An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Social Media as a Promotional Tool for Perlang Tourism Village
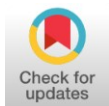
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Article Info

Abstract:
Rural tourism villages in Indonesia face increasing challenges in gaining visibility in the competitive digital tourism landscape, despite their rich cultural and natural assets. Perlang Tourism Village in Central Bangka Regency exemplifies this issue, as its promotional efforts via digital platforms remain fragmented and underdeveloped. This study investigates the effectiveness of social media as a promotional tool for Perlang, aiming to assess how visual storytelling, user-generated content (UGC), and platform-specific strategies influence destination branding and tourist engagement. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research utilizes secondary data including social media metrics, tourism reports, and literature on digital promotion. The analysis reveals that while Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok present unique opportunities, their current usage by Perlang lacks coherence, regularity, and platform optimization. Instagram posts are sporadic and visually inconsistent, YouTube is inactive, and TikTok lacks an official presence despite growing organic content under the #Perlang tag. Moreover, the absence of influencer partnerships and structured UGC campaigns undermines Perlang's potential to build trust and emotional connections with prospective tourists. The findings emphasize that effective rural tourism promotion requires a participatory and strategic digital approach incorporating targeted content, demographic segmentation, and emotionally resonant narratives. In conclusion, this research highlights the transformative potential of integrated social media strategies in enhancing the digital visibility of rural tourism destinations and recommends the adoption of community-driven storytelling and influencer collaborations to establish a compelling and competitive online identity for Perlang Village.

Keyword: Social Media, Rural Tourism, Digital Marketing

INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism has emerged as a viable and sustainable strategy for revitalizing marginalized regions and preserving local heritage, particularly in developing countries such as Indonesia. Tourism villages combine environmental aesthetics, community-based cultural heritage, and participatory economic opportunities. Nevertheless, these rural destinations often suffer from limited visibility compared to urban tourism centers, making digital promotional tools increasingly essential (Elshaer et al., 2024; Reina-Usuga et al., 2024) The dynamic growth of digital engagement compels tourism operators to

innovate in how they communicate with broader markets (Han et al., 2025; Lapuz, 2023). Social media, as a component of digital tourism, has dramatically transformed the way destinations interact with potential visitors. Unlike traditional one-way marketing, social media enables two-way communication, peer engagement, and real-time storytelling (Kim et al., 2017; Mariani et al., 2016; Stylidis et al., 2024). Its low cost, visual appeal, and viral potential make it a compelling tool for smaller destinations with limited promotional budgets (Guttentag, 2010; D. Li et al., 2024). Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are now indispensable channels for reaching millennial and Gen-Z tourists who seek personalized and visual experiences (Ali et al., 2021; J. Gan et al., 2023).

Perlang Tourism Village, situated in Central Bangka Regency, holds significant natural and cultural tourism assets, including traditional culinary heritage and coastal ecotourism. However, the village faces the challenge of low online discoverability and digital promotion. Without effective exposure, these assets risk remaining invisible to domestic and international travelers (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Ramazanova et al., 2018).

Recent data on social media usage across age groups supports the strategic need for targeted digital promotion. For instance, Instagram and TikTok are highly favored by Gen Z (85% and 78%) and Millennials (76% and 52%) respectively, while Facebook and YouTube remain dominant among Gen X (70% and 55%) and Baby Boomers (75% and 40%). These patterns suggest that Perlang Tourism Village must tailor its content distribution based on demographic-specific media behavior. Short-form videos and vibrant image appeal to younger travelers on mobile-driven platforms like TikTok and Instagram, whereas storytelling and reviews on Facebook and YouTube offer better engagement with older audiences (Abbasi et al., 2023; Marchesani et al., 2024; Wu & Yang, 2023). Thus, adopting a differentiated approach that aligns platform characteristics with target audience profiles becomes imperative for effective destination promotion.

