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Digital Storytelling and Social Media Management for Garut Sheep Educational Tourism

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Abstract

Sindang Ratu Village, located in Wanaraja District, Garut Regency, possesses prime potential in the form of Garut Sheep (*Domba Garut*), which holds significant economic, cultural, and educational value. However, the utilization of this potential as a tourist attraction still confronts numerous obstacles, particularly regarding digital promotion, community digital literacy, social media management, and destination branding. This community service program aims to enhance community capacity in developing Garut Sheep Educational Tourism (*Eduwisata Domba Garut*) through digital storytelling and social media management training. The activity involved 24 participants comprising the Garut Sheep breeders' community, village officials, youth, and residents of Sindang Ratu Village. The implementation method encompassed preparation and needs analysis stages, digital storytelling training, social media management training, the establishment and mentoring of a Village Social Media Team, and program evaluation. The results indicated an enhancement in participants' understanding and skills in constructing promotional narratives rooted in local culture, producing digital content utilizing smartphones, managing social media strategically, and analyzing content performance through insights and engagement metrics. Furthermore, the establishment of the Village Social Media Team serves as a vital output supporting the sustainability of digital promotion for Garut Sheep Educational Tourism. This program also catalyzed a shift in community perspectives, viewing Garut Sheep not merely as livestock commodities, but as cultural tourism assets with economic value and destination appeal. Consequently, digital storytelling and social media management training proved to be an effective strategy in strengthening the branding of Garut Sheep Educational Tourism and supporting community-based tourism development alongside community empowerment in the digital era.

Keywords: *community empowerment, digital storytelling, educational tourism, garut sheep, social media management*

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has precipitated substantial shifts across various facets of society, particularly within the tourism sector. Advancements in information and communication technology have enabled tourism destination promotion to be executed more expansively, swiftly, and efficiently through digital media utilization. The emergence of social media has altered tourists' information-seeking behaviors; travelers no longer rely exclusively on conventional channels, opting instead for digital platforms that showcase visual content, experiential narratives, and user-to-user interactions. Consequently, the ability to manage digital media has become a critical determinant in augmenting the competitiveness of tourism destinations in the creative economy era.

Sindang Ratu Village, situated in Wanaraja District, Garut Regency, holds prominent potential in the form of Garut Sheep (*Domba Garut*), which has long served as both a cultural hallmark and a signature livestock commodity of Garut Regency. The Garut Sheep is recognized as a crossbreed of indigenous sheep with Merino and Cape sheep (*Kaapstad*), developed since the 19th century. Beyond

its significant economic value, the Garut Sheep carries profound historical and cultural significance through the ram-fighting tradition (*ketangkasan domba*), an integral element of local social life. This tradition functions not merely as folk entertainment, but as an emblem of local wisdom passed down through generations, possessing substantial potential for development as a culture-based tourist attraction.

The potential of the Garut Sheep extends beyond the livestock sector; it can be strategically cultivated into a community-based educational tourism (*eduwisata*) destination. Educational tourism affords visitors direct engagement with animal husbandry processes, sheep care, introductions to the ram-fighting culture, and interpersonal exchanges with local breeders. Developing livestock- and culture-based tourism aligns with the tenets of community-based tourism, positioning local residents as primary actors in destination management to ensure that economic benefits accrue directly to the local community. Through this approach, local assets serve not only as tourist attractions, but also as mechanisms for community empowerment and rural economic reinforcement.

Economically, the livestock sector plays a pivotal role in the rural development of West Java. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023) indicate that agriculture, forestry, and fisheries remain leading contributors to West Java's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP). Garut Regency itself is acknowledged as one of the largest sheep husbandry hubs in West Java, supported by a steadily growing livestock population. This potential provides essential capital for livestock-based tourism development capable of fostering economic diversification through the strategic integration of livestock farming, tourism, and the creative economy.

Concurrently, the post-pandemic recovery of Indonesia's tourism sector has shown an increasingly favorable trajectory. Heightened domestic traveler mobility offers fertile ground for tourist villages to cultivate their localized assets. Nonetheless, tourist behavioral patterns have shifted markedly. Modern travelers predominantly consult the internet and social media before deciding on destination visits. The *Digital Indonesia 2024* report demonstrates that a vast majority of Indonesian internet users utilize social media as their primary information repository when searching for products, services, and travel destinations. This dynamic highlights that a destination's digital footprint is paramount in generating awareness, shaping public perception, and driving visitor interest.

