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Developing Sustainable Tourism Digital Promotional Messages through AI-Assisted Co-Creation: A Case Study of Kemuning Tourism Village

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how digital promotional messages for sustainable tourism are developed through AI-assisted co-creation and how the resulting narratives are implemented on Instagram in Kemuning Tourism Village, Karanganyar, Indonesia. A qualitative descriptive case study was conducted involving 25 participants, including village government representatives, members of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), destination managers, youth organization (Karang Taruna) members, local MSME managers, and tourists. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), an AI workshop, observations, and a literature review. The findings identify three interrelated stages in message development: co-creation, AI-assisted development, and human validation. During co-creation, stakeholders established core narratives based on local stories, cultural values, environmental conservation practices, and community economic contributions. ChatGPT then developed alternative storytelling content, captions, and calls to action for Instagram. Human validation ensured the resulting messages were accurate, authentic, culturally appropriate, and contextually relevant. The narratives were subsequently published as Instagram captions, photos, and videos emphasizing local culture, community empowerment, and educational tourism, while environmental sustainability was less explicitly represented. The study demonstrates how generative AI can support the development of sustainability-oriented promotional messages without replacing local knowledge and stakeholder judgment. It extends co-creation research by positioning human validation as a distinct stage in AI-assisted message development and offers a structured workflow that tourism village managers and facilitators may adapt and further evaluate in other contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism has become a primary paradigm in tourism village development, not only as an economic strategy but also as a commitment to preserving nature, culture, and local community well-being (Zamroni et al., 2024). In this context, sustainability narratives have increasingly become central to destination promotion, serving as a means of communicating a destination's distinctive values and attracting tourists (Chang et al., 2025;

Setiadi et al., 2025). Previous studies have demonstrated that promotional messages emphasizing sustainability can positively influence tourists' intention to visit and strengthen trust in destinations (Alhomaid, 2025; S. Zhang et al., 2023). Such messages typically communicate environmental protection, cultural preservation, local hospitality, transparency in sustainability practices, and opportunities for meaningful tourism experiences. However, in an increasingly competitive digital ecosystem, tourism villages face the challenge of promoting their distinctive characteristics and sustainability commitments in ways that are both engaging and authentic (Safitri & Ramdan, 2025).

Addressing this challenge requires promotional communication that goes beyond conventional marketing approaches. Developing sustainable tourism narratives involves not only the destination's promotional objectives but also the knowledge, experiences, and perspectives of various stakeholders. This collaborative dimension can be understood through the concept of co-creation, which originates from service-dominant logic and conceptualizes value as emerging through interactions and resource exchanges among actors rather than being created unilaterally by producers (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). It emphasizes meaningful stakeholder relationships and sustained collaboration, positioning consumers as active partners in value creation rather than passive recipients of marketing messages (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000; Tito et al., 2024). In tourism, co-creation therefore provides a conceptual basis for developing promotional narratives by involving destination managers, local communities, tourists, local governments, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and environmental groups. This approach grounds sustainability narratives in shared experiences and local knowledge rather than constructing them solely from destination marketers' perspective.

The relevance of co-creation in sustainable tourism is increasingly recognized. Tran (2025) developed a conceptual framework linking co-creation to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while Nuraini et al. (2025) showed that collaboration among government, business actors, and communities is essential to developing sustainable tourism villages in Indonesia. These studies reinforce the importance of stakeholder participation in developing tourism initiatives that reflect local values and sustainability objectives. In communication practice, collaboration can also improve the relevance of promotional messages by incorporating diverse perspectives, reducing miscommunication, and drawing upon the experiences of different stakeholders (Chan & Cho, 2022). Nevertheless, translating stakeholder knowledge and experiences into engaging digital promotional content remains challenging, particularly for tourism villages with limited creative and technical capacities.

