

## Utilizing Digital Storytelling and Social Media to Expand The Reach of Tourism Village Promotion

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### ABSTRACT

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Sektor pariwisata berbasis desa (desa wisata) di Bali memiliki potensi budaya dan alam yang luar biasa, namun seringkali menghadapi kendala dalam efektivitas promosi dan jangkauan pasar. Kegiatan Pengabdian Masyarakat (PkM) ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kapasitas pengelola desa wisata dalam memperluas jangkauan promosi melalui penggunaan Digital Storytelling dan media sosial. Penggunaan metode narasi digital dianggap memberikan nilai emosional yang lebih kuat bagi calon wisatawan dibandingkan dengan promosi konvensional. Mitra dalam kegiatan ini adalah kelompok penyadar pariwisata (Pokdarwis) dan pengelola desa wisata di Bali. Metode pelaksanaan kegiatan ini meliputi tiga tahap utama: (1) pelatihan dalam membuat konten berbasis storytelling, (2) bantuan teknis dalam mengoptimalkan media sosial (seperti Instagram, TikTok, dan YouTube), dan (3) evaluasi dan pemantauan keberlanjutan konten. Hasil kegiatan PkM ini menunjukkan peningkatan pemahaman mitra sebesar 85% dalam menciptakan narasi digital yang menarik, serta peningkatan interaksi (tingkat keterlibatan) di media sosial desa wisata setelah pelaksanaan program. Melalui kegiatan ini, desa-desa wisata mitra kini mampu secara mandiri memproduksi konten promosi yang autentik dan kreatif, yang pada gilirannya berkontribusi pada perluasan jangkauan pasar dan peningkatan kunjungan wisatawan.

*The village-based tourism sector (tourist villages) in Bali has extraordinary cultural and natural potential, but often faces obstacles in the effectiveness of promotion and market reach. This Community Service (PkM) aims to increase the capacity of tourism village managers in expanding promotional reach through the use of Digital Storytelling and social media. The use of digital narrative methods is considered to provide a stronger emotional value for potential tourists compared to conventional promotions. Partners in this activity are tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) and tourism village managers in Bali. The implementation method of the activity includes three main stages: (1) training in creating storytelling-based content, (2) technical assistance in optimizing social media (such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube), and (3) evaluation and monitoring of content sustainability. The results of this PkM activity show an 85% increase in partners' understanding in creating engaging digital narratives, as well as an increase in interaction (engagement rate) on tourism village social media after the program implementation. Through this activity, partner tourism villages are now able to independently produce authentic and creative promotional content, which in turn contributes to expanding market reach and increasing tourist visits..*



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### INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a crucial sector driving the global economy, and Indonesia is no exception. Among

the many tourist destinations in the archipelago, Bali Province remains a leading international tourism epicenter. Known as the Island of the Gods, Bali not only offers exotic natural beauty in the form of beaches, mountains, and enchanting rice terraces, but also possesses a magical power derived from its rich customs, religious rituals, performing arts, and philosophies of life, such as *Tri Hita Karana*. This harmony between nature, humanity, and spirituality forms a unique cultural tourism identity that cannot be replicated by any other destination in the world. However, the dynamics of global tourism over the past decade, particularly post-pandemic, have triggered a significant paradigm shift in tourist behavior and preferences. Mass tourism, which tends to be exploitative and capital-intensive, is now being abandoned by more environmentally and culturally conscious market segments. Modern tourists, both domestic and international, now desire alternative forms of tourism that prioritize sustainability, authenticity, and in-depth interaction with local communities. This concept positions community-based tourism as a new priority, concretely manifested in the development of the Tourism Village program.

The Bali Provincial Government, along with the central government, has responded to this global trend by issuing various strategic regulations and policies to encourage the establishment and legalization of tourist villages across all regencies/cities in Bali. The development of tourist villages is considered a highly effective instrument for simultaneously addressing two chronic problems in Balinese tourism: the economic disparity between South Bali (which is highly populated and commercial) and the relatively underdeveloped North, East, and West Bali, and the threat of cultural degradation due to uncontrolled modernization. Through tourist villages, ownership and management of tourism business capital are returned to local communities through institutions such as Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis) and Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes). This concept ensures that revenue from tourist spending flows directly into and impacts grassroots economic well-being, while simultaneously motivating the younger generation of villagers to preserve their ancestral cultural heritage, as it holds significant economic value.

