



# Optimizing the social media promotion strategy to improve the branding of Putak Tourism Villages

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## ABSTRACT

Tourism villages have contributed to improving the community economy, but the lack of optimal digital support for promotion has resulted in low visibility and popularity of tourism village destinations. Putak Tourism Village is one of those still experiencing this problem. The lack of knowledge and skills to optimize social media as a promotional medium remains an obstacle. This community service aims to optimize promotional strategies through social media to improve the branding of Putak Tourism Village. This community service activity is carried out through training and mentoring partners, using Instagram social media as a promotional strategy. The result of this program is an increase in the majority of Putak Tourism Village managers' understanding (86 percent understand) regarding the strategy for increasing tourism village branding through Instagram social media. The implication of this program shows that enhancing digital literacy through targeted social media training can significantly improve promotional capabilities and destination branding, thereby potentially increasing tourist visits and supporting the sustainable development of local tourism economies.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Putak Tourism Village is a tourism village in East Kalimantan that has a beautiful culture and nature. This tourist village is located in Putak Hamlet, Loa Duri Ilir Village, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, approximately 20 km or 40 minutes from Samarinda City, East Kalimantan. This village is inhabited by 13,489 people (Pemerintah Desa Loa Duri Ilir, 2025), with most of the population belonging to the Dayak Tonyooi Benuaq Tribe. Some of the attractions or tourism potential owned by this village include nature tourism (Batu Dinding Tapa and Jantur Bukit Sekilo), spiritual tourism (i.e., Goa Maria Retreat House), and tourist attractions that attract visitors (i.e., dance and traditional ceremonies). This tourism potential makes Putak Village one of the leading tourist attractions and has a positive impact on the surrounding community. Unfortunately, public awareness of the attractions in this tourism village remains low. Few people know about this tourist village and have made fewer visits.

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**Figure 1.** Putak Tourism Village, Kutai Kartanegara, East Kalimantan

Based on discussions with tourism village managers, various efforts have been made to increase the number of tourist visits. MSME actors have attempted to add facilities (such as camping equipment), improve foreign language skills for tour guides and managers, and utilize Instagram social media to promote. Unfortunately, Instagram social media as a medium for the information and promotion of tourism villages has not been actively utilized or managed properly. Instagram has been used as a medium for promoting tourism villages since 2022. This media has been used to display events in the Putak Tourism Village. However, the lack of knowledge and skills of tourism village managers has resulted in the use of Instagram as a promotional medium, which is not optimal. Posts about the natural beauty and potential of tourism villages are not yet optimally available on the Instagram display, and the creation of interesting captions/messages in posts and interactions with visitors is still ignored.

MSMEs must be able to manage Instagram optimally. The increasing use of Instagram in society (Kemp, 2024) makes it a marketing medium that should not be ignored by business actors, especially tourist destinations. Instagram is an effective promotional medium for increasing tourist awareness of village destinations (Adhanisa & Fatchiya, 2017). Instagram is a social media platform that emphasizes visual content. The increasingly attractive image display makes Instagram a favorite online platform for finding information (Kemp, 2024; Nelson et al., 2019), such as tourist destinations (Molinas, 2020; Mariani et al., 2016). Additionally, the use of machine learning on Instagram to understand its users makes it easier for business actors to connect with customers. However, promotion through Instagram presents several challenges for business actors that must be overcome. The utilization of Instagram as a promotional medium requires several strategies. Business actors should create interesting and quality content according to the target audience (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Business actors must also actively engage with their followers (Hudson et al., 2015), to maintain relationships with existing customers and attract new customers. Therefore, optimizing the use of Instagram is necessary for SMEs in tourist villages to increase public awareness and tourist visits.