The challenge of transforming local knowledge into digital promotional narratives also highlights the potential role of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in supporting collaborative communication. Generative AI refers to artificial intelligence that can produce content in various formats, including text, images, audio, and video. In particular, ChatGPT can facilitate natural language interaction, provide personalized recommendations, and support information processing (Hibatulwafi & Laksmi, 2024). Its ability to generate and refine text offers an opportunity to help tourism village managers develop promotional messages that match the characteristics of digital media and different audience segments (Indah & Maulana, 2025; Supradaka et al., 2024).

The use of AI in this study is informed by the need to expand the capacity of stakeholder co-creation rather than replace human participation. Although AI can support the creative process, its application in tourism communication raises concerns about authenticity, contextual relevance, and the representation of local values. Dogru et al. (2025) emphasize that generative AI in tourism struggles to maintain authenticity and local contextual relevance, making human oversight essential. Similarly, Feng and Sun (2025) indicate that generative AI can enhance consumer empowerment and creativity in brand narrative development, provided that human control remains part of the collaboration. These perspectives suggest that AI-assisted co-creation should be understood as a collaborative process in which stakeholders contribute local knowledge and narrative ideas, AI facilitates content development, and human actors retain responsibility for validating the substance and authenticity of the resulting messages.

This approach is particularly relevant to sustainable tourism, which emphasizes meeting present tourism needs while protecting and enhancing opportunities for future generations. Sustainable tourism involves managing resources in ways that accommodate social, economic, and aesthetic needs while preserving cultural integrity, social and ecological processes, biodiversity, and local values (Dewi et al., 2025). Consequently, sustainability-oriented promotional communication should not merely present destinations as attractive places to visit but should also communicate the environmental, socio-cultural, and economic values that underpin their development. Integrating co-creation, generative AI, and sustainable tourism thus provides a conceptual basis for examining how local knowledge and sustainability values can be transformed into digital promotional narratives through a collaborative process involving human actors and AI.

The practical relevance of this approach can be observed in Kemuning Tourism Village, located in Ngargoyoso District, Karanganyar Regency, Indonesia. Kemuning has been nominated among the top 300 destinations in the Indonesian Tourism Village Award (ADWI) and is categorized as an agro-tourism destination within a strategic tourism area offering diverse natural, cultural, and man-made attractions (Deliana et al., 2025). Its attractions include Kemuning tea plantations, Sumilir Valley, Paragliding Hill, the Glass Bridge, Ceto Temple, and Kemuning Mini Zoo. Previous tourism potential mapping has identified the distribution of these attractions as highly attractive and indicative of the village's potential for sustainable development (Kurniati et al., 2024).

Despite this potential, Kemuning Tourism Village has not fully leveraged digital media, particularly to communicate sustainable tourism narratives. Its social media posts and website have been found to contain relatively limited information and show low levels of content distribution activity (Deliana et al., 2025). This limitation is significant because digital marketing plays an important role in tourism promotion and can influence tourists' decisions to visit (Purbosaputro, 2023). The gap between Kemuning's tourism potential and its digital promotional practices therefore presents an opportunity to explore how sustainability-oriented promotional messages can be developed through stakeholder co-creation and AI-assisted content production.

Although research on co-creation has expanded across branding and marketing communication, much of it has focused on product marketing and its implications for marketing outcomes (Ertz, 2024). In tourism, studies have examined co-creation in destination marketing through qualitative approaches and case studies, highlighting how stakeholder engagement can incorporate diverse perspectives and improve the relevance of tourism marketing (Dewi et al., 2025; Viglia et al., 2023). Meanwhile, research on generative AI in tourism has largely adopted conceptual or quantitative approaches (Dogru et al., 2025; Tran, 2025), often focusing on the quality of AI-generated outputs or audience perceptions of such content.

