



DEVELOPING DEMANGAN VILLAGE'S TOURISM IDENTITY: A SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR THE MENARA KUDUS HERITAGE AREA

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ABSTRAK

Program pengabdian masyarakat ini dilakukan untuk mendukung pengembangan pariwisata berbasis lokal di Desa Demangan yang letaknya strategis di dekat Menara Kudus. Program ini berfokus pada membantu masyarakat setempat dalam membentuk identitas pariwisata yang mencerminkan budaya dan warisan sejarah desa yang unik. Sebanyak 27 peserta—termasuk perwakilan UMKM, aktivis masyarakat, dan pengelola pariwisata—aktif mengikuti program pengabdian Masyarakat. Metode pengabdian masyarakat dilakukan melalui pendekatan edukasi dan partisipatif, termasuk presentasi, diskusi kelompok, dan pemetaan potensi desa. Untuk menilai efektivitas program, peserta menyelesaikan pre-test sebelum kegiatan dimulai dan post-test setelahnya. Hasil pelatihan menunjukkan peningkatan pemahaman peserta yang signifikan tentang konsep identitas pariwisata, dengan peningkatan skor rata-rata sebesar 35%. Selain pemahaman yang lebih baik, peserta juga menyatakan komitmen yang kuat untuk mengembangkan narasi pariwisata yang lebih otentik dan menarik. Hasil dari program ini diharapkan dapat menjadi landasan inisiatif berkelanjutan yang bertujuan untuk memposisikan Desa Demangan sebagai kontributor penting citra wisata budaya Kudus. Bimbingan berkelanjutan dan keterlibatan pemangku kepentingan lokal yang lebih luas diidentifikasi sebagai langkah strategis selanjutnya untuk mewujudkan desa pariwisata yang kompetitif yang berakar pada identitas lokal.

ABSTRACT

This community service program was carried out to support the development of locally based tourism in Demangan Village, which is strategically located near the Kudus Tower. The initiative focused on assisting the local community in shaping a tourism identity that reflects the village's unique culture and historical heritage. A total of 27 participants—including MSME representatives, community activists, and tourism managers—actively took part in the program. The community engagement process was conducted through an educational and participatory approach, including presentations, group discussions, and village potential mapping. To assess the program's effectiveness, participants completed a pre-test before the activities began and a post-test afterward. The evaluation showed a significant improvement in participants' understanding of tourism identity concepts, with an average score increase of 35%. Beyond improved comprehension, participants also expressed a strong commitment to developing a more authentic and compelling tourism narrative. The outcomes of this program are expected to serve as a foundation for sustainable initiatives aimed at positioning Demangan Village as a vital contributor to the cultural tourism image of Kudus. Ongoing mentorship and broader involvement of local stakeholders are identified as the next strategic steps toward realizing a competitive tourism village rooted in local identity.

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INTRODUCTION

Demangan Village is one of the villages located in the Kota Kudus District, Kudus Regency, Central Java. Administratively, the village consists of six hamlets, four neighborhood units (RW), and thirteen community units (RT). Its proximity to the main tourist attraction of Kudus Regency the Menara Kudus (Kudus Tower) presents a significant opportunity for development as an integral part of the religious tourism area designated by the local government since 2014, through the Decree of the Head of the Kudus Regency Office of Culture and Tourism No. 556/23.01/043C/2014. According to the plan, the Menara Kudus serves as the central hub for the development of the religious tourism area, involving nine key supporting villages, including Demangan Village. Despite its strategic geographical location and rich cultural and historical assets such as Langgar Bubrah, Demangan Batik, and Omah Kembar Demangan Village remains relatively unknown as a tourist destination. This is particularly ironic given its cultural and historical wealth, which should serve as a valuable economic and social asset for the local community. Preliminary observations and previous studies have identified several challenges, including the lack of a clear tourism identity, weak promotion and branding efforts, and limited human resource capacity in tourism management.