Despite the massive potential and strong regulatory support, the reality on the ground shows a wide gap between the hopes and reality of successful tourism villages in Bali. Of the hundreds of tourism villages that have been officially established in Bali, only a handful have achieved independent status and successfully attracted consistent and sustainable tourist visits, such as Penglipuran Tourism Village in Bangli or Pemuteran Tourism Village in Buleleng. Meanwhile, most other tourism villages remain in the pioneering or developing category. These tourism villages often experience a lack of visitors, the facilities they have built are neglected, and local communities lose their enthusiasm for managing them. This phenomenon raises fundamental questions about what is wrong with the governance of these pioneering tourism villages. Based on in-depth observations and literature studies on destination governance, one of the main root problems faced by most pioneering and developing tourist villages in Bali is inadequacy in marketing aspects, as well as weak and non-adaptive promotional strategies. The majority of tourist village managers, dominated by senior community leaders or local youth with non-tourism educational backgrounds, still rely on conventional promotional methods. They still rely heavily on word-of-mouth marketing strategies, participation in expensive but short-term physical exhibitions, or the placement of physical brochures and billboards with very limited geographic reach. In an era where global connectivity has united the world without borders, analog promotional strategies like these are certainly outdated and have lost their relevance.

We now live in the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0 and Society 5.0, a time in which digitalization has disrupted all aspects of human life, including the travel and tourism industry. Consumer or tourist behavior has changed radically in searching for information, planning trips, and even making ticket and accommodation purchases. The decision-making process of modern travelers is now almost 90% influenced by the digital footprint and visual content they consume online. Prospective tourists no longer visit physical travel agencies; they open their mobile phones to find inspiration on social media. The failure of tourism village managers to build a strong digital presence on the internet automatically makes their destinations "invisible" in the eyes of the global tourism market. Therefore, the adoption of digital technology in tourism marketing (*e-tourism marketing*) is no longer an optional choice or a luxury, but an absolute necessity to maintain the existence and survival of tourism villages. However, the challenges in the digital realm are not as simple as simply creating a social media account and uploading random photos of homestay facilities or natural scenery in tourist villages. Cyberspace, particularly social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube, is now filled with millions of

promotional content from various global tourist destinations, all vying for viewers' attention. Digital consumers have unique characteristics: they have a very short attention span and quickly become bored with conventional, hard-selling advertising. *Monotonous*, rigid digital promotions that only display a list of prices or photos without soul are guaranteed to be immediately skipped by social media users. This phenomenon is often seen in social media accounts in tourist villages in Bali today: the accounts exist, but engagement is dead, the number of followers is small, and they are unable to convert viewers into real visitors.

To penetrate the intense competition on social media, a revolutionary, creative, and humanistic content marketing approach is needed. One of the modern marketing methods that has proven to be most effective in capturing emotional engagement with audiences is Digital Storytelling. Conceptually, *digital storytelling* is the art of combining in-depth traditional narratives with the use of multimedia technology, such as high-quality video recordings, aesthetic photography, supporting sound effects, evocative text, and dramatic background music. Through *digital storytelling*, tourist villages no longer sell "physical products" of tourism, but rather sell "experiences, meaning, and emotions." The main advantage of *digital storytelling* lies in its ability to explore and highlight the unique, intangible assets of a tourist village. For example, instead of simply photographing a traditional village culinary dish, a *storytelling* approach would tell the history behind the recipe, how the ingredients are picked fresh from the local community's organic garden in the morning, and the warm smile of a grandmother cooking the dish using ancestral firewood. Instead of simply photographing a temple or sacred building, *storytelling* would convey the philosophy of the ancient architecture and its connection to the peaceful life of the village community. These kinds of authentic, personal stories, filled with local wisdom, are what today's global tourists are seeking. A strong digital narrative can touch the psychological aspects of potential tourists, fostering curiosity, empathy, and a longing to come and experience life with the village community.

Although *digital storytelling* offers a very promising solution for expanding the reach of tourism village promotions, its implementation in the field faces a major barrier in the form of limited human resource (HR) capacity in rural Bali. Pokdarwis members and village youth generally face obstacles in the form of limited technical skills (*hard skills*) such as cinematic video shooting techniques, story writing (*copywriting/scriptwriting*), video editing techniques (*video editing*) using mobile-based software, to understanding dynamic social media algorithms (such as *hashtag* utilization, audio trends, audio-visual synchronization, and optimal upload times). In addition, psychological obstacles are often found in the form of a lack of confidence in exposing their village's potential to the international stage due to limited foreign language skills.