Extensive scholarship confirms the strategic function of social media in tourism marketing. Lund, Cohen, and Scarles (2018) assert that storytelling constructed via social media fortifies destination image and enhances audience engagement. Their findings reveal that travelers connect more readily with destinations that present authentic narratives and evoke emotional resonance through digital content. Furthermore, Lund, Scarles, and Cohen (2020) emphasize that storytelling directly contributes to destination brand value co-creation via social media exchanges. Destination marketing has therefore shifted focus from transactional information dissemination to the deliberate crafting of engaging, meaningful narratives.

A digital storytelling approach serves as a highly fitting framework for the development of Garut Sheep Educational Tourism. Digital storytelling is a communicative methodology that synthesizes narrative craft, photography, video, audio, and lived community experiences into an appealing digital narrative. Through this methodology, the history of the Garut Sheep, local husbandry activities, the cultural nuances of ram fighting, and daily social life in Sindang Ratu Village can be packaged into content that captures audience attention and fosters emotional affinity among prospective visitors. Research by Youssef, Leicht, and Marongiu (2019) corroborates that effective storytelling bolsters destination appeal and solidifies market positioning amidst digital tourism competition.

Despite this considerable potential, preliminary field observations and consultative discussions with village officials and the breeders' community revealed that digital media adoption for Garut Sheep tourism promotion remains sub-optimal. Promotional initiatives are predominantly conventional and lack integration within an organized digital communication plan. Village social media channels have not been leveraged effectively as platforms for branding and tourism outreach. Disseminated content remains sporadic, lacks planning rooted in content pillars, fails to implement persuasive copywriting techniques, and does not employ storytelling methods capable of highlighting local cultural uniqueness and regional assets compellingly.

An additional challenge involves the limited digital literacy within the community regarding professional social media administration. While segments of the community—particularly youth—routinely engage with social media platforms, its application remains confined to personal utility. Competencies surrounding visual content production, digital photography and videography, caption

drafting, strategic hashtag deployment, engagement management, and social media performance analysis are notably constrained. Yet, as delineated by Tuten and Solomon (2023), digital marketing efficacy is heavily governed by the capacity to administer content systematically, consistently, and through data-informed metrics.

Furthermore, no dedicated institutional body or working group currently oversees social media governance and branding for Garut Sheep tourism. The absence of a defined management structure results in erratic promotional output that hinges heavily on disparate individuals, thereby jeopardizing long-term promotional continuity. Darubekti et al. (2022) observe that the successful advancement of digital-based tourist villages relies intrinsically on institutional capacity and the digital literacy of community actors engaged in destination governance. Similarly, Kariadna, Johannes, and Mulawarman (2025) demonstrate that bolstering community capacity via digital literacy and social media management training heightens culture-based promotional efficacy while extending institutional outreach to broader audiences. These findings affirm that refining local digital competencies constitutes a strategic prerequisite for sustaining community-based tourism promotion.

Synthesizing these interrelated challenges indicates that the central dilemma confronting Sindang Ratu Village stems not from an absence of tourism potential, but from institutional and skill limitations in deploying digital technologies strategically and sustainably. Consequently, there is an imperative for a Community Service Program (*Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat*) delivering Digital Storytelling and Social Media Management Training for Garut Sheep Educational Tourism. This initiative is designed to elevate community digital literacy, cultivate creative content production capabilities, inaugurate a village social media management team, and establish professional branding for Garut Sheep Educational Tourism. Through this intervention, the Garut Sheep is expected to mature into a recognizable digital village identity, elevating tourism appeal, expanding outreach, and advancing community welfare via local wisdom-driven creative economy initiatives.

