

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF BUKIT KABA TOURISM THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA BASED ON IMC AND AIDA

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ABSTRACT

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The use of social media in tourism communication strategies has become crucial in the digital era. Bukit Kaba, a nature-based tourism destination in Bengkulu, utilizes platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok for promotion. However, the extent to which these platforms are strategically and integratively employed remains underexplored. This study aims to analyze the digital communication strategy of Bukit Kaba's tourism management through social media by applying the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and Attention, Interest, Desire, Action (AIDA) theoretical frameworks. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, using digital observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews. The findings reveal that each platform demonstrates unique characteristics and communication performance. TikTok exhibits strong engagement but lacks persuasive storytelling; Instagram excels in visuals but lacks explicit calls to action; Facebook is more informative yet less frequently updated. None of the platforms present a fully integrated cross-platform messaging strategy. These results highlight the need for IMC-based consistency reinforcement and better AIDA-driven content planning to attract, engage, and mobilize potential tourists. This study contributes novelty by integrating IMC and AIDA frameworks to evaluate rural tourism communication, an approach rarely applied in emerging market contexts, and offers practical recommendations for improving the digital marketing effectiveness of nature-based tourism destinations. The findings provide actionable guidance for tourism managers in designing coherent, persuasive, and sustainable promotional strategies that enhance destination competitiveness in increasingly crowded digital spaces.

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1. Introduction

Indonesia possesses remarkably diverse natural resources that hold not only ecological value but also significant recreational and economic potential. One such resource is Mount Kaba, a stratovolcano located in Rejang Lebong Regency, Bengkulu Province. This area is renowned for its active crater, stunning hiking trails, and appeal as a nature-based tourism destination. According to data from the management authority, namely Pokdarwis Taman Wisata Alam Bukit Kaba (Mount Kaba Nature Tourism Park Tourism Awareness Group), despite an increase in visitors from 22,878 tourists in 2018 to 35,135 in 2019, the numbers declined drastically in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and continued to fluctuate through

2024 with 18,000 visitors. This phenomenon reflects both the dynamics and challenges in promoting Mount Kaba as a sustainable and attractive tourism destination. One of the primary issues faced is the inconsistent and fragmented use of social media as a communication tool to maintain and enhance public interest in this destination.

In the contemporary tourism industry, marketing communication plays a crucial role, not only in promoting destinations but also in building destination image, creating emotional connections, and influencing tourist behavior. The emergence of digital platforms has revolutionized marketing practices, particularly through social media, which has become the primary channel for tourists to seek and share travel information. In the case of Mount Kaba, its social media ecosystem includes Instagram (@bukit_kaba_gunungkaba) with 31,000 followers, Facebook ("Lensa Bukit Kaba") with 6,100 followers, and TikTok (@bukit_kaba_gunungkaba) with 4,080 followers and 40,700 likes. While the presence across various platforms demonstrates commitment to digital communication, the lack of message alignment, limited content integration, and inconsistent branding narratives indicate the need for a more structured and theory-based communication strategy.

To understand how communication can be effectively enhanced, this research employs the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) framework. IMC refers to a strategic approach that integrates various communication channels and tools to deliver consistent and persuasive brand messages. Shimp and Andrews (2013) explain that IMC facilitates synergy between advertising, direct marketing, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, and digital marketing. Luxton, Reid, and Mavondo (2014) confirm a positive correlation between IMC capabilities and brand performance. In the tourism context, IMC enables stakeholders to develop coherent communication strategies across various platforms while aligning internal and external messages. Porcu, Barrio-García, and Kitchen (2017) emphasize that IMC must be implemented comprehensively throughout the organization to ensure uniformity in brand narratives. Finne and Grönroos (2017) expand this understanding through the concept of communication in use, which involves customer engagement in creating and disseminating communication content, making digital platforms highly relevant.

Alongside IMC, the AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) is used to analyze how social media content can stimulate audience engagement and decision-making. Batra and Keller (2016) affirm the relevance of AIDA in the digital context, where each stage can be linked to specific types of content and user interactions. Social media platforms are designed by nature to capture attention through visuals, build interest through narratives and storytelling, cultivate desire through testimonials and user-generated content, and drive action through direct links, booking features, and call-to-action messages. This model provides a clear pathway for evaluating and optimizing social media communication structures at every level of user engagement.

