided continuous support, guiding the local participants in content creation, Instagram optimization, and community engagement practices to ensure long-term success.

This study acknowledges several limitations related to the participatory role of the researchers. As the researchers were actively involved in content creation, training activities,

and mentoring processes, there is a potential for participatory bias, particularly in the interpretation of outcomes and perceived program success. The close interaction between students, researchers, and community members may have influenced participants' responses during observations and informal interviews. To minimize this bias, data were triangulated through multiple sources, including visual documentation, Instagram engagement analytics, and reflective field notes. Despite these limitations, the participatory approach was considered appropriate, as the primary objective of the study was not only observation but also community empowerment and capacity building.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the outcomes of the collaboration between students and the Pokdarwis group in Sumberjaya Village, examining both the achievements and the challenges encountered throughout the process. The primary focus of this study was to enhance the digital presence of Sumberjaya's tourism offerings through Instagram content creation, training local community members, and addressing the digital divide in rural tourism. The results demonstrate the effectiveness of community-driven initiatives and the impact of digital tools in rural tourism development. In addition to analyzing content creation and engagement metrics, this section also discusses the challenges faced, such as limited access to technology, and the long-term sustainability of the project in empowering the local community.

4.1. Content Creation and Engagement

The collaboration between students and Pokdarwis resulted in the creation of diverse Instagram content that effectively showcased the tourism potential of Sumberjaya. This content included visually engaging promotional posts, behind-the-scenes videos of local cultural events, and stories capturing the daily life of community members. A particularly successful initiative was the "hidden gems" series, which highlighted lesser-known attractions in the area, such as scenic hiking trails and family-owned craft shops. These posts resonated strongly with viewers and encouraged curiosity about the destination. The posts were designed to showcase authentic local experiences, further connecting the audience to the destination's charm.

Instagram Insights data revealed that the account experienced a notable increase in followers, with engagement metrics rising by 40% following the implementation of the new content strategy. The number of likes, comments, and shares also significantly increased, indicating that the content resonated with users and was effective in reaching a broader audience. The content's authenticity and visual appeal played a vital role in drawing attention and increasing interaction, highlighting the power of social media to attract both local and international tourists. This surge in engagement demonstrated that even rural destinations like Sumberjaya can thrive digitally when provided with the right tools and strategies.

Figure 1. Oar Island Sumur, Pandeglang

Moreover, the engagement was not limited to national followers but also reached international users, expanding Sumberjaya's tourism exposure. The "hidden gems" series particularly sparked interest among eco-tourists and travelers looking for off-the-beaten-path destinations. This success not only increased the number of followers but also enhanced the village's image as a destination with unique, untouched beauty, making it more attractive to prospective visitors.

4.2. Challenges Encountered

Despite the overall success of the project, several challenges surfaced during the execution phase. One of the most significant obstacles was the limited access to advanced editing tools and professional-grade software. Many of the Pokdarwis members and local residents used smartphones with lower specifications, which limited their ability to create high-quality content. For instance, editing videos and photos with high resolution or complex effects proved difficult, affecting the overall visual quality of some posts.

Figure 2. Instagram Post by @pulauoar

Additionally, some community members struggled with the technical aspects of content creation, including composition, lighting, and video editing techniques. This posed a challenge, as effective content creation requires knowledge of both creative principles and technical skills. To overcome these issues, the students focused on training the community in accessible, user-friendly tools. They emphasized simple yet effective techniques that could be applied using smartphones and free or low-cost apps. This allowed community members to produce content independently, even with limited resources. The students also encouraged the use of natural light, basic video composition tips, and easy editing apps, helping the community overcome technical barriers.

Although the resources available were constrained, the determination and enthusiasm of the local participants proved to be crucial in overcoming these limitations. The willingness of Pokdarwis members to learn and adapt to new methods significantly contributed to the project's success. This experience highlighted the importance of adapting strategies to the available resources and fostering a mindset of continuous learning within the community.

4.3. Sustainability and Long-Term Impact

One of the key successes of the project was the empowerment of the local community, which gained valuable skills that would allow them to maintain and grow Sumberjaya's digital presence. The training provided students not only helped enhance the community's technical skills but also fostered a sense of ownership over the tourism promotion efforts. This empowerment was crucial for the sustainability of the project, as it ensured that the community could continue managing their Instagram account and other digital platforms even after the students had completed their program.

