

Creation of Attractive Digital Marketing to Improve the Branding of Pematang Johor Community Businesses

Rahmad Dianta Purba¹, Linda Wahyu Marpaung², Muhammad Hafiz Abd.Rashid³, Hendra Halim⁴, Sipnarong Kanchawongpaisan⁵, Phan Bao Giang⁶, Nabila Dwi Puspita Sari⁷

^{1,2,7} Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Eka Prasetya, ³ Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Malaysia,

⁴ Universitas Syiah Kuala, ⁵ Shinawatra University Thailand, ⁶ University of Economics and Finance, Ho Chi Minh (UEF) Vietnam

*Corresponding author

E-mail: rahmaddianta05@gmail.com (Rahmad Dianta Purba)*

Article History:

Received: Desember 2025

Revised: Desember 2025

Accepted: Desember 2025

Abstract: This community service and research project aims to enhance the digital capabilities of the Pematang Johar Rice Field Tourism Village community through strengthened branding and digital marketing. The activity was motivated by the significant decline in tourist visits during the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted the need for more adaptive promotional strategies. The study employed a descriptive-participatory approach consisting of observation, socialization, training, and mentoring activities. A total of 60 participants were involved in training sessions covering visual content production, social media management, Google Maps optimization, and village website development. Pre-test results indicated low levels of digital literacy (40/100), while post-test scores increased sharply to 90/100 after the mentoring sessions. Beyond technical improvements, the program also led to social transformation, including the formation of a village digital team, increased collaboration among MSMEs, and the establishment of a new branding identity: "Pematang Johar – Rice Field Tourism on the Outskirts of Medan City." The outcomes demonstrate that digital marketing is an effective strategy for promoting tourist villages and supporting sustainable local economic growth.

Keywords:

Branding; Community Empowerment; Digital Marketing; Tourist Village; Visual Content

Introduction

Economic equity is currently being strengthened by the government to improve the welfare of communities across various regions in Indonesia through the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia (Pratama, 2023). One form of tourism that has gained popularity over the past five years is tourist villages (Arviani et al., 2024). Among the many tourism sectors that exist, tourist

villages have become one of the fastest-growing sectors in Indonesia, particularly in areas rich in natural resources and unique environmental characteristics (Riyanto et al., 2025). Tourist villages are predicted to continuously improve the local economy of communities surrounding the village area.

The concept of a tourist village does not merely focus on tourism aspects alone but also includes community empowerment and sustainable local economic development (Ariyanti et al., 2025). Collaboration between the government and the community will enable optimal development of these villages in the future. The government is taking serious steps in enhancing tourist villages across various regions due to their contributions to economic growth, community welfare, unemployment reduction, and job creation (Nurafifah et al., 2024). The significant positive impact of tourist villages has prompted the government to pay closer attention and strive for further development in this sector, including in Deli Serdang Regency located adjacent to Medan City.

On the outskirts of Medan City lies a tourist village called Pematang Johor Village, renowned for its rice field attractions. This village offers natural beauty that is difficult to find within the city, making it an attractive destination for visitors. To enhance the development of the tourist village, collaboration between the government and community must be strengthened. One approach that can be utilized is community-based marketing. Community-based marketing has become increasingly popular in developing sustainable local branding. This approach emphasizes active community involvement in the marketing and promotional process, which increases trust and strengthens support for local brands (Harahap et al., 2024).

Collaboration between the village government and the community once yielded significant results. The Village Head of Pematang Johar stated that at the beginning of the tourist village's opening, the village attracted nearly 8,000 visitors per day, both local and international. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and mandatory restrictions on public activities, the management was forced to limit visits and eventually temporarily close the tourist site. The pandemic significantly disrupted economic activity (Darmoko et al., 2022), causing Pematang Johor to lose its tourist visitors and become less recognized over time.

