



Digital Media and Public Engagement in the Practice of Digital Heritage Education A Case Study of Saung Angklung Udjo, Bandung

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Abstract:

Cultural heritage education no longer happens only inside museums, cultural villages, or classrooms; a growing share of it takes place through digital media, before and after instead of a physical visit. This paper is a conceptual, literature-grounded study of how digital media formats shape public engagement within the broader practice of digital heritage education, using Saung Angklung Udjo (SAU) in Bandung as an illustrative case. SAU is built around the angklung, a bamboo instrument whose live performances are themselves participatory: audiences are invited to play alongside performers rather than simply watch. The paper asks how far that participatory character of heritage education carries over into SAU's digital media presence. Methodologically, it combines a narrative review of digital-heritage-education and heritage-pedagogy literature published between 2019 and 2026 with a qualitative, non-metric reading of SAU's own Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube content: each post or video is read against three format categories static image/carousel, short-form video, and long-form video and every category is evaluated against a single criterion, namely whether it functions mainly as information, as low-effort exposure, or as an active invitation for the audience to participate, rather than by follower counts or engagement metrics. The discussion argues that public engagement with digital heritage content is not the same thing as public participation in cultural education, and that SAU's current digital media mix leans more toward the former than the latter a gap with practical implications for how heritage institutions design outreach that actually teaches rather than only reaches.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

Cultural heritage management has expanded beyond traditional experts to rely on broader community involvement, especially from underrepresented groups, to foster truly inclusive practices. Young people are essential partners as the upcoming generation of leaders, but their

involvement stays limited because adults often underestimate their capabilities and the youth themselves lack compelling motivation to participate. (Zhang et al., 2024)

Saung Angklung Udjo (SAU) is a cultural venue in Bandung built around the angklung, a bamboo instrument that is part of Sundanese and wider Indonesian musical tradition. Its central offering is a ninety-minute performance combining angklung music, traditional dance, and distinctively direct audience participation, delivered bilingually in Indonesian and English. Visitors do not only watch the show toward its end, they are handed instruments and taught to play alongside the performers. That participatory structure is arguably the most educationally significant feature of SAU as a heritage site: it is built to turn spectators into, briefly, practitioners. (Saung Angklung Udjo Bandung, 2026)

Alongside the physical venue, SAU maintains an active digital media presence – an Instagram account with roughly 73,000 followers and nearly 2,500 posts, a TikTok account, and a YouTube channel – through which it reaches audiences well beyond anyone who has bought a ticket. This raises a specific question for the practice of digital heritage education: does SAU's digital media presence extend the participatory character of its live show, or does it mainly function as promotion for that show, with the actual educational work still confined to the physical site? (Saung Angklung Udjo, 2026)

Despite this growing body of scholarship on digital heritage education, most existing case studies of heritage institutions' social media accounts describe format and audience response without asking whether a given format actually reproduces the participatory character of the underlying tradition, rather than simply displaying it ("Social Media and Cultural Heritage Institutions," ; "Connecting Characteristics of Social Media Activities," 2022). That leaves an open question this paper addresses: whether digital heritage education, as currently practiced by institutions built around participatory traditions, actually extends participation online or mainly publicizes it. SAU is a useful case for examining that question for three reasons. First, angklung was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010, partly because collaborative playing itself teaches cooperation and discipline ("Indonesian Angklung," 2010) meaning the tradition's pedagogical value is inseparable from hands-on participation rather than demonstration alone. Second, SAU is widely regarded as Indonesia's most prominent angklung institution ("Exploring the Story of Angklung," 2025), combining a tangible venue, an intangible performance tradition, and an established digital media presence in a single case, which makes it possible to compare digital content directly against a live, participatory benchmark instead of only inferring one. Third, because SAU's own live show already makes that participatory standard explicit handing every visitor an instrument any shortfall found in its digital content cannot be attributed to the tradition being inherently non-participatory; it isolates the digital medium itself as the variable of interest.

This paper approaches that question conceptually, through a literature-grounded reading of SAU's digital media content rather than through collected engagement statistics. The aim is to place SAU within the broader scholarly conversation about digital heritage education – what it is meant to achieve, and how public engagement in that process differs from public engagement in the narrower, more commercial sense used in social media analytics.

