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Communication In Tourism Development And Creative Economy (A Case Study on Tani Hutan Rahayu Jaya Group in Labuhan Ratu VII Village, Way Kambas, East Lampung Regency)

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Abstract

The tourism sector has a significant impact on the development of the creative economy in every tourist destination, playing a crucial role in the country's economic progress. Labuhan Ratu VII Way Kambas Village boasts an attractive educational tourism destination. This potential exists, but the village still faces challenges in the form of ineffective communication for the development of tourism and the creative economy in the village. This study aims to determine how to build tourism communication to realize a tourist village. This aspect highlights the importance of communication as a means of building awareness, participation, and collaboration between village communities and stakeholders. Building an environment that has tourist attractions, this section emphasizes how to structure environmental management efforts. Building communication to create a tourism- aware community, to discuss how to build communication that touches on aspects of education and community empowerment so that they become not only objects but also key actors in tourism development. Building communication in the form of professional tour guides, at this stage will discuss how to form and foster local tour guides. Then, building communication in promoting tourism, at this stage will identify efforts and challenges in maximizing digital media as a village promotional tool. Using a qualitative descriptive approach method, data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of this study are expected to demonstrate the effectiveness of communication for the

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development of tourism and the creative economy in the village.

Keywords: Communication, Creative Economy, Development Tourism, Way Kambas.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays a vital role in national and global economic development, particularly in Indonesia, an archipelago rich in natural resources and cultural diversity. Its strategic geographical location offers a wide range of attractions, making it appealing to both domestic and international tourists. Tourism significantly contributes to foreign exchange and supports the growth of the creative economy. The creative economy enhances tourism performance, efficiency, and cultural preservation by increasing labor participation and productivity (Larassaty, 2016). Rooted in small and medium enterprises, it empowers communities by leveraging creativity to generate economic value.

These two sectors are closely linked, contributing to sustainable development. Tourism provides employment, with one in eight global jobs connected to the sector (Pitana & Gayatri, 2009). According to Law No. 6 of 2009, empowering the creative economy is crucial for revitalizing Indonesia's economy and generating rural employment (Presiden RI, 2009). Tourism also promotes economic growth, improves welfare, reduces unemployment, preserves nature and culture, strengthens national identity, and fosters international relations (Law No. 10 of 2009). It encourages intercultural understanding and global diversity.

Indonesia has 38 provinces, including Lampung, located at the southern tip of Sumatra. With its natural and cultural wealth, Lampung has become a growing tourism and creative economy hub. In 2023, it recorded 10.26 million domestic tourists, ranking third in Sumatra. The Regional Tourism Development Plan (RIPP) 2012 - 2031 identifies seven priority zones in Lampung, including Way Kambas National Park, known as “The Treasure of Sumatra,” for its natural beauty and biodiversity. The park spans 125,631.31 hectares and is home to endangered species such as the Sumatran elephant.

Labuhan Ratu VII Village, one of 38 buffer villages around the park, offers educational tourism activities such as jungle tracking, elephant learning center visits, bee education, eco-printing, batik workshops, and wildlife observation. It has a cooperation agreement with the park for ecosystem restoration through tourism. Despite its potential, tourism development in the Rahayu Jaya Forest Farmer Group (KTH) remains suboptimal due to limited human resources, poor digital access, and outdated information. Effective communication strategies are essential to

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attract tourists and foster stakeholder collaboration among communities, entrepreneurs, government, and media.

Therefore, this study examines effective communication strategies in developing Labuhan Ratu VII as a tourist village, titled "Communication in Tourism and Creative Economy Development" (A Case Study of Rahayu Jaya Forest Farmer Group in Labuhan Ratu VII Village, Way Kambas, East Lampung Regency).

