

Human Resource Capacity Building Through Tour Guide and Tourism Management Training

Irvan Rolyesh Situmorang¹, Yonson Pane², Frenky Situmorang³, Sipnarong Kanchawongpaisan⁴, Phan Bao Giang⁵, Novi Indriyani Sitepu⁶

^{1,2,3} Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Eka Prasetya, ⁴ Shinawatra University Thailand, ⁵ University of Economics and Finance Ho Chi Minh Vietnam, ⁶ Universitas Syiah Kuala

**Corresponding author*

E-mail: irvanrolyesh15@gmail.com (Irvan Rolyesh Situmorang)*

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Abstract: *This community service program was conducted in Pematang Johar Village, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra, which holds strong potential as a community-based tourism destination but faces challenges due to limited human resource capacity. The main objective was to enhance local residents' knowledge and skills in tourism management and tour guiding. Using a participatory approach, the program involved three stages: observation and problem identification, training and mentoring, followed by evaluation and reflection. The program was collaboratively implemented with local government and community participation. The results indicated improved understanding of tourism management, the emergence of local tourism groups, and growing community awareness of sustainable tourism practices. Overall, this initiative strengthened local capacity toward developing Pematang Johar Village as an independent and sustainable tourism destination.*

Keywords:

Community Empowerment; Pematang Johar; Tour Guiding; Tourism Management; Training

Introduction

Pematang Johar Village, located in Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra, possesses great potential to be developed as a nature- and culture-based tourism destination. The area offers scenic rice fields, a tranquil rural atmosphere, and authentic local experiences that attract visitors seeking natural tourism. Beyond its natural beauty, several attractive photo spots have made the village increasingly popular among young tourists. However, this promising potential has not been matched by effective and professional tourism management. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Pematang Johar had only begun to emerge as a local tourism site with a relatively small number of visitors (Situmorang, 2022). During the pandemic, tourism activity nearly ceased, and even after restrictions were lifted, visitor numbers

remained low. This situation led to neglected facilities and declining motivation among residents to manage the site. These conditions highlight the limited capacity of local human resources, both among tourism managers and the surrounding community, in adapting and managing tourism potential effectively. Currently, the area is still managed in a modest, unstructured manner by the local community without a sustainable management system.

Previous studies emphasize the critical role of human resource development in community-based tourism. Santoso et al., (2022) argue that locally rooted tour guide training enhances professionalism and strengthens destination identity, while Azkar et al., (2022) found that the success of tourism villages largely depends on the community's ability to manage local potential and collaborate with local governments. However, such programs remain limited in North Sumatra, particularly in new tourism areas like Pematang Johar, which face human resource challenges despite strong potential. Hence, this community service initiative aims to address the gap through integrated training that focuses on improving tour guiding and sustainable tourism management skills (Akbar et al., 2021). Another key issue in Pematang Johar is the absence of qualified tour guides with adequate knowledge and communication skills. Visitors often struggle to obtain information about tourist sites or local history, resulting in less memorable experiences and limited word-of-mouth promotion (Situmorang et al., 2025). The success of a tourism destination depends not only on its attractions but also on the quality of service and interaction with visitors. As Christiani & Bhakti, (2022) note, tour guides play an essential role in shaping a destination's image and improving visitor satisfaction through effective communication and strong local insight.

This community service project responds to that need. Higher education institutions bear a social responsibility to empower communities, aligning with the *Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi* education, research, and community service. Through training in tour guiding and tourism management, this program seeks to build human resource capacity in the area, focusing on service quality, destination management, and local product development. One potential initiative includes developing local agricultural products into culinary items, such as rice-based snacks and souvenirs that reflect the unique identity of Pematang Johar. Through this training, local residents are expected to evolve from passive participants into active contributors who generate economic and social value through tourism. Strengthening human resource capacity in tourism serves as a strategic effort to revitalize Pematang Johar's tourism sector post-pandemic and to establish a competitive and sustainable destination. Thus, this community service program not only focuses on technical skill development but also

fosters collective awareness of inclusive, creative, and community-based tourism governance oriented toward sustainable development.