These studies offer valuable insights but leave several aspects underexplored. First, limited attention has been given to how stakeholder input translates into specific digital promotional messages, leaving the process between participation and content publication largely undocumented. Second, although previous studies emphasize the importance of human oversight in AI-assisted tourism communication (Bui et al., 2024; Dogru et al., 2025), empirical understanding remains limited of how human validation is organized and implemented throughout content development. Third, existing findings regarding AI-generated promotional narratives remain somewhat inconsistent. While ChatGPT-generated marketing content has been found to be fluent and appealing (Zhang & Prebensen, 2024), human-written narratives may offer greater emotional depth and cultural insight (Saxena & Rishi, 2025), and AI-generated content may undermine perceived authenticity (Bui et al., 2024). How these tensions are addressed in tourism village settings, where managers may have limited creative and technical capacities (Santoso et al., 2023), remains underexplored.

These research gaps indicate the need to examine AI-assisted co-creation not simply as a means of generating promotional content but as a process through which local knowledge, stakeholder perspectives, and sustainability values are translated into digital

communication. In this regard, ChatGPT was selected as an AI tool because of its accessibility, flexibility, and suitability for supporting promotional message development among tourism village managers with varying levels of technical ability. This consideration is particularly relevant given that tourism village managers have increasingly used digital media for marketing communication while continuing to face challenges in producing engaging content that aligns with the characteristics of digital platforms (Santoso et al., 2023). Previous capacity-development activities have also indicated that training in AI applications, including ChatGPT, can improve participants' understanding and skills in producing tourism promotional content (Setiawan et al., 2024). Furthermore, Indonesia's high level of ChatGPT adoption, as reported by KumparanTECH (2026), underscores the growing relevance of this technology in Indonesia.

Against this background, this study examines how digital promotional messages for sustainable tourism can be developed through AI-assisted co-creation and how the resulting narratives are implemented on the Instagram account of Kemuning Tourism Village, Karanganyar, Indonesia. Specifically, it addresses two research questions: (1) How are digital promotional messages for sustainable tourism developed through a generative AI-assisted co-creation approach? And (2) How are the resulting promotional message narratives implemented on Kemuning Tourism Village's Instagram account?

The novelty of this study lies in documenting the development and implementation of digital promotional messages at the tourism village level, from stakeholder co-creation of core narratives and ChatGPT-assisted drafting to human validation and publication on Instagram. Rather than evaluating AI's ability to generate tourism content or assessing the effectiveness of the resulting messages, this study focuses on how the collaborative process is organized and implemented in practice. Theoretically, it links co-creation with generative AI in sustainable tourism communication by positioning human validation as an explicit stage in developing promotional narratives. Practically, the findings offer a reference workflow for tourism village managers seeking to transform local knowledge and sustainability values into digital promotional content while maintaining human control over message authenticity and validity. The study also demonstrates how digital promotional communication can provide a platform for communicating local environmental, socio-cultural, and economic values to wider audiences.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the development of digital promotional messages for sustainable tourism through stakeholder co-creation assisted by generative artificial intelligence (AI). A qualitative approach enables researchers to understand phenomena through participants' experiences, perceptions, actions, and interactions, producing descriptive data in the form of written or spoken accounts and observable behavior (Indah, 2021). The study was designed as a single-case study conducted in Kemuning Tourism Village, Ngargoyoso District, Karanganyar Regency, Indonesia, from May to August 2026.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling using a maximum variation strategy to incorporate diverse perspectives from stakeholders involved in tourism activities in Kemuning. The inclusion criteria were: (1) direct involvement in tourism as a destination manager, regulator, tourism product provider, or visitor; (2) knowledge of local narratives, cultural values, conservation practices, or community economic contributions; and (3) willingness to participate in the focus group discussion (FGD) and AI workshop and to have their participation recorded. This strategy was intended to ensure that promotional narratives incorporated perspectives beyond those of destination managers.

Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included interviews, an FGD, an AI-assisted workshop, and direct and online observations. The observations focused on existing digital promotional practices and the implementation of developed narratives on Instagram. Secondary data were obtained through a literature review of books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and official websites relevant to sustainable

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tourism, tourism communication, co-creation, and generative AI. These sources were used to contextualize the research problem and support the interpretation of empirical findings.