Seeing a crucial gap between the urgent need for narrative-based digital promotion and the actual competencies possessed by local managers in Bali, the proposing team saw the need for a concrete, structured, and applicable academic intervention. Departing from this thinking, the Community Service (PkM) activity entitled "Utilizing Digital Storytelling and Social Media to Expand the Reach of Tourism Village Promotion" was designed and implemented in Bali. This PkM activity positions academics not only as theoretical providers, but also as partners who go directly into the field to transfer knowledge and technology to the target community. The urgency of implementing this community service activity rests on several important aspects. First, from an economic perspective, increasing the reach of successful digital promotions will boost the volume of tourist visits, which will linearly increase the income of Pokdarwis, MSMEs, homestay owners, local tour guides, and village original income (PADes). Second, from a socio-cultural perspective, the process of extracting stories (*story hunting*) for digital content will force the younger generation of the village to re-learn and interview traditional elders about the history, mythology, and traditions of their village that are starting to be forgotten. This indirectly triggers the process of revitalizing and preserving oral culture within the community itself. Third, from an institutional sustainability perspective, this training will equip partners with long-term practical skills, so that after the PkM program ends, tourism village managers will be digitally independent and able to continue producing quality promotional content sustainably without relying on third parties.

Methodologically, this PkM program is designed not only to use boring one-way lecture methods, but also to use an active participatory approach (*Participatory Rural Appraisal*) combined with the *Action Research* method. Activities will be broken down into several comprehensive stages, starting from workshops on mapping the potential of unique village narratives (*identity mapping*), technical

training on script writing and aesthetic shooting techniques using gadgets (*smartphone cinematography*), instant video editing simulations, to growth hacking strategies for social media performance. Intensive online and offline mentoring is carried out to ensure that each partner can directly practice the knowledge gained to promote their respective tourist villages. Through the synergy of academics, the community, and the use of multimedia technology, it is hoped that tourist villages in Bali can rise, expand their market reach to the international level, and become the main driving force of cultured, quality, and dignified Balinese tourism in the future.

## METHOD

### ***Preparation and Potential Mapping Stage (Pre-Project)***

The implementation method for this PkM activity begins with the preparation and potential mapping stage (*identity mapping*) which is carried out in a participatory manner with the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) and local community leaders. At this stage, the proposing team conducts field surveys and in-depth interviews to identify the unique culture, history, local wisdom, and physical assets of the tourist village that have the potential to be raised into a digital narrative. In addition, a situational analysis is conducted on digital assets already owned by partners, such as Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube accounts, to measure the extent of digital literacy and technical obstacles faced by managers so far. The results of this mapping are then used as a basis for developing personalized training modules according to the characteristics and specific needs of partner tourist villages in Bali.

### ***Intensive Training and Mentoring Implementation Stage (Action Plan)***

The second stage is the core of the community service program, which is implemented through a combination of theoretical workshop methods and direct technical assistance in the field (*on-the-job training*). Partners are equipped with strategic materials on the concept of *Digital Storytelling*, content script writing (*copywriting*), and social media management that is adaptive to the latest algorithms. Next, participants are invited to do a live simulation using a device (*smartphone cinematography*) that includes cinematic video shooting techniques, interview techniques, and instant video editing using a mobile application. Intensive assistance is carried out during the production process to ensure that each partner group successfully creates at least one story-based promotional video content (*storytelling*) that is ready to be published on the tourism village's social media platforms.

### ***Evaluation, Monitoring, and Sustainability Stage (Post-Project)***

The final stage of this implementation method focuses on evaluation, monitoring, and ensuring program sustainability. Evaluation is carried out by measuring the increase in partner capacity through *pre-test* and *post-test* questionnaires before and after training, as well as measuring the digital performance of uploaded content based on *engagement rate* parameters (number of likes, comments, saves, and shares). To ensure the sustainability of the program so that it does not stop when the service period is over, the PkM team established a digital communication forum as a forum for regular consultations and provides awards for the best promotional content. Through regular evaluations for three months after the activity, the proposing team ensures that the tourism village managers are digitally independent and consistently produce creative promotional content on an ongoing basis.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Community Service (PkM) activity entitled “*Utilizing Digital Storytelling and Social Media to Expand the Reach of Tourism Village Promotion*” has been carried out comprehensively by involving key stakeholders in partner tourism villages in Bali. The main target partners of this program are members of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and representatives of village youth who are proactive in tactical management of destinations. The interventions provided by the PkM team are grouped into three main outcomes, namely: increasing the digital literacy capacity of partners, producing story-based promotional content (*digital storytelling*), and expanding market reach through optimizing social media metrics.