Various recent empirical studies also reinforce the utility of the IMC and AIDA frameworks. Zuhdi and Rifai (2024) found that structured communication strategies by tourism village managers can increase visitor interest and brand loyalty to destinations. Dahana, Sulaiman, and Sari (2023) demonstrate that strategically integrated media content can enhance the visibility and credibility of tourism villages. Olivia and Widarti (2021) emphasize the importance of digital storytelling and festival-based promotion in attracting user attention and driving visits. Meanwhile, Fitrianiingsih et al. (2023) highlight that optimizing digital platforms in tourism requires not only technological infrastructure but also content consistency and audience interaction. These findings confirm the importance of combining IMC and AIDA approaches to achieve effective destination communication.

Furthermore, Valos et al. (2016) emphasize the importance of integrating social media within the broader IMC framework to ensure brand message consistency. These findings align with the tourism context, where digital content must be integrated across platforms to avoid confusing potential visitors. Similarly, Batra and Keller (2016) stress the need for communication flow design based on consumer psychology, which is highly relevant to the systematic approach of the AIDA model. This dual framework offers practical insights into how

destination managers can structure, align, and optimize their digital strategies. Therefore, the application of IMC and AIDA theories is not only based on strong theoretical foundations but is also supported by numerous empirical findings in tourism marketing literature.

Despite the growing body of literature on digital tourism marketing, a significant gap remains in understanding how theory-based communication strategies specifically the integrated application of IMC and AIDA frameworks can be systematically implemented in nature-based, community-managed tourism destinations. Most existing studies focus on urban destinations, established tourism enterprises, or single-platform strategies, leaving rural nature-based destinations underrepresented. Mount Kaba presents a particularly compelling case as it exemplifies the challenges faced by community-managed destinations: limited institutional capacity, resource constraints, visitor fluctuation, yet active multi-platform social media presence. What distinguishes this study from previous research is its dual theoretical approach combining IMC's focus on message integration across platforms with AIDA's psychological engagement flow applied specifically to a rural, nature-based tourism context. This combination has rarely been explored in existing literature, particularly for destinations managed by community-based organizations (Pokdarwis) rather than commercial tourism operators. Furthermore, this research addresses the practical reality that many nature-based destinations in Indonesia maintain social media presence without strategic coherence, making the findings directly applicable to similar contexts across the region.

Against this background, this research aims to analyze the use of social media as a tourism communication tool at Mount Kaba, Bengkulu, through the theoretical approaches of IMC and AIDA. The research problem formulation focuses on the extent to which social media communication conducted by Mount Kaba management aligns with the principles of integrated messaging and audience engagement flow. Specifically, this research aims to: first, examine the structure and synchronization of communication on Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok accounts; second, evaluate content strategies in guiding audiences through the AIDA stages; and third, formulate strategic recommendations based on theoretical foundations and empirical findings. By integrating theory with field data, this research is expected to contribute to the development of digital communication for tourism destinations and offer practical solutions for managers of nature-based destinations like Mount Kaba.

2. Method

This research employs a qualitative approach using descriptive case study methodology. This approach was chosen to comprehensively describe and analyze the social media communication strategies implemented by the management of Mount Kaba Nature Tourism Park (TWA) in promoting this tourism destination. The research location is situated in Sumber Urip Village, Selupu Rejang District, Rejang Lebong Regency, Bengkulu Province, and was conducted from January to March 2025. This methodological approach aligns with previous studies examining digital communication in tourism contexts, such as Dahana et al. (2023) in tourism villages and Zuhdi and Rifai (2024) in Pokdarwis promotion strategies through social media.

The research subjects consist of Mount Kaba Nature Tourism Park social media account managers, including members of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), social media administrators, and representatives from BUMDes as the managing entity. The informant selection technique employed purposive sampling, selecting individuals based on their roles and direct knowledge regarding the destination's digital communication activities. The primary informants comprise five individuals actively involved in the planning, management, and publication of social media content across Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok platforms.