Literature Review

Digital Heritage Education as a Field

UNESCO's Charter on the Preservation of Digital Heritage frames digital heritage broadly, as encompassing cultural, educational, and scientific resources either created digitally or converted into digital form, and explicitly includes the use of digital media in the service of understanding and preserving cultural and natural heritage ("Digital Heritage," n.d.). Within that broader frame, heritage education specifically has been described as a way of increasing

knowledge, creativity, and active citizenship, connecting tangible, intangible, and digital heritage, and treating public participation not as a bonus outcome but as something closer to a right and a shared responsibility within a lifelong-learning framework ("Considering Heritage as a Common Good," n.d.). Work on cultural heritage pedagogy in digital contexts similarly frames digital heritage education as inquiry-based: students or the public are meant to construct their own understanding of a tradition through investigation and interaction, not simply receive information about it, with digital and social tools used to support critical thinking about heritage rather than only to display heritage content ("Cultural Heritage, Pedagogy and Education," n.d.).

This framing matters for how 'engagement' should be understood in a heritage-education context. In digital marketing literature, engagement is typically operationalized as a like, a comment, or a share a measure of attention. In heritage-education literature, engagement is closer to participation: a way of interacting with cultural content that builds understanding or contributes something back, not just a signal of interest. The distinction is not a technicality; it directly shapes what a heritage institution should be trying to design its digital media around.

Digital Media as a Vehicle for Public Participation

A body of work on heritage engagement makes the case that public participation is itself a way of protecting heritage, not just a means of raising awareness of it: engaging communities actively, through crowdsourcing, co-creation, or invited contribution, connects the public with heritage in a way that traditional, one-directional communication does not, and helps build the kind of public support that sustains a tradition beyond a single generation (Vincent, n.d.). Policy-level research on European heritage communities reaches a similar conclusion, recommending that institutions actively involve people with relevant digital, design, and co-creation skills, rather than treating audiences purely as recipients of content ("CoHERE Policy Brief," 2019). A related strand of scholarship on cultural heritage communities notes that digital technology has already expanded who gets to define and interpret heritage beyond professionals, to volunteers, interest groups, and citizen-led initiatives reconfiguring how heritage is communicated, interpreted, and validated (Cultural Heritage Communities, n.d.).

For an intangible, performance-based tradition like the angklung, this participatory framing is especially relevant, because the tradition itself is participatory by nature angklung is typically played in coordinated groups, and SAU's own live show is structured around getting the audience to take part rather than only observe. Digital heritage education research on other performance and craft traditions suggests this participatory quality can, in principle, be extended online: a recent framework for AI-assisted intangible cultural heritage education, for instance, describes a staged pathway from passive exposure through observation and simulation toward more embodied practice, arguing that digital tools are most valuable not when they replace direct instruction but when they widen access to the earlier stages of that pathway ("From Craft Practice to Aesthetic Cognition Transmission," 2026).

Format-Level Patterns in Heritage Institutions' Social Media

Within that broader participatory framing, existing case studies of heritage institutions' own social media activity offer some sense of how different digital media formats tend to be used in practice. A qualitative multi-case study of museums in Naples found that most institutions posted largely uniform content across platforms and formats, without a coherent strategy matched to what each format does well ("Social Media and Cultural Heritage Institutions," n.d.). A study of Historic Environment Scotland's Instagram account, covering several years of posts and stories, found enough of a pattern in audience response to argue that format and content choices meaningfully shape engagement, though building that evidence required more sustained data access than a small institution or independent researcher typically has ("Connecting Characteristics of Social Media Activities," 2022). Closer to the Indonesian context, a 2025 study of intangible cultural heritage education among elementary students in Sumenep found that

social media mainly YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram — meaningfully shaped students' exposure to cultural content, but that general awareness did not translate evenly into a deeper grasp of a tradition's philosophical or identity-related dimensions ("Digitalization of Intangible Cultural Heritage," 2025). That gap between exposure and understanding is, in effect, the gap between engagement and participation this paper is concerned with.