Table 1. Social Media Platforms Usage for Travel Inspiration by Age Group

Age Group	Instagram (%)	TikTok (%)	Facebook (%)	YouTube (%)
Gen Z (18-24)	85	78	40	65
Millennials (25-40)	76	52	60	70
Gen X (41-56)	45	20	70	55
Baby Boomers (57+)	20	5	75	40

Source: Compiled From Various Sources, 2025

The table titled presents compelling evidence that supports the strategic relevance of using tailored social media platforms for promoting Perlang Tourism Village. It reveals that Instagram and TikTok are dominant among Gen Z (18–24) and Millennials (25–40), with usage rates of 85% and 78% for Gen Z and 76% and 52% for Millennials respectively, highlighting these platforms as powerful tools for reaching younger, digitally-savvy travelers. Conversely, Facebook and YouTube exhibit higher engagement among older age groups, with Facebook preferred by 70% of Gen X and 75% of Baby Boomers, while YouTube maintains steady influence across all demographics. This demographic segmentation of platform usage underscores the importance of adopting a diversified content strategy leveraging visually engaging, short-form video content on Instagram and TikTok for younger audiences, while utilizing longer-form narratives,

reviews, and community stories on Facebook and YouTube to appeal to older, family-oriented travelers. For Perlang Tourism Village, which seeks to enhance its digital visibility and attract a broader market, understanding these usage trends is crucial in designing inclusive, age-targeted campaigns that maximize reach, emotional resonance, and ultimately, tourist engagement through effective and context-sensitive digital storytelling.

Understanding how social media can bridge this visibility gap is essential for formulating strategic promotional frameworks tailored for community-based tourism (Almansour, 2025; González-Ramiro et al., 2016). The urgency to adopt innovative digital promotion strategies is heightened by global trends in rural tourism modernization. Several studies have confirmed that destinations that successfully leverage social media tend to experience higher tourist engagement, stronger brand identity, and increased loyalty (Kavoura & Stavrianea, 2014; Mariani et al., 2016) Particularly in rural contexts, effective storytelling via social media not only enhances image perception but also fosters emotional bonds between tourists and local narratives (Costa & Honorina, 2023; X. Li et al., 2023; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

Despite the acknowledged potential of social media in destination marketing, scholarly attention has disproportionately focused on urban or national-scale tourism initiatives. Community-based tourism villages especially in Southeast Asia remain underrepresented in such analyses (Ketterer et al., 2023; J. Liu et al., 2024). This study addresses this research gap by analyzing the case of Perlang Tourism Village, with a particular focus on the applicability of visual storytelling, influencer engagement, and user-generated content (UGC) in shaping destination awareness and decision-making (Tang et al., 2024)

UGC, in particular, has emerged as a credible and influential promotional asset in the tourism sector. Tourists now serve as micro-ambassadors by posting real-time images, experiences, and reviews that shape public perceptions of destinations . This shift democratizes the production of promotional content and creates a feedback loop where authenticity, not only aesthetics, influences travel choices (Poirier et al., 2024; Wan & Poon, 2014). Hence, UGC becomes an invaluable component for emerging tourism villages lacking institutional marketing infrastructure.

Equally important is the selection of social media platforms and the optimization of visual and narrative formats to maximize reach and engagement. Research has shown that immersive, short-form videos especially on TikTok and Instagram Reels have the power to boost travel intention, particularly among younger audiences (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015; Otsuka & Yamakoshi, 2020; Siswantoro & Ikhwan, 2024). In contrast, platforms like Facebook and TripAdvisor remain effective for targeting family travelers and older demographics through detailed testimonials and long-form content (Ma et al., 2020). This article applies an interdisciplinary lens, integrating insights from communication theory, rural tourism governance, and digital strategy (Kavoura & Stavrianea, 2014; Reina-Usuga et al., 2024).

This approach allows for the mapping of digital interaction flows and content patterns that influence visitor behavior. Theoretical grounding also draws from collaborative governance and perceived value frameworks that emphasize participatory media as a catalyst for sustainable tourism development (Reina-Usuga et al., 2024; Santos & Giraldi, 2017). This study strengthens the understanding of how social media

functions not only as a communication channel but also as a participatory platform that reshapes the dynamics of tourism promotion, particularly in rural settings. The article does not seek to present empirical conclusions but rather opens a conceptual dialogue that integrates current academic perspectives with contextual challenges faced by grassroots tourism stakeholders. This article offers a comprehensive and forward-looking exploration of how digital media especially social platforms can be effectively harnessed to promote emerging tourism destinations such as Perlang Village.

Despite its rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and unique coastal ecotourism potential, Perlang Tourism Village in Central Bangka Regency continues to struggle with low visibility and limited reach in the digital tourism market. This marginalization is exacerbated by the lack of structured digital promotion strategies, inadequate use of social media platforms, and minimal engagement with user-generated content (UGC) that is now shaping travel decisions globally. While urban destinations and internationally renowned tourism spots capitalize on the viral nature of social platforms to build strong brand presence, rural tourism sites like Perlang remain underrepresented, making it difficult to compete for attention in an increasingly saturated and visual-driven digital environment.