Diffusion Of Innovations Theory

The Diffusion of Innovations theory, developed by Everett M. Rogers, explains how new ideas or products spread through communication within a social system. This theory outlines five categories of adopters: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Each group exhibits different communication behaviors, such as media usage and decision-making patterns. The theory originated from the study The People's Choice by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet. It emphasizes the role of opinion leaders and mass media in influencing public behavior. According to Rogers and Shoemaker, diffusion is the process by which innovations are communicated among members of a social system.

In the context of tourism and creative economy development in Labuhan Ratu VII Village, this theory helps in designing effective communication strategies to promote new tourism innovations. It highlights the importance of using communication channels such as social media, travel agents, festivals, and influencers to spread awareness and encourage adoption of new tourism products. This approach can enhance visitor engagement and support local economic growth.

Development Communication Strategy Theory

Development Communication, as proposed by Hafied Cangara, emphasizes the critical role of communication in accelerating socio-economic development. It goes beyond mere information dissemination by actively encouraging community participation and empowerment. According to Cangara, development communication is characterized by four key features: it is strategic in mobilizing community involvement and driving social change; change-oriented, focusing on transforming behaviors, mindsets, and social structures; multi-media, utilizing a range of communication channels such as interpersonal, mass, and digital media; and participatory and empowering, ensuring that communities are active participants rather than passive recipients of information.

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Three primary communication models are recognized: the Linear (Top-Down) model, which involves one-way communication from authorities to the public; the Participatory (Bottom-Up) model, which promotes community engagement throughout the development process; and the Convergent Model, which integrates both approaches to achieve collaborative and sustainable outcomes. Furthermore, development communication plays a vital role in disseminating information about development programs, educating, and advocating for marginalized groups, motivating behavioral change, and mediating or resolving conflicts. This theory is highly relevant to the development of tourism and the creative economy in Labuhan Ratu VII Village, as it underscores the importance of inclusive, collaborative communication strategies to ensure sustainable and impactful development.

Marketing Communication Theory

According to Kotler and Keller (2016), marketing communication is a tool used by companies to inform, persuade, and remind consumers about products or brands. In the tourism and creative economy sectors, marketing communication plays a crucial role in building brand awareness, shaping positive perceptions, and encouraging tourist visits. In today's competitive business environment, marketing communication serves as a bridge connecting companies with consumers, and companies must differentiate themselves from competitors through unique, attractive, and effective messaging. Kotler (2005) in Hariyanto (2016) identifies eight elements of the marketing communication mix: advertising, sales promotion, public relations and publicity, personal selling, direct marketing, digital marketing, event marketing, and sponsorship. Advertising refers to paid, non-personal communication through identified sponsors. Sales promotion involves short-term incentives to encourage product trials. Public relations and publicity are activities aimed at maintaining a positive corporate image. Personal selling involves direct interaction with customers to meet their needs.

Direct marketing uses databases and digital tools to communicate directly with consumers. Digital marketing includes online strategies such as SEO, content marketing, and email campaigns. Event marketing promotes products through events, and sponsorship supports events or causes to build brand visibility. In the context of tourism and creative economy development in Labuhan Ratu VII Village, marketing communication can be used to promote tourism destinations, build brand identity, highlight competitive advantages, and market local creative products. It also helps create networks through partnerships and expand market reach.

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Communication

Etymologically, the word "communication" comes from the Latin word *communicare*, meaning "to share" or "to make common." Communication is a deliberate and purposeful process involving the exchange of messages between individuals or groups. It requires participation, cooperation, and symbolic interaction. According to Hariyanto (2021), communication has several characteristics: it is a process involving communicators, messages, channels, and receivers; it is intentional and goal-oriented; it requires participation and cooperation from all parties; it is symbolic, using verbal and non-verbal cues; it is interactive, requiring both sending and receiving; and it transcends time and space, especially through digital tools.