Method

This community service program was carried out in Pematang Johar Village, Labuhan Deli District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra. The location was chosen because it has significant tourism potential that has not yet been optimally managed by the local community. The approach used in this activity was participatory, where the service team collaborated with village officials, tourism managers, and the local community in every stage of implementation. A participatory approach is considered the most effective in community empowerment, as it allows active involvement of residents in planning, implementation, and evaluation (Reindrawati, 2023). The program was carried out in three main stages: (1) observation and problem identification, (2) training and mentoring, and (3) evaluation and reflection. These stages were designed to be interrelated to achieve an increase in human resource capacity in tourism management and service delivery.

1. Observation and Problem Identification Stage

The initial stage began with field surveys and interviews involving village officials, tourism managers, and local residents. The purpose was to understand the existing conditions of the tourism area and the challenges faced in destination management. The findings showed that tourism activities in Pematang Johar had not yet been supported by a clear management structure or skilled human resources. Moreover, the absence of trained tour guides became a key obstacle in providing visitors with informative and memorable experiences. A needs assessment approach was applied to identify the community's priority needs both in terms of tourism management knowledge and communication skills. This stage was crucial to ensure that the program addressed the real needs of the community and remained relevant to the local context. Coordination was also carried out with the Village Head of Pematang Johar, who expressed full support for the implementation of the training activities.



Figure 1. Opening Remarks from the Village Head

Figure 1 shows the Village Head of Pematang Johar giving a welcoming speech and motivational message to participants, representing the strong support of the local government for this program.

2. Training and Mentoring Stage

The second stage was the core of the program training sessions for the local community and tourism managers. This stage focused on two main aspects: (a) Tour guide training, and (b) Community-based tourism management training.

a. Tour Guide Training

The materials covered topics such as communication and service techniques, knowledge of local history and potential, and tour guiding ethics. Participants were given the opportunity to practice delivering information to visitors in engaging and educational ways. The success of a tourism destination is largely determined by the quality of interaction between guides and visitors, as tour guides act as cultural intermediaries who strengthen the positive image of a destination (Lestari et al., 2022).

b. Community Based Tourism Management Training

In this session, participants were introduced to the concept of *Community-Based Tourism (CBT)*, an approach that positions local communities as the main managers of the destination. This concept emphasizes independence and sustainability so that residents are not only beneficiaries but also creators of economic value. During the implementation, the service team provided examples of simple management practices, including organizing tourism areas, managing entrance tickets, and maintaining cleanliness and visitor safety. The training was conducted interactively through lectures, group discussions, role-playing, and direct field practice. Experiential learning methods were used

to accelerate skill development.

Figure 2 shows the community service team providing direction and on-site training to participants.



Figure 2. On-Site Training and Direct Guidance

3. Evaluation and Reflection Stage

The final stage was the evaluation of the program's effectiveness and changes in community behavior after the training. Evaluation was conducted through open-ended interviews and observation of participant engagement throughout the activities. Qualitative evaluation was used to assess the social impact and acceptance of the program within the community. At this stage, participants demonstrated high enthusiasm and a growing understanding of the importance of proper tourism governance. Some participants even proposed forming small tourism management groups to ensure the sustainability of the program.

Figure 3 captures the collaboration between the service team, community members, and village officials during the activity.



Figure 3. Collaboration among the Service Team, Community, and Village Officials.