To increase tourist visits, several strategic measures must be undertaken by both the government and local community groups. The government and residents can fully leverage advancements in digital technology, which have brought about fundamental transformations in the way organizations conduct various marketing activities (Brahmana & Sinaga, 2025). One of the key approaches to revitalizing tourist arrivals is the implementation of digital marketing. The utilization of digital

marketing can stimulate tourists' interest in visiting a destination, as it enables wider promotional reach, enhances interaction with potential visitors, and strengthens brand awareness (Nurmadewi, 2024). Through well-designed digital marketing strategies, tourism villages are expected to identify their unique strengths and enhance their competitiveness relative to other tourism destinations. Moreover, digital marketing facilitates more accurate evaluation of marketing campaign effectiveness, as it allows tourism villages to easily measure customer engagement with the content provided (Pratama, 2023).

Digital marketing plays a crucial role in developing tourist villages by increasing visibility and destination attractiveness. With digital technology, a tourist village can reach a broader audience and attract more visitors (Ariyanti et al., 2025). Previous studies have found that digital marketing in tourism correlates positively with increased tourist visits (Abidin et al., 2022; Arofah & Achsa, 2022; Marpaung et al.). Thus, digital marketing is considered capable of increasing the income of local communities within tourist villages.

This community service activity aims to enhance the understanding of Pematang Johor communities regarding digital marketing to attract visitors back to the village. The activity fosters collaboration between village institutions and community members to collectively develop attractive digital marketing strategies and build strong branding for Pematang Johor Village. Effective digital marketing and strategic planning broaden insights (Wijaya & Rizqiullah, 2024). With improved knowledge, the village community and stakeholders can develop ideas and implement attractive digital branding that brings tourists back to visit the village.

Method

This study employed a descriptive-participatory approach through a series of community empowerment activities focusing on strengthening branding and digital marketing for the Pematang Johor Rice Field Tourism Village. The research process began with designing an activity plan that outlined objectives, target participants, and the key needs of the community. The next stage involved field observations to map the village's current condition, rice field tourism facilities, and the community's ability to use digital technology.

Researchers then conducted a socialization session involving 60 participants consisting of village officials, tourism managers, creative youth communities, and local MSME representatives. Socialization is considered effective in delivering more comprehensive and optimal information in community-service programs involving

multiple stakeholders (Arviani et al., 2024; Herlambang et al., 2025; Purba et al., 2025). The mentoring stage was carried out through training sessions on social media usage, visual content creation, and the introduction of basic website.

To measure the effectiveness of the activities, pre-test and post-test instruments containing 10 indicators of digital ability were used. The assessment applied a scale of 0–10 to measure participants' understanding before and after the mentoring sessions. All data were analyzed descriptively to observe changes in digital literacy and community readiness to develop the branding of the Pematang Johar Rice Field Tourism Village.

Results

The digital mentoring activity in the Pematang Johar Rice Field Tourism Village showed significant results in increasing community ability to utilize digital technology for tourism promotion. Before the mentoring, the digital literacy level of the 60 participants was relatively low, with an average score of 40/100. This low performance was influenced by participants' limited ability to create visual content, manage business social media accounts, and understand analytical tools and website platforms.

Visual Content Training

During the visual content training session, participants were introduced to basic photography techniques, image composition (rule of thirds, framing, leading lines), natural lighting in rice field areas, and techniques for recording short videos for reels or TikTok content. Participants also practiced using smartphones as the primary tool for visual production, enabling the training to match their resources and skill levels.

Evaluation results demonstrated a substantial improvement in participants' competencies in producing high-quality visual content. Prior to the training, participants generally captured images in a basic manner without applying principles of visual composition. Following the intervention, participants were able to generate photographs and videos that exhibited enhanced aesthetic qualities, improved clarity, and more professional visual standards. They effectively incorporated various environmental elements of the village—such as expansive green rice fields, agricultural activities, pedestrian pathways, and natural photographic vantage points—into the development of promotional materials for the tourism village.

Social Media Management

Through Instagram social media management training, participants were

introduced to basic digital marketing strategies, including brand identity development, selection of content tone and color, writing engaging captions, using relevant hashtags, and applying geotags to increase reach. Participants practiced creating monthly content calendars and scheduling strategies to publish posts at optimal times.

