

Innovative Homestays and Eco-Friendly Accommodation as Tourist Attractions

Desma Erica Maryati Manik^{1*}, Hommy Dorthy Ellyany Sinaga², Yulvitriyani Br Sebayang³, Muhammad Hafiz Abd.Rashid⁴, Marwan⁵, Sipnarong Kanchawongpaisan⁶

^{1,2} Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Eka Prasetya, ³ Politeknik Mandiri Bina Prestasi, ⁴ Universiti Teknologi Mara Malaysia, ⁵ Universitas Syiah Kuala, ⁶ Shinawatra University Thailand

**Corresponding author*

E-mail: desmaerica79@gmail.com (Desma Erica Maryati Manik)*

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Abstract: Rural areas with natural potential and agrarian atmosphere such as Pematang Johar Village present opportunities to be developed into sustainable tourism destinations. However, limitations in lodging facilities and lack of environmentally friendly practices become obstacles in optimizing that potential. Therefore, this community-service activity aims to design and assist the implementation of eco-friendly homestays and lodgings as a new tourist attraction in the village. The implementation methods consist of initial observation and problem identification, training and assistance for lodging managers/owners and community members, and post-implementation evaluation. The results show increased environmental awareness among homestay managers and the community, evidenced by improved building design using local/natural materials, implementation of waste management systems and greening the environment, and establishment of environmentally friendly homestay service standards. These findings indicate that eco-friendly homestay development can serve as an alternative lodging option that strengthens the village's tourism appeal while supporting environmental preservation and community empowerment. Thus, environmentally conscious lodging innovation is worthy to be adopted as a sustainable tourism model in Pematang Johar Village, with a recommendation that management continues participatively and receives support from the village authority for sustainability.

Keywords:

Community Empowerment; Eco-friendly Homestay; Pematang Johar; Sustainable Tourism; Village Tourism

Introduction

Pematang Johar Village, Labuhan Deli Subdistrict, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra Province, is known as one of the villages with rice field tourism potential, characterised by its vast rice fields and unspoilt rural scenery. According to the village's official profile, tourist attractions in this village are packaged in the form of a village-owned enterprise (BUMDes) called 'rice field tourism', with facilities such as a parking area, cafeteria, souvenir kiosks, photo spots, and accommodation/homestay services for tourists (Gultom et al., 2024). However, official documents state that the human resources sector, such as homestay management and training for managers, remains an important concern for improving tourism quality (Disbudporapar.deliserdang, n.d.)

1. Rice Field Tourism

Pematang Johar offers a rural atmosphere, rice fields, and leisurely recreation suitable for families, domestic tourists, and those who want to 'escape' from the urban atmosphere (Mailani & Purnomo, 2023). The main attractions of this rice field tourism are:

- a. Vast green rice fields and soothing natural scenery, perfect for relaxation and photography.
- b. Sunrise/sunset spots in the rice fields that offer beautiful views, different from mountain or beach tourism.
- c. A rural atmosphere with fresh air, a calm atmosphere, and a traditional feel, providing a different experience from urban tourism.



Figure 1. Rice Field Tourism

Pematang Johar Rice Field Tourism, as seen in Figure 1, not only offers recreation but also has a positive impact on the local economy and community, namely:

- a. Opening up alternative economic opportunities for residents, not only from agriculture, but also tourism, land rental services, souvenir kiosks, culinary services, and visitor services.
- b. Attracting local and foreign tourists, thereby increasing community income and recognition of the village as a tourist village.
- c. Empowering the community, especially farmers and villagers, to become involved as tourism operators: opening small businesses, participating in the culinary sector, souvenirs, or tourism services.
- d. Becoming an alternative for rural/agricultural tourism close to urban areas, for example, for tourists from Medan or its surroundings who want to enjoy the natural atmosphere without travelling far.

2. Traditional Restaurant

The village profile mentions that, in addition to rice fields and natural tourist attractions, Pematang Johar also offers 'traditional restaurants' as tourist spots. These traditional restaurants are likely not large modern restaurants, but rather dining establishments with a rural atmosphere that blend in with the concept of rice field tourism, local cuisine, and traditional/local wisdom.



Figure 2. Traditional Restaurant

Thus, this restaurant is part of the village's tourism services, where visitors can enjoy food while experiencing the natural atmosphere of the countryside and rice fields. Although detailed information is limited, the existing concept and approach demonstrate efforts to combine nature tourism, local wisdom, and environmental sustainability (Manik & Angkasa, 2025).

3. Children's Playground

According to literature on the tourism potential of Pematang Johar, children's playgrounds are included in the indicator of 'variety of tourist activities', meaning that the destination is not only for adults/general tourists, but also suitable for children and families.



