

Optimizing the Usage of Instagram in Improving the Image of Taman Pintar Yogyakarta

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the usage of Instagram in digital communication to improve the image of the Yogyakarta Smart Park Zone. In the digital era, social media has become a strategic tool for building public perception and strengthening the branding of educational tourism destinations. This study used a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. Data collection techniques included observation of Instagram content, in-depth interviews with social media managers, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

The results indicate that Instagram optimization is achieved through informative, educational, and interactive content strategies, such as engaging visuals, storytelling, and the use of Instagram features (feed, stories, and reels). Furthermore, consistent posting and active interaction with followers contribute to building engagement and a positive image. However, challenges remain in terms of consistent visual branding and systematically measuring content effectiveness.

The implications of this study indicate a destination's image, use "the image of the destination/attraction. Therefore, strengthening content strategies, data-driven evaluation, and improving the competency of social media managers are necessary to achieve optimal results.

Keywords: *Digital Communication, Destination Image, Instagram, Social Media*

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology in the digital era has significantly changed the way organizations convey information and build relationships with the public. This transformation is marked by the increase in the use as an effective, interactive, and visual communication tool (Tuten, 2023). Instagram is one of the social media platforms that has a significant influence, which enables the rapid dissemination of information and builds engagement between managers and audiences (Salsabila & Prathisara, 2025). With its strong

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visual characteristics, Instagram has become a strategic medium in shaping the perception and image of an institution, including in the tourism and education sectors (Hardianti et al., 2023).

The development of information and communication technology in the digital era has significantly changed the way organizations convey information and build relationships with the public (Andini & Santoso, 2025). This transformation is marked by increased use of media as an effective, interactive, and visual communication tool. One platform that has had a significant influence on digital communication is Instagram, which enables the rapid dissemination of information and builds engagement between managers and audiences (Rismawanti & Dharmawan, 2025). With its strong visual characteristics, Instagram has become a strategic medium in shaping the perception and image of an institution, including in the tourism and education sectors (Rismawanti & Dharmawan, 2025).

The management of the Yogyakarta Smart Park Zone utilizes Instagram as a strategy for conveying program information, promoting activities, and building interaction with visitors. The contents generally consist of educational information, activity documentation, and promotion of available facilities. However, several issues still remained, indicating suboptimal use of this social media platform. These issues include a lack of consistency in content management, the suboptimal use of Instagram features such as reels, stories, and insight analytics, and the absence of a structured and sustainable digital communication strategy.

Furthermore, another challenge is creating content that is not only informative but also engaging and able to increase user engagement. In the fiercely competitive era of digital content, every tourist destination is competing to present creative content to attract audience attention. This requires managers to have the ability to understand audience preferences, manage visual branding, and evaluate the effectiveness of published content. Without the right strategy, social media utilization will remain purely informative and unable to significantly impact the destination's image.

Based on these conditions, efforts are needed to optimize the use of Instagram as a digital communication medium, serving not only for disseminating information but also as a strategic tool for building a positive image. This optimization includes content planning, maximizing feature utilization, improving the quality of visuals and communication messages, and data-driven evaluation to measure the effectiveness of implemented strategies. Thus, the main issue in this research is how Instagram's digital communication in the Taman Pintar Yogyakarta has not been fully optimized in enhancing the destination's image. This also includes some aspects of content strategy, management consistency, audience engagement levels, and overall utilization of the platform's features.

The purpose of this study is to analyze and describe in depth the usage of Instagram in digital communication to enhance the image of the Taman Pintar Yogyakarta. Furthermore, this study aims to identify the problems encountered and formulate strategies that can be implemented to increase the effectiveness of social media management as a digital communication tool.

The results of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically in the development of digital communication and tourism marketing, and practically as a reference for tourism

destination managers in optimizing the use of social media to enhance their image and competitiveness in the digital era.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative, descriptive approach, aiming to deeply understand the phenomenon of optimizing social media use in digital communication (Nazarudin & Handayani, 2024). This approach was chosen because it allows for contextual and comprehensive exploration of the meaning, strategies, and processes of social media management, particularly in enhancing the image of educational tourism destinations such as the Taman Pintar Yogyakarta.