The purpose of communication, according to Gordon, is to influence, convey messages, create empathy, attract attention, and bring about changes in attitude, opinion, or behavior. Communication also facilitates interaction between communicators by conveying ideas, thoughts, and emotions, understanding others, and motivating people to act. In the context of tourism and creative economy development, communication is a process of exchanging information between various parties involved in the tourism industry. It aims to build understanding, create a positive image of the destination, and influence tourist behavior. This process includes both verbal and non-verbal communication, either directly or through media used to convey messages about tourism products, services, culture, and experiences to a broader audience.

Communication in tourism and the creative economy can be categorized into several forms and channels, such as interpersonal communication between tourism actors (tour guides, local communities) and tourists; mass communication using traditional media such as television, radio, newspapers, and promotional advertisements; digital communication through social media, websites, travel apps, vlogs, and email marketing; and cross-cultural communication, which must consider differences in language, values, customs, and cultural perceptions between tourists and local communities. Communication is crucial as it is the key to successful information dissemination. Effective and targeted communication can create a positive image of a destination, increase tourist confidence, and positively impact sustainable tourism development. Amid rapid technological and social changes, communication in the context of tourism and creative economy development must continue to adapt and innovate to remain relevant and effective. An effective communication strategy can differentiate a destination from its competitors.

Tourism Development

According to I Gede Pitana (2005), tourism development is a planned process aimed at

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improving a destination's potential through economic, social, cultural, and environmental efforts. Tourism development is a structured and organized process that enhances the potential of a destination through various efforts covering economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects. The primary objectives of tourism development include improving the welfare of the local community by creating jobs, increasing income, and accelerating infrastructure development; preserving local culture and heritage through traditional performances and crafts and supporting environmental conservation through sustainable tourism practices.

Samsul Alam Paturusi (2001) in Mustika et al. (2021) defines tourism development as a strategy used to advance, improve, and enhance the condition of tourism objects and attractions so that they can be visited by tourists and provide benefits to the surrounding communities and the government. Wahab (2008) in Mamonto (2021) states that tourism development is a series of efforts aimed at realizing the use of integrated tourism resources from various forms of tourism that are directly or indirectly involved in the sustainability of tourism development. Tourism is a national economic sector that relies on various potentials such as natural resources, culture, and society. Sustainable tourism considers current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, meets the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and local communities, and can be applied to all forms of tourism activities in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and other types of tourism activities.

Creative Economy

The creative economy is a sustainable economic development concept based on creativity, innovation, and intellectual assets. According to Yunaz et al., it involves utilizing non-renewable but unlimited resources such as ideas, talents, and creativity. The creative economy focuses on creating value through creativity, innovation, and the use of intellectual property. Its development is crucial as it represents an effort to achieve sustainable development through creativity, which fosters a competitive economy with renewable resources. The Indonesian Ministry of Trade defines the creative economy as activities that utilize creativity, skills, and talent to generate wealth and employment. According to Howkins (2001), the creative economy includes advertising, architecture, arts, crafts, design, fashion, film, music, publishing, R&D, software, toys, television, and radio. UNCTAD (2022) states that the creative economy involves economic activities based on individual creativity, skills, and talent to generate wealth and create jobs through the exploitation of intellectual property. The creative economy not only drives economic growth but also enriches the social and cultural values of a society. By leveraging creativity as a key asset, the creative

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economy becomes a source for achieving economic sustainability and social well-being.

Based on Law No. 24 of 2019 (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2021) which mandates the development of a creative economy ecosystem, the creative economy ecosystem refers to the interconnected system that supports the value chain of the creative economy, such as creation, production, distribution, consumption, and conservation, carried out by creative economy actors to add value to their products so they are competitive, accessible, and legally protected. The creative economy offers opportunities for economic growth from various aspects, such as digital platforms and manual methods. Innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and blockchain can be used to create more creative and innovative products and services. The creative economy can be a solution for economic advancement, especially in Indonesia, which has great potential and promising prospects in the future, particularly with full government support and continuous technological development.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach to explore tourism communication strategies in Labuhan Ratu VII Village, a conservation-based tourism village in East Lampung. Following Moleong (2017) and Sugiyono (2016), qualitative research was chosen to understand local perspectives through behaviors, perceptions, and community practices in their natural context. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis, emphasizing depth and meaning over generalization. The research was conducted as fieldwork, with the researcher serving as the main instrument, supported by triangulation to ensure data validity. As explained by Rakhmat (2020), the descriptive qualitative method prioritizes natural settings and inductive analysis to generate themes grounded in participants' lived experiences. The findings were interpreted narratively to reflect the social reality of tourism communication in the village, aligned with the post-positivist paradigm (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018).