Langgar Bubrah, designated as a cultural heritage site with distinctive historical and architectural value; Demangan Batik, featuring local motifs such as Parijoto that represent the cultural identity of Kudus; and Omah Kembar, which holds the legacy of the founder of Kudus' first cigarette industry, are three key assets that

have the potential to become leading tourist attractions in Demangan Village. However, without professional and structured management, these assets remain part of a local narrative that lacks significant impact on attracting visitors.

Previous studies have emphasized that destination branding plays a crucial role in the success of tourism village development (Kotler, P., & Gertner, 2021) et Demangan Village currently lacks a widely recognizable identity. This situation is further exacerbated by the limited training and understanding among the local community regarding digital marketing, cultural asset management, and the importance of strengthening local narratives as a core component of tourism promotion strategies. Moreover, basic infrastructure such as road access, public facilities, and tourism signage remains inadequate, which further hinders tourist interest in exploring the village. Similar issues have been identified in studies of tourism villages across various regions in Indonesia, where underdeveloped infrastructure and low community awareness are major barriers to the development of community-based tourism (Saayman, M., & Li, 2023); (Peeters, et al, 2024)

In this context, a structured community engagement approach focused on strengthening local capacity is essential. One relevant framework is Community-Based Rural Tourism (CBRT), which emphasizes the active involvement of local communities in every stage of tourism development from planning to implementation (Astuti, et al., 2022) CBRT asserts that communities should not merely be seen as objects of development, but rather as key agents whose participation determines the sustainability of tourism village programs. Accordingly, efforts to

strengthen tourism identity through mentoring must include enhancing the community's understanding of the importance of branding, digital marketing strategies, and cultural asset conservation. In the digital era, tourism promotion is inseparable from the effective use of information technology (Via Amalia, Suratno, 2025). A study by (Darma Oka, I. N., & Subadra, 2024) found that implementing digital marketing strategies such as managing social media platforms, village websites, and visual content significantly increased tourist visits to rural destinations in Bali. This reinforces the argument that digital marketing serves as a strategic tool to broaden the visibility of Demangan Village, particularly given its rich historical and cultural narratives (Insani, A, Ariani, & Ningrum, 2022).

Based on this situation, this community service initiative was carried out with the primary goal of building the tourism identity of Demangan Village through a mentoring program focused on three key aspects: tourism village branding, digital marketing, and cultural asset management (Suhartadi, et al., 2024). These three components were chosen for their complementary nature and their potential to reinforce one another when implemented systematically. The program began with a needs assessment and an initial understanding measurement conducted through a pre-test administered to participants, who included representatives from village authorities, youth groups, MSME actors, and community leaders. This was followed by participatory training sessions using a workshop and group discussion approach, aimed at fostering critical community awareness about the importance of developing a positive image of the village as a tourism destination. During the training, participants

received materials on local wisdom-based branding strategies, the use of social media for tourism promotion, and basic techniques for cultural asset conservation. As a form of outcome evaluation, a post-test was conducted to measure the extent of improvement in participants' understanding and motivation to support the village tourism development program. The activity was attended by 27 participants and demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm, as reflected in active discussions and the formulation of follow-up plans developed collaboratively.

This initiative is expected to make a tangible contribution to shaping the image and attractiveness of Demangan Village as part of the flagship destination within the Menara Kudus Area. Beyond that, this community service program holds strategic value as a model for empowering tourism villages through the integration of local cultural assets and digital approaches one that can be replicated in other villages with similar characteristics (Juriah, 2025). In the long term, strengthening tourism identity is anticipated not only to increase tourist visits but also to contribute to local economic development, cultural preservation, and community-based development (Pertiwi, et al., 2025). The success of this model will largely depend on the commitment and collaboration among various stakeholders, including the village government, tourism agencies, academics, and local entrepreneurs. Through a collaborative approach grounded in data and best practices from previous studies (Wiranatha, et al., 2024), Demangan Village holds strong potential to evolve into a leading tourism destination one that not only offers memorable visitor experiences but also stands as a symbol of

empowerment and the preservation of local cultural heritage.