The primary instrument in this research is the researcher as the key instrument, supported by semi-structured interview guides, participatory observation sheets, and documentation protocols for social media posts. These instruments were systematically developed based on

indicators derived from Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) theory and the AIDA model to ensure alignment between theoretical frameworks and empirical observation. Instrument validation was conducted through expert judgment by two academics specializing in tourism communication and digital marketing, following practices employed by Fitriyaningsih et al. (2023) in developing digital observation instruments for tourism village promotion.

Data collection was conducted through three complementary techniques: (1) in-depth interviews with key informants to explore narratives and social media communication strategies; (2) direct observation of destination social media activities, including post frequency, content types, user interactions, and message consistency across platforms; and (3) documentation of digital archives and promotional materials published on official accounts. The data analysis technique employs Miles and Huberman's interactive model consisting of data reduction, data presentation in thematic matrices based on IMC and AIDA indicators, and conclusion drawing through systematic interpretation. To ensure data validity, source and method triangulation techniques were applied, complemented by member checking with informants to confirm interpretive accuracy.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all informants, clearly explaining the research purpose, procedures, voluntary participation, and confidentiality measures. Informants were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. For the analysis of publicly accessible social media content, while such data is available in the public domain, the research maintained ethical standards by focusing on organizational communication patterns rather than individual user data, and by anonymizing any user-generated comments or interactions when necessary. All documentation and interview transcripts were stored securely and accessible only to the research team. These ethical protocols align with qualitative research standards in tourism and communication studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3. Results and Discussion

Social media has become an integral part of tourism destination marketing communication strategies in the digital era. As visual and interactive platforms, social media enables destination managers to reach audiences directly, build brand image, and foster emotional engagement with potential tourists. In the context of Mount Kaba, the presence on three main platforms TikTok (figure 1), Instagram (figure 2), and Facebook (figure 3) provides opportunities to deliver varied and engaging promotional messages. Analysis of each account is crucial for understanding the characteristics, effectiveness, and challenges of each channel in delivering integrated messages according to IMC (Integrated Marketing Communication) and AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) principles. The following is an in-depth analysis of each account, beginning with TikTok, followed by Instagram, and then Facebook.

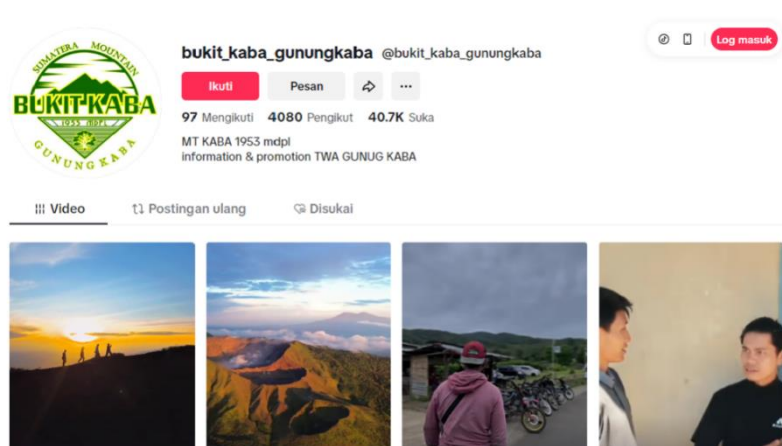


Figure 1. TikTok Account (@bukit_kaba_gunungkaba) Performance Metrics for Bukit Kaba Tourism

The TikTok account @bukit_kaba_gunungkaba has 97 following, 4,080 followers, and 40,700 likes with the profile description "MT KABA 1953 mdpl information & promotion TWA GUNUG KABA" using the same green gradient logo as other social media platforms. This account displays varied video content ranging from natural scenery such as sunrise at the mountain peak with climber silhouettes, mountain landscapes with cloud backgrounds, motorcycle activities in the tourism area, to interpersonal content that demonstrates content type diversification to reach a broader TikTok audience. With a relatively good engagement ratio, this account shows more optimal performance compared to other platforms in terms of user interaction, although it still has potential for further development to increase follower count.