To address the challenges of SMEs, we propose a solution by optimizing promotions using Instagram social media. This initiative aims to increase awareness, influence the public interest, and improve services. Instagram can increase brand awareness through its ability to disseminate information widely and periodically, as well as increase distribution so that consumers can more easily obtain products. Through an emphasis on attractive visual content, Instagram can also attract users' interest in viewing and searching for further information. Furthermore, through the communication features provided, Instagram allows for two-way communication between business actors and customers. Several studies have emphasized the importance of social media marketing in supporting tourist villages (Jamilah et al., 2023; Ningrum & Salim, 2021; Nursanti & Yudhiasta, 2022). Jamilah et al (2023) showed that platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter usage as promotional media increases visitors and income in Nangka Beurit religious tourism in Cileungsi Hamlet, Subang Regency. Specifically, Instagram

is a social media platform that plays an important role in promoting (Ningrum & Salim, 2021; Nursanti & Yudhiasta, 2024) and significantly increases the number of visits to tourist villages, such as Dusun Jepang (Nursanti & Yudhiasta, 2024) and "Nepal van Java" in Magelang Regency (Ningrum & Salim, 2021).

The idea of optimizing the use of Instagram as a branding strategy received positive and enthusiastic responses from SME managers. The high use of Instagram in Indonesia, which is 85.3 percent, after WhatsApp (Kemp, 2024), and approximately 90.2 million users as of May 2025 (Nurhayati-Wolff, 2025), makes Instagram attractive as a promotional tool for Putak Tourism Villages. Therefore, SMEs need the knowledge and skills to optimize the use of Instagram as a promotional tool.

To address these problems, we provide solutions to increase awareness and tourist visits with Instagram. We provide training on creating creative content and accompany it for one month of activities until they can optimize Instagram and interact regularly with followers. The purpose of this community service activity is to improve the knowledge and skills of SME managers using Instagram to improve the branding of Putak Tourism Villages.

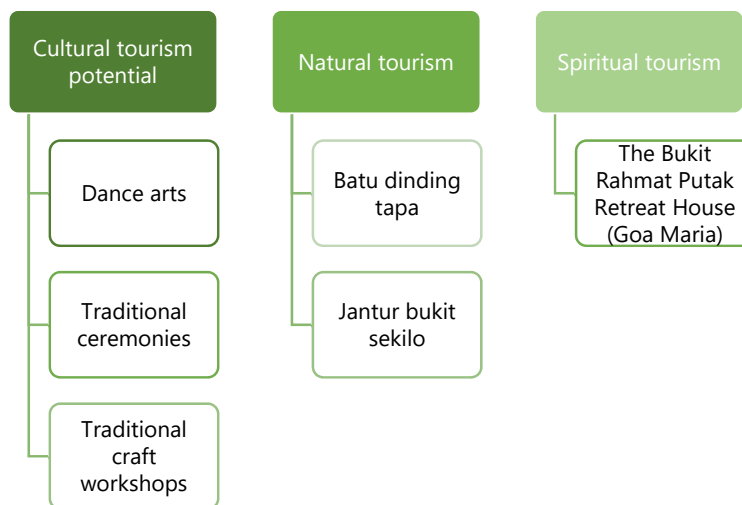


Figure 2. Various types of tourism in Putak Tourism Village

## 2. METHODS

This community service program was implemented in Putak Tourist Village. Putak Tourist Village is in Loa Janan District, Loa Duri Ilir Village, Kampoeng Putak, Kutai Kartanegara, and East Kalimantan. The partners involved in this activity were the Putak Tourist Village manager. This location was chosen because it has many interesting tourism potential, ranging from nature to culture and spiritual tourism (Figure 2). In addition, it was also due to the problems faced by partners when the team conducted the interviews. UKM managers revealed that social media, as a medium for information and promotion, has not been actively utilized and managed properly because of tourist village managers' lack of knowledge and skills, such as: (1) Cultural tourism potential, namely dance arts, traditional ceremonies, and traditional craft workshops. The Gegoog Goraq Dance Arts or Art Studio displays several traditional dances of the Tunjung and Benuaq Dayak communities, such as the "gantar" and "belian" dances which depict the folklore and rituals of the Tunjung Benuaq community. Furthermore, the traditional ceremony was the "Festival Tanam" dan "Panen Padi Nutuq Bahapm". This festival is the biggest cultural event in Putak Village. Activities include processing young sticky rice, traditional game competitions, music and