DISCUSSION

Building Tourism Communication in Realizing Tourism Villages

Tourism communication is a critical foundation for developing sustainable village tourism. In Labuhan Ratu VII Village, a buffer zone of Way Kambas National Park (TNWK), tourism communication remains informal and primarily verbal, with limited use of formal media such as signage, brochures, or digital platforms. This has led to uneven information flow, low

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documentation, and over-reliance on key figures like the village head or TNWK facilitators.

Table 1. Tourism Communication Data in Labuhan Ratu VII Village

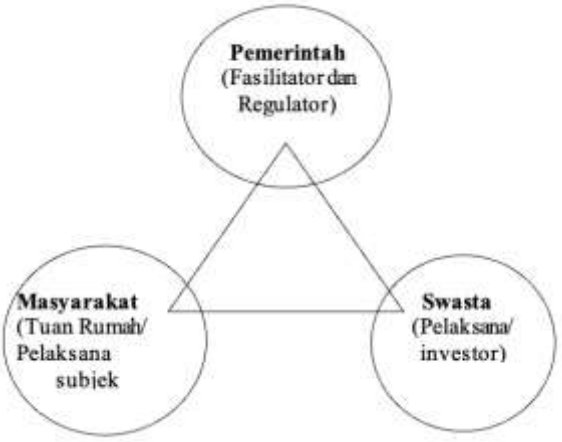
Aspects	Field Findings	Source
Community awareness	There are already some people who have started to participate in tourism activities and show enthusiasm. Especially when accompanied by WKNP extension workers	Village Head
Perception of Local Human	Resources People are still afraid to try, not confident, and waiting for evidence of success before getting involved.	
Communication Patterns	Still rely on verbal discussions and there is no formal media such as a website or tourist village brochure	Observations and interviews
Role of KTH Rahayu Jaya	There have been initiatives for educational bee tourism, homestays, and restoration of elephant feed, but it has not been widely socialized	Interviews & documentation of KTH activities
Suggestions WKNP	WKNP as a "magnet", while buffer villages such as Labuhan Ratu VII should be developed as main destinations	Village Head
Visual Communication	here is no signage or clothing for tour guides, no brochures, leaflets, or visualization of tour narratives	Tour Guides
Coordination of Activities	There is no integrated system of communication between tourism actors	KTH members
Young Generation	Not yet actively involved in the creation of promotional content or social media communication	Observations and interviews

Field findings (Table 1) show that while some community members are beginning to engage in tourism activities, especially under TNWK guidance, most remain hesitant, waiting for

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visible results before participating. Communication patterns are top-down, lacking inclusivity and strategic planning. Visual communication is minimal, and youth involvement in digital promotion is nearly absent. Applying Roger's Diffusion of Innovations theory, the tourism village concept is still in the early stages of adoption. The knowledge stage is hindered by the lack of visual and mass media. The persuasion stage is partially achieved through direct interaction with TNWK, but emotional or rational narratives such as success stories or economic data are missing. In the decision stage, only a few individuals or groups commit to participation. Implementation has seen some initiatives like beekeeping and jungle tracks, but these are not yet inclusive. The confirmation stage remains unachieved due to the absence of documented impacts or testimonials.