The research was conducted in the Taman Pintar Yogyakarta Zone, focusing on managing Instagram accounts as a digital communication medium. The research focused on content strategy, utilization of Instagram features, and audience interactions that contribute to the development of the destination's image. Informants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, which involves selecting informants based on specific considerations relevant to the research objectives. Informants included social media managers/Instagram administrators, public relations or marketing teams, and Instagram visitors or followers. Informant criteria included individuals who were directly involved in managing or experienced in accessing Instagram content. Visitors or followers of Instagram Taman Pintar Yogyakarta.

Data collection was conducted through several techniques, including in-depth interviews with key informants to obtain information related to strategies, constraints, and efforts to optimize social media. Observations were conducted by directly observing Instagram account activity, including content types, upload frequency, and user interactions (likes, comments, shares). Documentation consisted of Instagram content archives, screenshots, and other supporting data relevant to the research. These techniques were used to obtain comprehensive and complementary data (Lester et al., 2020).

Data analysis in this study uses the interactive model from Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, the process of selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data obtained from the field. Data presentation (data display), the arrangement of data in the form of descriptive narratives for easy understanding (Lester et al., 2020). Conclusion drawing and verification, the process of interpreting data to find patterns, meanings, and conclusions relevant to the research objectives. Analysis is carried out continuously from the data collection process until the final stage of the research (Hitchings & Latham, 2020).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study employed triangulation techniques. Member checks were also conducted with informants to ensure the data matched the actual situation. In analyzing the optimization of Instagram utilization, this study employed several indicators, including content consistency and quality, utilization of Instagram features (feed, stories, reels), engagement level, message alignment with the desired image, and audience response to the content. These indicators were used to assess the extent to which the implemented digital communication strategy was able to improve the image of Taman Pintar Yogyakarta. This research method is expected to provide an in-depth and systematic overview of the optimization of social media utilization in digital communication, thus producing relevant findings that can be used as a basis for strategic decision-making for tourism destination managers (Lindgren et al., 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on qualitative research conducted through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, findings were obtained regarding the optimization of Instagram's use in digital communications to enhance the image of Taman Pintar Yogyakarta. The results of this study are presented in several key findings, which are then analyzed descriptively.

1. Result

Content Strategy as the Foundation of Digital Communication

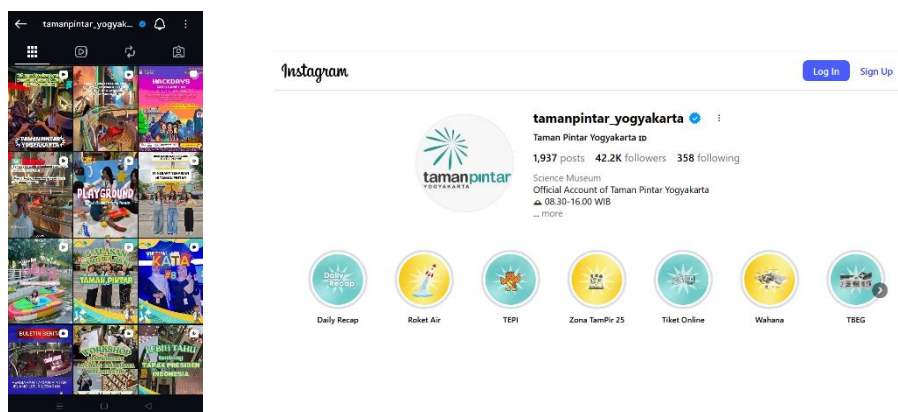
Content strategy is a key element in digital communication, determining the success of delivering messages to audiences. Research shows that published content consists of educational, informational, promotional, and interactive content. The dominance of educational content reflects the management's efforts to maintain its positioning as an education-based tourism destination.

However, the implemented content strategy still tends to be descriptive and not fully based on strategic planning. This is evident in the absence of a systematic content calendar and a lack of consistency in visual themes and communication messages. According to Kotler et al. (2021), an effective digital marketing strategy must be able to integrate values, experiences, and audience engagement on an ongoing basis.

Furthermore, the use of storytelling in content is still suboptimal. Yet, a narrative approach plays a crucial role in building an emotional bond between the audience and the destination. Emphized that visual storytelling on social media can increase content appeal and strengthen audience retention of the message.

Therefore, an optimal content strategy focuses not only on conveying information but also on creating meaningful experiences for the audience through a strong narrative and consistent visuals.