The TikTok account @bukit_kaba_gunungkaba has great potential as a promotional medium for Mount Kaba nature tourism destination, considering the follower count has reached over 4,000 users and total likes of 40,700. However, in terms of posting consistency and content strategy, this account appears to be underutilized. Most uploaded content focuses on the scenic beauty and natural atmosphere of Mount Kaba but lacks narratives that build storytelling or direct calls-to-action for audiences to visit or share information. This aligns with findings by Andhika et al. (2022) showing that TikTok use as promotional media must prioritize interactive and narrative elements to build emotional connections with audiences.

Furthermore, the type of content uploaded tends to be passive, such as landscapes or documentary moments, without much involvement of figures, tourist testimonials, or informative explanations that could explain the destination's main selling points. According to Listiana et al. (2024), TikTok's strength in promoting tourism lies in its ability to create short duration content that is educational, inspirational, and entertaining (edutainment). When these elements are combined with attractive visuals and local uniqueness, the potential to reach wider audiences increases significantly.

From a features perspective, this account has not maximized the use of TikTok's creative elements such as filters, effects, popular sounds, engaging captions, and live streaming. Research by Maulani (2024) shows that TikTok Live Streaming features are proven effective as two way interaction channels between managers and potential tourists, while building trust and destination authenticity. Additionally, there is no visible use of digital branding techniques or paid promotions (ads) that could actually accelerate content distribution to more targeted segments (Febriyanti et al. 2024).

Moving forward, more structured and consistent content strategies need to be developed to enhance the digital communication effectiveness of this account. Referring to

studies by Fitriyaningsih et al. (2023), TikTok based promotion optimization in tourism villages is determined not only by how attractive the visuals displayed are, but also by strategic message management, collaboration with local content creators, and cross platform integration. This reinforces the importance of synergy between management actors, Pokdarwis communities, and village officials so that TikTok becomes not just a passive showcase, but an active medium for conveying values, culture, and tourism village identity.

Therefore, while the @bukit_kaba_gunungkaba account already has a fairly good initial foundation in terms of visuals and follower base, improvements in content quality, interaction consistency, and utilization of creative features are needed to optimize its function as a tourism promotional medium. TikTok is not just an entertainment platform, but also a strategic tool in building sustainable digital based tourism destination image.

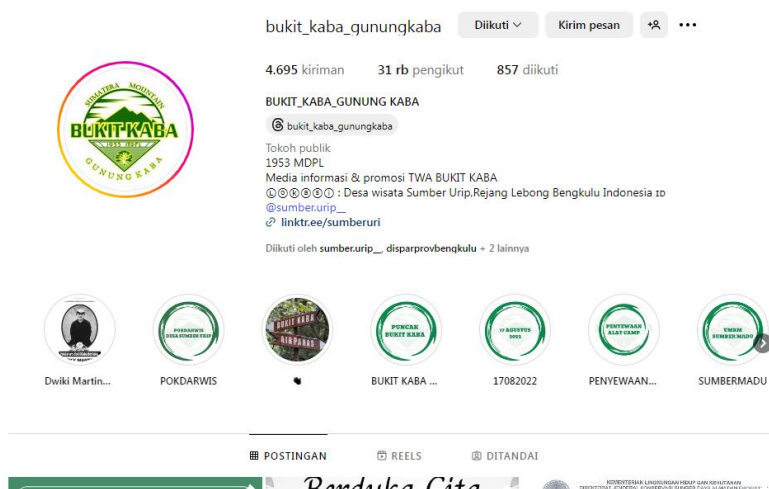


Figure 2. Instagram Account (@bukit_kaba_gunungkaba) Performance Metrics for Bukit Kaba Tourism

Instagram as a visual social media platform has great potential in supporting tourism destination marketing communication strategies, particularly through Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) approaches and the AIDA model. The @bukit_kaba_gunungkaba account, with 31,000 followers, 4,695 posts, and following 857 accounts, represents the most active digital channel owned by Mount Kaba Nature Tourism Park management. This high activity and digital footprint reflects strong visibility potential, but its effectiveness heavily depends on communication structure, message consistency, and cross platform integration.