The data collection process was organized into several interconnected stages. The first stage involved semi-structured interviews with five key informants: the head of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), two village government officials, and two members of the youth organization (Karang Taruna). The interviews explored existing promotional practices, challenges in managing digital communication, and sustainability-related initiatives in Kemuning. Their findings provided an initial understanding of the research context and informed the subsequent FGD and workshop activities.

The second stage involved an FGD with 20 participants representing six stakeholder groups: tourism managers (8), Karang Taruna members (2), tourists (2), village government officials (2), Pokdarwis members (2), and local MSME operators (4). The discussion explored tourism development, local attractions, community values, and sustainability practices, bringing together diverse perspectives on destination management and local experiences. With participants' consent, the FGD was audio-recorded and transcribed. The research team synthesized the discussion into core narratives and narrative assets reflecting Kemuning's local knowledge, tourism potential, and sustainability-related values, which informed the development of promotional messages.

The third stage was an AI-assisted workshop with the same 20 participants, combining brief presentations on Instagram management, storytelling, and sustainable tourism communication with practical exercises using ChatGPT. Participants developed prompts based on the core narratives and destination information to generate promotional captions, storytelling narratives, and calls to action. Drafts were reviewed by participants and the research team for factual accuracy, authenticity, cultural appropriateness, and the validity of sustainability claims. Content requiring revision was refined through additional context and adjusted prompts, with ChatGPT implementing changes. Human participants and researchers retained responsibility for validation, and only validated messages were published on the destination's Instagram account.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive qualitative analysis model, comprising data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Zulfirman, 2022). The study organized and examined interview transcripts, FGD transcripts, workshop documentation, observation notes, and secondary materials to identify information relevant to the research objectives. The study coded data inductively into categories on stakeholder co-creation, AI-assisted content development, human validation, and themes in published promotional narratives. The analysis examined relationships among stakeholder contributions, AI-generated drafts, human validation, and the resulting Instagram content, particularly how it represented the environmental, sociocultural, and economic dimensions of sustainable tourism.

To strengthen the credibility of the findings, the study triangulated sources by comparing information from interviews, the FGD, the AI workshop, direct and online observations, and secondary documents. The study drew and verified conclusions through iterative comparison of findings across data sources and stages of the research process. The study focused on documenting how stakeholder co-creation, supported by generative AI, helped develop and implement digital promotional messages for sustainable tourism, rather than evaluating the effectiveness of the resulting content.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined how digital promotional messages for sustainable tourism were developed through an AI-assisted co-creation approach and how the resulting narratives were implemented on Instagram. The findings show that the resulting promotional narratives were translated into Instagram captions, photographs, and videos that emphasized local culture, community empowerment, and educational tourism. However, the environmental dimension of sustainability was less explicitly represented in the published content.

Developing Sustainable Tourism Promotional Messages through AI-Assisted Co-Creation

The development of digital promotional messages in Kemuning Tourism Village began with stakeholder co-creation to establish the narrative foundation. The process involved the village government, the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), local communities represented by Karang Taruna, tourism destination managers, MSME operators, and tourists. Through focus group discussions (FGDs), participants explored local tourism potential, experiences, stories, cultural values, environmental conservation practices, and tourism's contribution to the local economy. The resulting narratives were grounded in the knowledge and experiences of those directly involved in the destination rather than being formulated exclusively by tourism managers.

This finding illustrates the relevance of co-creation as a process of developing value through interaction and resource exchange among actors (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In tourism communication, stakeholder participation contributes not only information about destination attractions but also the meanings and values through which those attractions are understood. The involvement of different stakeholder groups consequently broadens the basis for destination narratives and helps prevent promotional communication from being limited to destination management perspectives. This aligns with Murti (2026), who shows that co-creation in Indonesian rural tourism development can strengthen community ownership and the legitimacy of destination identity, particularly through themes of heritage, authenticity, and sustainability.