Moreover, the local tourism operators often lack technical capacity, digital literacy, and access to influencer networks or digital marketing frameworks that could elevate their promotional efforts (Armutcu et al., 2023; Y. Liu et al., 2021). Consequently, Perlang's valuable tourism assets remain largely invisible to millennial and Gen Z travelers the very demographic that drives much of the online travel discourse today leading to untapped economic opportunities and stagnated growth in community-based tourism development.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study design, focusing on the specific context of Perlang Tourism Village in Central Bangka Regency. The case study method is particularly effective in exploring complex contemporary phenomena within their real-life settings, especially when the researcher aims to uncover depth rather than breadth (Yin, 2018). This approach allows for a rich understanding of how social media platforms are utilized or underutilized in promoting rural tourism destinations. Importantly, this study does not involve interviews or human informants, ensuring that the analysis is solely based on existing and accessible information, making it suitable for contexts where primary data collection is constrained by logistical, ethical, or resource limitations.

The study exclusively utilizes secondary data, which includes tourism-related reports, government policy documents, digital marketing evaluations, social media platform metrics (e.g., likes, shares, views, hashtag engagement), academic literature, online travel content, and public posts related to Perlang Village. These sources provide an ample and diverse data pool to examine promotional trends, audience responses, and content strategies deployed across various platforms. By avoiding primary data collection methods such as surveys or interviews, this research places emphasis on the analytical rigor of document-based evidence and digital observation, aligning with accepted practices in non-reactive qualitative research (Johnston, 2014). The collected data are thematically organized to trace patterns and gaps in digital engagement related to the tourism village.

To ensure the credibility and robustness of the analysis, the study applies methodological triangulation within the framework of secondary data analysis. This involves cross-verifying multiple types of documents and digital content from various sources to validate the findings and reduce bias (Denzin, 2017; Patton, 2002). For example, social media metrics are compared with national tourism benchmarks, and content narratives are assessed against best practices in destination marketing. Triangulation enhances the internal validity of the research by integrating data from different vantage points without relying on subjective input from participants. This approach aligns with qualitative traditions that prioritize contextual interpretation over generalizability, and supports theory-informed insights that can guide practical promotional strategies for rural destinations (Flick, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
### 1.	Condition of the digital platform of Perlang Tourism Village

Perlang Tourism Village has established its presence on three key digital platforms: Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. The official Instagram account, @desawisataperlang, currently features 58 posts and has gathered 614 followers. The profile highlights several local attractions, including Gusung Perlang, Gunung Pading, Sadap Waterfall, traditional houses, and Pading Lake. Visually, the profile icon is appealing, showcasing local cultural identity with the tagline "Yoo... ke Perlang." However, content updates remain irregular and lack a cohesive visual narrative. Moreover, features like Instagram Reels and story highlights which are essential for maximizing reach appear to be underutilized, limiting the platform's potential for high-impact storytelling.

On YouTube, the channel @desawisataperlang2486 exhibits very limited activity, with only one video uploaded and 153 subscribers. While YouTube has strong potential for hosting destination documentaries, visitor testimonials, and immersive visual content aimed at family travelers and older audiences, this potential remains largely untapped. The current lack of video diversity, thematic playlists, or regular posting undermines the channel's capacity to function as a compelling promotional medium. This underutilization suggests an absence of a long-term digital content strategy tailored to the behavioral patterns of YouTube users.

In contrast, TikTok displays grassroots digital activity, with the hashtag #Perlang appearing in over 700 user-generated posts. Although much of this content does not directly represent the tourism assets of the village, it signals growing awareness and latent potential for viral engagement. Unfortunately, the lack of an official or curated TikTok account means that this momentum remains unmanaged and inconsistent. TikTok's algorithm favors creative, short-form content, which could be highly effective in attracting younger audiences through challenges, behind-the-scenes videos, and quick destination highlights formats that are currently absent in Perlang's official promotion efforts (Hussain et al., 2024; Siegel et al., 2023).

