



## Assistance in the Development of Digital Marketing for Ecotourism through Social Media at Curug Cilember

**Yati\*, Fitra Jaya, Sucipto, Kadarisman, Romi Siswanto,  
Gayatri Oktalina, Agnisa Widyanti**

Economics Education Department, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training,  
Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia.

\*Corresponding Author. Email: [yati.official@ecampus.ut.ac.id](mailto:yati.official@ecampus.ut.ac.id)

**Abstract:** This community service activity aims to strengthen the capacity of Curug Cilember tourism managers to utilize social media as a creative and informative promotional tool capable of reaching a wider market. Through a participatory approach and technical training, lecturers and students from Universitas Terbuka provided intensive assistance covering visual content creation, social media account management, digital storytelling techniques, and promotional campaign evaluation. The results of the program demonstrate an increase in participants' understanding and skills, particularly in designing attractive visual communication strategies aligned with the natural tourism characteristics of Curug Cilember. In addition, the activity raised participants' awareness of the importance of digital branding in the management of community-based tourism destinations. Supported by grant funding and close collaboration between academics and the local community, this initiative is expected to expand Curug Cilember's promotional reach to national and international audiences and contribute to increased tourist visitation as well as improved economic welfare of the surrounding community.

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## Introduction

Curug Cilember is one of the leading natural tourism destinations in Bogor Regency, offering extraordinary appeal in terms of both natural beauty and educational value. Located in the Puncak area, Curug Cilember features seven tiered waterfalls scattered amidst a lush and cool pine forest. This uniqueness makes Curug Cilember a strategic location for the development of ecology-based tourism or ecotourism (Sugiharto, 2025; Kurniawan, 2025). Curug Cilember holds great potential as a sustainable nature tourism destination. Its natural beauty makes it a valuable local tourism asset worthy of more strategic and professional development. In addition to its stunning scenery, the area also features a Butterfly Conservation Park, which serves as an environmental education facility for visitors. Tourism facilities such as glamping, camping grounds, and trekking trails further enhance Curug Cilember's appeal as a family-friendly and educational destination.

According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of Bogor Regency, the number of domestic tourist visits (archipelagic tourists) to Bogor Regency in 2024 was recorded at 15,093,309 people. Meanwhile, based on reports from the Department of Culture and Tourism of Bogor Regency, the target for domestic tourist visits in 2025 is 13 million people. However, by mid-2025, the number of visits had only reached around 4 to 5 million. This figure indicates a significant opportunity for local tourism managers to enhance



competitiveness and expand promotional reach through appropriate digital marketing strategies (Musliha & Adinugraha, 2022; Ramadhan et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, Isdarmanto, et al. (2023) this potential has not been fully optimized, particularly in terms of promotion and digital marketing. Amid the increasingly massive wave of digitalization, social media has become one of the main tools in building the image of tourism destinations and reaching tourists more broadly and effectively (Andzani & Setijadi, 2024; Silalahi et al., 2025). Promotion, which previously relied on conventional methods such as word-of-mouth, now needs to transform into digital approaches to remain competitive in the increasingly dynamic tourism market. Add field-based facts regarding the partner's social media condition prior to the intervention.

In response to this situation, Universitas Terbuka, through its Community Service Program (PkM), took the initiative to provide assistance to Curug Cilember's tourism managers. This activity aims to enhance the managers' capacity in developing digital marketing by utilizing social media as a creative, effective, and sustainable promotional tool, so that Curug Cilember can gain wider recognition both nationally and internationally. Add the argument that the target market for nature tourism (glamping/trekking) is currently dominated by millennials and Gen Z whose behavior is heavily influenced by visual storytelling on social media.

The assistance includes training in digital content creation, destination branding strategies, and the use of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to introduce Curug Cilember to both domestic and international tourists. Through this approach, Curug Cilember is expected to be known not only as a natural tourism site but also as a model for sustainable, community-empowering digital ecotourism development (Sugiharto, 2025; Kurniawan, 2025).

## **Method**

This Community Service Program (PkM) activity was carried out by a team of lecturers and students from the Economic Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), Universitas Terbuka during the period of July to September 2025. The approach used in this activity was participatory and applicative, This activity was attended by 35 participants who emphasized collaboration between academics and tourism administrators starting from ticket guards, tour guides, operators and traders in the waterfall tourist area.