Figure 3. Children's playground

The benefits of having a children's playground, as shown in Figure 3, include:

- a. Providing recreational space for children to play, move around and socialise without having to travel far to parks in big cities.
- b. Making tourism attractive for families: parents can enjoy the atmosphere of rice fields and rural nature while children have space to play.
- c. Introducing children to rural nature: not only playing, but also getting to know the environment of rice fields, agriculture, and village life a combination of education and entertainment.

Against this tourism backdrop, innovations in the form of homestays or eco-friendly accommodation have become relevant. Eco-friendly homestays can not only increase tourism appeal, but also promote sustainable tourism that preserves the environment and local culture, as well as empowering local communities (Pratama et al., 2025). This approach has been proven effective in several studies for example, the development of 'local wisdom-based homestays' with environmental and cultural sustainability practices.

Thus, this community service activity aims to design and encourage eco-friendly lodging/homestay innovations in Pematang Johar Village as part of sustainable tourism development.

Method

This community service activity was carried out in Pematang Johar Village, Labuhan Deli Subdistrict, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra. The approach used in this activity was participatory, where the service team collaborated with village officials, tourism managers, and the surrounding community in every stage of the activity. The participatory approach is considered the most effective in the context of community empowerment, as it allows for the active involvement of residents in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities (Reindrawati, 2023)

The implementation of the activity was carried out in three main stages: (1) observation and problem identification stage, (2) training and mentoring stage, and (3) activity outcome evaluation stage. These three stages are interconnected to achieve an increase in human resource capacity in tourism management and services (Manik & Sinaga, 2019).

1. Observation and Problem Identification Stage

The initial stage began with conducting a survey of homestays and lodgings in the village, observing the physical conditions, environment, and natural potential. Interviews were conducted with village officials, BUMDes administrators, homestay owners/managers, and the community to gain an understanding of the challenges and aspirations related to homestay development (Manik, Desma Erica Maryati; Gultom, Pesta; Nainggolan, 2022). The initial conditions documented include buildings, the environment, sanitation, accessibility, and natural potential such as rice fields and rural panoramas. In addition to direct visits to the service area, a literature study and review were also conducted, referring to the concepts of sustainable tourism, homestays based on local wisdom, and green hospitality practices.



Figure 4. Remarks from the Village Head

Figure 4 shows the Village Head of Pematang Johar, Sudarman, S.Pd., giving remarks as a form of support from the local government for this community service activity.

2. Training and Mentoring Stage

The second stage is the core of the community service activities, namely training for the community and tourism managers. These activities focus on two main aspects: (a) training for tour guides, and (b) training in community-based tourism destination management.

a. Training for Homestay Managers/Owners

Training for homestay managers/owners on the principles of 'environmentally friendly homestays', the use of local/natural building materials, hygiene management, waste management, environmental conservation, green spatial planning, and sustainable tourism services. This training also emphasises the importance of preserving the environment and local cultural heritage so that homestays can become a representation of local identity.

b. Technical Assistance for Homestay Managers/Owners

This technical assistance supports the renovation or construction of homestays based on environmentally friendly principles, providing guidance on simple design, selection of local materials, green spatial planning, green areas or greening around the accommodation, waste management, and water.



Figure 5. Training and Assistance for Homestay Managers/Owners

c. Socialisation with the wider community

This socialisation with the wider community involved residents, local builders, village officials, and relevant stakeholders to gain mutual support. At this stage, the community showed great enthusiasm and began to understand the importance of good tourism management. Several participants also proposed the formation of small tourism management groups as a step towards programme sustainability (Dharma Nurhalim, 2023). Figure 3 shows the community service team, the community, and village officials participating in the activity together.



Figure 6. Togetherness of the Community Service Team, Homestay Managers, Community, and Village Officials.

4. Evaluation and Reflection

After training and mentoring, an evaluation is conducted on the changes, both physical aspects (buildings, cleanliness, facilities), environmental aspects (greening, waste management), and tourism service aspects (satisfaction, readiness of homestays as tourist facilities). The evaluation can use questionnaires and interviews with homestay managers, guests/tourists (if there are any staying), and the surrounding community. Post-intervention documentation can take the form of photographs of the condition of the homestay, the environment, facilities, and management activities.

To provide a clearer picture of the stages of community service implementation, a flowchart of activities was prepared to illustrate the process from the initial stage to the final stage.