The lack of formal communication media and structured systems hampers community engagement and tourism visibility. Although the village has an Instagram account, it is not actively managed due to limited digital literacy and human resources. There is also no audience segmentation, leading to ineffective communication strategies. To improve this, a more systematic and participatory communication strategy is needed. According to Cangara (2015), effective communication should consider four components: communicator, message, media, and audience. Communicators should include respected community figures, UMKM actors, and youth. Messages should be contextual, supported by local narratives and visual elements. Media should be expanded to include digital platforms. Audience segmentation is essential for tailored communication.



Source: adapted from Wearing

Figure 1. Stakeholders in Tourism Development

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This study aligns with Purwanti (2019) and Situmeang (2020), which emphasize the importance of dialogical, actor-based communication in village tourism development. An ideal communication model (Figure 1) illustrates the roles of stakeholders, with the local government acting as a facilitator, the community as core actors, and private and conservation partners as strategic allies. A dedicated tourism communication unit should be established, comprising youth, community leaders, and UMKM actors. This unit should manage content creation, digital promotion, and stakeholder coordination. Additionally, participatory communication training is needed to improve digital literacy and message delivery. By integrating all stakeholders into a collaborative communication framework, Labuhan Ratu VII can accelerate tourism innovation, enhance community participation, and realize a sustainable, conservation-based educational tourism village.

Building an Environment with Tourist Attraction

Creating a sustainable tourism village requires not only natural beauty but also a well-managed physical and social environment that offers authentic experiences. In Labuhan Ratu VII Village, several tourism potentials have been identified, including Trigona bee education, jungle tracks, elephant feed conservation, and a sacred well known as Sumur Awet Muda. However, these attractions remain underdeveloped due to limited resources and infrastructure. Field interviews revealed that while initiatives such as jungle tracks with monitoring cameras and homestays have been started, they are still at an early stage. The village head, Mr. Sumarno, noted that although attractions like the bee education program and selfie spots at the embankment exist, their implementation is incomplete due to limited funding and coordination.

The absence of essential facilities such as a tourist map, signage, and proper pathways limits the overall visitor experience. To improve this, the village can adopt a gradual approach by: Creating a simple tourist map and installing information boards. Developing basic infrastructure (e.g., seating areas, restrooms, gazebos). Training local youth as tour guides to provide cultural narratives. Organizing annual events like the Trigona Honey Festival to promote local products and community engagement. These strategies align with Dewi and Santosa (2018), who emphasize that integrating cultural and educational elements enhances tourist experience and community participation. Applying Relph's (2007) concept of sense of place, the village can strengthen its identity by embedding emotional and cultural meanings into its attractions, such as transforming Sumur Awet Muda into a spiritual tourism narrative.

To ensure sustainability, the village government and KTH Rahayu Jaya should collaborate

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to build an integrated tourism system. This includes revitalizing homestays, training guides, and designing a cohesive tourist route. Moreover, involving youth and housewives in digital promotion and local product sales can create inclusive economic opportunities. In conclusion, the development of Labuhan Ratu VII as a tourism village should follow a gradual, contextual, and resource-based approach. Small but strategic improvements such as maps, signage, and trained guides can significantly enhance the visitor experience. Active community involvement, especially from youth and women, will empower the village to become a dynamic and sustainable tourism destination.

Building Communication to Realize a Tourism-Aware Community

The success of village tourism depends heavily on community participation and awareness. In Labuhan Ratu VII Village, initial signs of community involvement in tourism are visible, as stated by the Village Head: *"The community has started to become aware and enthusiastic because tourism is also a way for them to improve their own economy."* However, this awareness is not yet widespread. Many residents remain hesitant, lack confidence, and prefer to wait for visible results before participating, as also noted by the Village Head: *"There are still those who are hesitant and not yet confident. Many are waiting for results before they decide to get involved."* Some still perceive tourism as a temporary program rather than a sustainable livelihood opportunity. A local villager confirmed this by saying: *"If there are visible results from those who are already involved, many might follow. But right now, people are still doubtful and afraid of wasting time."* This indicates the need for strategic communication that not only informs but also builds trust, confidence, and a shared vision.