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dance performances, and more. The next cultural tourism potential is a traditional craft workshop in the form of local MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) products such as “bordir Tumpar”. “Sulaman tumpar” is typical Tunjung Benuaq Dayak embroidery with unique motifs. Putak Village provides various “bordir Tumpar” products such as scarves and clothes with typical Tumpar motifs. Moreover, there are also food products in the form of Taro chips, namely chips made from taro; (2) Natural tourism, namely “Batu dinding tapa” and “jantur bukit sekilo”. Batu dinding tapa is a rock cliff formation that towers above the beautiful forests of Kalimantan. This place also offers camping packages with facilities and good spots to watch the sunrise. Meanwhile, Jantur Bukit Sekilo is a waterfall with views of mountain rice fields and a gazebo. Jantur in the Tunjung language means waterfall; and (3) Spiritual tourism. The Bukit Rahmat Putak Retreat House is a spiritual tourist spot under the auspices of the Catholic Church. One of them is Goa Maria which is a place of pilgrimage for Catholics from various regions in East Kalimantan. Moreover, this place also hosts several major events for Catholics and Protestants such as Christmas and Easter. The methods and stages of implementing the PKM program are illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The implementation of stages

<b>Stage 1 Identify the problem</b>	
Activity	Discuss with the manager of Putak Tourist Village
Objective	The service team assessed partners' needs and problems.
Implementation	The second week of May 2024
<b>Stage 2 Planning</b>	
Activity	The team prepares program solutions to partner problems. The team prepares Instagram marketing applications using smartphones and laptops, prepares photos or videos (such as tourist destinations, campsites, spiritual tourism, cultural events, and local SMEs) for posts to be uploaded, and other strategies to strengthen the promotion of tourist villages on Instagram (such as the tourist villages image, selecting Instagram templates, captions, tone of images, etc.).
Objective	Prepare a program to improve the branding of Putak Tourist Village
Implementation	The activity was carried out from May 20 to 31, 2024.
<b>Stage 3 Discussion</b>	
Activity	The community service team conducted training through discussions with the management of Putak tourist village to optimize the use of the Instagram application, promotional strategies, content that can be used, and adding information on Instagram.
Objective	Provide an understanding of the importance of Instagram as a promotional medium and strategies that can be applied to improve Putak's branding
Implementation	The activity was carried out from June 03 to 04, 2024, with several Putak Tourist Village managers.
<b>Stage 4 Training</b>	
Activity	The service team assists in optimizing the use of Instagram. Program implementation is carried out by assisting in preparing content to be uploaded, helping to create more templates for Instagram feeds to make them look more professional and visually attractive, uploading content such as photos and videos on Instagram, and helping to ensure that Instagram profiles remain consistent over a long period.
Objective	Accompanying partners by optimizing their Instagram social media
Implementation	This activity was carried out around June 5 to 25, starting from preparing content with partners to observing the results of optimizing partner Instagram by the team
<b>Stage 5 Evaluation</b>	
Activity	The team conducts the monitoring and evaluation process related to the service program's benefits to partners and further improvement efforts
Objective	evaluate activity results
Implementation	The evaluation was implemented through a post-test with a questionnaire for participants after completing the activity

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This activity is carried out to assist and strengthen the Putak Tourist Villages in addressing their problems. Many interesting tourism potentials, from natural to cultural and spiritual, have not been optimally promoted. The low public awareness of Putak's Tourist Village destination has resulted in low popularity and low levels of visits. Social media as a medium for the information and promotion of tourist villages has not been actively utilized and managed properly by SMEs because of their lack of knowledge and skills. Therefore, increasing knowledge and skills regarding branding strategies on social media is important for increasing visibility, popularity, and tourist visits to tourist villages. This increase in knowledge and skills is carried out through several activities including socialization, discussion, training, and evaluation.