Because there is no structured digital content plan, dedicated social media management, or community driven campaign strategy in place to harness this organic exposure into meaningful, destination-focused narratives. Without proactive engagement from tourism stakeholders or local content creators, the visibility gained

through the #Perlang tag risks remaining superficial and disconnected from Perlang's actual tourism identity and promotional objectives.
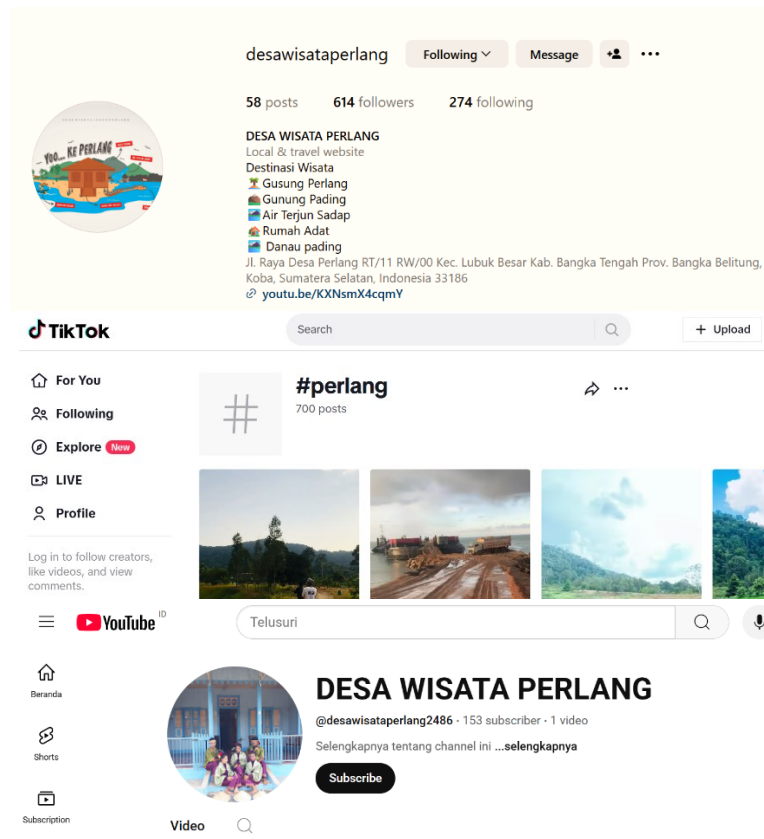

Figure 1. Digital Presence of Perlang Tourism Village Across Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok
Source: Instagram, Youtube & TikTok, 2025

Overall, the digital media strategy of Perlang Tourism Village remains fragmented and underdeveloped across all three platforms. Instagram lacks consistent branding and visual storytelling; YouTube is inactive and offers little value in terms of long-form promotional content; and TikTok, despite organic visibility, is not leveraged strategically. The absence of two way interaction, such as community engagement, calls for participation, or influencer collaborations, further weakens the village's online presence. Moving forward, a coordinated, cross-platform strategy that incorporates audience segmentation, user-generated content, and localized storytelling is essential to enhance Perlang's digital footprint and tourism appeal.

To validate the observation that Perlang Tourism Village lacks strategic use of digital platforms, data triangulation was conducted by cross-referencing social media engagement metrics, published tourism reports, and comparative studies on rural destination marketing. For example, while the village maintains official Instagram and YouTube accounts, their posting frequency, follower interaction, and content reach are significantly lower compared to rural destinations with coordinated digital strategies (Giglio et al., 2019; Reina-Usuga et al., 2024). Moreover, benchmarking with studies on community-based digital tourism governance reveals that consistent multi-platform engagement is a key success factor in rural branding (Blanco-Moreno et al., 2024; Santos & Giraldi, 2017). The lack of a TikTok account despite widespread grassroots tagging

(#Perlang) highlights a missed opportunity in real-time engagement and viral reach, supporting the finding that digital infrastructure remains underutilized. These multiple data points converge to confirm that without a platform-specific, adaptive content strategy, digital visibility will remain stagnant despite the presence of rich cultural assets.

2. Poor Quality of Visual Storytelling

Visual storytelling has become an essential component in modern tourism marketing, particularly in the digital age where travelers are increasingly influenced by engaging images and emotionally resonant narratives. However, a detailed examination of Perlang Tourism Village's digital platforms especially Instagram and YouTube reveals that most visual content remains sporadic, uncurated, and lacks narrative coherence. While some posts attempt to showcase traditional cuisine and coastal landscapes, they often appear in isolation without contextual captions, thematic series, or calls-to-action that could convert visual interest into visitor engagement. This fragmented approach limits the ability of content to evoke a sense of place or immerse potential tourists in the unique cultural identity of Perlang.

