



EDUTOUR IN KAUMAN VILLAGE: TRANSFORMING TRADITION AND EDUCATION INTO FRIENDLY TOURISM IN KUDUS CITY

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ABSTRAK

Program pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan mengembangkan Desa Kauman, Kota Kudus, sebagai desa wisata edukasi sejarah dan seni tradisional melalui pendekatan pelatihan berbasis partisipasi masyarakat. Metode pengabdian dilaksanakan melalui tiga tahapan, yaitu: (1) persiapan dengan koordinasi dan Focus Group Discussion (FGD) bersama Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Kabupaten Kudus, pemerintah desa, serta Karang Taruna; (2) pelaksanaan berupa pelatihan storytelling sejarah, literasi media digital, dan produksi konten promosi wisata berbasis narasi lokal; serta (3) evaluasi melalui observasi, wawancara, dan refleksi bersama mitra. Hasil FGD menegaskan pentingnya pemetaan desa penyangga di kawasan heritage Menara Kudus untuk menghindari tumpang tindih jalur wisata. Berdasarkan pemetaan tersebut, Desa Kauman ditetapkan sebagai zona wisata sejarah dengan fokus pada narasi penyebaran Islam dan akulturasi budaya Hindu–Islam. Pelatihan yang dilaksanakan mampu meningkatkan pemahaman sejarah lokal, keterampilan komunikasi, serta literasi digital pemuda Karang Taruna. Luaran program berupa modul narasi sejarah dan video storytelling dimanfaatkan sebagai media edukasi dan promosi digital desa wisata. Tindak lanjut program diarahkan pada pembentukan unit edutourism Karang Taruna, integrasi program dengan BUMDes, serta penguatan promosi digital berkelanjutan melalui dukungan pemerintah daerah. Program ini menunjukkan bahwa pelatihan komunitas berbasis narasi lokal dan teknologi digital efektif dalam mendorong pengembangan desa wisata sejarah yang berkelanjutan.

ABSTRACT

This community engagement program aims to develop Kauman Village in Kudus City as an educational tourism village based on historical heritage and traditional arts through a participatory training approach. The program was implemented in three stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. The preparation stage involved coordination and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the Kudus Regency Department of Culture and Tourism, village authorities, and the youth organization (Karang Taruna). The implementation stage focused on historical storytelling training, digital media literacy enhancement, and the production of tourism promotional content grounded in local narratives. Evaluation was conducted through observation, interviews, and joint reflection with community partners. The FGD results emphasized the importance of mapping supporting villages within the Menara Kudus heritage area to avoid overlapping tourism routes. Based on this mapping, Kauman Village was designated as a historical tourism zone, highlighting narratives of Islamic dissemination and Hindu–Islamic cultural acculturation. The training activities improved participants' understanding of local history, communication skills, and digital literacy. Program outputs included a historical narrative module and storytelling videos used for educational and digital promotional purposes. Overall, the program demonstrates that community-based training supported by local narratives and digital technology effectively promotes sustainable historical tourism village development.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of tourism villages plays a strategic role in preserving cultural heritage, strengthening local wisdom and identity, and promoting community based economic growth by leveraging regional potential. Kauman Village is one of the key tourism destinations in Kudus Regency, widely known for its iconic landmark, the Kudus Minaret. This location is a popular pilgrimage site for both domestic and international tourists, especially those visiting the tomb of Sunan Kudus. In addition to its historical value, Kauman also embodies deep religious significance. However, survey results indicate that this great potential has not been fully optimized. According to data, the number of tourists visiting Kauman Village for pilgrimage purposes reached 36,000 domestic tourists and 36 international tourists, which is significantly lower than other destinations such as Pijar Park with 307,004 visitors and Jenang Museum with 267,650 visitors (Department of Tourism and Culture, Kudus Regency, 2025). One of the main challenges is the narrow perception held by both the local community and tourists, who often assume that the only attraction in Kauman is the Kudus Minaret, with pilgrimage to the tomb of Sunan Kudus as the sole activity. In fact, Kauman Village recognized as a religious and historical area centered around the Kudus Minaret Complex holds great potential to be developed into an educational tourism village that integrates history and traditional arts. However, such potential remains underutilized. This is due to the reliance on oral historical narratives, the lack of systematic documentation, and the absence of digital technologies to support promotion and educational outreach. Furthermore, the role of local youth as tour guides or storytellers is still