Table 2. Data Related to Public Awareness

Aspects	Interview Results	Source
Initial Involvement	The community has begun to realize and be enthusiastic because it is also their way to increase their own economy	Village Head
Community Perceptions	There are still some who are timid, not all are confident. Many are waiting for results first then want to participate	Village Head

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Village Government	Expectations If all can participate, because this tourism potential is shared. But indeed not all residents understand.	Village Head
Kristis Awareness	Not all understand that tourism can be	Village Head

The findings show that the community is at an early stage of tourism awareness. Participation is growing in activities like Trigona bee education and site maintenance, but many still lack confidence or understanding. Communication remains top-down, limiting substantive participation. To improve this, a more dialogical and participatory communication strategy is needed. Proposed solutions include establishing community forums for inclusive discussion and decision-making. Forming a village tourism working group with representation from youth, women, UMKM, and local leaders. Empowering youth to lead digital promotion through social media and video content. Collaborating with external partners (universities, tourism agencies, NGOs) to provide training and support.

These findings align with Putri (2021), who emphasizes that community-based communication and direct involvement are key to building a tourism-aware mindset. Labuhan Ratu VII has the potential to become a sustainable, locally driven tourism village, if communication strategies become more inclusive and empowering. The village government is encouraged to: Create a dedicated tourism communication forum for education, discussion, and evaluation. Provide communication training for youth and community leaders. Document and share success stories to inspire broader participation. By adopting a participatory communication approach, the village can foster a confident, engaged, and tourism-aware community that actively contributes to sustainable development.

Building Professional Guide Communication

In the context of village tourism development, local guides (pramuwisata) play a crucial role as communicators between the village and tourists. They convey cultural values, provide information, and shape visitors' experiences. However, in Labuhan Ratu VII Village, the current guiding system remains informal and lacks professional structure. Interviews revealed that while some KTH Rahayu Jaya members act as guides, they lack formal training, clear narratives, and standardized service protocols. The Village Head, Mr. Sumarno, stated*: "We still lack specialized guides; only KTH members assist when there are guests. But they haven't received proper training*

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on how to be a guide." This results in inconsistent service quality and limits the depth of the tourist experience. Mr. Adam, a KTH member, added: *"We're willing to become guides if trained. We're afraid of making mistakes or not knowing what to say."*

This indicates that while there is willingness among locals to become guides, they require structured training in communication, storytelling, and guest interaction. Youth involvement is also promising. Dimas, a young villager, expressed interest in digital promotion*: "It would be cool to make videos about the village and explain things ourselves, but we need training first."* Similarly, Mrs. Inggrit, a housewife who interacts with tourists, shared: *"I've talked to tourists before, but I wasn't sure how to respond. Training would help me get more involved."* A local tour guide noted the absence of standard operating procedures (SOPs): *"Sometimes we get confused when handling group visitors. There's no agreed order or format."* This lack of structure undermines the professionalism of the guiding service and affects visitor satisfaction.

According to Nuriata (2015), tour guides are cultural communicators who do more than provide information they shape the visitor's perception of the destination. Effective guiding involves verbal and non-verbal communication, emotional connection, and contextual storytelling. To improve this, the village can collaborate with the Tourism Office, educational institutions, or student volunteers to develop training programs. These should include local history and cultural storytelling Guest service ethics Route planning and simulation exercises. Additionally, a village narrative guidebook should be created to standardize the information provided by all guides. This would help maintain consistency and professionalism.

Based on the findings, although community interest in guiding is emerging the lack of training, narrative guidance, and standardized procedures hinders the development of high-quality tourism services. By leveraging community support, adequate training, and integrated communication systems, local guides in Labuhan Ratu VII can become agents of change in culturally, educationally, and conservation-based village tourism development. This will create authentic, meaningful, and memorable experiences for every visitor.