METHOD

Location

This community service program was carried out in Demangan Village, located in the Kota Kudus District, Kudus Regency, Central Java Province. Demangan Village is one of the nine supporting villages within the Menara Kudus Tourism Area, which has been officially designated as a Religious Tourism Village by the Kudus Regency's Department of Culture and Tourism since 2014. Its close proximity to the iconic Menara Kudus positions the village strategically as a potential supporting tourism destination as can be identified in Figure 1.

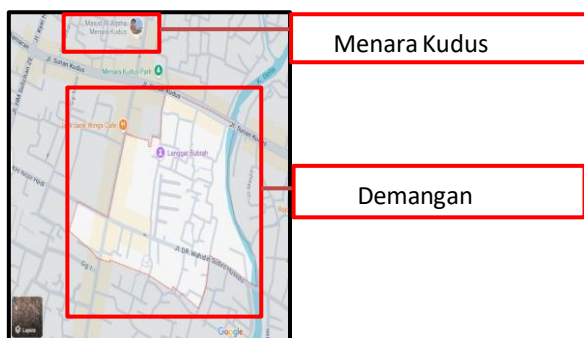


Figure 1. The Location of Demangan Village

The village possesses several cultural and historical assets, including Langgar Bubrah, Demangan Batik, and Omah Kembar, all of which hold significant historical and educational value. However, these assets have not yet been optimally developed within the tourism village framework. Therefore, Demangan Village was selected as the implementation site due to its urgent need for community capacity-building in branding, marketing, and sustainable management of tourism assets. During the activity, training and

mentoring sessions were conducted both at the village hall and directly at the cultural heritage sites, allowing participants to gain firsthand, contextual experience in the field.

Target Participants

The primary targets of this community service activity were village officials, members of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), local entrepreneurs, and community leaders in Demangan Village, Kota Kudus District, Kudus Regency. These target groups were chosen for their strategic roles in the development and management of the village's tourism potential. Village officials, as local policymakers, must understand the importance of tourism branding and identity. Meanwhile, Pokdarwis members and local business actors serve as the front-liners in the implementation of tourism activities on the ground. Community leaders were also involved to ensure social and cultural support for sustainable tourism development. In total, 27 participants from these various stakeholder groups were involved in the activities. Through targeted training and mentoring, it is expected that Demangan Village will be able to develop a strong tourism identity, attract visitor interest, and reinforce its position as an integral part of the Menara Kudus Tourism Area.

Methodology

The methodology for the community service program in Demangan Village was designed systematically through three main phases: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. Each phase was structured to directly address the challenges faced by the community in developing their tourism potential particularly in terms of

identity building, promotion, and cultural asset management.

1. Preparation Phase

In this initial phase, the service team conducted comprehensive data collection and analysis regarding the existing conditions of facilities, infrastructure, and tourism potential in Demangan Village. Activities began with field observations and informal interviews with community leaders, local SMEs, and village officials to identify tourism-worthy local assets such as Langgar Bubrah, Demangan Batik, and Omah Kembar. The potential analysis included assessments of the historical appeal, aesthetics, market value of each asset, as well as physical condition and accessibility. Additionally, this phase included an assessment of tourism-supporting infrastructure, such as road access, public facilities, and the availability of information media. The data gathered served as the basis for developing contextually relevant and applicable training modules and intervention strategies for the community.

2. Implementation Phase

This core phase consisted of training and direct mentoring for community members. The training program was structured to build participant capacity in three key areas:

a. Tourism Village Branding Strategy

Participants were introduced to the importance of visual identity, historical narratives, and local cultural symbols as integral elements of tourism village branding. They were guided through the

process of designing a tourism identity for Demangan Village, including the creation of a logo, tagline, and promotional messages that reflect local cultural richness.

b. Digital Marketing

This session focused on practical skills for using social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook to promote the village's tourism potential. Participants were trained to create engaging content photos, short videos, and promotional narratives. The training also included basic digital literacy and social media management for tourism promotion purposes.

c. Cultural Asset Management

In this area, participants were trained in the importance of preserving cultural assets and how to transform them into attractive tourism products. Hands-on practice involved site visits to Langgar Bubrah, Omah Kembar, and Demangan batik artisans to formulate a community-based, integrated management strategy.