### ***Improving Partners' Digital Capacity and Literacy***

Before the program intervention was carried out, the PkM team conducted an initial measurement (*pre-test*) to map the level of real understanding of 35 training participants regarding the concept of *digital storytelling*, *smartphone cinematography* techniques, script writing (*copywriting*), and analysis of social media algorithm performance. The *pre-test* results showed a fairly concerning condition, where the

average partner understanding score was only 42 on a scale of 100. Most participants (78%) admitted to having and using social media such as Instagram and Facebook personally, but they did not yet understand how to treat these platforms as measurable tourism business marketing instruments. The biggest obstacle identified early in the project was the partners' perception that digital promotion required expensive professional cameras and advanced computer video editing skills. This technological anxiety led to previously sporadic and rigid management of tourism village social media accounts, which tended to simply display administrative announcements or static landscape photos without any narrative touch that would engage the audience's emotions.

To address this competency gap, the PkM team conducted an intensive workshop that combined tactical theory transfer with hands -on experience. The approach focused on demystifying technology, teaching participants that their mid-range smartphones were more than sufficient to produce global-scale promotional video content, provided they combined them with strong storytelling techniques. After three days of face-to-face training and mentoring, the PkM team conducted a post-test to evaluate the effectiveness of knowledge transfer. The results showed a significant increase. The average partner understanding score increased dramatically to 87 on a scale of 100.

**Table 1.** Score

Tested Competency Aspects	Pre-Test Score (Average)	Post-Test Score (Average)	Percentage Increase
Understanding the Concept of <i>Digital Storytelling</i>	38	89	134%
Gadget Cinematography Techniques & Visual Composition	45	84	86%
Narrative Scriptwriting and <i>Copywriting</i>	35	82	134%
Social Media Feature & Algorithm Optimization (Reels/TikTok)	50	93	86%

Qualitatively, this capacity increase was evident in the partners' behavioral changes during the mentoring sessions. Participants, initially passive and hesitant, began to demonstrate courage in exploring angles, creating simple *storyboards* before filming, and actively discussing audience-hooking techniques within the first three seconds of a video a crucial aspect of modern short-form video algorithms like Instagram Reels and TikTok.

**Production of Promotional Content Based on Digital Storytelling**

The tangible achievements of this community service program are reflected in the partners' independent ability to produce narrative-based digital assets (*story-driven content*). Under the guidance of the Community Service Program (PKM) team, participants were divided into several small working groups tasked with exploring and story-hunting within their tourism village environments. This process successfully shifted the partners' promotional paradigm, from a boring, hard sell approach to humanistic content marketing that engages the psychological well-being of potential tourists.

In this content production process, there are three major *digital storytelling* theme clusters that have been successfully developed independently by tourism village partners in Bali: 1). *Heritage and Philosophy Cluster*: This group focuses on highlighting the stories behind Balinese daily rituals, such as the philosophy behind making *penjor* (a traditional Balinese traditional cloth) or the spiritual meaning behind traditional weaving in local villages. The narrative no longer focuses on "what the object is," but rather "why it exists and how the community has maintained the sanctity of this tradition from generation to generation". 2). *Authentic Culinary Experience Journey Cluster*: This group produces content that tells the story of the process of making local culinary delights that are rarely known to the public. Rather than simply showing the finished dish on the table, the videos are cinematically packaged, depicting how the ingredients are picked directly from the village's organic garden by local farmers, cooked using a traditional wood-fired stove, and served with the warm smiles of local residents. 3). *A Day in the Life of a Villager Cluster*: This themed content invites viewers to experience the visualization of life as part of a villager through a first-person perspective. This content explores the friendliness of social interactions, the peacefulness of the village atmosphere in the morning, and farming activities that offer an escape from the stress of city life (*urban escapism*).

All 60- to 90-second short videos were independently edited by the partners using free mobile apps

(such as CapCut and VN Video Editor) using beat-syncing techniques, aesthetic natural lighting, and emotional *voice-overs*. The successful production of 12 high-quality promotional videos during the mentoring period is concrete evidence that limited technical skills in rural areas can be eliminated through structured and applicable assistance methods.