Within the IMC framework, this account demonstrates efforts to deliver consistent messages through visual elements, such as the use of a green gradient logo that is also used on TikTok and Facebook. This represents good brand alignment, consistent with IMC principles that communication messages must be coherent and synergistic across all channels (Porcu et al. 2017; Shimp and Andrews 2013). However, horizontal integration with other social media platforms is not yet optimal. There are no explicit calls or cross platform connectors (cross promotion), which could actually strengthen the destination's digital ecosystem comprehensively (Valos et al. 2016).

In the dimension of vertically integrated communication, Instagram content is mostly documentary and visual such as natural landscapes, sunrise moments, and hiking trails. However, from the perspective of two way communication (dialogic communication) as emphasized by Finne and Grönroos (2017), this account remains passive. The minimal active interaction through comment replies, use of interactive features such as polling or stories with question prompts, indicates insufficient utilization of IMC potential that is participatory and

customer driven. Follower engagement has also not been directed into a strategic communication funnel, such as directing audiences to tourism package bookings or additional information channels.

From the AIDA framework perspective, this account successfully attracts Attention through quality visual posts depicting the natural beauty of Mount Kaba. However, creating Interest through storytelling, informative narratives, or descriptive captions that build emotional appeal remains limited. Captions used are often brief and lack local stories, history, or destination uniqueness. According to Batra and Keller (2016), interest in the digital world heavily depends on narratives and personal relevance value offered by content.

At the Desire stage, this account has also not maximally aroused followers' desire to visit Mount Kaba. Few tourist testimonials, experience reviews, or user-generated content showing previous visitor satisfaction are found. The AIDA model emphasizes the importance of social proof in generating prospective tourists' desire to make decisions (Dahana et al. 2023). The absence of these elements makes this account stop only at informative function, not persuasive.

Meanwhile, Action as the final stage has not been optimally facilitated. There are no explicit links in the bio directing users to reservation sites, admin contacts, or tourism activity schedules that can be followed. This indicates that call to action (CTA) elements are still minimal, whereas features like linktree, accommodation info highlights, or tourism packages could be utilized to encourage concrete actions from followers.

According to Fitrianiingsih et al. (2023), social media optimization in tourism village promotion is not sufficient with visual consistency alone, but must also involve strategic communication design capable of educating, entertaining, and actively engaging audiences. Therefore, the @bukit_kaba_gunungkaba account needs to strengthen message integration, add rich and authentic narrative elements, and build two way communication patterns so it becomes not just a visual showcase but also an effective digital persuasion tool.



Figure 3.

Page ("Lensa Bukit Kaba") Performance Overview

Facebook

Facebook "Lensa Bukit Kaba" currently has 6,100 followers and 5,500 likes, making it one of the oldest digital channels utilized in Mount Kaba promotional efforts. Unlike the characteristics of TikTok or Instagram audiences who are more visual and fast-paced, Facebook has a more heterogeneous user demographic that tends to be loyal. Therefore,

utilizing this account has a strategic role in reaching broader tourist segments, including those who need more comprehensive and text-based information. However, based on observations, the use of this account has not fully adopted IMC principles and AIDA stages optimally.

From an IMC perspective, this Facebook account has the potential to serve as an official information center and interaction forum between managers and prospective tourists. In line with the IMC concept from Shimp and Andrews (2013), this platform should become a communication integration point that aligns all messages from other channels, both Instagram and TikTok. However, no systematic interconnection between these platforms was found. There are no cross-links encouraging users to access content on other media, whereas IMC strategy promotes inter-channel communication synergy as a form of message delivery efficiency and effectiveness (Luxton et al. 2014; Valos et al. 2016).

In the concept of firm-wide IMC as proposed by Porcu et al. (2017), the management of this Facebook account still lacks a coordinative role. Its content is sporadic, mostly consisting of destination photo reposts without structured narratives, tourism activity calendars, or practical information such as rates, contacts, and hiking procedures. Yet Finne and Grönroos (2017) emphasize that communication-in-use demands active audience engagement, not just one-way exposure.