The training utilized various methods, including interactive lectures, focused group discussions (FGDs), and practical simulations. The intensive training lasted three days and was followed by two weeks of light mentoring sessions to assist participants in applying their newly acquired skills directly in the field.

3. Evaluation Phase

The evaluation was conducted to measure the effectiveness of the program implementation.

The assessment employed three main methods:

a. Pre-test and Post-test

Before and after the training, participants were asked to complete a Likert-scale (1–5) questionnaire that assessed three main areas:

- (1) understanding of tourism village branding,
- (2) digital marketing skills, and
- (3) knowledge of local cultural asset management.

b. Field Observation

The community service team conducted direct observations of participants' post-training activities, including tourism promotion initiatives, changes in the presentation of cultural assets, and the emergence of creative local ideas from the participants.

c. Reflection and Feedback

The program concluded with a participatory reflection session, during which participants shared their experiences, challenges, and expectations regarding the program's sustainability. This feedback served as valuable input for formulating recommendations and designing future program developments.

This participatory method ensured the active involvement of the community throughout the entire process and encouraged the sustainability of the program beyond the intervention phase. Such an approach is in line with the principles of community-based tourism (CBT), which emphasizes the strengthening of local capacities as the key to successful tourism village development (Novelli et al., 2023; Anuar et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation Results

The community service program was successfully implemented. The series of activities carried out are outlined as follows:

1. Planning Phase

The planning phase of the community engagement activities in Demangan Village began with field observations and intensive coordination between the service team and the Demangan Village administration. The goal was to identify the actual challenges faced by the community in developing its tourism potential and to gather preliminary data related to the village's cultural assets and infrastructure. To enrich the data and ensure alignment with regional tourism development goals, the team also conducted a visit to the Department of Culture and Tourism of Kudus Regency (*Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Kabupaten Kudus*). This visit was aimed at collecting secondary data on tourism policies, village classification, and the status of Demangan Village as one of the nine supporting villages in the Kudus Tower Tourism Area (Kawasan Wisata Menara Kudus) as can be seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2. A visit to the Department of Culture and Tourism of Kudus Regency

During this stage, the team mapped key tourism potentials within the village, including: Langgar Bubrah as a historical and religious site, Batik Demangan as a creative economic product, and Omah Kembar, which holds significant historical value as the residence of the founder of the first cigarette factory in Kudus.

A participatory approach was adopted throughout the planning process, involving community leaders, local entrepreneurs (UMKM), and village officials in focused group discussions (FGDs). The results of the FGDs revealed that the community was receptive to the idea of developing a tourism village but still required increased capacity in branding, digital promotion, and cultural asset management.

Based on these findings, the service team designed a training program that included modules on tourism village branding strategies, social media-based digital marketing techniques, and community-based cultural asset management. Additionally, pre-test and post-test instruments were developed to assess learning outcomes, and a structured training schedule was drafted.

Overall, this phase laid a strong foundation for the implementation of the program. The

participatory and evidence-based approach ensured the activities addressed the real needs of the community and aligned with the local context and unique cultural potentials of Demangan Village.

2. Implementation Phase

The implementation phase formed the core of the community engagement activities in Demangan Village. This stage was conducted on dates agreed upon in coordination with the village authorities and involved 27 participants, consisting of village officials, local MSME (UMKM) actors, youth representatives, and community leaders. The activities commenced with a pre-test designed to assess participants' baseline understanding of the three main themes: tourism village branding, digital marketing, and cultural asset management.



Figure 3. Participants Completing the Pre-Test Questionnaire at the Beginning of the Training Session

The first training session focused on village tourism branding, introducing the basic concepts of destination image, the importance of differentiation in tourism villages, and methods for crafting a compelling narrative about Demangan Village. Participants were guided to identify local strengths such as Langgar Bubrah and Batik Demangan as key symbols of the village's identity. The second

session addressed digital marketing, where participants were introduced to platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Google Maps as tools for promoting their village.