limited, and there is little integration between the village's historical, cultural, and artistic assets. Therefore, this community engagement initiative is highly relevant in addressing the need for validated historical narratives, the development of digital promotional media, and the empowerment of local communities, particularly youth, in managing the village's potential more professionally and sustainably.

According to the Ministry of Tourism (2019), a tourism village is defined as a rural area that offers environmental authenticity, including social life, economy, culture, traditions, and natural potential that can be developed as tourist attractions. The essence of a tourism village lies in the preservation of its authenticity as an ecosystem in which humans and nature coexist harmoniously. To ensure that the benefits of tourism village development are directly experienced by the community, active participation of local residents is required at every stage of the process including planning, management, and destination development (Suansri, 2003).

A study by (Oktaviani et al., 2020) reinforces that the success of tourism village development largely depends on the integration of local wisdom, cultural richness, and community empowerment as key efforts to ensure sustainability. Kauman Village possesses strong social, historical, and cultural capital that aligns closely with this concept particularly through the presence of the Kudus Minaret Mosque, which serves not only as a religious cultural icon but also as an important historical site in the spread of Islam in Java.

Furthermore, the development of tourism villages can be directed toward the concept of edutourism, or education-based tourism. Edutourism integrates educational elements into tourism activities both formal and informal enabling visitors to gain firsthand learning experiences within the local community and its environment (Pitana, 2005). Through edutourism, tourists not only enjoy the natural and cultural beauty of a destination, but also actively engage in learning processes related to history, traditions, and everyday practices of the local society.

According to (Ritchie, 2003) the concept of edutourism is highly relevant as a form of experiential learning, where direct interaction with local communities provides new insights into history, culture, traditions, and distinctive social life. In this context, Kauman Village holds significant potential to be developed as an edutourism destination rooted in historical heritage, traditional arts, and deeply embedded religious values within the local community.

A study by (Wijayanti & Pratama, 2020) (Wijayanti & Pratama, 2020) also shows that the inclusion of traditional arts in tourism village development can strengthen the character and uniqueness of a destination. Moreover, community involvement in managing traditional arts contributes to the sustainability of local creative economies, reinforces community identity, and enhances residents' sense of pride in their cultural heritage.

In the context of Kauman Village, an arts- and education-based tourism approach can serve as a strategy to revitalize local traditions that are increasingly threatened by modernization, while also functioning as a medium to strengthen the identity of an urban religious community amid

ongoing societal change. Research by Gunawan et al. (2018) also supports the idea that education- and culture-based tourism villages have been proven to enhance community well-being through job creation, MSME (micro, small, and medium enterprises) development, and increased social participation. By leveraging its historical, artistic, and religious assets, Kauman Village holds great potential to develop an integrated educational tourism program that generates meaningful impacts for community welfare

METHOD

This community service activity was carried out in Kauman Village, located in Kota Kudus District, Kudus Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. Kauman Village is one of nine supporting villages within the Menara Kudus Tourism Area, which has been designated as a Religious Tourism Village by the Department of Culture and Tourism of Kudus Regency. Its proximity to the Kudus Minaret gives the village strategic potential to be further developed as a tourist destination.

The target audience of this community service activity includes all key stakeholders involved in the development of Kauman Village as a tourism village, namely the Department of Culture and Tourism of Kudus Regency, the Kauman Village authorities, and the Karang Taruna (youth organization) of Kauman Village, Kudus Regency. This group was selected due to their strategic roles in the development and management of the village's tourism potential.