From the AIDA model perspective, this account can attract Attention through visual posts such as mountain landscapes, fog moments, or visitor photos. However, visual quality is not consistent, and not all content is edited or packaged attractively. To build Interest, this account lacks local storytelling, such as resident stories, area history, or visitor experiences. Such narratives are crucial because they can foster emotional closeness and increase potential tourist interest (Olivia and Widarti 2021).

At the Desire stage, this account is still minimal in displaying attractions that differentiate Mount Kaba from other destinations. Few testimonial content, positive reviews, or interactions from previous visitors are found. According to Batra and Keller (2016), creating audience desire is determined by their perception of the value and experience offered, and social media becomes a platform to display such evidence. When this is absent, the account tends to become merely a visual catalog without persuasive function.

Finally, in the Action aspect, this account has not facilitated further action. There are no booking features, reservation forms, or explicit invitations to visit. Even contact information is often not permanently embedded. Yet CTAs (call-to-action) such as "contact us," "see schedule," or "plan your visit" are important components for encouraging action (Dahana et al. 2023).

This indicates that the Lensa Bukit Kaba Facebook account is still in the early stages of digital utilization as an IMC channel and AIDA conversion tool. If managed more strategically, Facebook can become a communication hub that bridges audiences who are not yet active on Instagram or TikTok.

Based on the in-depth analysis of the three social media platforms utilized in promoting Bukit Kaba tourism, it is evident that each channel possesses distinct characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses in implementing IMC principles and AIDA stages. TikTok demonstrates high engagement yet remains weak in storytelling and call-to-action elements; Instagram maintains the largest follower base with good visual consistency but underperforms in two-way interaction and facilitating concrete actions; while Facebook remains underutilized as a strategic information hub despite its potential to reach broader demographic segments. To provide a more systematic comparative overview of cross-platform performance, Table 1

synthesizes the key findings from the analyses of TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook in relation to IMC principles and AIDA stages.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Bukit Kaba's Social Media Performance Across IMC and AIDA Dimensions

Dimension	Tiktok	Instagram	Facebook
Followers	4.080	31.000	6.100
Engagement Level	High (40,700 likes)	Moderate	Low
Content Type	Short videos, landscapes	Photos, visual stories	Reposts, minimal originality
IMC Integration	Weak cross-promotion	Moderate brand consistency	Poor platform synergy
AIDA: Attention	Strong (visual appeal)	Strong (quality imagery)	Weak (inconsistent quality)
AIDA: Interest	Limited storytelling	Limited narratives	Minimal storytelling
AIDA: Desire	No testimonials/UGC	Few testimonials	No social proof
AIDA: Action	No CTA/links	No booking links	No contact info
Optimization Opportunities	Live streaming, creator collaborations	Interactive features, CTA integration	Content calendar, cross-linking

Table 1 clearly illustrates significant gaps between the potential and actual utilization of social media in Bukit Kaba's marketing communication strategy. Although Instagram possesses the highest follower count (31,000), none of the three platforms successfully integrates all AIDA stages comprehensively or implements effective cross-platform IMC synergy. The most prominent weakness lies in the Action aspect, where no platform provides clear call-to-action mechanisms or reservation links that facilitate conversion from interest to actual visitation. These findings indicate the necessity for a more structured and integrated digital communication strategy, wherein each platform functions not merely as a visual showcase but also as an active persuasion channel capable of moving audiences through the entire tourist decision-making journey from initial awareness to concrete booking actions.

Social media has become a fundamental pillar in marketing communication strategies for tourist destinations, including for Bukit Kaba management. The three primary platforms utilized TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook possess distinct characteristics and strengths in reaching diverse audiences. Within the framework of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), the presence of these multi-platforms should ideally support unified message delivery (message consistency), shape brand perception, and strengthen visitors' emotional engagement. Meanwhile, from the AIDA perspective, each platform must be capable of attracting attention, building interest, creating desire, and encouraging action in a structured and hierarchical manner (Batra and Keller 2016; Shimp and Andrews 2013).