As identified in point 1, the limited optimization of key platforms like Instagram and YouTube directly correlates with the poor execution of visual storytelling. The absence of a content calendar, branded visual templates, and targeted thematic campaigns suggests that there is no underlying content strategy guiding the visual representation of the village. As a result, Perlang's digital presence fails to differentiate itself from other rural destinations in Indonesia, despite having distinct tourism assets. The lack of consistency in tone, color palette, and messaging weakens the overall branding impact, making it difficult for viewers to emotionally connect with the destination or retain a memorable impression.

More importantly, the current visual materials fall short of utilizing techniques that drive emotional resonance and viewer retention. For example, effective tourism storytelling often includes before-and-after narratives, behind-the-scenes views of local life, visitor testimonials, and immersive experiences through vlogging or cinematic-style clips. Perlang's current social media content lacks these elements, offering mostly static images or amateur footage without editing or background storytelling. This diminishes the persuasive power of the content, especially when compared to destinations that leverage short-form video formats like Instagram Reels or YouTube Shorts to craft compelling travel journeys in under a minute. Without such engaging formats, Perlang risks being overlooked by digital audiences who are accustomed to fast, emotionally gripping content.

This situation highlights a strategic opportunity and an urgent need for Perlang Tourism Village to professionalize its visual communication. Establishing a structured storytelling strategy that integrates local voices, seasonal events, and authentic experiences could transform the current fragmented visuals into a cohesive digital narrative. By improving the visual aesthetics, deploying content formats tailored to different demographics, and aligning storytelling with platform-specific engagement mechanisms, the village can create an emotionally resonant and competitive brand image. In a tourism ecosystem where decision-making is increasingly driven by visuals, Perlang cannot afford to rely on sporadic uploads; it must invest in visual storytelling as a deliberate, central component of its destination marketing strategy.

Table 2. Storytelling Analysis

Analytical Dimension	Current Observation (Perlang)	Strategic Implication
Content Frequency and Consistency	Posts are sporadic with no structured schedule.	Implement a content calendar to ensure consistency.
Narrative Strength and Thematic Focus	Lacks cohesive themes or narrative storytelling.	Develop thematic campaigns that align with tourism assets.
Visual Aesthetic Quality	Mostly amateur visuals with minimal editing or design.	Invest in visual training or collaboration with creators.
Use of Engaging Formats (e.g., Reels, Shorts)	Reels, Shorts, and cinematic formats are underused or absent.	Utilize short-form video to attract digital-native audiences.
Emotional Appeal and Brand Identity	Low emotional engagement; branding elements are weak.	Strengthen identity through emotional and cultural narratives.
Platform Optimization and Integration	Instagram and YouTube used passively; TikTok lacks official account.	Align content strategy across all platforms for synergy.

Source: Processing Data Analysis, 2025

The table above presents a comprehensive analysis of the visual storytelling performance of Perlang Tourism Village across six key dimensions: content consistency, narrative strength, visual quality, format engagement, emotional appeal, and platform integration. It reveals that current promotional efforts are fragmented, with irregular posting schedules and a lack of structured narrative strategy, resulting in low viewer engagement and weak brand identity. Visuals are predominantly amateur and under-edited, failing to capture the emotional richness or cultural uniqueness of the village. Moreover, modern content formats such as Reels and Shorts which are highly favored by digital-native audiences remain largely unused. The absence of platform synergy, particularly the lack of an official TikTok presence and passive use of Instagram and YouTube, further undermines the effectiveness of the village's promotional outreach. Strategically, these gaps highlight the urgent need for Perlang to adopt a cohesive content calendar, build thematic campaigns, invest in aesthetic quality, and align messaging across platforms to create a strong, emotionally resonant, and visually compelling digital identity.

The conclusion regarding weak visual storytelling is reinforced through triangulated evidence from platform content analysis, tourism media aesthetics literature, and digital behavior studies. Visual content posted by Perlang lacks the narrative and aesthetic elements recommended by destination branding frameworks, such as story arcs, emotional resonance, and consistent tone (Stylidis et al., 2024). Secondary data from tourism promotion case studies show that immersive visual formats such as vlogs and Instagram Reels are significantly more effective in building engagement, especially among younger travelers (Gan et al., 2023; Li et al., 2020). This aligns with (Mariani et al. 2022), who emphasize that visual content must do more than display a scene; it must evoke meaning and belonging. When triangulated with field data on Perlang's digital media, it becomes evident that without investing in narrative structure and emotional design, the content will fail to differentiate the village in a saturated visual

market. This triangulation affirms that storytelling is not a luxury but a necessity for digital tourism competitiveness.