Figure 1. Utilizing Instagram as a Digital Communication Media



Source: Taman Pintar Yogyakarta, 2026

Based on observation of Instagram accounts, it was found that the published content is dominated by educational content, event promotions, and documentation of visitor activities. This variety of content is presented in the form of engaging visual photos and videos.

Utilizing Instagram Features to Increase Reach

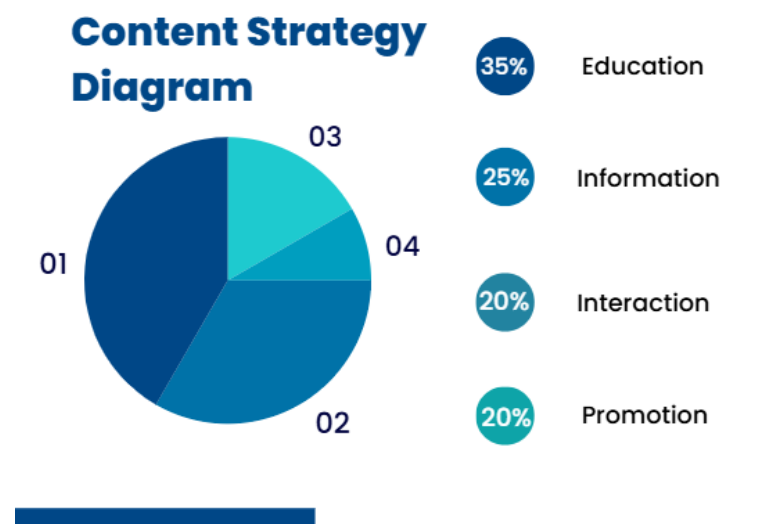
Instagram's available features, such as feeds, stories, reels, and insight analytics, play a crucial role in supporting the effectiveness of digital communication. Research shows that feature utilization is still dominated by feeds and stories, while reels and analytics are underutilized.

However, reels, as a short video-based feature, has significant potential to increase content reach and visibility, particularly in reaching new audiences. That utilizing interactive features on social media can increase user engagement and expand content distribution organically.

Furthermore, the use of insight analytics is still suboptimal in supporting content performance evaluation. Data such as the number of views, interactions, and audience demographics should be used as a basis for formulating more targeted content strategies. A Hootsuite report (2024) emphasized that data-driven decision-making is key to a successful social media strategy.

Therefore, comprehensive optimization of Instagram features is necessary so that it serves not only as a publication medium but also as a tool for analysis and development of digital communication strategies.

Figure 2. Content Strategy Diagram



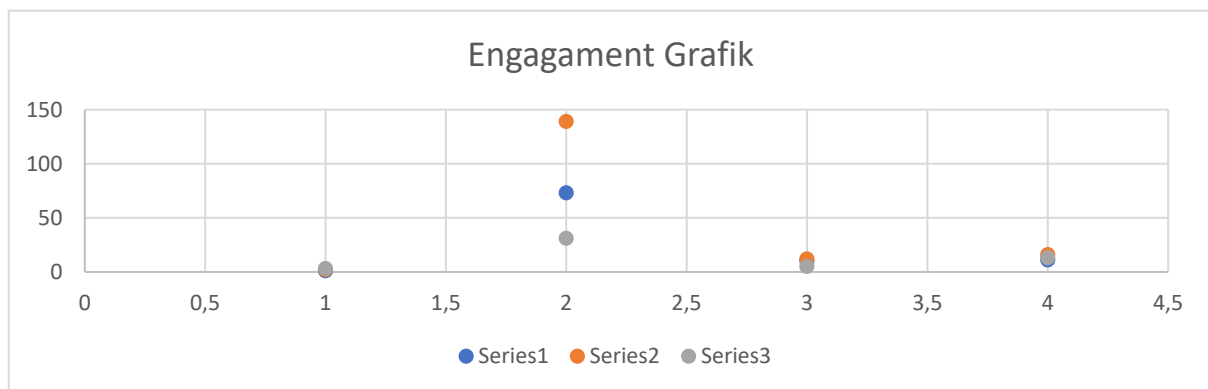
Source: Data Process, 2026

Based on the analysis, the content strategies used can be categorized into several main types: educational, informational, promotional, and interactive content. The distribution of these content strategies can be seen in Figure 2.