The initial stage of the activity was conducted through discussions with the Putak Tourist Village manager. An initial discussion to identify problems in Putak's Tourist Village. A discussion was conducted with a tourist village manager. Based on our observations, the many interesting tourism potentials, ranging from natural tourism to cultural and spiritual tourism, have not been optimally promoted by UKM managers. This discussion shows that there is seriousness from managers in developing and advancing Putak Tourist Villages. The discussion resulted in an explanation of the problems faced by the tourist village managers, including the lack of knowledge of tourist village managers to increase the popularity of tourist villages, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic until now, there has been no significant increase in tourist visits. Second, UKM managers lack knowledge and skills in promoting or branding mechanisms through social media. Social media as a medium for the information and promotion of tourist villages has not been actively utilized and managed properly. [Vrontis et al. \(2011\)](#) emphasized that the lack of proper marketing practices and communication is still an obstacle often faced by UKM ([Vrontis et al., 2011](#)).



**Figure 3.** Surveys and discussions with partners

Digital marketing is an important strategy that SMEs should implement in the current digital era. The optimal use of digital marketing media in SMEs has been effective in building brand awareness in wider communities ([Panjalu et al., 2024](#)). A brand of SME, which is a term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of these ([Kotler et al., 2022](#)), can be known by the wider community through social media. Social media helps SMEs to widely inform and increase public trust in their products. Media also helps SMEs communicate with their consumers ([Panjalu et al., 2024](#)).

The problems obtained through discussions with tourism village managers became the main focus of the team to improve the branding of Putak Tourism Village. One of the efforts to improve branding is through a promotional strategy using Instagram social media. Instagram was chosen as a promotional medium because its features are more visual for displaying photos and videos aesthetically for businesses ([Nelson et al., 2019](#)), Its use is very high in Indonesia. Instagram is the most widely used social media platform in Indonesia after WhatsApp ([Kemp, 2024](#)).

## Planning

Responding to problems from partners, the service team coordinates with fellow teams to formulate and prepare the program to be implemented. The program is focused on a more dynamic and targeted social media campaign to attract a wider audience and increase tourism in Kampung Putak. Through the power of digital marketing, we hope to significantly increase the promotion of these various tourism offers and attract more visitors.

In the initial stage, the team traveled to Putak Village to capture a comprehensive visual record of its attractions regarding the rich traditions and dynamic community life in Putak Village. In this case, the team collects photos and videos to prepare the content to be uploaded. High-quality images and videos are taken at major tourist destinations, such as scenic spots, cultural landmarks, cultural events, and festivals. The team also documented the campsite facilities, capturing the natural beauty and facilities that support it. Moreover, the team also focuses on local SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) showcasing their products, expertise, and unique aspects of their businesses. After content collection, the team moves to content planning. The team created a detailed outline for the Instagram feed, determining the overall aesthetic, theme, and messaging strategy. This includes crafting engaging text that suits our target audience and choosing the right tone for each post, whether informative, inspirational, or promotional. By carefully planning the order and content of posts, we strive to ensure a cohesive and engaging feed.



Figure 4. Preparing the template will be used

## Discussion

At this stage, the team engaged in a dialogue with partners regarding the important role of tourism villages in the economy and community welfare. However, based on observations with SMEs, branding improvements for tourism villages are needed, especially branding strategies in social media. Social media as a promotional medium for tourism villages has not been actively utilized or managed properly. Thus, this training was conducted in response to the complaints and problems conveyed by SMEs. The community service team attempted to present speakers competent in digital marketing. This training is expected to help promote and increase tourist visits to Putak Tourism Village.