The co-creation process produced core narratives, or narrative assets, that served as the foundation for subsequent message development. These narratives incorporated the destination's tourism potential and the environmental, sociocultural, and economic dimensions of sustainability. The distinction between narrative development and message production is important. Stakeholders determined which aspects of Kemuning were worth communicating and which values to associate with the destination, while later stages focused on translating these narratives into promotional messages suitable for digital media. In this sense, co-creation provided the substantive foundation of the communication process, ensuring that promotional narratives remained connected to local realities rather than being shaped solely by external promotional objectives.

The second stage involved AI-assisted development through a workshop on Instagram management, storytelling, and sustainable tourism communication using ChatGPT. The workshop involved 20 participants representing six stakeholder groups: eight tourism managers, two Karang Taruna members, two tourists, two village government officials, two Pokdarwis members, and four MSME operators. The workshop was informed by preliminary interviews, which identified limitations in the knowledge and skills of some tourism managers in using ChatGPT to develop digital promotional messages. These findings indicate that Kemuning's challenge was not simply the availability of digital platforms but also the capacity to develop relevant content for those platforms.

This condition corresponds with Santoso et al. (2023), who identify the need to strengthen tourism village managers' capacity to optimize digital media for marketing communication. The workshop therefore combined knowledge transfer and practical exercises, enabling participants to explore Instagram content characteristics, storytelling, and sustainability-oriented communication before practicing with ChatGPT. Participants developed prompts containing destination information and core narratives to generate alternative captions, storytelling formats, and calls to action. ChatGPT helped organize information, refine language, and produce variations of promotional messages, thereby supporting the transformation of stakeholder-generated narratives into digital content.

The role of AI in this process should be understood in relation to the limitations of conventional promotional communication. Tourism village managers need to communicate destination attractions while also conveying the cultural, social, economic, and environmental values associated with them. This requires not only access to digital media but also the ability to craft engaging, contextually relevant messages. ChatGPT supported

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this process by helping participants formulate and adapt content. Nevertheless, the workshop did not directly measure changes in participants' skills or their capacity to independently produce promotional messages. Its findings therefore demonstrate the use of AI in the content development process rather than establishing the effectiveness of AI-based capacity building.

The third stage was human validation, in which AI-generated drafts were reviewed by stakeholders and the research team for factual accuracy, authenticity, cultural appropriateness, and the validity of sustainability claims. Drafts requiring revision were refined through additional contextual information and adjusted prompts, with publication proceeding only after validation. This stage was important because fluent AI-generated text does not necessarily capture local experiences and cultural meanings. Saxena and Rishi (2025) suggest that while AI-generated content may offer advantages in structure and readability, human-written narratives can provide greater emotional depth and cultural insight. Similarly, Bui et al. (2024) highlight the risk that AI-generated tourism content may diminish perceived authenticity when it is not grounded in local context. The findings from Kemuning demonstrate how these concerns were addressed through a review process involving stakeholders with contextual knowledge of the destination.

The validation process also clarifies the relationship between human and AI contributions. Stakeholders did not simply provide information for AI to process; they retained the authority to determine whether the generated messages were appropriate for publication. This supports the argument that human-AI co-creation extends beyond content production to evaluation and refinement (Waardenburg & Huysman, 2022). In the Kemuning case, ChatGPT was not positioned as a stakeholder contributing local knowledge or determining destination identity. Its role was limited to assisting with message formulation, while stakeholders retained responsibility for the substance and legitimacy of the narratives. Human validation therefore served as a mechanism to maintain authenticity and contextual relevance while leveraging generative AI's efficiency.

Table 1 summarizes the three stages, their focus and activities, ChatGPT's role, and the resulting outputs. It highlights the distinction between determining the message's substance through co-creation, developing alternative presentations with AI, and validating the final content through human review.