Engagement as The Indicator of Communication Success

The research results show that Instagram features like feeds and stories are routinely used, but other features like reels and insight analytics are still underutilized. Yet, reels have significant potential to increase content reach and visibility. In terms of engagement, interactions in the form of likes and comments are quite visible, but they are not consistently followed by active responses from managers. This lack of two-way interaction results in low, in-depth audience engagement. This indicates that communication is still one-way, rather than dialogic.

Figure 3. Engagement Graphic



Source : Data Process, 2026

Figure 3 shows that the second post, or series 2, had the highest engagement rate, with 139 likes, 12 reposts, and 16 reposts. This indicates that the content in the second post was more effective at attracting audience attention and interaction than the other posts. Meanwhile, the first post, or series 1, showed a moderate level of engagement, while the third post, or series 3, had a relatively low number of likes but still showed a high level of repost activity. This indicates that while not all content elicits an immediate response in the form of likes, some content still has value for audiences to share. Overall, engagement patterns remain volatile, necessitating a more consistent, audience-preference-based content strategy to sustainably increase engagement.

Destination Image as Digital Communication Output

Destination image is the result of a consistent communication process through various media, including social media. The research results show that the Yogyakarta Smart Park Zone has successfully established an image as an attractive, family-friendly, educational tourist destination.

However, the image remains general and lacks strong differentiation compared to similar destinations. Xiang and Gretzel (2023) state that a strong destination image must have uniqueness and consistent messaging that differentiates it from competitors (Nazarudin & Handayani, 2024).

This lack of differentiation may be due to a suboptimal digital communication strategy, particularly in terms of storytelling and visual branding. Therefore, efforts are needed to strengthen the destination's identity through more specific and consistent messaging.

Based on the interview results, several obstacles in social media management impact the optimization of digital communication. To clarify the relationship between these problems and potential solutions, they are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Table 1. Problems and Solutions

Problem	Solution
Inconsistent content	Content planning
Low Engagement	Active interaction
Limited human resources	Digital training
No evaluation	Insight analysis

Source : Data Process, 2026

Obstacles and Challenges in Social Media Management

The research results identified several key obstacles in Instagram management, including limited human resources, the absence of long-term content planning, and a lack of data-based evaluation. These obstacles indicate that social media management is not yet carried out professionally and strategically. The crucial role of digital public relations in building an organization's image through social media. Without adequate competency, social media management tends to be reactive and unfocused (Bellaj, 2026).

Furthermore, the lack of integration between communication strategy and organizational goals also poses a challenge in achieving optimal results. This indicates the need for a more systematic approach to digital communication management.

Synthesis: Digital Communication Optimization Model

Based on the overall findings, optimizing the use of Instagram in digital communication requires the integration of several key elements: content quality, feature utilization, audience interaction, and data-driven evaluation.

The resulting optimization model shows that enhancing a destination's image is influenced not only by posting activity, but also by the synergy between communication strategy and audience engagement. That social media success is determined by the ability to manage interactions and build relationships with audiences.

Digital communication in tourism must be able to create participatory and real-time experiences (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Therefore, Instagram optimization must be directed towards creating interactive, adaptive, and sustainable communication.

2. Discussion

Based on the overall results and analysis conducted, it can be confirmed that utilizing Instagram as a digital communication medium has significant potential to build and strengthen the image of the Yogyakarta Smart Park Zone. However, the effectiveness of this utilization is not automatic; rather, it is largely determined by the management's ability to integrate various digital communication elements strategically, planned, and sustainably.

Conceptually, the findings of this study reinforce the view that modern digital communication is no longer one-way but has shifted toward participatory communication (two-way communication), which positions the audience as a co-creator in the image-building process (Kesar, 2025). In this context, Instagram functions not only as a medium for publishing information but also as a social interaction space that allows for dialogue, feedback, and the formation of collective digital experiences (Hudson & Hudson, 2023).

Furthermore, the research findings indicate that content strategy is a key foundation in building a destination's image. The dominance of educational content found in this study aligns with the characteristics of the Yogyakarta Smart Park Zone as an education-based tourist destination. However, without storytelling and experiential content packaging, this potential is not fully capable of creating emotional engagement with the audience. This aligns with the findings of de-Lima-Santos and Kooli (2021), who emphasized the crucial role of visual storytelling in enhancing user retention and engagement on social media (de-Lima-Santos & Kooli, 2021).