From Instagram's perspective, the @bukit_kaba_gunungkaba account demonstrates the highest performance in terms of follower count, with 31,000 followers. This platform leverages visual strength to build destination image through photo and short video content showcasing natural beauty, hiking activities, and unique moments from tourists. However, within the IMC context, there appears to be insufficient effort to synergize visual narratives with narrative text or explicit calls-to-action. The captions used tend to be descriptive without strong persuasive elements and have not integrated storytelling elements that could create emotional engagement as suggested by Dahana et al. (2023) and Fitrianiingsih et al. (2023). Within the AIDA framework, while this account has successfully attracted attention and interest, the transition to the "desire" and "action" stages has not been optimally managed due

to the absence of booking links, pricing information, or direct contact details easily accessible to potential tourists.

Unlike Instagram, the TikTok account @bukit_kaba_gunungkaba excels in user engagement despite having only 4,080 followers. The number of likes reaching 40,700 indicates that audiences respond to content with considerable enthusiasm. The short videos displayed showcase dramatic natural landscapes, adventure activities, and sunrise views packaged cinematically. According to Listiana et al. (2024), TikTok's strength in tourism communication lies in the edutainment element entertaining while being informative which unfortunately has not been fully utilized by this account. From an IMC perspective, TikTok has potential as a visual storytelling channel, but there is no message continuity across platforms. Additionally, this account has not optimized interactive features such as Live streaming, collaborations with creators, or hashtag challenges that could potentially increase audience participation. Within the AIDA framework, TikTok successfully captures attention and builds strong interest but has not encouraged action due to minimal CTAs or reference links.

Meanwhile, the Facebook account "Lensa Bukit Kaba" with 6,100 followers and 5,500 likes appears more passive and minimally updated. Although Facebook has a more mature user demographic that tends to be loyal, the content displayed consists of resharing from other platforms without distinctiveness or unique approach. This indicates Facebook's weak function as an independent communication channel. Within the IMC framework, this suggests message inconsistency that impacts destination image fragmentation. In the AIDA framework, Facebook has not been sufficiently strong in building attention or encouraging visitors' desire to act, as its content approach is too one-way and passive (Olivia and Widarti 2021; Valos et al. 2016).

When examined comprehensively, Bukit Kaba's digital communication strategy through social media remains individualistic and has not been integrated into a coherent and strategic communication system. According to IMC theory, each channel should complement and strengthen each other, forming a complete and easily recognizable brand identity (Luxton et al. 2014). The absence of unified narratives and planned publication schedules causes audiences to switch to other destinations offering more interactive digital experiences. Conversely, if these three accounts could be optimized simultaneously by carrying unified messages structured within the AIDA scheme, the digital transformation of Bukit Kaba destination would be stronger and more sustainable.

Based on observation results and in-depth interviews with Pokdarwis Bukit Kaba, it is concluded that social media account management remains informal and sporadic. There is no dedicated content team or editorial strategy built on user insights. Furthermore, there is no routine evaluation of social media performance, such as engagement rates or CTA effectiveness. However, recent literature (Batra and Keller 2016; Zuhdi and Rifai 2024) emphasizes that the success of digital tourism communication heavily depends on consistency, emotional engagement, and the courage to explore creative approaches that involve users.

Therefore, strategic recommendations that can be proposed are: first, establishing a dedicated social media team with clearly defined roles; second, developing an AIDA-based editorial plan for each platform; third, integrating messages across channels in the spirit of IMC; and fourth, building collaborations with local content creators to expand reach. Through this approach, Bukit Kaba would not only be able to increase visitor numbers quantitatively but also strengthen destination image based on sustainable local values.

4. Conclusion

This study has examined the strategic use of social media as a tourism communication tool for Bukit Kaba, Bengkulu, through the lenses of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) model. The findings indicate that although Bukit Kaba has established a digital presence on TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, the utilization of these platforms remains fragmented and inconsistent, lacking a unified narrative or structured communication strategy. From the IMC perspective, the three social media accounts are not yet aligned in terms of message integration, content design, or audience targeting. There is no synergy between platforms that would allow for reinforcement of key tourism messages or strengthening of the destination's brand image. The lack of coordination across media channels undermines the effectiveness of promotional efforts and reduces audience recall and engagement. Furthermore, content delivery still heavily relies on visual aesthetics without deeper storytelling, persuasive appeals, or interactive engagement strategies.