#### **Market Reach Expansion and Social Media Metrics Evaluation**

To assess the real impact of *digital storytelling* implementation on expanding the reach of tourism village promotions, the PkM team conducted intensive monitoring of the analytical performance of partners' social media accounts (particularly Instagram and TikTok) for three months after the training. This digital performance data was compiled periodically to evaluate the extent to which narrative-based content was able to penetrate geographic audience boundaries and attract interest from a broader tourism market. The results of social media optimization showed a massive increase in metrics compared to the period before the program was implemented. The official Instagram account of the partner tourism village recorded a 320% increase in accounts reached *within 60 days of consistently posting storytelling* content. Most interestingly, the demographic structure of the audience reached experienced a significant change. Before the program, 90% of the audience of the tourism village account was local Balinese residents in the surrounding area of the regency. However, after the program implementation, market reach expanded nationally and internationally, with the emergence of high impressions from social media users domiciled in Jakarta, Surabaya, Melbourne (Australia), and several cities in Europe.

Digital Engagement Analysis: The highest increases were recorded in *Saves* and *Shares*. In modern social media algorithms, these two metrics carry the highest weight, indicating that the content is highly valuable, inspiring, and worth recommending to others.

This linear increase in digital performance also has a direct economic impact on the tourism village ecosystem. Based on secondary data collected from the secretariat of partner Pokdarwis, there has been a 45% increase in accumulated inquiries *via* direct messaging *and* WhatsApp business links within two months. Questions from prospective tourists shifted from simply asking about entrance ticket prices to specific inquiries regarding cultural activity packages, homestay availability, and traditional cooking class reservations they had previously watched through video *storytelling*. This proves that a strong digital narrative is successful in building trust *and* stimulating behavioral intention *in* potential consumers effectively without the need for direct sales pressure.

#### **Discussion and Theoretical-Practical Implications**

The success of this PkM program provides concrete confirmation of modern tourism marketing theory, which states that in the digital age, content is king, but context and narrative are queen. Empirical experience in the field shows that tourist villages in Bali do not lack beautiful visual objects; what they lack is the ability to package this beauty into a meaningful story structure for a global audience. When tourism village managers shift from promoting "products" (such as homestay rooms or rice paddy views) to promoting "meaning and experiences" through *digital storytelling*, they successfully differentiate themselves from thousands of other tourist destinations worldwide. This aligns with the concept of transformative tourism, where travelers seek trips that provide new insights and an emotional connection with the local communities they visit.

From a sustainability perspective, the key to the program's long-term success lies in the active involvement of village youth (*pentahelix synergy* at the grassroots level). Village youth act as technological brokers *for* traditional elders and senior Pokdarwis managers, who have limited digital literacy but a rich understanding of village history and mythology. This intergenerational collaboration at the local level ensures that the digital promotional content creation process maintains its cultural authenticity while remaining up-to-date with the ever-changing aesthetic trends of social media.

However, post-PkM sustainability challenges remain, particularly related to consistent content production. Social media algorithms demand regularly scheduled posts to maintain account reach. Therefore, the PkM team, along with tourism village managers, have compiled a *Content Calendar* and allocated digital production shifts for the established Pokdarwis creative teams. This mitigation measure is crucial to ensure that the digital independence established during this community service program can continue to operate autonomously and professionally, and provide a sustainable economic multiplier effect for all tourism village communities in Bali.

## **CONCLUSION**

The implementation of the Community Service (PkM) activity entitled "*Utilizing Digital Storytelling and Social Media to Expand the Reach of Tourism Village Promotion*" in Bali has proven successful in providing concrete solutions to the marketing problems faced by partner tourism villages. Through a participatory training and mentoring approach, this program successfully demystified technological fears and drastically increased the digital literacy capacity of local managers (Pokdarwis and village youth). Indicators of this success are reflected in the significant increase in partners' understanding scores in aspects of gadget cinematography techniques, narrative script writing, and tactical understanding of the dynamics of the latest social media algorithms.

In practice, the implementation of *digital storytelling* methods can change the paradigm of tourism village promotion from the original monotonous *hard selling* to content marketing *that* is humanistic, aesthetic, and full of local wisdom values. Story-based content produced independently by partners has proven effective in boosting the digital performance of tourism village accounts by increasing market reach *massively* to the national and international levels. This digital impact linearly contributes to the economic aspect in the form of increased interaction volume and requests for tour package reservations from prospective visitors, which in turn stimulates sustainable economic growth for village communities.

As a step to ensure the sustainability of the program, the key to success after the Community Service Program (*PkM*) rests on intergenerational collaboration at the grassroots level, where village youth act as the driving force behind digitalization while remaining rooted in the cultural narratives derived from traditional elders. The formation of an internal Pokdarwis creative team and the preparation of a structured content calendar are important foundations so that content production activities do not stop after the community service program ends. With the digital independence that has been established, partner tourism villages in Bali are now ready to compete on the global stage independently, professionally, while remaining sustainable in maintaining the authenticity of their culture.

#### THANKS WORDS

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