A caution running through several of these studies, and worth carrying into the discussion of SAU below, is what has been called an authenticity paradox: social media algorithms reward content optimized for quick engagement, which can pull cultural representation toward whatever format performs best rather than toward what most faithfully conveys a tradition's meaning ("The Authenticity Challenge," 2025). A heritage institution optimizing purely for reach, in other words, may end up working against its own educational purpose.



Method (منهج)

This paper takes a qualitative, single-case approach in the tradition described by Yin's (1992) work on case study method, applied here to a literature synthesis grounded in one institution's digital media presence rather than to a set of formal propositions tested against interview or survey data. Two sources of material are combined: the heritage-education and digital-heritage literature summarized in Section 2, and a direct, non-metric reading of SAU's public Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube content — what is posted, in what format, and how (or whether) it invites the audience to do anything beyond watch.

This is a deliberate choice rather than a shortcut. Platform data-access restrictions introduced after 2018 have made it genuinely difficult for independent researchers to study social media activity at scale — one recent study of heritage-related Facebook groups noted that a formal academic data-access request was still pending well after its research period had ended ("Researching Heritage Values in Social Media Environments," 2023). Given that constraint, a qualitative reading of publicly visible content is a workable and, for a question about educational role rather than raw popularity, arguably more appropriate method than a metrics-based one. Its limitation is equally worth stating plainly: this approach describes what SAU's content appears to invite from its audience, not what audiences actually did in response, and it should be read as a starting argument rather than a verified finding.



Result (نتائج)

SAU's Digital Media in the Educational Process

Table 1 sets out the pattern that emerges from reading SAU's public content against the three format categories used throughout this paper, this time evaluated specifically for what each format seems to invite from the audience, rather than simply what content it carries.

Table 1. SAU's digital media formats read against their apparent role in public education, not audience reach

Digital Media Format	Typical Content on SAU's Channels	Role in the Educational Process	Platform(s)
Static image / carousel	Event posters, ticketing information, behind-the-scenes photos, festive greetings	Informs the public that learning opportunities exist (schedules, access points) but invites little more than a glance	Instagram
Short-form video	Brief clips of angklung riffs, dance excerpts, festival highlights (e.g., Expo 2025 Osaka)	Introduces newcomers to the sound and movement of the tradition; a low-effort first point of contact rather than instruction	Instagram Reels, TikTok
Long-form video	Fuller performance segments, event recaps,	Carries most of the explanatory and demonstrative material, closer to the	YouTube, occasional IG video

Digital Media Format	Typical Content on SAU's Channels	Role in the Educational Process	Platform(s)
	occasional explanatory content	participatory, hands-on character of SAU's live show	

Read against the participatory literature in Section 2.2, the pattern is telling. None of the three formats, as commonly used on SAU's channels, closely reproduces the defining feature of SAU's own live show: handing the audience an instrument and asking them to play. Static posts function as scheduling and record-keeping. Short-form video functions as a preview — closer to a trailer than a lesson, in that it shows the tradition happening rather than inviting anyone to try it. Long-form video comes closest to an educational format in the conventional sense, in that it has room to explain, but it remains something the viewer watches rather than does.

This is not a criticism unique to SAU; it reflects a broader pattern noted in Section 2.3, where heritage institutions' social media tends to default toward display rather than participation, even when the underlying tradition — as with angklung — is itself participatory. What would close that gap is content specifically designed to invite a small act of participation: a short video teaching a simple angklung rhythm and asking followers to record their own attempt, a caption that poses a question about the meaning of a specific dance rather than only announcing it, or a format that treats comments as a space for cultural exchange rather than incidental audience reaction. None of this requires new technology — it requires designing digital content around the same participatory logic that already defines SAU's physical show.



Discussion (مناقشة)

The distinction this paper has tried to hold onto throughout — between public engagement as attention and public participation as involvement in learning — matters most at exactly this point. A heritage institution can be highly 'engaging' by social-media standards, generating plenty of views and reactions, while still leaving the public education literature's more demanding goals — active citizenship, deeper cultural understanding, a sense of shared responsibility for a tradition's continuation — largely untouched. Conversely, formats that invite genuine participation may never be the most-viewed content on an account, precisely because participation asks more of the audience than a glance.