Table 1. Promotional Message Design Through Co-Creation and AI

Stage	*Focus*	*Activity*	*The Role of AI (ChatGPT)*	*Output*
Co-Creation	Determining the substance and values of the message	FGDs exploring local stories, tourism potential, experiences, culture, and sustainability practices with local communities and business actors	Not involved in determining the core narrative	Core narrative / narrative assets
AI-Assisted Development	Developing and optimizing the narrative	AI workshop; developing storytelling, captions, CTAs, and adapting messages for digital platforms	Generating alternative message drafts and narrative formats based on the core narrative	Alternative digital promotional messages
Human Validation	Ensuring message quality and authenticity	Reviewing accuracy, authenticity, cultural appropriateness, local context, and sustainability claims	Assisting with revisions based on evaluation results	Final digital promotional messages

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The three-stage process shows that digital technology in sustainable tourism promotion must remain grounded in local community participation and knowledge. Local actors provide the knowledge needed to represent the destination's potential, culture, and sustainability values, while AI helps develop and adapt narratives for digital media. These findings align with Yasir (2021), who emphasizes community participation and creative, integrated, and

sustainable communication in destination development. They also align with Prayudi and Susilo (2022), who highlight communication and collaboration among stakeholders in developing sustainable tourism villages, and Yudhiasta et al. (2023), who show the role of integrated marketing communication in conveying tourism potential, local culture, and sustainability values.

Overall, stakeholders determine what is worth communicating through co-creation, ChatGPT helps shape how it is communicated through AI-assisted development, and local actors determine whether the resulting messages are appropriate for publication through human validation. This distinction is theoretically significant. ChatGPT does not function as a stakeholder contributing local knowledge; it contributes only by shaping the message's form and presentation. The local actors involved retain legitimacy of the content. Human validation therefore serves as a gatekeeping mechanism through which AI-assisted co-creation addresses authenticity concerns raised in the literature (Bui et al., 2024; Dogru et al., 2025).

Implementation of Promotional Narratives on Instagram

The narratives developed through co-creation, AI-assisted development, and human validation were implemented on the Instagram accounts of Kemuning Tourism Village (@desakemuning) and Kemuning Orchid (@kemuningorchid). Captions, photos, and videos combined destination information with storytelling and invitations to visit or learn, translating stakeholder-generated narratives into visual, conversational messages suited to Instagram. Although Instagram is widely used to promote tourism villages due to its visual features (Rahayu et al., 2023), visual appeal alone may not convey meaningful destination narratives. Yudaninggar and Damastuti (2023) found that informative captions on the Ciburial Tourism Village account lacked persuasive and interactive elements, contributing to low engagement. In Kemuning, storytelling and calls to action aimed to connect destination information with local experiences and values.



Figure 1. Local Stories of Kemuning Village: The "Kemuning Ngangeni" Jingle
Source: Instagram @desakemuning (2026)

The first example is the video post introducing the village jingle, *"Kemuning Ngangeni,"* published by @desakemuning (Figure 1). The video features a musician playing a bowed string instrument in front of a waterfall, while the caption presents Kemuning as both an attractive tourist destination and a comfortable place to live. It identifies tourism, agriculture, culture, and nature as the village's key assets and concludes with an invitation to visit. The narrative primarily communicates the sociocultural dimension of sustainability by integrating local music, traditional attire, and the natural landscape into the representation of community life. Rather than presenting the destination solely through its attractions, the post links tourism promotion to the village's cultural identity.

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Figure 2. Storytelling on Local Community Empowerment: in Vitro Orchid Cultivation
Source: Instagram @kemuningorchid (2026)

The second example, published by @kemuningorchid, promotes in vitro orchid cultivation through a video showing small-scale culture medium preparation at home (Figure 2). The caption uses an informal and conversational style *("Hai sobat!!")* to introduce orchid cultivation as an activity that does not require an advanced laboratory and invites audiences to learn about the process on-site. The content communicates educational and economic dimensions of sustainability by presenting local skills and cultivation practices as potential learning experiences for visitors. It also represents local economic activity beyond conventional tourism attractions, connecting the visitor experience with community knowledge and productive activities.