In addition to technical improvement, participants became able to create promotional narratives that highlighted local potential, such as farming activities, Malay cuisine, rice field pathways, and the unique rice field tourism experiences of Pematang Johar. With enhanced social media management abilities, the village now has more strategic and professional promotional channels to attract visitors. This outcome demonstrates that social media is not merely a communication tool but a powerful engine for building branding and increasing village competitiveness.

Website Platform

Through the mentoring activity, participants were introduced to the fundamental concepts of website development, including platform selection, structuring web pages (homepage, destinations, tour packages, gallery, contact), and managing the dashboard for regular updates. Participants were trained using a CMS (Content Management System), allowing village officials and tourism managers to update content independently without relying on external parties. Participants engaged in developing website content, selecting high-quality photos, writing descriptions of rice field destinations, listing tour package prices, and integrating Google Maps location features.

The website significantly improved accessibility for potential visitors. Several local MSMEs that were previously unknown are now listed on the village website, enhancing their visibility and market potential. The website also serves as the official information channel for the village, maintaining branding consistency and strengthening the destination's credibility. It also helps the village appear in search results when internet users search for terms such as "Medan Rice Field Tourism" or "Pematang Johar Tourism Village." Overall, the website provides a strong digital foundation for developing Pematang Johar as an informative, reliable, and easily accessible modern tourist destination.



Figure 1. Website Platform Socialization

After training on rice field photography, video content creation, Instagram business management, and website usage, participants showed a significant increase in understanding. Post-test results showed an average score of 90/100—categorized as high. This demonstrates that participants not only grasped the theory but were also able to apply their digital skills effectively, especially in producing content for rice field tourism promotion.

The score improvement reflects the success of the mentoring process in strengthening the branding of Pematang Johar as “Rice Field Tourism on the Outskirts of Medan City.” Participants had produced 37 pieces of promotional content, created a monthly content calendar, and increased the village’s digital activity, which contributed to growing online engagement.



Figure 2. Activities After the Post-Test

Discussion

The community service activities conducted in the Pematang Johar Rice Field Tourism Village demonstrated significant dynamic changes, both in strengthening community capacity and in social transformation following the mentoring process. Initially, the community showed enthusiasm but had low digital abilities in visual content creation, social media management, and website utilization. This was reflected in the pre-test score of only 40/100.

Initial discussions and field observations revealed that the community possessed great potential to develop rice-field-based tourism but lacked adequate digital knowledge to support it. The socialization activities involving village officials, youth groups, tourism managers, and MSMEs built collective awareness of the importance of digital promotion. This awareness strengthened the community's sense of ownership regarding village tourism.

After completing training sessions—visual content, social media management, and website development—significant changes emerged. Participants were able to produce higher-quality photos and videos, schedule content posting, and utilize digital features such as geotags, hashtags, and social media analytics. The increase in post-test scores to 90/100 indicates not only technical improvement but also a shift in mindset and behavior toward proactive digital promotion.

Social change was visible in the formation of small digital teams, increased collaboration among community groups, and a transition from solely agricultural activities to creative digital work such as photography, video editing, and digital storytelling. The village began transforming into a more adaptive, innovative, and technology-friendly community.

Overall, the mentoring process—from needs assessment to training implementation—created meaningful social impact. Digital capacity-building fostered confidence, independence, creativity, and a collaborative culture essential for sustainable tourism development.

Conclusion

The mentoring activities on branding and digital marketing in the Pematang Johar Rice Field Tourism Village significantly improved community capacity in digital-based tourism promotion. Before the mentoring, the average digital literacy score was 40/100. After training in photography, videography, social media management, content creation, and website usage, the score increased dramatically to 90/100. This reflects participants' ability to understand and apply the skills directly.

The activities also established a new branding identity: "Pematang Johar – Rice Field Tourism on the Outskirts of Medan City," now used in social media content and village digital platforms. Village promotional activities also increased, with better social media engagement and the adoption of cashier applications by local MSMEs. Overall, the mentoring successfully enhanced community readiness in digital tourism promotion and supported sustainable village economic growth.

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