Figure 7. Flowchart of Community Service Activities

This diagram illustrates the sequence of activities, starting from observation and problem identification, planning and implementation of training, field assistance, to the evaluation and reflection stage of the activities. With this diagram, it is hoped that the process of community service carried out by the team can be understood systematically, as well as the interrelationship between the stages in achieving the goal of increasing human resource capacity in the tourism sector.

By using a participatory approach and experience-based learning, this activity is expected to improve the community's skills in managing tourism potential independently and sustainably. A similar approach has proven effective in various community service studies in the local tourism sector because it emphasises the transfer of applicable and collaborative knowledge (Manik & Angkasa, 2025).

Results

The community service activities carried out in Pematang Johar Village have been running well and have received full support from the village government and the local community. In general, these activities have successfully achieved their objectives, namely:

1. Some homestays have been successfully renovated or redesigned with environmental principles in mind: the use of local/natural materials, the

creation of green spaces around the homestays, the provision of recycling bins, good ventilation and air circulation systems, and a layout that retains the rural and natural feel of Pematang Johar Village.

2. The renovated homestays have received positive responses from the community, both managers and neighbours, who see this as an added value, because in addition to aesthetics, it also increases the selling value of village tourism.
3. Increased interest among residents to participate in tourism management: not only as homestay owners, but also as supporters (environmental management, tour guides, cleanliness, welcoming guests). This indicates the potential for broader community empowerment.
4. The initial plan to make eco-friendly homestays part of the official tourist attractions in Pematang Johar Village can increase the village's tourism value, extend the length of stay for tourists, and open up new economic opportunities for the local community.

Discussion

Through this activity, the community not only gains new knowledge about how to manage tourism, but also begins to realise the importance of good service and sustainable management. The village government, BUMDes, and local stakeholders need to continuously support environmentally friendly homestay programmes, for example through small funding, further training, certification, or incentives for homestay managers who apply environmentally friendly principles. In addition, it is also necessary to involve the wider community, not just homestay managers, in efforts to protect the environment and support tourism, such as through mutual assistance programmes for cleanliness, reforestation, integrated waste management, and education on the environment and local culture.

This activity can also be carried out by integrating eco-friendly homestays with village tourism packages, such as rice field tours, agro-tourism, and cultural tours, so that tourists can enjoy a comprehensive experience of accommodation, nature, culture, and the hospitality of the local community. Periodic monitoring and evaluation are needed to assess the social, economic, and environmental impacts and identify improvements to ensure the sustainability of the programme.

This aligns with the view (Prayoga & Wahyono, 2024) that community empowerment will succeed if residents are actively involved in the entire process of activities. After the training, the community showed significant behavioural changes.

They became more confident in interacting with tourists and began to apply the principles of friendly service. In addition, there was a new awareness that tourism management is not only about attracting visitors but also maintaining the comfort and cleanliness of tourist areas.

This activity also succeeded in fostering local initiatives through the formation of small groups of tourism managers who voluntarily maintain the tourist area and carry out simple promotions through social media. This initiative shows that the Pematang Johar community is beginning to have the ability to manage the potential of their area independently. Apart from social changes, this activity also opened up new economic opportunities (Mailani & Purnomo, 2023).

The implementation of this activity also emphasises the important role of higher education institutions in supporting regional development through the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi (Three Pillars of Higher Education). Collaboration between academic teams, village governments, and communities has created productive cooperation. This approach emphasises that synergy between various parties will increase the effectiveness of community empowerment programmes.

Overall, this community service activity has had a tangible social impact in Pematang Johar. The community is now more active, has a new enthusiasm for developing their village, and is beginning to understand the importance of professionally managed tourism. Despite challenges such as limited facilities and digital promotion, this activity has been a first step towards independent and sustainable tourism management.

Conclusion

The community service activities carried out in Pematang Johar Village have had a positive impact on improving human resource capacity in the field of tourism. Innovative homestays and eco-friendly lodgings are suitable and relevant to be developed in Pematang Johar Village, given its natural potential (rice fields, countryside, panoramic views) and the village's efforts to develop rice field tourism. Training and mentoring involving the community and homestay managers have proven effective in raising environmental awareness and bringing about changes in the physical and managerial aspects of homestays.

Eco-friendly homestays not only improve the quality of tourism facilities but also open up opportunities for community empowerment, from homestay owners and tourism workers to supporting actors such as cleaners and guides. With a shared commitment, this concept can strengthen the village's tourism appeal and support

environmentally conscious sustainable tourism (Loo, 2025).

This activity is the first step towards the formation of an independent, competitive and sustainable tourist village. With synergy between the community, government and academics, Pematang Johar has the potential to become a model for community-based tourism development in North Sumatra that can improve the welfare of the community without abandoning the local values that characterise it.

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