Figure 3. Storytelling Video on Educational Tourism: Tea Processing
Source: Instagram @desakemuning (2026)

The third example, published by @desakemuning, promotes educational tourism through tea processing at the Teh Gambyong Kemuning production house (Figure 3). The video shows visitors observing the production process, while the on-screen text identifies

the activity and the caption explains how Kemuning is expanding its tourism offerings beyond adventure tourism. The narrative connects the tourism experience with local production and gives visitors an opportunity to learn about how local products are processed. In this way, the content communicates the economic dimension of sustainability by linking tourism with local enterprise and productive activities.

Across these three examples, the published narratives emphasize local culture, community empowerment, and educational experiences. Their implementation demonstrates how the core narratives developed during the co-creation stage were translated into Instagram content through storytelling, visual representation, and conversational captions. The narratives also incorporate calls to action that encourage audiences to visit or participate in the experiences presented. However, the environmental dimension of sustainability is communicated less explicitly. Although natural landscapes appear in the visual content, the posts do not consistently explain environmental conservation practices or how tourism contributes to environmental protection. This distinction matters because natural scenery in promotional content does not necessarily communicate environmental sustainability.

The implementation process is further illustrated in Figure 4, which presents the sequence through which the promotional narratives were developed and published.



Figure 4. Implementation Sequence
Source*:* Primary Data (2026)

Figure 4 illustrates the workflow for developing and implementing digital promotional messages, beginning with co-creation through FGDs, followed by the workshop and use of ChatGPT to draft promotional messages, human validation, and publication on Instagram. Human validation occurs between drafting and publication, ensuring local stakeholders review the messages before they are shared publicly. This workflow demonstrates how AI was integrated into the promotional communication process to help managers develop more structured and adaptable messages for digital media, particularly Instagram.

The principles of sustainable tourism informed the message development process, aiming to communicate environmental, sociocultural, and economic values alongside destination attractions. However, the published posts indicate that the environmental dimension was less explicitly represented than the sociocultural and economic dimensions. This reveals a gap between the sustainability dimensions considered during message development and those ultimately communicated through the published content. While cultural identity, community activities, and educational tourism were readily translated into concrete and accessible Instagram stories, environmental sustainability remained less explicit. The findings suggest that translating sustainability values into promotional content is not automatic, as some dimensions may become more visible than others when local narratives are adapted to social media formats and communication objectives.

This finding highlights the importance of sustainable tourism communication that extends beyond presenting attractive destinations to conveying the values and practices underpinning sustainable tourism development. Storytelling can connect tourism experiences with cultural meanings and local communities' lived experiences (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019). However, a promotional narrative's sustainability depends not only on its storytelling format but also on the substance of its message. In Kemuning, the published content communicated cultural preservation, community empowerment, and local economic activity, while the environmental dimension was not articulated to the same extent.

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The implementation process also demonstrates the importance of human oversight in AI-assisted tourism communication. The resulting messages were reviewed by stakeholders and researchers for accuracy, authenticity, cultural appropriateness, and sustainability-related claims before publication. This reinforces the argument that AI can support promotional narrative development without replacing local actors' contextual knowledge and judgment (Carvalho et al., 2025; Saxena & Rishi, 2025). ChatGPT helped translate stakeholder-generated narratives into Instagram-ready messages, while managers retained control over the destination's identity, local context, and sustainability values.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that AI-assisted co-creation can provide a structured process for developing and implementing sustainable tourism promotional messages at the tourism village level. By connecting stakeholder participation, AI-assisted message development, and human validation, the process documents how local knowledge and sustainability-related values are translated into digital promotional narratives. Its contribution, however, lies in explaining this process and identifying the uneven representation of sustainability dimensions, rather than establishing the messages' effectiveness in attracting tourists or changing audience perceptions.