METHOD

This community service activity employed a participatory and community empowerment approach. This approach emphasized the active engagement of participants across all stages of the activity—from planning and implementation to evaluation—ensuring that the program's outcomes directly addressed their needs. The execution of the program was divided into three primary stages:

Preparation and Needs Analysis Stage

This stage commenced with coordination between the program team, the Sindang Ratu Village Government, and the Garut Sheep breeders' community to align perspectives regarding the program's objectives and execution. Subsequently, a preliminary survey and field observations were conducted to identify current digital promotional practices, including the utilization of village social media and the communication patterns employed to promote Garut Sheep tourism potential. The team also mapped potential content suitable for digital storytelling, such as livestock breeding activities, the cultural tradition of Garut Sheep ram fighting (*ketangkasan Domba Garut*), and the daily life of the local community. Furthermore, a digital literacy pre-test was administered to participants to assess baseline knowledge and skills concerning social media usage, content creation, and digital promotion, serving as the benchmark for curriculum formulation and program evaluation.

Implementation Stage

The implementation stage comprised three core training and mentoring activities. Digital Storytelling Training: Conducted to augment participants' capabilities in packaging the potential of Garut Sheep into captivating and promotional digital content. The curriculum encompassed the conceptual understanding of storytelling as a destination branding strategy, narrative construction techniques rooted in cultural values and local wisdom, and hands-on visual content production using smartphones. Participants also received training in basic photography and videography, content editing using accessible mobile applications (such as CapCut, Canva, and InShot), persuasive copywriting techniques, and strategic hashtag deployment to amplify audience reach and engagement on social media. Social Media Management Training: Following content creation competencies, participants engaged in social media management training aimed at developing structured and sustainable administrative capabilities. This included developing *content pillars* tailored to the characteristics of Garut Sheep Educational Tourism, formulating a *content calendar* to guide

publication schedules, executing strategies to foster audience interaction and engagement, and optimizing major social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts. Additionally, participants were equipped with analytical skills to interpret social media metrics, including reach insights and engagement rates, to evaluate content effectiveness. Establishment and Mentoring of the Village Social Media Team: To ensure program sustainability, a Village Social Media Team was established, comprising representatives from the village government, the breeders' community, and local youth. This team is tasked with overseeing ongoing digital promotions for Garut Sheep Educational Tourism. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for social media governance were established, governing task delegation, publication schedules, and content review mechanisms. The service team also provided intensive mentoring over a 3- to 6-month period during content production and publication, accompanied by periodic performance monitoring and evaluation to maintain promotional consistency and efficacy.

Evaluation Stage

The evaluation stage was conducted to measure overall program success and participant competency gains following the training and mentoring series. The assessment focused on participants' practical execution of learned digital storytelling and social media management concepts, particularly evaluated through the quality of produced digital content, promotional narrative structuring, platform administration, and the utilization of digital features to optimize reach and engagement. Furthermore, evaluation outcomes served as the basis for formulating sustainability recommendations, including institutional strengthening of the Village Social Media Team, expanding structured promotional strategies, and detailing follow-up mentoring plans to safeguard the long-term branding of Garut Sheep Educational Tourism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Community Service activity, titled "Digital Storytelling and Social Media Management Training for Garut Sheep Educational Tourism," was conducted in Sindang Ratu Village, Wanaraja District, Garut Regency, involving 24 participants consisting of members from the Garut Sheep breeders' community, village officials, local youth, and residents interested in culture- and digital-based tourism development. The program was designed to improve community capacity in utilizing digital media as a promotional and branding tool for Garut Sheep Educational Tourism (*Eduwisata Domba Garut*). The implementation commenced with a needs identification and a baseline assessment of participant competencies via a digital literacy pre-test. The findings revealed that although most participants routinely engaged with social media platforms, its utility remained personal and had not been directed toward tourism promotion or local economic development. This aligns with Darubekti et al. (2022), who observed that while tourist village communities are typically familiar with digital media, they still require capacity-building interventions to deploy technology for professional destination marketing.

During the Digital Storytelling training session, participants were provided with foundational insights into the role of narratives in cultivating destination identity and image. Participants were trained to identify the cultural values intrinsic to the Garut Sheep—such as its history, husbandry practices, ram-fighting traditions, and local community life—as narrative sources for digital content. Additionally, participants acquired practical skills in smartphone photography and videography, promotional narrative design, and content editing using accessible applications such as Canva and CapCut. Practical exercises demonstrated that participants were capable of producing diverse forms of structured digital content, including photographs, short-form videos, and promotional copy, reflecting marked improvement over their pre-training capabilities. This skill enhancement indicates that the digital storytelling framework effectively assists communities in packaging local assets into engaging and communicative assets. These findings corroborate Lund, Cohen, and Scarles (2018), who noted that storytelling fosters audience emotional attachment and reinforces destination image across digital media.