The implementation method for this community service program was systematically designed to achieve the predetermined objectives. It consists of three main stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. Each stage was

carried out using a partner-oriented approach and the utilization of technology to develop solutions that are both effective and sustainable.

1. In the preparation stage, the community service team conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to establish the strategic direction of the program. The FGD involved various stakeholders, including the Community Service Team from the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Negeri Semarang (FEB UNNES), representatives from the Department of Culture and Tourism of Kudus Regency, Kauman Village authorities, and the Karang Taruna youth organization of Kauman Village. The discussion was held at the Kauman Village Hall using a participatory and collaborative approach to explore the needs, challenges, and implementation strategies for an edutourism program based on local history and traditional arts.
2. The implementation stage is the core of this program, where the planned solutions are put into action. In terms of content production, the team will begin by developing multimedia narratives using the available equipment. These narratives will be created in video, audio, and interactive presentation formats to enrich Kauman Village's promotional content. In terms of human resource development, training will be provided to local youth to become storytellers, and to local artists who will assist in calligraphy art workshop routes. The training sessions will include hands-on practice to ensure that participants acquire applicable, real-world skills.

3. The evaluation stage is conducted to assess the success of the program using multiple methods. Direct observation during implementation, interviews with participants, and the collection of feedback from partners are integral parts of the evaluation process. The results of this evaluation will be analyzed to determine the program's effectiveness and to identify opportunities for improvement in the future.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This community service program has been successfully implemented. The series of activities carried out is as follows:

1. Preparation Stage

The planning stage of the community service activities in Kauman Village began with a needs analysis involving key partners through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). This FGD engaged various stakeholders, including the Community Service Team from the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Negeri Semarang (FEB UNNES), representatives from the Department of Culture and Tourism of Kudus Regency, Kauman Village authorities, and the Karang Taruna youth organization. The FGD was held at the Kauman Village Hall using a participatory and collaborative approach.

During the FGD, it was agreed that prior to implementing the edutourism program, a thematic mapping of the tourism area was necessary to accommodate 10 supporting villages within the Menara Kudus Complex. This mapping resulted in the identification of three thematic zones:

- 1) Culinary Tourism Zone, comprising Damaran Village, Janggalan Village, Kerjasan Subdistrict, and Sunggingan Subdistrict.
- 2) Cultural Tourism Zone, comprising Demangan Village and Langgardalem Village.
- 3) Historical Tourism Zone, comprising Kauman Village, Kajeksan Subdistrict, Purwosari Subdistrict, and Bakalan Krapyak Village.

Kauman Village was classified under the Historical Tourism Zone, with the main focal point being the Menara Kudus Complex, including Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Tomb of Sunan Kudus, and the graves of his companions. The FGD also revealed that the community is generally open to the idea of developing a tourism village, but still requires capacity building in areas such as branding, digital promotion via social media, and tourism content development. Based on these findings, the community service team designed training needs that included modules on village tourism branding strategies, social media-based digital marketing techniques, and content development for tourism promotion.

Overall, the planning phase successfully established a strong foundation for the implementation of the program. The participatory approach provided a clear picture of the community's actual needs and ensured that the program was well-aligned with the unique potential of Kauman Village.

2. Program Implementation

The implementation phase was the core of the community service activities in Kauman

Village. The activities were conducted on dates agreed upon in coordination with village authorities and were attended by members of the Karang Taruna (youth organization) of Kauman Village. The training sessions were based on a historical narrative module developed by the community service team. Participants were expected to deliver historical narratives in a structured, communicative, and interactive manner, while also utilizing visual aids such as images, videos, and historical illustrations. The training also included the development of skills in tourism content creation, as a follow-up to the FGD outcomes—namely, the integration of historical storytelling with direct cultural experiences, such as calligraphy workshops, making Kudus-style batik, or even visiting heritage houses while listening to local stories shared by village elders. This reflects the potential to build a storytelling- and participation-based tourism model that not only educates but also evokes emotional engagement and curiosity among visitors. This concept aligns with the principles of experiential tourism, a growing global trend where tourists seek not just to observe but to feel, touch, and experience the local way of life. Therefore, the combination of historical narrative and cultural activity is expected to become a distinctive strength of Kauman Village, setting it apart from other destinations in Kudus. As such, equipping the Karang Taruna, who serve as the front-liners of the edutourism program, is essential. Their communication and storytelling skills must be enhanced through targeted training facilitated by the community service team. One of the key success factors for edutourism lies in the ability