Figure 4. The Training Session

The session included hands-on practice in creating promotional accounts, writing engaging content, and taking appealing photos for online publication. The final training session centered on cultural asset management, highlighting the importance of preserving local history and encouraging community involvement in safeguarding cultural values. Participants took part

in simulations involving the management of tourist visits and the creative packaging of cultural narratives. Following the training sessions, a post-test was administered.

3. Evaluation Phase

The evaluation phase served as a critical component in assessing the effectiveness of the community service program implemented in Desa Demangan. This evaluation was conducted through two primary approaches: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative evaluation involved a comparative analysis of the results from pre-test and post-test assessments administered to all

27 training participants. The evaluation instrument consisted of a Likert-scale

questionnaire designed to measure changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and skills across three core areas: village tourism branding, digital marketing, and cultural asset management.

The results revealed a significant improvement in participant competency. The average pre- test score was 2.6, indicating a relatively low baseline level of understanding and practical skills. Following the training sessions, the post-test average rose markedly to 4.1, reflecting a notable increase in comprehension and readiness among community members to manage tourism potential in a more professional and sustainable manner.

A total of 27 participants completed both assessments. The table below presents a statistical summary of the pre-test and post-test results:

Table 1. Comparison of Average Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Demangan Village Tourism Identity Training Participants

Aspect	Pr e-test Mean	Po st-test Mean	Score Improvem ent
Branding Understanding	2,5	4,2	+1,7
Digital Marketing Concept	2,7	4	+1,3
Cultural Asset Management	2,6	4,1	+1,5
Rata-rata Total	2,6	4,1	+1,5

Source: Primary Data (2025)

This improvement reflects a positive shift in participants' capacity to understand fundamental tourism concepts, the importance of village tourism identity, and the skills required to utilize digital media for promotional purposes. Beyond cognitive gains, observations during the training sessions also indicated increased enthusiasm, active participation in discussions, and proactive engagement in practical activities—such as creating digital promotional content and reorganizing cultural assets based on local narratives. Overall, the evaluation results demonstrate that the training approach employed was effective in enhancing participants' competencies in alignment with the goals of the community assistance program.

Meanwhile, the qualitative evaluation was conducted through post-training focus group discussions (FGDs) and field observations. During the FGD, participants expressed that the training was highly beneficial and provided new insights into the importance of a distinct village tourism identity and the active role of communities in cultural promotion and preservation. Notably, some participants had already initiated efforts to create social media accounts independently to promote their village's tourism potential.

Field observations further confirmed these findings, revealing a growing enthusiasm among residents for tourism-related activities and the initial formation of a small community-based tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis) as a first step toward structured community organization. This evaluation confirms that the program not only enhanced individual capacities but also fostered collective awareness and a sense of ownership in the development of

village-based tourism. These findings provide a valuable foundation for designing future programs that are more impactful and sustainable.

Discussion

The evaluation utilized a pre-test and post-test design involving 27 participants. A Likert-scale questionnaire assessed changes across three key areas: (1) understanding of village tourism branding, (2) digital marketing skills, and (3) knowledge of local cultural asset management. The results demonstrated a marked improvement: the average pre-test score was 2.6, rising to 4.1 in the post-test. This positive shift indicates substantial gains in both knowledge and applied competencies. The outcomes echo the Pasir Eurih (2021) study, which concluded that CHSE (Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environment) training programs led to measurable improvements in knowledge classification from moderate to high.

Branding Capacity Improvement

During the branding workshop, participants demonstrated a growing ability to articulate a clear visual identity and compelling local narrative for their village. Through collaborative exercises, they successfully developed a draft logo and the tagline "Demangan Berbudaya Religi" ("Demangan: Cultured and Religious"), which integrates elements of local wisdom, such as the Parijoto batik motif and the historical significance of Omah Kembar. These cultural markers were consciously selected to reflect both the spiritual and historical richness of the village. In-depth interviews and focused group discussions revealed a marked improvement in participants' understanding of the strategic value of integrating cultural identity into

destination marketing efforts. Participants increasingly recognized that branding is not merely a matter of visual design, but a comprehensive narrative framework that communicates the village's unique character to potential visitors.