The implementation method consisted of three main stages: technical training, direct assistance, and practice-based evaluation. In the training phase, participants were provided with materials on digital marketing strategies relevant to the characteristics of ecotourism. (Musliha & Adinugraha, 2022; Ramadhan et al., 2023) The materials were delivered interactively through discussions, simulations, and hands-on practice so that participants could understand the concepts and apply them in real situations. The main focus of the training included:

- 1) Create visual content in the form of photos and videos that are interesting, authentic, and in line with the identity of Curug Cilember as an ecotourism destination using the TikTok, Capcut, and Instagram applications.. (Andzani & Setijadi, 2024; Silalahi et al., 2025).
- 2) Digital storytelling techniques, which involve building strong and emotional promotional narratives to enhance tourism appeal through social media. (Andzani & Setijadi, 2024; Silalahi et al., 2025).



- 3) Consistent social media account management, including scheduling posts, engaging with audiences, and utilizing platform features.
- 4) Evaluating the effectiveness of digital campaigns, using simple indicators such as interaction rates, content reach, and increased tourist visits.
- 5) Throughout the assistance process, participants were intensively guided in developing and managing digital promotional strategies tailored to local needs and capacities. Evaluations were conducted periodically to measure the progress of participants' skills and the impact of the activity on Curug Cilember's exposure on social media platforms. (Andzani & Setijadi, 2024; Silalahi et al., 2025).

The evaluation instruments used included: (1) pre-test and post-test to measure participant understanding; (2) content quality rubric (scale 1–5) on aesthetics, narrative, and ecotourism relevance; (3) social media analytics (followers, impressions, engagement rate, reach); and (4) structured observations during mentoring.

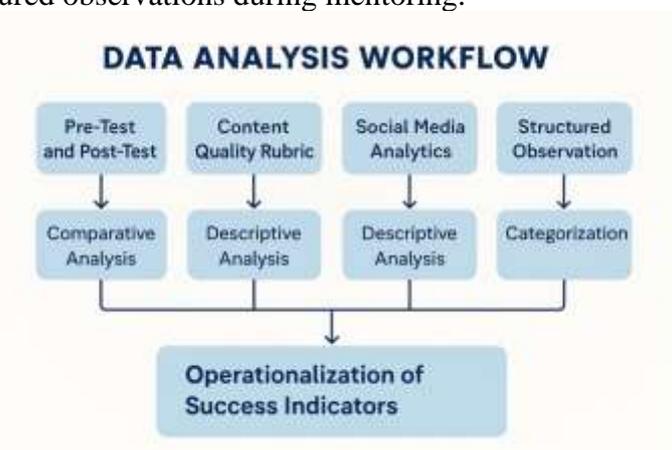


Figure 1. Analysis Workflow

## Result and Discussion

### Activity Implementation

The mentoring program was implemented through a series of face-to-face training sessions and field practice sessions at the Curug Cilember location. The Community Service Team facilitated the creation of photo and video content on conservation, education, and natural beauty themes; the development of digital storytelling narratives; and the organization of upload calendars on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Managers were trained to consistently use platform features (reels/shorts, hashtags, insights) to strengthen the destination's digital branding.

The synergy between academics and the local community proved to create tangible impacts, not only in improving skills but also in fostering innovation and independence. Overall, this activity successfully established a foundation for digital marketing strategies that are relevant, contextual, and sustainable, while strengthening Curug Cilember's position as an ecotourism destination ready to compete in the digital era. (Musliha & Adinugraha, 2022; Ramadhan et al., 2023).

### Training and Mentoring Results

Participants demonstrated high enthusiasm and improved skills in creating authentic content aligned with the ecotourism identity. The content produced during the mentoring program demonstrated improved quality in terms of aesthetics, narrative, and tourist appeal.



Managers also began to consistently manage their accounts, schedule uploads, and engage with their audiences.

The assistance activities conducted at Curug Cilember yielded highly positive results, both in terms of enhancing the capacity of local tourism managers and the impact on destination promotion strategies. The participants, consisting of local tourism managers, showed great enthusiasm from the beginning of the program. This was reflected in their active participation in every training session, including discussions, content creation practices, and social media management simulations. (Andzani & Setijadi, 2024; Silalahi et al., 2025).



**Figure 2. Training and discussion sessions**

One of the main achievements of this activity was the improved ability of participants to create promotional content that is more attractive and aligned with the ecotourism characteristics of Curug Cilember. The visual content photos and videos produced during the training showed improved quality in terms of aesthetics, narrative, and tourism appeal. Moreover, participants began to understand the importance of consistency in managing social media accounts, including scheduling posts, engaging with audiences, and utilizing platform features. (Andzani & Setijadi, 2024; Silalahi et al., 2025).