Alongside storytelling instruction, participants completed Social Media Management training focused on structured and sustainable platform administration. Coursework covered the development of content pillars, content calendar design, engagement strategies, platform optimization across Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts, and performance analytics using built-in insights and engagement metrics. Prior to the training, most participants were unfamiliar with content scheduling

and analytics evaluation; publications had been sporadic and devoid of clear communication goals. Post-training, participants demonstrated proficiency in assembling content calendars and curating content categories aligned with educational tourism promotion. Participants also recognized the necessity of consistent publication intervals, persuasive captioning, and active audience interaction. This increased comprehension illustrates that social media management training significantly bolsters community capacity for professional digital administration. These findings support Tuten and Solomon (2023), who stated that digital marketing success depends on an organization's or community's ability to plan, produce, distribute, and evaluate content on an ongoing basis.

A key deliverable of this initiative was the establishment of the Village Social Media Team, charged with sustaining the digital promotion of Garut Sheep Educational Tourism. The team was formed through a participatory mechanism engaging the village government, breeders' associations, and local youth. Institutionalizing this team represents a strategic step toward guaranteeing project continuity beyond the initial training phase. The team was subsequently guided in formulating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) governing task distribution, production workflows, publishing schedules, and regular performance reviews. Establishing this governing body minimizes dependence on specific individuals and creates a more resilient promotional framework. This outcome aligns with Kariadna et al. (2025), who found that community-based tourism marketing relies heavily on dedicated administrative groups possessing digital capabilities and organized operational systems. Defined institutional structures allow destination branding to be executed consistently over time.



Figure 1. Training sessions conducted with community members in Wanaraja District, Garut Regency



Figure 2. Practical digital content creation workshops with local participants



Figure 3. Collaborative mentoring and institutional team formation sessions

The training delivered tangible contributions to the broader advancement of Garut Sheep Educational Tourism in Wanaraja District. Beyond elevating technical proficiency in content generation and platform management, the program cultivated a paradigm shift regarding digital technology as an engine for economic empowerment. Community members recognized that Garut Sheep represent more than agricultural commodities; they embody cultural and educational value suitable for tourism development. Packaging these assets through digital storytelling produces compelling narratives that solidify destination identity. This outcome corroborates Rini (2019), who asserted that digitalization in community-based tourism development enhances local economic value while reinforcing community cultural identity. Furthermore, leveraging social media channels expands promotional outreach for Garut Sheep Educational Tourism to broader audiences. This reach is vital given modern tourist reliance on digital media for travel planning. According to Lund et al. (2020), storytelling paired with targeted social media strategies reinforces destination branding and deepens visitor engagement. Overall, the intervention successfully elevated community competencies in digital storytelling and platform management, established an administrative body for digital outreach, and strengthened the branding of Garut Sheep Educational Tourism as a community-based cultural destination. Continued mentoring and periodic capacity reinforcement are recommended to ensure long-term, sustainable benefits for the residents of Sindang Ratu Village.

Table 1. Evaluation of Community Service Activities

QUESTION / INDICATOR	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Relevance of activity material to participant needs	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	16.7%	79.2%
Clarity and comprehensibility of presented material/activities	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	25.0%	70.8%
Utility of material/activities for enterprise and village digital promotion	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	17.4%	82.6%
Participant comprehension of digital storytelling post-training	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%
Participant comprehension of social media management post-training	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%
Clarity and accessibility of instructional media and learning aids	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	37.5%	58.3%
Quality of discussions and interactions during training sessions	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	29.2%	62.5%
Overall satisfaction with the training program	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	87.5%

(Scale: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree)

Table 1 presents the participant evaluation data gathered via questionnaires employing a 5-point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA). Overall participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive across all assessed dimensions. Notably, no respondents selected "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" for any item, demonstrating high program acceptability. Regarding curriculum alignment with community needs, 79.2% of respondents rated it as Strongly Agree and 16.7% as Agree, with only 4.2% remaining neutral, verifying that the instructional modules matched local operational priorities. For the clarity and comprehensibility of instruction, 70.8% indicated Strongly Agree and 25.0% Agree, while 4.2% were neutral, confirming that delivery methods were accessible. On the perceived utility of course material for business and village promotion, 100% of participants returned positive responses (82.6% Strongly Agree; 17.4% Agree). This metric ranked among the highest in the evaluation, reflecting clear perceived real-world applicability.