Concrete examples from SAU's own channels illustrate this pattern. A number of SAU's best-performing TikTok videos are nostalgia prompts — captions inviting followers to say who they would want to meet again if they could go back to SAU — which draw thousands of comments but ask the audience only to reminisce about a past visit, not to engage with the tradition itself (Saung Angklung Udjo [@saungangklungudjo], 2026); the interaction is genuine, but it is participation in a conversation about SAU rather than participation in angklung. Coverage of SAU's 2025 appearance at World Expo Osaka follows a similar pattern in a higher-production register: bilingual captions frame the performance as a moment of national cultural pride and invite viewers to watch and share, even though the on-site event itself reportedly included inviting Expo visitors to play alongside performers — a participatory element that did not carry over into how the moment was represented online. By contrast, SAU's longer YouTube uploads, including profiles of the venue's history and its founder, Udjo Ngalagena, and current steward, Taufiq Hidayat Udjo, carry substantially more explanatory content about the tradition's meaning and continuity (Saung Angklung Udjo YouTube Channel, 2026), but remain something the viewer watches start to finish rather than a format that asks for any action in return. Across all three formats, the one type of content that would most directly mirror SAU's live show — a short tutorial inviting followers to learn and record a simple rhythm — was not found among the content reviewed, reinforcing the pattern in Table 1: SAU's channels currently reach and inform effectively, and occasionally move viewers to react, but rarely ask them to do anything with the tradition itself.

For SAU specifically, this suggests a modest but concrete direction: use the reach that short-form video already generates as a deliberate entry point into more participatory content, rather than treating it as the end goal. A short clip that hooks attention could lead, through a caption, comment prompt, or linked video, toward something the viewer is invited to do — attempt a rhythm, answer a question about the dance they just watched, share what the performance meant to them — echoing, in a smaller way, the hands-on moment that already anchors SAU's physical show. Given that SAU already frames its live performances bilingually for domestic and international audiences, extending that same framing to participatory digital content would also widen who gets to take part, not just who gets to watch.



Conclusion (خاتمة)

This paper set out to ask whether SAU's digital media presence extends the participatory character of its live show or mainly promotes it, and three findings follow from the analysis in Sections 3 and 4. First, none of the three digital media formats SAU relies on — static image/carousel, short-form video, and long-form video — closely reproduces the defining feature of its live performance: handing the audience an instrument and asking them to play. Second, this shortfall is not a matter of isolated posts but a structural pattern across the account: static content functions mainly as scheduling and record-keeping, short-form video functions mainly as a preview, and even long-form video, which carries the most explanatory depth, remains something watched rather than done. Third, and most importantly, this pattern holds

even though SAU already has a working template for participatory content in its own physical show, which means the gap identified here is not a lack of participatory material to draw on but a lack of digital formats designed around it. Read against digital heritage education's more demanding goals – active citizenship, deeper cultural understanding, a sense of shared responsibility for a tradition's continuation – SAU's digital media presence currently functions mainly as a promotional and informational layer around its physical show, with the participatory core of that show largely absent from its online content.

These findings point to several concrete steps heritage institutions in SAU's position could take to close that gap. First, convert part of the short-form video output already driving reach into brief participatory tutorials – for example, a short clip teaching a single angklung rhythm with an explicit invitation for followers to record and share their own attempt. Second, redesign captions on existing content to pose a question or set a small task rather than only announcing an event, turning the comment section into a space for cultural exchange instead of incidental reaction. Third, treat long-form YouTube video not only as a vehicle for explanation but as a bridge to action, closing videos with a specific next step a viewer can take rather than ending on the performance itself. Fourth, extend SAU's existing bilingual framing of its live show to participatory digital content, so that international as well as domestic followers are invited to take part, not only to watch. None of these steps requires new technology or a larger production budget; they require applying the same participatory logic that already defines SAU's physical show to the format choices already available on its digital channels.

As with the discussion in Section 3, the central limitation here is that this paper describes what SAU's content appears to invite, based on a literature-grounded reading, without verifying how audiences actually responded to it. A natural next step would be a modest empirical follow-up – a short survey of followers about what they recall learning, or a simple comparison of comment content between more participatory and more passive posts – to test whether the gap identified here actually plays out in practice, and whether closing it changes not just how many people engage with SAU's content, but what they take away from it.



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