From a digital marketing perspective, Kotler et al. (2021) in their Marketing 5.0 concept emphasize that the integration of technology and a human-centric approach is key to creating meaningful experiences for consumers (Preisler, 2025). In the context of this research, this is reflected in the importance of combining quality visual content, a strong narrative, and active interaction with the audience to produce communication that is not only informative but also emotional and persuasive.

Furthermore, utilizing Instagram features such as reels, stories, and insight analytics is also a crucial factor in determining the success of digital communication. Research findings indicate that these features have not been optimally utilized, resulting in the potential for increased reach and engagement not being fully realized. Stated that optimizing interactive features on social media can increase content visibility and strengthen relationships between organizations and their audiences.

Regarding engagement, research results show fluctuations in interaction levels, indicating unstable audience engagement. This confirms that engagement is influenced not only by post frequency but also by content relevance, publication timing, and manager responsiveness to audiences. Emphasize that engagement is a key indicator of digital communication success, reflecting the extent to which audiences are cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally engaged (Nazarudin & Handayani, 2024).

Furthermore, in the context of destination image formation, research findings indicate that the image formed is still general and lacks strong differentiation (Nyström, 2022). Stated that an effective destination image must have a clear uniqueness and consistency in messaging. Therefore, a more specific branding strategy is needed to strengthen the identity of the Yogyakarta Smart Park Zone as an innovative and interactive educational tourism destination.

In addition to strategic aspects, this study also uncovered structural constraints, such as limited human resources and suboptimal data-based evaluation. This suggests that the success of digital communication is determined not only by content creativity but also by the organization's capacity to manage social media professionally. Emphasized the crucial role of competent digital public relations in building a sustainable organizational image.

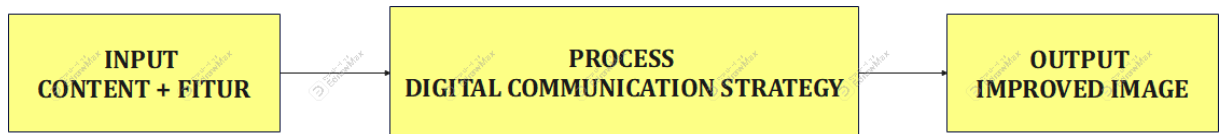
Overall, this research yields an understanding that optimizing the use of Instagram in digital communication is a holistic and multidimensional process. This process involves the integration of content strategy, technology utilization, audience interaction, and data-driven evaluation. This aligns with the concept of digital communication in tourism which emphasizes the importance of creating interactive, real-time, and participatory digital experiences (Hudson & Hudson, 2023).

Therefore, the primary contribution of this research lies not only in describing the phenomenon but also in developing a conceptual model that can serve as a reference in managing tourist destinations' social media. This model emphasizes that enhancing a destination's image can only be achieved if all elements of digital communication are managed in an integrated and sustainable manner.

The implications of these findings suggest that the management of the Yogyakarta Smart Park Zone needs to adopt a strategic approach to social media management, emphasizing content innovation, technology utilization, and strengthening relationships with audiences. With this approach, social media becomes not only a communication tool but also a strategic instrument in creating superior value, experiences, and image in the digital era.

This model demonstrates that image enhancement is influenced not only by upload activity but also by the integration of content quality, optimal feature utilization, and active interaction with the audience. The model is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Figure 3. Instagram Optimization Model in Improving Image



Source : Data Process, 2026

CONCLUSION

Based on research on optimizing Instagram's use in digital communications to enhance the image of Taman Pintar Yogyakarta, it can be concluded that Instagram has been utilized as a primary communication medium for conveying information, promotions, and educational content to the public. This utilization has proven effective in building a positive image as an attractive and informative educational tourism destination.

However, Instagram management remains suboptimal. This is evident in the lack of structured content planning, the underutilization of Instagram features like reels and insight analytics, and the low level of two-way interaction with the audience. The content strategy that has been implemented is also still primarily informative and does not fully align with the storytelling approach that can enhance audience emotional engagement.

The research also shows that optimizing Instagram usage depends not only on posting frequency, but also on the integration of content quality, consistent messaging, optimal feature utilization, and active interaction with the audience. Therefore, a planned and sustainable digital communication strategy is a key factor in significantly improving a destination's image.

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