Putak Tourism Village's potential, which varies from natural tourism to cultural and spiritual tourism, requires promotion to increase awareness and the level of tourist visits. The literature reveals the importance of online media for SMEs to help inform their products and companies to the wider public so that they are better known (Andiani et al., 2023; Atmojo et al., 2024; Darma et al., 2022; Panjalu et al., 2024). SME actors are still more focused on their products, while the focus on making their brands known to the public tends to be ignored (Panjalu et al., 2024). To overcome this problem, SME actors can use social media to build their brands to be better known (Atmojo et al., 2024) and gain the trust of the public (Panjalu et al., 2024).

The increasing use of social media in Indonesia (Kemp, 2024), requires actors to follow and develop their businesses. Instagram is a social media with a high level of use in society (Kemp, 2024), and is an opportunity for business actors to use this media as a promotional medium. However, the use of social media as a business medium must always be checked regularly, updated with information (such as updating the latest information/photos/videos), or evaluating whether additional strategies are needed (such as using content according to the target audience, hashtags, etc.).

In addition to conveying the importance of branding strategies through social media and efforts to optimize them, the team also directly discussed information that would be added as updates, the use of hashtags, adding content to Putak Tourism Village's Instagram social media, and adding location information. This suggestion received a positive response from Putak Tourist Village SMEs for this training. This training is hoped to help increase awareness and tourist visits to Putak Tourist Village.

### **Program implementation**

The public's use of social media has impacted the tourism sector (Atmojo et al., 2024) to switch to a digital marketing model. Social media is an effective media platform to promote the tourism sector and attract many tourists (Nursanti & Yudhiasta, 2024), especially in tourist villages. However, using social media as a promotional medium to develop tourist villages has not been fully understood because managers lack knowledge. Therefore, knowledge about the use and strategies to optimize social media is needed to develop the potential of tourist villages.

In response to this problem, the community service team assisted with strategies to increase the use of Instagram in Putak Tourism Villages. Instagram was chosen as a promotional medium because of the high use of Instagram by Indonesian people (Kemp, 2024) and media that emphasize visual content, so that it is effective in increasing tourist awareness of village destinations (Adhanisa & Fatchiya, 2017). The name of the Putak Tourist Village's Instagram is @kampoengwisataputak.

This strategy improvement is intended to increase public awareness of the appeal of Putak Tourist Village so that it can increase the number of tourist visits. It is expected that increasing public awareness and the number of tourist visits will have a positive impact on the economy of the community in the Putak Tourist Village area.

Based on the partner's agreement on the solutions offered in the previous stage, at this stage, the empowerment program focused on activities to optimize the use of Instagram in Putak Tourism Village. The following steps were performed: (1) The team began to upload the initial content to the Instagram profile by introducing tourist attractions in Putak Village. In addition to uploading several photos and videos, the team also updated the information on the latest events that will be held in Putak Tourism Village; (2) The team worked to improve the visual appeal of the Instagram feed. The team developed and designed a series of templates for posts that ensured a consistent and professional appearance. These templates include overlays for images and grid post designs ranging from 3 × 1 grid designs to 3 × 3 grid designs, which give all posts a branded and sleek look. In addition, the team created and applied certain tones and presets to photos to maintain a uniform aesthetic across the feed. This style consistency will make an Instagram profile more visually appealing and easily recognizable; (3) The team added maps and navigation features to the tourist village destinations; and (4) The team used hashtags and interacted with followers on the platform. The interaction stage with followers was carried out by responding to questions and comments from several visitors.

