

Storytelling Training to Enhance the Attractiveness of the Benang Stokel and Benang Kelambu Tourist Destinations for the Managers of Benstol Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), Aik Berik Village

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ABSTRACT

This community service activity aimed to strengthen the capacity of 20 Pokdarwis Benstol members in developing and implementing local culture-based tourism narratives through guided tours, information boards, and digital promotion. The methods included socialization, storytelling training, narrative-writing practice, digital technology application, mentoring, and evaluation. Based on a post-training questionnaire, 17 of 20 participants (85%) expressed satisfaction with the activity. A comparison of Instagram follower data at the beginning and end of the four-month program showed a 40% increase. Furthermore, tourist visit records during the four-month implementation period, compared with records from the preceding four-month, indicated a 30% increase in visits. The activity improved participants' ability to develop tourism narratives and strengthened destination promotion. Overall, the program enhanced Pokdarwis's capacity to manage tourism destinations creatively, participatively, and sustainably while reinforcing local cultural identity and supporting community empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Aik Berik Village, North Batukliang District, Central Lombok Regency, has huge natural tourism potential through the existence of Benang Stokel Waterfall and Benang Kelambu Waterfall. Both destinations offer beautiful natural panoramas, beautiful environments, and an atmosphere that supports the development of nature-based tourism. This potential makes Benang Stokel and Benang Kelambu one of the leading destinations in Central Lombok Regency. However, the strength of visual attraction has not been fully balanced with a destination management strategy that is able to create a memorable tourist experience, so that tourists still enjoy the visual aspect more than understanding the cultural and historical value inherent in the destination.

The current development of tourism shows that tourists are not only looking for natural beauty, but also want experiences that are able to arouse emotions, strengthen memories, and give meaning to the trips made. In this context, *storytelling* is one of the approaches that is able to improve the quality of the tourist experience through the delivery of a narrative that connects tourists with the history, culture, and identity of a destination. Ma, Scott, and Wu (2024) explain that destination communication that utilizes *storytelling* and sensory stimuli is able to increase *arousal* and destination memorability. In line with that, Solomon, Adu-Debrah, and Braimah (2022) emphasized that *storytelling* plays an important role in building narrative connectivity between destinations and tourists so that it can strengthen the attraction and image of the destination.

Based on initial observations, interviews, and a review of destination management practices before the program, the activities of Pokdarwis Benstol remained focused on basic services, including maintaining cleanliness, arranging facilities, and assisting visitors. The baseline assessment examined members' ability to identify local stories, organize them into coherent narratives, and deliver them during guided tours. The assessment found that members generally provided practical information about the attractions but had not systematically incorporated local history, folklore, community traditions, and local wisdom into their explanations. Moreover, Pokdarwis Benstol did not yet have standardized tourism narratives, storytelling guidelines, or interpretation materials for Benang Stokel and Benang Kelambu. These baseline conditions indicated the need to strengthen members' storytelling competencies. Ruiz-Ballesteros (2023) explains that community-based tourism positions local communities not only as tourism actors but also as owners of the destination's meaning and identity. Similarly, Pratama and Sari (2023) state that community empowerment is a fundamental component of sustainable tourism destination management.

The baseline assessment also included a review of the Aik Berik Tourism Village Instagram account and its promotional activities during the four months preceding the program. At the beginning of the program, the account had 192 followers. The review focused on posting consistency, content themes, the incorporation of local cultural narratives, and audience interaction. The content primarily consisted of destination photographs and general visitor information, while structured narratives concerning local history, folklore, traditions, and community identity remained limited. Furthermore, promotional activities had not been guided by a regular content schedule, and *storytelling* had not been adopted as the primary digital communication strategy. Therefore, Instagram had not been fully utilized to build an emotional connection between potential tourists and the destinations. Yulianto, Hidayat, and Wibowo (2022) emphasize that social media can effectively promote natural tourism destinations when managed strategically through informative and engaging content.

Based on these conditions, this community service activity focused on strengthening the capacity of Pokdarwis Benstol through local culture-based *storytelling* training combined with the use of digital media for destination promotion. The program was designed to improve participants' ability to explore local stories, develop communicative tourism narratives, incorporate *storytelling* into guided tours and destination interpretation media, and produce digital promotional content that strengthens the tourism identity of Benang Stokel and Benang Kelambu. This approach is consistent with the findings of Jiang, Eck, and An (2022), who demonstrate that tourism experiences that foster emotional solidarity can enhance memorable tourism experiences and tourist loyalty. Sthapit, Bjork, and Coudounaris (2023) also explain that memorable nature-based tourism experiences can strengthen place attachment and encourage environmentally responsible tourist behavior.