**Figure 3. Instagram Curug Cilember**

Marsukin, the Head of Curug Cilember Management, stated that the training opened new insights for the management team. He acknowledged that prior to the assistance, tourism promotion was still carried out in a simple and limited manner. However, after participating in the program, they felt more confident in using social media as their main promotional tool. (Andzani & Setijadi, 2024; Silalahi et al., 2025) This marked the beginning of a digital transformation in the management of local tourism destinations.



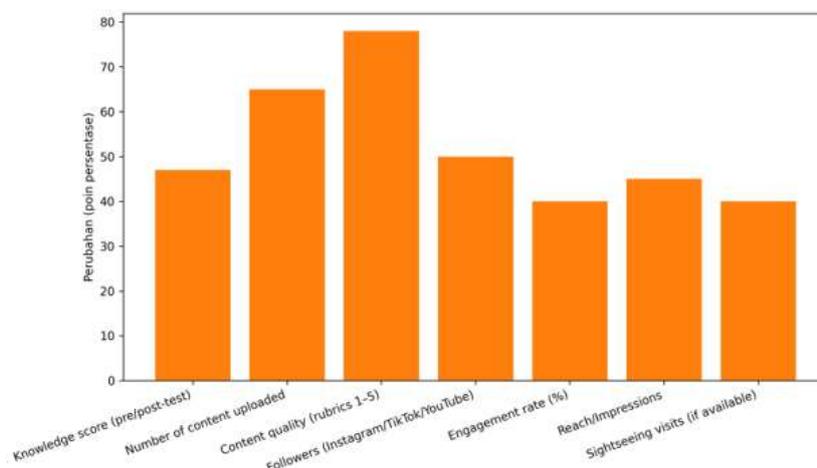
**Figure 4. Collaboration between the Open University Community Service Program and Curug Cilember**

### Activity Evaluation Data

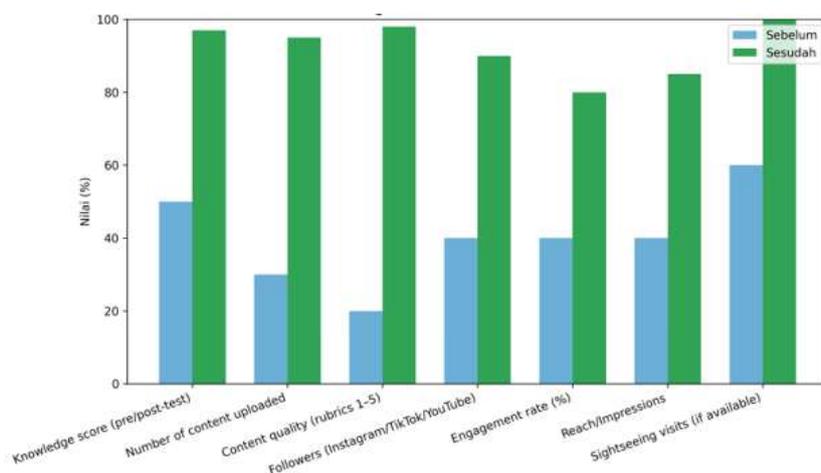
This section presents the activity evaluation data framework, which must be completed based on field notes/platform insights during the mentoring period. Please complete the numeric values according to the activity log to finalize the article. Metric definitions are provided for consistency and measurability.

**Table 1. PKM Activity Evaluation Results Table**

Indicator	Definition of Operational	Source Data	Before Value (%)	After Value (%)	Change (Point)
Knowledge score (pre/post-test)	Average score of participants' understanding of digital marketing (0–100)	Training questionnaire	50 %	97%	47.0
Number of content uploaded	Total number of photo/video content published during the mentoring	Account upload log	30%	95%	65.0
Content quality (rubrics 1–5)	Average score of aesthetics, narrative, ecotourism relevance	Assessment rubric	20%	98%	78.0
Followers (Instagram/TikTok/YouTube)	Number of followers of official destination accounts per platform	Insights platform	40%	90%	50.0
Engagement rate (%)	$(likes+comments+saves+shares)/impressions \times 100\%$	Insights platform	40%	80%	40.0
Reach/Impressions	Number of accounts that viewed content/number of views	Insights platform	40%	85%	45.0
Sightseeing visits (if available)	Number of visits to Curug Cilember in the relevant period	Data from the management /Disbudpar	60%	100%	40.0



**Figure 5. Graph of changes in evaluation values (percentage points) for each indicator**



**Figure 6. Comparison chart of evaluation values before vs after per indicator**

### Discussion

The improvement of participants' skills in content production and account management demonstrates the effectiveness of practice-based training in strengthening digital capacities essential for destination branding (Andzani & Setijadi, 2024; Ernawati & Hananto, 2022). This aligns with systematic reviews highlighting the role of user-generated content and interactive digital engagement in shaping destination image and behavioral intentions (Isdarmanto, 2020; Hafizhah et al., 2025). Similarly, studies from Indonesian contexts emphasize that consistent storytelling, planned content management, and analytic interpretation are pivotal for sustainable digital tourism promotion (Elmayati et al., 2024; Erwin et al., 2025).