3.   Lack of Influencer Collaboration and User Engagement

One of the most critical gaps in Perlang Tourism Village's digital strategy is the lack of structured collaboration with influencers or digital tourism ambassadors. Although some grassroots-level content using the hashtag #Perlang appears on platforms like TikTok, these posts are largely uncoordinated and do not effectively showcase the village's core tourism assets such as its culinary heritage, coastal beauty, or cultural identity. The absence of strategic influencer partnerships results in missed opportunities to amplify visibility through authentic, personality-driven narratives that resonate with online audiences, particularly younger travelers (Molina et al., 2020). In addition to the absence of influencer engagement, the village has not yet adopted a user-generated content (UGC) strategy. Platforms such as Instagram and Facebook do not feature reposted visitor content, interactive campaigns, or contests that could encourage tourists to share their experiences. This is particularly unfortunate because UGC is known to increase trust, emotional connection, and purchase intention among potential travelers by offering an authentic, peer-driven view of the destination (Aboalganam et al., 2025; Marine-Roig & Anton Clavé, 2015) Without mechanisms that promote content co-creation with the public, Perlang's digital narrative remains top-down and under-engaging.

The simultaneous lack of influencer collaboration and UGC integration points to a broader weakness in the village's digital tourism governance. Unlike successful rural tourism initiatives in Southeast Asia that have empowered local storytellers and partnered with travel influencers to strengthen their digital footprints, Perlang still relies on traditional and centrally curated content. In a media environment dominated by visual immediacy and algorithm-driven exposure, failing to activate these dynamic and participatory tools significantly hampers the village's ability to establish a compelling digital presence (Holowack, 2023; Woolsgrove, 2021)

Empirical observation of Perlang's social media platforms, literature on influencer tourism marketing, and international best practices. A comparative review of Instagram and TikTok accounts indicates negligible use of influencer endorsements or UGC reposting. Academic research consistently affirms that influencer marketing enhances destination branding, and UGC fosters higher engagement and loyalty (Kavoura & Stavrianea, 2014; Tran & Rudolf, 2022). Additionally, platforms such as VisitScotland and Tourism Australia have documented the success of integrated influencer-UGC strategies in increasing tourist arrivals (VisitScotland, 2024). Therefore, to improve promotional effectiveness, Perlang must embrace these participatory digital methods as essential components of modern tourism marketing.

CONCLUSION

The study underscores that while Perlang Tourism Village possesses rich cultural and natural assets, its digital promotional strategies remain significantly underdeveloped, hindering its visibility and attractiveness in an increasingly competitive and image-driven tourism market. The research finds that although platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube offer unique advantages for destination branding and

visitor engagement, their current usage by Perlang is fragmented and lacks coherence. Instagram posts are irregular and visually inconsistent, YouTube is underutilized despite its capacity for immersive storytelling, and TikTok lacks an official account even though grassroots content shows viral potential. This disconnect between platform capabilities and strategic usage results in weak destination representation and limits the village's ability to engage meaningfully with diverse age demographics, especially younger, digital-native travelers.

Moreover, the research highlights the absence of professional visual storytelling and influencer collaboration as critical deficiencies in Perlang's digital outreach. Without structured content calendars, branded visuals, or emotionally resonant narratives, the village fails to distinguish itself in the saturated visual tourism ecosystem. Equally problematic is the lack of participatory digital methods such as user-generated content (UGC) and influencer partnerships, both of which are proven to enhance destination credibility, reach, and traveler intention. This omission not only diminishes trust and peer validation but also reinforces a top-down communication approach that is no longer effective in the age of interactive digital tourism. Benchmarking against successful rural tourism initiatives reveals that integrating community voices, co-creating content, and leveraging storytelling tools are essential for transforming rural destinations into compelling digital brands.

To address these gaps, a strategic transformation is imperative. Perlang Tourism Village must adopt a comprehensive, platform-specific digital marketing framework that includes consistent content production, collaborative influencer engagement, targeted demographic segmentation, and emotionally compelling storytelling. By embracing a participatory approach that values local narratives and visitor experiences, the village can not only enhance its online visibility but also foster sustainable tourism development that benefits the community. In this context, social media is not merely a promotional tool, but a vital instrument for shaping perception, driving economic inclusion, and cultivating long-term tourist loyalty in rural destinations.

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