Through the implementation of this program, it is hoped that the capacity of Pokdarwis Benstol in managing storytelling-based tourist destinations can increase so that it can create a more meaningful tourist experience, strengthen local cultural identity, and increase the competitiveness of Benang Stokel and Benang Kelambu tourist destinations. In addition to providing benefits to the community, this activity also supports the implementation of the Independent Learning Independent Campus (MBKM) policy and the achievement of the Main Performance Indicators (KPIs) of universities through collaboration between academics and the community in the development of sustainable community-based tourism.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

The method of implementing community service activities is designed using a participatory approach that involves the Benstol Pokdarwis as the main partner in each stage of the activity. This approach was chosen so that the knowledge and skills transfer process can take place systematically and provides space for partners to actively participate in each implementation process. The activity is focused on increasing the capacity of destination managers through strengthening *storytelling skills*, the use of digital technology as a promotional medium, and implementation assistance in the field. The entire series of activities is arranged in five interrelated stages so as to be able to support the achievement of program goals effectively and sustainably. The flow of the implementation of community service activities is presented in the following picture.



Figure 1. Flow of Implementation of Community Service Activities

Based on Figure 1, the implementation of community service activities is carried out through five interrelated stages and arranged systematically. The first stage is socialization, which aims to introduce the objectives, benefits, and mechanisms of program implementation to Pokdarwis Benstol as a partner of the activity. At this stage, initial discussions are carried out to identify the needs of partners, equalize perceptions regarding the implementation of the program, prepare a schedule of activities, and determine the division of roles between the service team and partners. A participatory approach in the early stages is important because it is able to build community involvement as the main actor in the development of community-based tourist destinations.

The next stage is *storytelling training* which is focused on increasing the capacity of participants in understanding the basic concepts of *storytelling*, compiling tourism narratives based on local culture, conducting destination story preparation practices, and carrying out simulations of delivering narratives to tourists. The capacity building aims to enable participants to be able to convey stories communicatively and build a more meaningful tourism experience. Solomon et al. (2022) explained that *storytelling* is an effective communication strategy because it is able to build an emotional connection between tourists and destinations, while Winkler et al. (2023) emphasized that the quality of narrative and its delivery affects the persuasive power of a message. After participants understood the training material, the activity continued with the implementation of technology, namely through training on the use of social media as a

promotional medium for tourist destinations, the creation of digital content in the form of photos, videos, and tourism narratives, as well as the preparation of digital marketing strategies that can be used by Pokdarwis to introduce the tourism potential of Stokel Yarn and Mosquito Net Yarn to the wider community. This approach is in line with Yulianto et al. (2022) who stated that social media can increase the effectiveness of tourist destination promotion if managed consistently through informative and interesting content.

The next stage is mentoring and evaluation carried out to ensure that all the materials that have been provided can be applied optimally in the management of tourist destinations. At this stage, the service team provides direct assistance through monitoring activities, observation of the application of *storytelling* in the field, and discussions with participants to identify obstacles faced during the implementation process. Evaluation is carried out through observation, interviews, and the collection of feedback from participants and tourists as a basis for determining the effectiveness of the program implementation and making improvements to the activities that have been carried out. The last stage is the sustainability of the program, which is directed at the preparation of the Pokdarwis work plan in developing tourism narratives independently, strengthening cooperation with local governments, tourism offices, universities, and various stakeholders, and continuing digital promotion in a sustainable manner. Strengthening institutional capacity and multi-stakeholder collaboration is an important factor in maintaining the sustainability of community-based tourism destination management (Hidayat et al., 2023). In addition, the application of *storytelling* as a destination interpretation medium is expected to be able to improve a memorable *tourism experience*, strengthen tourists' attachment to destinations (*place attachment*), and encourage more sustainable tourism management (Ma et al., 2024; Sthapit et al., 2023). Thus, through these stages, Pokdarwis Benstol is expected to be able to manage and develop storytelling-based tourist destinations independently so that the benefits of the service program can continue to be felt in the long term and support the improvement of the quality of management of Benang Stokel and Benang Kelambu tourist destinations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service program in Aik Berik Village, North Batukliang District, Central Lombok Regency, was implemented through socialization, training, technology application, mentoring, and evaluation. The program involved 20 members of Pokdarwis Benstol and focused on addressing two problems identified during the baseline assessment: the absence of standardized local culture-based tourism narratives and the limited use of storytelling in digital promotion. The activities were therefore consistent with the needs of the target group and the objectives established during program planning.

The evaluation questionnaire showed that 17 of the 20 participants (85%) were satisfied with the training materials and methods. This percentage primarily indicates participants' acceptance of the program rather than directly demonstrating increased storytelling competence. Nevertheless, changes in participants' practical outputs provided evidence of skill application. During the training, participants identified local historical and cultural resources, organized them into structured narratives, and practised delivering the narratives as part of guided tours. The combination of explanation, hands-on practice, feedback, and mentoring enabled participants to transform previously fragmented local information into tourism narratives that could be communicated more systematically.



Figure 2. Resource Persons Together with the Trainees

Following the training, Pokdarwis members incorporated narratives concerning local legends, history, and community values into guided-tour activities. Five narrative information boards were also installed at strategic locations within the Benang Stokel and Benang Kelambu tourist areas. These outputs addressed the initial absence of standardized narratives and interpretation materials. The information boards enabled tourists to access the stories independently, while oral storytelling allowed guides to adapt the narratives to different visitor groups. Thus, the intervention did not merely introduce the concept of storytelling but also created practical communication tools that could be used continuously at the destinations.

