

Enhancing the Competitiveness of Wukirsari Wayang Kulit Products through Optimising Instagram as a Digital Promotional Medium

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Abstract.

This community service activity aims to improve the competitiveness of Wukirsari leather puppet products through the optimisation of Instagram as a digital promotional medium, while also encouraging the preservation of local cultural values through an adaptive digital approach. The challenges faced include low digital literacy among artisans and the underutilization of Instagram as a strategic promotional tool. Existing posts tend to be static without narrative, lack aesthetic appeal, and are not interactive, thereby hindering the product's potential to reach a broader market. The method used is a participatory approach based on community empowerment, involving local artisans in the process of identifying problems, designing solutions, and implementing the programme. The activities were carried out in three stages: preparation (observation and interviews), implementation (training in the use of Instagram, creation of visual content and cultural narratives), and evaluation (review of the quality and consistency of participants' posts). The results of the activities showed a significant improvement in artisans' digital literacy and promotional skills. Participants successfully created business Instagram accounts, produced attractive visual content, and incorporated local cultural values through storytelling. Some participants began to show consistency in their posts and increased interaction with their audience. Additionally, the content produced was deemed capable of reflecting the aesthetic values and philosophy of wayang kulit, making it a tool for both promotion and the preservation of local culture.

Keywords: *Competitiveness; Digital Literacy; Digital Marketing; Instagram; Wayang kulit*

I. INTRODUCTION

Wukirsari shadow puppets are a unique intangible cultural heritage of Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, which not only represent the historical and philosophical values of Javanese culture, but also serve as the main source of livelihood for hundreds of local craftsmen (Latifah, 2023). The existence of wayang kulit as a traditional craft product makes it a symbol of cultural identity as well as a valuable economic commodity for the people of Wukirsari Village.

The development of a highly competitive modern market, especially one dominated by digital technology and social media, has presented a major challenge to the competitiveness of wayang kulit products. One of the challenges is the limited visibility and market access in the digital realm, which has a direct impact on declining demand (Novianti et al., 2024). The situation was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused sales to drop by up to 65% and cut off tourist access to craft centres that previously contributed up to 28,000 visits per year (Masiswo, 2021). In these circumstances, artisans are encouraged to adapt their strategies by utilising digital media, particularly social media platforms, in order to maintain the existence of their businesses (Diandra & Rahanatha, 2024).

The main problem faced in Wukirsari Village is the lack of an integrated and sustainable digital marketing ecosystem that can support artisans in developing promotional strategies that are adaptive to the dynamics of the modern market. Instagram, as a visual-based social media platform, offers great potential in supporting the promotion of cultural products such as wayang kulit (Watajdid et al., 2021). This platform has various features that enable the delivery of information in an interesting and interactive way, such as Reels, Stories, and Live, which can be used to showcase the manufacturing process, aesthetic value, and even the philosophical narrative behind each product. Content delivered through a visual storytelling approach has the potential to create emotional engagement with the audience, thereby increasing interest and purchase potential (Aripadono, 2020). With the right content strategy, Instagram can be an effective tool for building a strong cultural brand image and reaching a wider market, both nationally and internationally. However, the implementation of Instagram by Wukirsari artisans has not been optimal. Most posts are limited to static product photos without narration, without paying attention to aesthetic visual aspects, strategic publication times, or interaction with the audience (Putra, A. W. K., Riyanto, B., & Siswanta, 2024). This situation is caused by low digital literacy, especially among female artisans, who make up the majority of craft businesses in the village.

Optimising the use of Instagram as a digital marketing medium requires a planned and sustainable approach. One relevant strategy is the development of culture-based content marketing, where each piece of content not only serves as visual promotion but also as an educational medium that conveys symbolic meaning, history, and the product creation process. This approach is believed to enhance consumer interest while instilling local cultural values in the public consciousness. By combining visually appealing elements with meaningful narratives, Instagram content can serve as a medium for cultural preservation while also expanding the market (Zahra et al., 2025). Therefore, it is necessary to increase the capacity of craftsmen through training in digital content creation, Instagram algorithm strategies, and professional business account management. This step will not only help strengthen the existence of Wukirsari leather puppet products in the digital market, but also contribute to the preservation of local culture in line with the continuous development of digital technology.