This strategic misalignment at the IMC level directly impacts performance across the AIDA stages. From the AIDA perspective, content across all platforms shows strength in attracting initial attention through appealing visuals and natural beauty, particularly on TikTok and Instagram. However, the accounts generally struggle to sustain interest, stimulate desire, and encourage action. Key components such as consistent narrative hooks, emotional appeal, tourist testimonials, call-to-action elements, and direct engagement with audiences are minimal or absent. This gap is most evident in the Action stage, where none of the platforms provide clear pathways for booking, inquiry, or visit planning. The analysis reveals that while Bukit Kaba successfully captures visual attention, it fails to convert this initial engagement into meaningful interest or concrete visitor actions, highlighting a critical disconnect between content creation and strategic communication objectives.

These findings contribute distinctively to the tourism communication literature by demonstrating the value of integrating IMC and AIDA frameworks in evaluating digital communication effectiveness for rural, nature-based tourism destinations in emerging markets. While previous research has examined social media in tourism contexts separately through either IMC or AIDA lenses, this study reveals how strategic misalignment at the organizational level (lack of cross-platform integration) directly undermines performance at each stage of the consumer decision-making journey. This integrated analytical approach offers a replicable methodological model for assessing tourism communication strategies in similar contexts, particularly in underdeveloped or rural destinations seeking to enhance their digital presence and competitive positioning.

The practical implications of these findings underscore the necessity for destination managers and tourism stakeholders to adopt a more integrated and audience-oriented communication plan. Specific actionable steps include establishing a unified content calendar that aligns messaging across all platforms while respecting platform-specific characteristics; incorporating storytelling elements such as local narratives, visitor testimonials, and cultural context to build emotional connections; utilizing interactive features including Instagram Stories polls, TikTok Live streaming, and Facebook Q&A sessions to foster two-way communication; implementing clear call-to-action mechanisms such as booking links, contact information, and visit planning guides prominently displayed across all channels; and developing collaborative partnerships with local content creators and tourism communities (Pokdarwis) to generate authentic user-generated content that enhances destination credibility. These recommendations are grounded in the study's empirical findings and align with contemporary best practices in digital destination marketing.

However, this study acknowledges several limitations that warrant consideration. The analysis focused exclusively on content evaluation without examining actual audience perception or behavioral outcomes, limiting insights into how target audiences actually respond to current communication efforts. Additionally, the study was conducted at a single point in time, constraining understanding of how communication strategies evolve or how interventions might improve performance over time. The research also did not explore organizational and resource constraints that may affect social media management in rural tourism contexts, factors that likely play significant roles in shaping current practices. These limitations suggest important directions for future research, including quantitative studies incorporating conversion rates, click-through rates, and sentiment analysis to assess communication impact more comprehensively; longitudinal research tracking changes in social media performance following strategic interventions; comparative studies examining strategies across multiple rural tourism destinations to identify best practices and contextual success factors; and investigations into community participation models in destination social media management, particularly the involvement of local stakeholders in content co-creation.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that effective digital tourism communication requires not only attractive visual content but also strategic coherence, narrative depth, interactive engagement, and clear conversion pathways. By adopting a more deliberate and theoretically grounded communication strategy that integrates IMC principles with AIDA-driven content design, Bukit Kaba can better position itself in the competitive tourism market, build stronger engagement with potential visitors, and contribute to sustainable regional tourism development. As rural and nature-based destinations increasingly compete for tourist attention in crowded digital spaces, the integration of robust communication frameworks becomes essential for achieving both promotional effectiveness and long-term destination sustainability. The insights generated from this study provide both theoretical foundations and practical guidance for destination managers seeking to transform social media presence from passive visual showcases into active, persuasive communication channels that drive tangible tourism outcomes.

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