Instagram serves as a platform for articulating Kemuning Tourism Village's identity and sustainability values. Pham (2025) explains that sustainable tourism positively influences travel intentions and tourists' trust in a destination, although the present study does not assess whether the published content produced these outcomes. Rather, it demonstrates how managers used AI-supported narrative development to communicate destination-related values through the platform. This approach is consistent with research highlighting the complementary roles of AI and human judgment in tourism communication. While AI can produce structured and readable content, human narratives offer greater emotional depth and cultural richness, making collaboration between AI and humans a promising approach (Saxena & Rishi, 2025). The importance of human oversight in AI-generated tourism promotional messages is also emphasized by Carvalho et al. (2025). Accordingly, AI in Kemuning's digital promotion was used not to replace managers' creativity but to support the development of adaptable and authentic narratives, while local actors remained responsible for their meaning, contextual relevance, and suitability for publication.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how digital promotional messages for sustainable tourism were developed through AI-assisted co-creation and how the resulting narratives were implemented on Instagram in Kemuning Tourism Village. The findings show that message development involved three interrelated stages: co-creation, AI-assisted development, and human validation. Local stakeholders shaped the narratives by contributing knowledge, experiences, destination potential, and local values, while ChatGPT developed alternative promotional messages that were more structured and adaptable to Instagram. Human validation ensured that the resulting messages remained accurate, authentic, contextually appropriate, and aligned with sustainable tourism values. The narratives were subsequently published through captions, photos, and videos that emphasized local culture, community empowerment, and educational tourism, although the environmental dimension was less explicit. Thus, the study documents how local knowledge and sustainability-related values were translated into digital promotional narratives, rather than establishing the effectiveness of those messages or measurable changes in managerial capacity.

Theoretically, this study extends value co-creation literacy by showing how generative AI can be incorporated into a co-creation process while local stakeholders retain authority over meaning and contextual legitimacy. The findings suggest a distinction between stakeholders' role in determining the substance of promotional narratives, ChatGPT's role in developing their communicative form, and human validation as a mechanism for determining their appropriateness for publication. This positions human validation as a distinct stage in AI-assisted co-creation, particularly in contexts where authenticity and local knowledge are central. Practically, the three-stage workflow offers a process that tourism

village managers, local governments, and facilitators may adapt: engaging stakeholders to establish core narratives, using ChatGPT to develop message drafts through destination-specific prompts, and reviewing the outputs with local actors before publication. The workflow provides a structured approach to integrating AI into tourism communication without transferring responsibility for local meaning and message validity to the technology.

This study is limited to a single tourism village and the use of ChatGPT, which constrains the transferability of its findings to destinations with different cultural, organizational, and digital literacy contexts. Moreover, the research focused on message development and implementation rather than systematically measuring managerial capacity, message quality, audience engagement, or tourists' perceptions and intentions to visit. Further research could examine workflows across multiple tourism villages with different management characteristics and levels of digital literacy and compare the use of different generative AI platforms. Given these findings, future studies could also investigate how sustainability dimensions are represented in AI-assisted promotional narratives, particularly why environmental values may be communicated less explicitly than sociocultural and economic values. Mixed-methods or longitudinal research could assess changes in managers' ability to develop and evaluate AI-assisted messages, examine audience responses and engagement, and explore whether such messages influence destination perceptions and visiting intentions. These directions would help determine the proposed workflow's applicability and evaluate its outcomes beyond the message development process.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Tiara Indah: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing, Project Administration, and Corresponding Author. **Dian Deliana:** Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Visualization, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing. **Erwin Purbosaputro:** Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing, Funding Acquisition, and Resources.

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DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

In preparing this article, we, as authors, have no financial interests or competing personal relationships that could influence the work reported in this paper.

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DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors utilized Generative AI (Claude) developed by Anthropic, between July and September 2026. This tool was used to: (1) assist in developing an outline and defining the distribution of tasks among the authors; (2) improve grammar, spelling, and sentence clarity; and (3) format citations and the statement of authors' contributions. The AI was not used to generate data, conduct analyses, interpret findings, draw conclusions, or create references. All ideas, arguments, data, and conclusions are the work of the authors. After using the tool, the authors reviewed, edited, and verified all output and assume full responsibility for the manuscript's content.

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