II. METHODS

This community service activity was conducted in Wukirsari Village, Imogiri Subdistrict, Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, from 19 to 22 May 2025. The partner for this activity is the Wukirsari Wayang Kulit group. The activity employs a participatory approach based on community empowerment, emphasizing the active involvement of wayang kulit artisans from

Wukirsari Village in every stage of implementation (Irwan et al., 2021). This method was chosen to ensure that the process of identifying problems, designing solutions, and evaluating programmes was carried out collaboratively and was relevant to local needs and conditions. The main focus of the activity was to increase the capacity of artisans to utilise the Instagram platform as an effective and sustainable digital marketing medium (Setiawan et al., 2023). The activity was carried out in three main stages:

1. Preparation stage, conducted through observation and interviews to identify promotional issues and the level of digital literacy among artisans.
2. Implementation stage, consisting of training on how to use Instagram, including creating accounts, product photography and video techniques, writing cultural narratives, and utilising the Reels and Stories features.
3. Evaluation stage, including assessment of participants' improved skills, the quality of uploaded content, and the development of follow-up strategies through ongoing mentoring.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of Instagram optimisation as a digital marketing medium for leather puppet craftsmen in Wukirsari Village has shown significant results in improving digital literacy and visual promotion skills for local cultural products. The programme was implemented participatively through three interrelated stages.

1. Preparation Stage

The activity began with observations and interviews with artisans to identify the main obstacles in marketing their products, particularly through social media. The findings showed that the majority of artisans did not have Instagram accounts and did not understand how to manage the platform effectively. In addition, limited digital literacy was a significant challenge, especially for female artisans who dominate this sector. At this stage, the potential of local culture, such as the process of making wayang kulit (shadow puppets), philosophical values, and the stories of its characters, was also identified as material for visual content. Documentation of the observation and interviews with artisans is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Group discussion with Wukisari Wayang Kulit entrepreneurs

2. Implementation Stage

At this stage, practical and applicable technical training is conducted using a learning-by-doing approach. Participants are trained to create a business Instagram account, familiarise themselves with Instagram features such as Reels, Stories, and Highlights, and learn techniques for taking product photos using a mobile phone camera. They are also introduced to the basics of creating engaging cultural narratives (storytelling) to incorporate into their posts. Additionally, the training covers how to design a simple content calendar and schedule posts at optimal times to increase audience reach.

This activity was designed to be easily followed by participants of various ages and experience levels, using communicative language and examples from the handicraft products they produced themselves. Through hands-on practice, participants began to understand how to combine visual elements, cultural stories, and promotional techniques to make posts more attractive and marketable. Documentation of the storytelling activity is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Participants creating storytelling content using wayang kulit as the main object.

3. Evaluation and Follow-up Stage

This stage aims to assess the extent to which the training has had an impact on improving participants' capacity. The evaluation is carried out by reviewing the Instagram accounts that have been created, covering aspects such as the visual quality of the content, consistency in posting frequency, and the cultural narrative conveyed in each publication. The assessment is conducted qualitatively through a dialogic approach, where participants are given the opportunity to reflect on their experiences during the training, identify challenges faced, and express needs for further development.

As part of a sustainability strategy, a regular mentoring programme has been designed to ensure participants remain active in producing and managing digital content. Additionally, a collaborative space was opened among business actors to strengthen a broader digital marketing network. It is hoped that the Instagram accounts created will function as professional, representative, and sustainable digital showcases for promoting Wukirsari wayang kulit products to a wider audience, both nationally and internationally. Documentation of the Instagram post creation process is shown in Figure 3.