This approach aligns with the conceptual framework proposed by (Nurdien & Galuh, 2023)) who emphasize that a destination's identity must authentically represent local cultural and historical elements to enhance its attractiveness and differentiate it from competing destinations. The process undertaken by the community in Demangan reflects this principle, demonstrating a shift toward more intentional and culturally grounded place branding strategies.

Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Initiatives

The digital marketing training produced tangible outcomes, most notably the creation of an official Instagram account for Desa Demangan and the successful registration of the village on Google Business Profile by two participants. These developments significantly enhanced the village's online presence and accessibility to a broader audience. This progress aligns with the findings of (Jati, et al., 2025) who emphasize that an integrated digital marketing strategy—incorporating platforms such as Instagram and Google Business—can effectively increase the visibility of rural tourism destinations, even in areas with limited digital infrastructure.

Early indicators of success were also evident in audience engagement. The initial promotional content, which featured photographs of Langgar Bubrah and Demangan batik, garnered over 500 views within just two weeks of publication. This level of reach suggests a promising start in leveraging social media to attract attention and

generate interest in the village's cultural assets. The experience confirms that even with minimal resources, strategic use of digital tools can serve as a powerful means of promoting community-based tourism in emerging destinations (Anholt, 2021).

Management of Local Cultural Assets

Participants collaboratively developed a conservation and management plan for key cultural assets in Desa Demangan, applying a participatory approach. For Langgar Bubrah, a local preservation team was established with designated responsibilities, including the restoration of informational signage, regular maintenance and cleaning, and the digital documentation of the site's historical narrative. This initiative not only aimed to improve the physical condition of the site but also to enhance its interpretative value for visitors.

In the case of Batik Demangan, six local micro-entrepreneurs (UMKM) received hands-on training in basic product photography and the creation of informative online captions to improve the visual and narrative appeal of their products in digital platforms. These efforts reflect a growing awareness among community members of the importance of cultural asset packaging and presentation in shaping a compelling tourism identity(

These findings resonate with the study by (Wiranatha, A. S., et al., 2024) which emphasizes that the preservation and localized presentation of cultural heritage are critical in enhancing the perceived value of rural tourism destinations. The integration of conservation practices with community-driven storytelling contributes not only to safeguarding intangible heritage but also to

enriching the visitor experience in a sustainable manner.

CONCLUSION

The community engagement program in Desa Demangan has yielded tangible outcomes in strengthening the village's tourism identity, contributing meaningfully to the broader development of the Kawasan Wisata Menara Kudus. Centered around training on village branding, digital marketing, and cultural asset management, the program focused on key heritage elements such as Langgar Bubrah, Batik Demangan, and Omah Kembar. The effectiveness of the intervention was evident in the significant improvement in participant knowledge, with average pre-test scores increasing from 2.6 to 4.1 after the program. Through the implementation of a participatory action research (PAR) approach, community members were actively involved throughout the program—from initial field assessments to reflection and evaluation—fostering a sense of ownership and enhancing the program's contextual relevance. As a result, Desa Demangan began to develop a coherent tourism identity, supported by the creation of promotional social media accounts and early-stage branding materials. Local cultural assets that had previously been underutilized are now being reframed as valuable tourism products with historical and educational appeal (Via Amalia, Eriyani, 2025). Nonetheless, several challenges persist, particularly concerning limited digital infrastructure and the need for continued capacity building among local actors. To ensure long-term sustainability, future initiatives should prioritize advanced training in digital content production, hospitality service standards, and the governance

of community-based tourism. Collaboration between government agencies, academic institutions, and the private sector will be critical in supporting these efforts. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to develop a comprehensive village tourism masterplan that aligns with regional tourism strategies and enhances institutional support for local stakeholders such as Pokdarwis and small business owners. Overall, the success of this Community Service Program the transformative potential of culturally grounded, community-driven tourism programs and offers a replicable model for rural development in other regions across Indonesia.

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