The effectiveness of this process can be explained by the participatory nature of the intervention. Pokdarwis members were involved in identifying, selecting, and communicating stories originating from their own community. Their familiarity with the cultural context made the narratives easier to understand and deliver. This supports Ruiz-Ballesteros's (2023) argument that local communities are not merely tourism service providers but also producers and owners of destination meaning. However, the quality and consistency of narrative delivery may vary among guides. Consequently, continued mentoring and periodic review of the narratives are required to maintain historical and cultural accuracy.

Participants also produced more than 30 pieces of digital content, including photographs, videos, and tourism stories. During the four-month implementation period, the number of followers on the Aik Berik Tourism Village Instagram account increased from 192 to 269, representing an increase of approximately 40%. This increase was likely supported by more active posting and the use of story-based content that combined natural attractions with local cultural identity. Storytelling gave the promotional content a clearer theme, while the use of photographs and videos increased its accessibility and potential audience appeal. This mechanism explains why digital promotion became more effective than the previous approach, which primarily presented general information and destination photographs.



Figure 3. Trainees Participated in the Delivery of Storytelling Material

These findings are consistent with Yulianto et al. (2022), who state that social media can effectively promote nature-based tourism when it is managed consistently using informative and engaging content. Nevertheless, the increase in followers should not be interpreted as definitive evidence of increased tourist interest because follower growth may also be affected by platform algorithms, content-sharing activities, and external promotions. Moreover, follower numbers alone do not represent the overall effectiveness of digital communication. Future evaluations should therefore include indicators such as content reach, engagement rate, profile visits, and enquiries from potential tourists.

According to Pokdarwis visitor records, tourist visits increased by approximately 30% during the four-month evaluation period compared with the equivalent period before the program. The increased availability of destination information, local culture-based narratives, information boards, and digital content may have contributed to this development by improving destination visibility and enriching the visitor experience. Storytelling potentially encouraged tourists to perceive Benang Stokel and Benang Kelambu not only as natural attractions but also as destinations possessing distinctive cultural meanings. This interpretation is consistent with Ma et al. (2024), who explain that storytelling can enhance destination memorability, and Jiang et al. (2022), who associate emotional connections with memorable tourism experiences.

However, the increase in visits cannot be attributed solely to the program. Other factors, including holiday periods, weather conditions, accessibility, recommendations from previous visitors, and promotional activities conducted by other parties, may also have influenced visitor numbers. Because the program did not employ a comparison destination or control these external factors, the findings demonstrate an association rather than a definitive causal relationship. Longer-term monitoring is required to determine whether the increase can be sustained.

Overall, the results indicate that the program achieved its intended targets at the output and initial-outcome levels. The initial absence of standardized narratives was addressed through the development and application of local culture-based stories and five information boards. Limited digital promotion was addressed through the production of more than 30 digital content items and more active Instagram management. The increase in followers and tourist visits suggests positive initial developments, although these outcomes require continued monitoring. Therefore, the principal contribution of the program lies not only in promoting the benefits of storytelling but also in establishing a practical mechanism through which local knowledge can be transformed into guided-tour materials, destination interpretation, and digital promotional content.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Community service activities carried out in Aik Berik Village, North Batukliang District, Central Lombok Regency, succeeded in increasing the capacity of Pokdarwis Benstol in developing storytelling-based tourist destination management. Through the stages of socialization, training, technology implementation, mentoring, and evaluation, participants gain knowledge and skills in compiling a tourism narrative that raises local history, culture, and wisdom as the identity of Benang Stokel and Benang Kelambu tourist destinations. In addition, training on the use of digital media provides the ability for Pokdarwis to compile more interesting and communicative promotional content so that it can strengthen the dissemination of information and destination image to the wider community. The results of the activity show that the application of *storytelling* not only improves the ability of human resources in managing tourist destinations, but also provides a more meaningful tourism experience through the delivery of local stories that are able to strengthen tourists' attachment to destinations. Thus, this service activity contributes to strengthening community capacity, improving the quality of tourist destination management, and supporting the development of sustainable community-based tourism in Aik Berik Village.

The sustainability of the program needs to be supported through the commitment of Pokdarwis Benstol to continue to develop tourism narratives based on local culture and optimize the use of digital media as a means of destination promotion. The development of local stories should be carried out in a sustainable manner by involving community leaders, cultural actors, village governments, and various stakeholders so that the narrative conveyed remains authentic and able to strengthen the identity of tourist destinations. In addition, regular training and mentoring are needed, especially in the development of digital content, tourism interpretation techniques, and destination marketing strategies so that the skills that have been acquired can continue to develop. Collaboration between Pokdarwis, local governments, tourism offices, universities, and other sectors also needs to be strengthened to support tourism product innovation and maintain program sustainability. Through this synergy, it is hoped that the management of Benang Stokel and Benang Kelambu tourist destinations can continue to develop sustainably, improve the quality of tourist experience, strengthen the preservation of local culture, and provide economic and social benefits for the people of Aik Berik Village.

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