To give a clearer overview of the implementation process, a program flow diagram was developed, illustrating the steps from the initial observation stage to evaluation and reflection

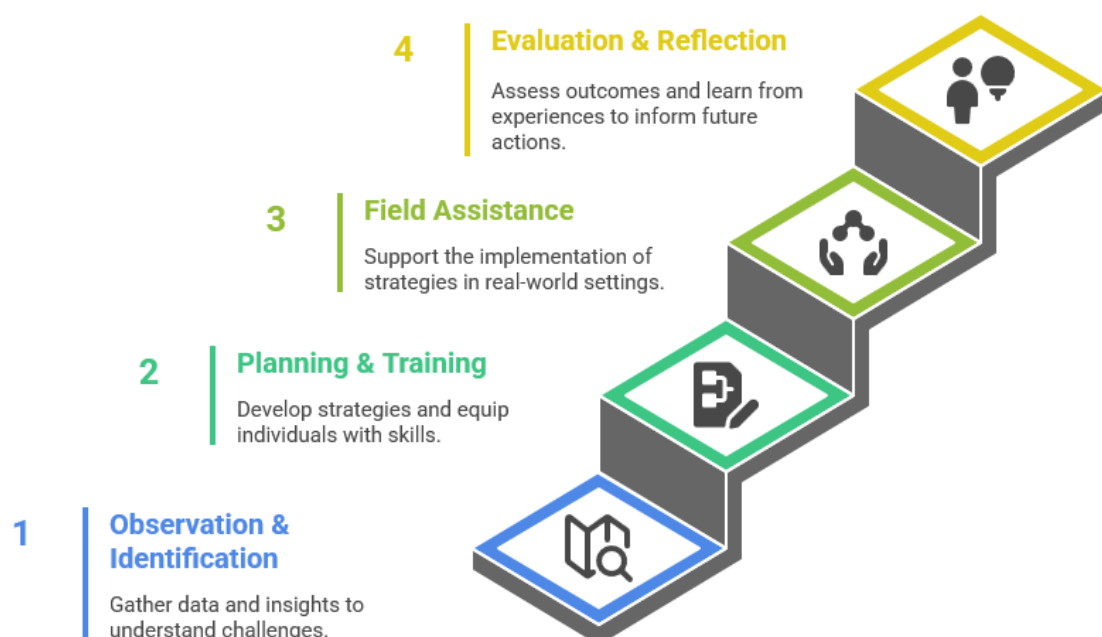


Figure 4. Community Service Program Flow Diagram

This diagram illustrates the sequence of activities starting from observation and problem identification, planning and training, mentoring, and finally evaluation and reflection. The diagram helps visualize how each stage is interconnected in achieving the goal of strengthening human resource capacity in the tourism sector.

By applying a participatory approach and experiential learning, this program succeeded in improving the community's skills to manage tourism potential independently and sustainably. Similar approaches have proven effective in various local tourism empowerment programs, as they focus on practical and collaborative knowledge transfer.

Results

The community service program conducted in Pematang Johar Village was successfully implemented with strong support from both the village government and the local community. In general, the program achieved its primary objective to enhance human resource capacity in tourism management and to raise awareness of the importance of tour guiding in creating an informative and memorable visitor experience. During the training sessions, the community showed great enthusiasm for the material presented. Participants consisted of tourism managers, local youth, and village officials who had been involved in tourism operations. The training was conducted using discussions, simulations, and field practices within the tourism area. Participants learned how to welcome visitors, explain local potential, and maintain cleanliness and comfort in tourist areas. Their enthusiasm was evident from their active participation during question-and-answer sessions and hands-on practice. Based on the observation of the service team, most participants were able to apply the knowledge and skills gained effectively.

Figure 5 illustrates the participants' enthusiasm while engaging in direct practice at the tourism site



Figure 5. Participants' Enthusiasm During Field Practice

As a result of the program, several positive changes emerged among local residents and tourism managers. First, there was an increased collective awareness of the importance of professional and sustainable tourism management. Previously, tourism activities were mainly focused on collecting entrance fees without prioritizing visitor comfort. After the training, residents began to understand the significance of excellent service and experience-based promotion. Second, several participants took the initiative to establish small village tourism management groups responsible for maintaining cleanliness schedules, visitor services, and simple promotional documentation through social media. Third, the service team assisted residents in identifying local culinary potentials that could be developed as additional attractions, such as rice-based snacks, traditional delicacies, and handmade souvenirs from natural materials. Beyond improving technical skills, this program also strengthened the social relationship between the community and the village government. The Village Head of Pematang Johar expressed appreciation for this activity, recognizing its success in motivating residents to revive local tourism potential that had declined during the pandemic.