of local youth to narrate history in an engaging, modern, and relatable manner, especially for younger generations. To address this need, a storyteller training program was also conducted for the Karang Taruna of Kauman Village. These various training initiatives by the community service team serve as a foundation for developing edutourism in Kauman Village.

3. Evaluation

The evaluation phase was a crucial component in ensuring the effectiveness of the community service program implemented in Kauman Village. A qualitative evaluation was conducted through post-training Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and field observations. The FGD results revealed that participants found the training highly beneficial and enlightening, particularly in raising awareness about the importance of village identity and the active role of the community in promoting and preserving local culture.

Field observations also indicated positive changes, such as the increased capacity of the Karang Taruna in developing storytelling skills, creating narratives, and producing tourism-related content. This evaluation demonstrates that the community service activities not only enhanced individual competencies but also fostered collective awareness and a sense of ownership toward village tourism development. These findings will serve as a critical foundation for designing future programs that are more impactful and sustainable.

Discussion

The implementation of this community service program in Kauman Village represents

an effort to transform the village's initial condition into an innovative educational tourism destination. According to data from the Department of Culture and Tourism of Kudus Regency (2025), the number of tourist visits to Kauman Village remains significantly lower compared to other destinations such as Pijar Park or the Jenang Museum. This low visitation rate is not due to a lack of potential, but rather the limited innovation in designing visitor experiences. Existing historical narratives are delivered orally and without standardization, there is no active involvement of youth as tourism agents, and the village lacks a strong digital promotion structure. These findings are consistent with Fitria's study, which states that tourism villages that fail to present their history in a visual and interactive narrative will struggle to compete with modern destinations (Fitria et al., 2022). In addition, Fathy et al. emphasize that transforming into a tourism village requires youth involvement and the packaging of local narratives through digital platforms to reach the new generation of travelers (Fathy et al., 2024).

Following the implementation of the community service activities, significant changes began to emerge. Through a series of initiatives—such as FGDs, area mapping, storyteller training, the development of historical narrative modules, and the production of storytelling videos, there has been a paradigm shift from "a village that receives tourists" to "a village that conveys historical narratives." The involvement of Karang Taruna as storytellers demonstrated tangible impact in enhancing the capacity of

local human resources. A public test during the edutour route simulation showed that training participants were able to deliver historical narratives with confidence, contextual relevance, and clarity. Changes were also observed at the institutional level. Village officials, who had previously served primarily in administrative roles, began to act as facilitators for tourism development. Moreover, the Department of Tourism expressed support to position Kauman Village as a pilot project for developing narrative-based historical tourism through digital platforms.

The main strength of this community service initiative lies in the integration of historical, cultural, and digital technology approaches. The historical narrative module developed by the team not only outlines the chronology of Islam's spread in Kudus but also emphasizes the values of Hindu-Islamic acculturation, as reflected in the architecture of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the philosophy of Menara Kudus, and local traditions such as Dhandhangan and Buka Luwur. This approach aligns with the concept proposed by Saepudin et al. (2019) regarding the importance of local narratives in shaping the "local people gaze" a critical and reflective perspective of local communities on their own cultural assets. The storytelling video produced during the program serves as evidence of the successful digitalization of historical narratives. Beyond its use in training, the video has been uploaded to Karang Taruna's social media channels, featured in village events, and disseminated by the Department of Culture. This supports the

findings of (Abidin et al., 2024), which state that audiovisual-based historical narratives can significantly enhance tourists' perception of a destination's educational value. The edutourism approach also aligns with the literature on community based educational tourism development. A study by (Aryaningtyas et al., 2024) emphasizes that local community involvement in designing and delivering historical narratives can foster a sense of belonging and strengthen community identity. In Kauman Village, this effect is evident in the enthusiasm of residents who contributed historical stories, visual artifacts, and expressed readiness to serve as local narrators.