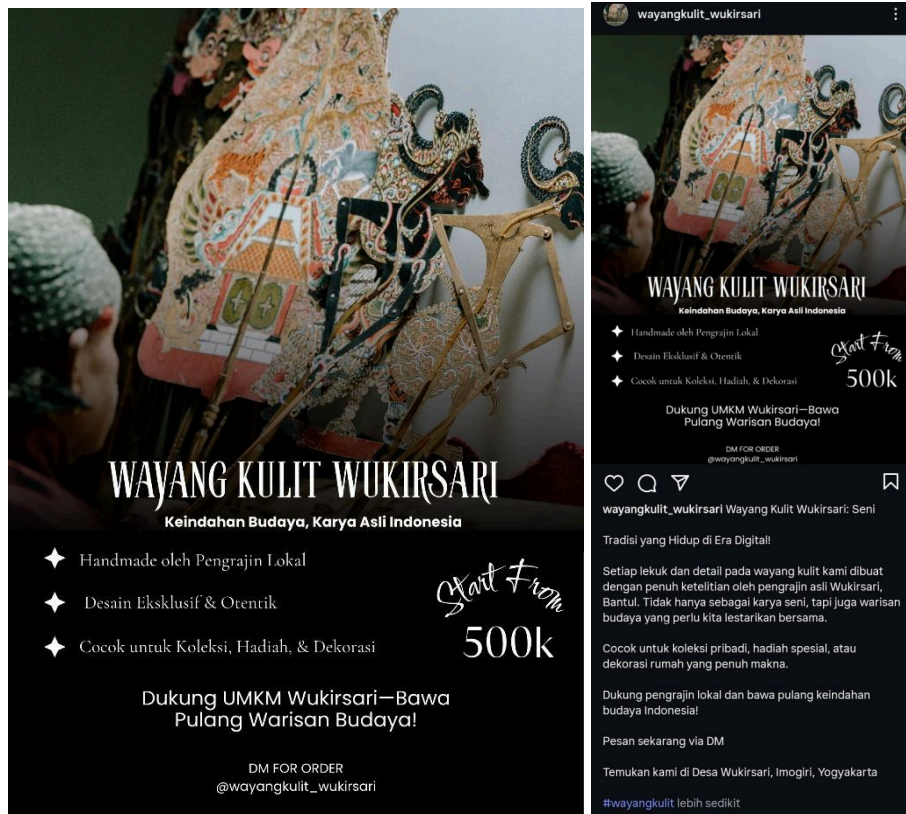


Figure 3. Documentation of Content Uploaded to Instagram and Wayang Designs Developed by Training Participants.

Discussion

The training activity on optimising the use of Instagram as a digital promotional medium had a positive impact on improving the capacity of Wukirsari leather puppet craftsmen in utilising social media to expand their market reach. During the preparation stage, a participatory observation approach was able to explore the main issues in depth, namely low digital literacy and limited understanding of social media-based promotional strategies. This identification became the basis for designing training materials that were tailored to the participants' needs.

Through a participatory and sustainable approach, this activity also sparked collective awareness of the importance of digital transformation in supporting the existence of local cultural products in the modern era. Follow-up mentoring strategies and collaboration among business actors are expected to continue strengthening promotional networks and programme sustainability.

The implementation phase was designed using hands-on methods to help participants better understand the use of Instagram features. As a result, participants not only learned to create and manage business accounts but also began to skillfully create visually appealing content and incorporate cultural narratives through storytelling. This is evident from activity documentation showing participants actively creating content using wayang kulit (shadow puppets) as the main subject, complete with story backgrounds reflecting local cultural values.

The evaluation phase revealed that most participants had successfully applied the knowledge gained. Some participants' Instagram accounts began to show consistency in posts with improved visual quality and stronger cultural narratives. The content created not only serves as a promotional tool but also as a form of cultural preservation through digital media.

IV. CONCLUSION

This programme demonstrates that optimising Instagram can effectively increase artisans' competitiveness while preserving cultural heritage. The novelty lies in combining participatory digital literacy training with culture-based storytelling, transforming Instagram into a sustainable promotional tool. This approach provides a replicable model for promoting other cultural products in the digital era.

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