Building Tourism Communication to Promote Tourism

In the digital era, effective communication is essential for promoting village tourism and reaching a broader audience. However, in Labuhan Ratu VII Village, digital communication remains limited. Although the village has an Instagram account and some presence on social media, content is inconsistently managed due to a lack of dedicated personnel. As the Village Head stated: *"We've tried building digital communication, but it hasn't been consistently managed. Our*

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Instagram is sometimes active, sometimes not." This inconsistency limits the village's visibility and prevents it from reaching potential tourists beyond the local area. Despite having attractive tourism spots such as Trigona bee education, elephant feed plants, and scenic selfie points, many people remain unaware of these attractions. The Village Head further noted: *"It's a pity; many people don't know we have bees, elephant feed plants, and great spots. If someone could help with digital promotion, we'd be happy."*

The Secretary of KTH Rahayu Jaya added that most visitors find out about the village through user-generated content such as social media posts, blogs, or YouTube videos created by previous visitors. While this shows the power of digital platforms, it also highlights the village's passive role in shaping its own narrative. A local housewife expressed interest in digital marketing but admitted: *"If we could sell local food online, it would be great. But we don't know how to upload or promote things. We need training*." This indicates that digital promotion should not only focus on tourism spots but also integrate local products such as food and handicrafts. However, the community lacks digital literacy and structured training to leverage these opportunities. An extension officer from TNWK emphasized the need for consistent digital promotion: *"If social media promotion were consistent, I'm sure many would be interested in visiting. Everyone now searches for information on their phones. But we need a dedicated team; it can't run independently."*

This highlights the importance of forming a village digital media team consisting of youth, village officials, KTH members, and UMKM actors. This team should be responsible for content creation, scheduling, and managing official tourism communication channels. Key recommendations include:

1. Provide technical training in photography, caption writing, storytelling, and social media management.
2. Develop an official tourism website to serve as a central hub for information, testimonials, and event updates.
3. Leverage user-generated content from tourists while curating it to reflect the village's desired image.
4. Integrate digital promotion with UMKM programs to boost local economic opportunities.
5. Collaborate with external partners such as universities or creative communities to support training and content creation.

These strategies align with Dwijayanti (2021), who found that villages with professional digital communication experience significant increases in visitor numbers. Digital platforms not only

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promote tourism but also build brand identity and foster interaction between stakeholders and potential visitors. By implementing a structured and inclusive digital communication strategy, Labuhan Ratu VII Village can enhance its visibility, attract more visitors, and empower the community especially youth and women within a productive digital ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

Tourism communication plays a crucial role in the development of Labuhan Ratu VII Village as a conservation-based educational tourism destination. However, current practices remain informal, fragmented, and lacking in strategic direction. The village relies heavily on verbal communication, with limited use of formal media such as signage, brochures, or digital platforms, resulting in uneven information dissemination and low community participation. Interviews reveal that while there is growing awareness and interest in tourism, many residents remain hesitant, waiting for visible success before engaging actively. The diffusion of tourism innovation, based on Roger's theory, is still at an early stage due to limited persuasive communication and emotional narratives. To overcome these challenges, a more structured, participatory, and inclusive communication strategy is needed, involving multiple stakeholders such as local youth, UMKM actors, and community leaders.

The formation of a dedicated tourism communication unit, supported by training in public communication, digital media management, and storytelling, is essential to improve message delivery and build a consistent village narrative. Digital promotion through platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and a dedicated village tourism website should be institutionalized to enhance visibility and attract a broader audience. In line with Dwijayanti (2021), effective digital communication can significantly increase visitor numbers and strengthen the village's brand identity. Moreover, local tour guides need formal training and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to deliver informative, engaging, and professional experiences, as emphasized by Nuriata (2015). By integrating community-based communication, environmental storytelling, and digital innovation, Labuhan Ratu VII can foster a tourism-aware community, enhance visitor satisfaction, and achieve sustainable, inclusive, and identity-driven tourism development.

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