There is no transformation without challenges. During the implementation of the program, several critical obstacles emerged that required adaptive responses. The first challenge was the lack of written historical documentation. Much of the local history exists only in oral form, making it difficult to create standardized narratives.

The second challenge was the low level of digital literacy and public speaking skills among youth. Most members of Karang Taruna had never acted as public narrators or used video content production tools. To address this, the training was conducted in stages, not only focusing on narrative content but also covering vocal techniques, facial expressions, language improvisation, and an introduction to basic editing applications. The third challenge was the limited funding for long-term promotion. As the community service program had a defined scope and timeline, strategies were needed to ensure

continuity beyond the funding period. In response, the team coordinated with the Department of Culture to incorporate the program into the regional tourism promotion roadmap and encouraged Karang Taruna to establish a dedicated edutourism task unit capable of accessing CSR funds or village-owned enterprise (BUMDes) resources.

To ensure the sustainability and long-term impact of the community service program, several follow-up initiatives were jointly formulated with community partners and local stakeholders. First, the establishment of a **Karang Taruna-based edutourism unit** is planned to institutionalize the role of trained youth as official storytellers and facilitators of educational tourism activities. This unit will be responsible for managing storytelling routes, coordinating cultural activity-based tours, and maintaining the continuity of historical narrative delivery for visitors.

Second, the program will be integrated with the village-owned enterprise (BUMDes) to strengthen organizational support and financial sustainability. Through this integration, edutourism activities—such as guided historical tours, cultural workshops, and storytelling-based tourism packages—can be developed as village economic products that generate local revenue and support youth involvement.

Third, continued collaboration with the Department of Culture and Tourism of Kudus Regency is planned to align Kauman Village's edutourism program with the regional tourism promotion roadmap. This includes the utilization of digital platforms managed by

local government for wider dissemination of storytelling videos and promotional content.

Finally, periodic capacity-building activities, such as advanced storytelling training and digital content development workshops, are planned in collaboration with higher education institutions to ensure continuous skill enhancement. These follow-up strategies are expected to strengthen institutional capacity, promote sustainable digital-based tourism promotion, and reinforce Kauman Village's position as a narrative-based historical edutourism destination.

CONCLUSION

The community service program in Kauman Village successfully facilitated the transformation of the village from a passive pilgrimage destination into an active, educational tourism village grounded in history and culture. Through area mapping, the development of historical narratives, storyteller training, and digital media production, the local community particularly Karang Taruna was empowered to become knowledgeable and communicative tourism agents. The strengthening of Kauman's identity as a historical tourism area was evident in the increased local capacity to deliver historical narratives in an engaging and accurate manner, as well as in the emergence of a collective spirit for cultural preservation. Challenges such as the lack of historical documentation and limited digital literacy were addressed through participatory approaches, gradual training, and the use of simple technologies. Overall, the program demonstrates that the development of narrative-based tourism villages can be effectively implemented when

supported by multi-stakeholder collaboration, youth involvement, and the strengthening of historical values as a core community asset.

To ensure sustainability, the program will be continued through the establishment of a Karang Taruna-based edutourism unit responsible for managing storytelling activities and educational tourism routes. The integration of edutourism programs with the village-owned enterprise (BUMDes) is expected to strengthen institutional support and generate local economic benefits. In addition, collaboration with the Kudus Regency Department of Culture and Tourism will be maintained to align digital storytelling and promotional content with regional tourism strategies. Periodic capacity-building activities, particularly in storytelling and digital content production, will be conducted in collaboration with higher education institutions to support continuous skill development. These follow-up efforts are designed to reinforce community ownership, institutional sustainability, and the long-term development of Kauman Village as a narrative-based historical edutourism destination

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