Through observations about a few weeks after uploading content through active and extensive promotion on Instagram, several results were obtained as follows: (1) Increased Engagement Rates. There has been an increase in user engagement. This increase can be seen from the increasing number

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of likes, comments, shares, and direct messages on posts. Efforts to create interesting content, utilize hashtags, and interact with followers have succeeded in increasing visibility and engagement levels on Instagram. This positive trend shows that our social media strategy is being effectively received by our audience, increasing our online presence and community engagement. The results can be seen in Figure 7; (2) Increase in the number of followers (followers). Putak Tourist Village's Instagram also experienced an increase of around 40 followers after the team carried out a program to optimize the use of Instagram. Although the increase may seem small, this growth in followers reflects the positive impact of promotional activities and increased user interest in Putak Tourism Village content. The results can be seen in Figures 7 and 8; and (3) Increased Tourist Interest and Booking. The progress of the optimization program has also seen an increase in interest in and bookings for tourist attractions. This surge is reflected in the increasing number of inquiries, the level of visits to tourist attractions, and bookings for cultural and spiritual tourism attractions offered by Kampung Putak.



Figure 5. Results of follower addition and engagement early June 2024

Figure 6. Results of follower development until the end of June 2024

## Evaluation

In the final stage, the team evaluated the implementation and sustainability of the program. The evaluation analyzed the usefulness of the program implemented with partners. Based on the results of our survey, most Putak Tourist Village managers understand the strategy for increasing the branding of tourist villages. Several indicators are used to evaluate activities, such as: Is knowledge about optimizing the use of social media well-understood? Does the team provide counseling and mentoring about optimizing social media to increase partner optimism, to expand the target market or to attract visitors more efficiently? Are partners interested in using social media as a sustainable promotion medium for tourist villages? Based on the results of the details carried out, 10 percent of tourist village managers do not understand branding efforts through Instagram, 60 percent already understand branding efforts through Instagram, and 30 percent understand branding efforts through Instagram very well.

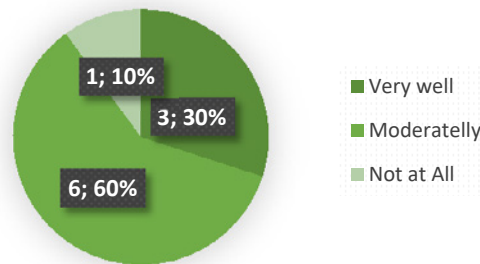


Figure 7. Partner comprehension of social media promotion

Based on the survey results, many activities still need to be developed to improve the promotion strategy of tourism villages through online media, especially for managers who still do not understand the use of social media to improve branding. Technical training on the use of social media still needs to be provided to managers who do not understand the importance of using social media. However, most tourism village managers understand the importance of using social media for branding in tourism villages.

#### **4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The development of tourism villages contributes to economic progress and community welfare. Unfortunately, public awareness of the Putak Tourist Village is still low. Few people know about this tourist village; therefore, the number of tourist visits remains low. Social media as a promotional medium for tourist villages has not been actively utilized or managed properly. The lack of knowledge and skills of tourist village managers to optimize media is one of the factors of the problems still faced by SMEs. This community empowerment activity is carried out to improve and expand marketing strategies through Instagram social media promotions. Community empowerment activities are carried out by involving partners to optimize Instagram as a promotional tool. The main focus of this empowerment activity is creating content and maintaining interaction with followers regularly. Through this empowerment activity, partners gain increased insight and skills on how to attract public awareness of the existence of the Putak Tourist Village, attract attention, build interaction, and obtain information from consumers. Moreover, partners can also learn how to create and upload content about natural beauty, cultural events, and local businesses regularly and maintain interactions with consumers. This ultimately encourages partners to increase visits and expand their market reach. However, these activities have some limitations. The activity of optimizing the use of social media is still focused on one media, namely Instagram. The activity is also still focused on social commerce and not on other digital marketing strategies, such as search engine optimization (SEO) to make it easier for visitors to find the Putak Tourist Village through search engines. It is hoped that further activities can be expanded to other social media, such as TikTok or Facebook. Further activities can also carry out training on SEO to increase visibility and ranking so that it is easier for visitors to find tourist villages.

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