Overall, the community service program did not only result in the enhancement of technical competencies but also fostered positive social transformation within Pematang Johar Village. Residents are now more aware that effective tourism management contributes not only to income generation but also to building a positive image of their village. This initiative marks an important milestone

toward transforming Pematang Johar into an independently managed, competitive, and sustainable tourism destination

Discussion

The community service activities conducted in Pematang Johar Village demonstrate that training in tour guiding and tourism management can generate significant positive impacts for the local community. Through this program, residents not only gained new knowledge about how to manage tourism effectively but also developed awareness of the importance of good service quality and sustainable tourism practices. This finding aligns with (Prayoga & Wahyono, 2024), who argue that community empowerment programs can succeed when residents are actively involved throughout the entire process. After the training, there were noticeable changes in participants' behavior. They became more confident when interacting with tourists and began to apply the principles of friendly and professional service. Moreover, a new awareness emerged that tourism management is not merely about attracting visitors but also about maintaining comfort, cleanliness, and the overall quality of the tourism environment

This activity also fostered local initiatives, as several participants voluntarily formed small community tourism groups responsible for maintaining tourist areas and promoting attractions through social media. This initiative reflects the community's growing ability to manage their local potential independently. In addition to social change, the program also opened up new economic opportunities. Residents became more interested in developing agricultural-based culinary products, such as rice-derived snacks, and producing traditional souvenirs that represent the village's identity. These efforts are in line with the concept of Community-Based Tourism (CBT), which emphasizes that local communities should be the primary managers of tourism activities so that the economic benefits can be directly experienced by them (Suyatna et al., 2024).

The implementation of this program also reaffirms the crucial role of higher education institutions in supporting regional development through the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, which includes education, research, and community service. Collaboration between academics, village governments, and local communities in this program created a synergistic partnership that enhanced the effectiveness of community empowerment efforts. This synergy illustrates that sustainable tourism development can only be achieved through collective cooperation among various stakeholders. Overall, this community service initiative generated tangible social

impacts in Pematang Johar Village. The local community has become more active, motivated, and aware of the importance of professional tourism management. Although challenges remain such as limited infrastructure and insufficient digital promotion this program represents an essential initial step toward developing a self-sustained and sustainable tourism management system in the village

Conclusion

The community service program implemented in Pematang Johar Village has had a positive impact on improving human resource capacity in the tourism sector. Through training in tour guiding and community-based tourism management, the local community gained a new understanding of the importance of professional governance, quality service, and collaboration to ensure the sustainability of the destination. The results of the activity revealed significant improvements in communication skills, tourism service capabilities, and collective awareness among residents to play an active role in local tourism development. Theoretically, this program demonstrates that the participatory approach combined with experiential learning methods can be effectively applied in community empowerment initiatives. By involving local residents directly, knowledge transfer becomes more meaningful and encourages long-term social transformation.

This outcome is in line with the concept of Community-Based Tourism (CBT), which places the community as the main actor in tourism management. As a recommendation, it is expected that the village government and local residents continue the momentum by organizing advanced training focused on digital marketing, promotional content creation, and product development based on local potential. Furthermore, building partnerships among tourism managers, entrepreneurs, and educational institutions is essential to strengthen promotion networks and integrated destination management.

This community service activity serves as an initial milestone in developing an independent, competitive, and sustainable tourism village. Through the synergy between the community, local government, and academia, Pematang Johar Village has strong potential to become a model for community-based tourism development in North Sumatra, promoting local prosperity while preserving cultural identity and environmental values.

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