Regarding conceptual comprehension, 66.7% Strongly Agreed and 33.3% Agreed that their grasp of digital storytelling increased post-training. Identical figures were reported for social media management, indicating consistent pedagogical effectiveness across both core subjects. Concerning learning aids and instructional media, 58.3% selected Strongly Agree, 37.5% Agree, and 4.2% Neutral. Session engagement and discussion quality received positive ratings from 91.7% of respondents (62.5% Strongly Agree; 29.2% Agree), with 8.3% neutral, reflecting an active learning environment. The highest individual rating occurred in overall program satisfaction, where 87.5% rated Strongly Agree and 12.5% Agree, with zero neutral or negative responses.

Participant satisfaction remained consistently high throughout implementation. Respondents highlighted the Digital Storytelling Concept, Storytelling Techniques, and Social Media Management Strategies as the most practically beneficial modules. This prioritization demonstrates that structured narrative design and platform governance represent critical operational needs for local digital communication. In addition to curriculum substance, participants praised the blended pedagogical approach combining theoretical lectures with applied exercises. Practical workshops covering content design, promotional posters, video editing, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool integration significantly assisted skill acquisition, providing immediately applicable capabilities for regional tourism marketing.

Evaluation feedback also highlighted strong interest in pursuing advanced instruction, specifically in advanced digital storytelling, content planning, performance marketing, video production, AI utilization, and studio recording workflows. This demand signals a requirement for follow-up interventions to build on initial gains. Accordingly, participants recommended that future initiatives increase practical allocations, on-site mentoring, case study analyses, and field execution. Respondents expressed interest in multi-day workshops focusing specifically on local commodity marketing, educational tourism packaging, and village portal administration.

Finally, the assessment revealed favorable indicators for institutional sustainability: 73.9% of participants expressed willingness to join follow-up mentoring programs, 43.5% committed to assisting ongoing promotional content production, and 39.1% volunteered for membership in the Village Social Media Team. Only 13.0% reported no intention of ongoing involvement. This high degree of commitment confirms that the intervention went beyond technical knowledge transfer to generate genuine local motivation and ownership. In summary, the program met its intended objectives of enhancing community capacity in digital storytelling, social media management, and creative digital production. High satisfaction scores, sustained interest in advanced coursework, and clear commitments to local working groups confirm favorable sustainability prospects. Future efforts should emphasize extended practical timelines, field coaching, formalization of village social media units, structured editorial calendars, and longitudinal tracking of digital metrics such as publication frequency, audience reach, and prospective visitor engagement.

CONCLUSION

The Community Service activity, titled "Digital Storytelling and Social Media Management Training for Garut Sheep Educational Tourism" in Sindang Ratu Village, Wanaraja District, Garut Regency, successfully enhanced community capacity in leveraging digital technologies to support the promotion and branding of local potential. Involving 24 participants from the Garut Sheep breeders' community, village apparatus, and local residents, this program imparted knowledge and practical competencies in developing local culture-based narratives, producing digital content, and executing planned, sustainable social media management. The outcomes demonstrate significant improvements

in participants' comprehension of digital storytelling concepts, creative content production techniques, and social media management strategies encompassing content planning, audience engagement, and performance analytics evaluation. Furthermore, the establishment of the Village Social Media Team represents a crucial milestone expected to ensure the long-term sustainability of digital promotional efforts for Garut Sheep Educational Tourism through more structured and professional governance. This initiative also successfully catalyzed a paradigm shift within the community, encouraging them to view the Garut Sheep not merely as livestock commodities, but as cultural assets and educational tourism resources carrying significant economic value. Through the integrated approach of digital storytelling and social media management, local assets can be curated into engaging narratives that strengthen destination identity and expand promotional reach to broader target audiences. Consequently, sustained mentoring and continuous capacity building remain essential to ensure the branding of Garut Sheep Educational Tourism thrives optimally and generates enduring socio-economic benefits for the community of Sindang Ratu Village.

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DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing process of this manuscript.

CONFLICTING INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors states that there is no conflict of interest in the publication of this article.

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