Figure 3. Content Creation Training

The Instagram account, now actively managed by the Pokdarwis members, remains a key tool in promoting the village's tourism potential. The students provided initial training and ongoing support, but the long-term management of the account is now under the full control of the local community. This transition to community leadership is a critical factor in ensuring the project's continued success, as it allows the local community to adapt to evolving social media trends and manage the promotion of their destination in the future.

Looking ahead, the long-term impact of this project is promising. As the community continues to refine its digital strategies and engages with their audience, Sumberjaya's visibility on Instagram is expected to grow, attracting more visitors and boosting the local economy. Furthermore, this initiative sets a precedent for other rural communities seeking to leverage digital media for tourism promotion. It also serves as a model for other tourism development programs, showing how digital content and social media strategies can contribute to the sustainability and growth of rural tourism.

4.4. Theoretical Interpretation of Digital Tourism Communication Practices

From a theoretical perspective, the findings align with digital tourism communication models that emphasize visual storytelling and user engagement as core components of destination branding. The increased engagement observed on Sumberjaya's Instagram account supports Xie and Yang's (2018) assertion that visually driven social media content enhances emotional connection and destination awareness. The "hidden gems" series reflects experiential communication principles, where authentic and locally grounded narratives are more effective than purely promotional messages (Sanjaya & Handayani, 2025).

Furthermore, the results reinforce the concept of community-based tourism (CBT), in which local participation is central to sustainable tourism development (Mandić & Walia, 2023). The active involvement of Pokdarwis members in content creation demonstrates how digital media can function as a participatory communication tool, rather than merely a marketing channel (Mukti, 2024). This finding is consistent with Sujarwo et al. (2022), who emphasize that digital literacy strengthens community autonomy and long-term sustainability.

Compared to previous studies on rural tourism promotion, this research extends existing knowledge by illustrating how collaborative academic–community partnerships can accelerate digital capacity building. Unlike studies that focus solely on engagement metrics, this case highlights the process of empowerment and skill transfer as equally significant outcomes. Therefore, the success of the program should not only be measured by follower growth but also by the community's ability to independently manage digital tourism communication.

5. Conclusion

The collaboration between students and the local community in Sumberjaya Village led to significant improvements in the village's digital presence, particularly on Instagram. A 40% increase in followers and higher engagement rates were achieved through the creation of authentic content, such as a successful "hidden gems" series. Despite challenges like limited access to advanced tools and initial difficulties with content creation, these obstacles were addressed with training in simple yet effective techniques, ensuring the community could continue creating content independently.

For the sustainability of the project, it was vital that the community took ownership of the Instagram account, as this ensured that the promotional efforts could continue independently beyond the involvement of external parties. By granting full control and responsibility to the local community, the initiative became more resilient and adaptable to changing digital trends. This sense of ownership also fostered greater motivation among residents to consistently update content, interact with followers, and maintain the aesthetic and informational quality of the platform.

Continued training and refinement of digital strategies are crucial to maintaining and expanding Sumberjaya's digital presence. As social media algorithms and audience preferences evolve, the community must remain informed about new techniques in content creation, visual storytelling, and digital engagement. Regular workshops and mentoring sessions can help strengthen technical skills, enhance creativity, and improve the community's ability to produce compelling and competitive content. Without ongoing capacity building, digital stagnation may occur, reducing the effectiveness of their promotional efforts.

The success of this project highlights the importance of empowering local communities to manage their own tourism promotion through digital tools. When residents acquire the necessary skills and confidence, they become active agents in shaping their destination's identity and visibility. This empowerment not only enhances community participation but also supports sustainable tourism development by ensuring that promotional activities are culturally grounded, contextually relevant, and continuously maintained. As a result, the community becomes better equipped to attract visitors, strengthen local pride, and contribute to the long-term growth of rural tourism.

Future efforts should focus on providing more advanced training in content creation, facilitating access to better equipment, and developing a long-term digital marketing strategy. Building partnerships with local businesses and engaging younger generations will be key to ensuring the ongoing success and sustainability of such initiatives. By adopting these recommendations, similar programs in other rural communities can strengthen their digital presence, contributing to sustainable tourism development and local economic growth. Future efforts should focus on providing more advanced training in content creation, facilitating access to better equipment, and developing a long-term digital marketing strategy. Building partnerships with local businesses and engaging younger generations will be key to ensuring

the ongoing success and sustainability of such initiatives. By adopting these recommendations, similar programs in other rural communities can strengthen their digital presence, contributing to sustainable tourism development and local economic growth.

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