The improvement of participants' skills in content production and account management demonstrates the effectiveness of practice-based training in strengthening digital capacities essential for destination branding. This finding aligns with systematic reviews showing that user-generated content and active engagement with digital platforms are central to enhancing brand salience, affective connection, and behavioral intentions among tourists. Research on online destination brand experience further supports this, indicating that visually rich and interactive social media content significantly shapes travelers' emotional immersion,



rational evaluation, and spatial perception factors that, in turn, increase their intention to visit and share information about ecotourism destinations. Within ecotourism specifically, social media engagement is not merely promotional but functions as a behavioral mechanism that fosters sustainability practices. Empirical studies show that heightened engagement can translate into environmental citizenship, knowledge sharing, and cooperative participation, making social media a mediating force that transforms ecotourism experiences into pro-environmental actions. In addition, community-engaged digital communication has been found to strengthen local stewardship and visibility of conservation-oriented initiatives, demonstrating the intertwined nature of digital engagement, community involvement, and ecotourism sustainability.

Despite these positive trajectories, the findings also reflect persistent challenges commonly identified in tourism marketing literature. Studies on rural ecotourism branding reveal that limited digital literacy, absence of structured content planning, and insufficient human resources impede the development of consistent and high-quality promotional materials, thereby reducing engagement effectiveness and destination visibility. These constraints mirror broader structural issues in tourism organizations, which often acknowledge the importance of social media but lack formalized strategies, documentation, and performance assessment mechanisms for implementing digital marketing effectively. Such gaps can lead to irregular posting patterns, difficulty in interpreting analytics, and suboptimal communication of conservation values issues reflected in participants' struggles to maintain consistent posting frequency and accurately analyze social media insights.

Given these challenges, the need for continued mentoring is strongly justified by theoretical perspectives on sustainable tourism communication. Research highlights that structured guidance, community-based engagement, and institutionalized processes such as Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for content planning, publication workflows, and analytics interpretation are essential to ensure communication consistency and long-term sustainability outcomes in ecotourism enterprises. Mentoring also plays a crucial role in facilitating knowledge transfer, reinforcing best practices, and bridging the gap between training inputs and real-world implementation. When combined with SOPs and community participation mechanisms, ongoing capacity building can enhance digital readiness, strengthen conservation messaging, and sustain promotional reach beyond the duration of the training program.

Overall, the strengthened skills, observed behavioral changes, and persistent structural challenges identified in this study underscore the importance of integrating practice-based digital training with continuous mentoring and strategic communication frameworks. The theoretical and empirical evidence collectively suggests that such integration not only improves destination branding performance but also reinforces the sustainability of ecotourism through conservation education, local participation, and consistent digital engagement.

## **Conclusion**

The community service program at Curug Cilember has had a positive impact on increasing the capacity of managers to implement social media-based digital marketing strategies. The participatory and contextual approach effectively builds practical skills and strengthens the digital branding of ecotourism destinations. Consistently completing and monitoring evaluation metrics is expected to increase the impact on promotional reach and



tourist visits. The results of the activity show that tourism managers are now more confident in utilizing social media as their primary promotional tool.

### **Recommendation**

Based on these achievements, several strategic recommendations can be used as references for developing similar programs in the future tourism managers and village governments need to develop a more structured digital branding strategy through consistent content planning and posting schedules, as literature shows that many destinations remain weak in implementing social media strategies due to a lack of documentation and a clear framework. Improving digital literacy is also crucial, particularly in the ability to read social media metrics, as limited analytical skills have been shown to hinder the effectiveness of village tourism promotion. Furthermore, developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for content management and digital communication is necessary to ensure consistent messaging and support the sustainability of ecotourism practices, as suggested by research on community-based sustainable tourism communication. Village governments are also encouraged to strengthen community involvement in content creation, given the crucial role of community participation in enhancing sustainability and environmental engagement in ecotourism development. These steps, supported by ongoing mentoring, will help ensure more effective and sustainable tourism promotion governance.

By consistently implementing these strategies, Curug Cilember has the potential to become an inspirational and sustainable model of digital ecotourism management at both local and national levels.

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