

Empowering Tourism Village MSMEs through Product Innovation and Social Media Branding: A Community Service Program in Wisata Domba Rancabango

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Abstract

Tourism villages offer strong opportunities for local economic development, yet many micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) face challenges in product innovation and digital branding. This community service program aimed to empower MSMEs in Wisata Domba Rancabango, Garut Regency, through product innovation and social media branding. Using a participatory approach, the program involved situational analysis, capacity-building workshops, hands-on mentoring, and evaluation. The results show improvements in MSMEs' ability to develop tourism-oriented products, enhance basic packaging and branding, and utilize social media platforms for promotion. These outcomes strengthened product attractiveness, digital visibility, and entrepreneurial awareness. Despite limitations related to program duration and digital literacy, the program demonstrates that integrating product innovation and social media branding effectively supports the empowerment of tourism-based MSMEs and can be replicated in other tourism villages.

Keywords: MSME empowerment; tourism village; product innovation; social media branding; community service.

Abstrak

Desa wisata menawarkan peluang besar untuk pengembangan ekonomi lokal, namun banyak usaha mikro, kecil, dan menengah (UMKM) menghadapi tantangan dalam inovasi produk dan branding digital. Program pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memberdayakan UMKM di Wisata Domba Rancabango, Kabupaten Garut, melalui inovasi produk dan branding media sosial. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan partisipatif, program ini melibatkan analisis situasi, lokakarya peningkatan kapasitas, pendampingan langsung, dan evaluasi. Hasil menunjukkan peningkatan kemampuan UMKM dalam mengembangkan produk berorientasi pariwisata, meningkatkan pengemasan dan branding dasar, serta memanfaatkan platform media sosial untuk promosi. Hasil ini memperkuat daya tarik produk, visibilitas digital, dan kesadaran kewirausahaan. Terlepas dari keterbatasan terkait durasi program dan literasi digital, program ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi inovasi produk dan branding media sosial secara efektif mendukung pemberdayaan UMKM berbasis pariwisata dan dapat direplikasi di desa wisata lainnya.

Kata-kata kunci: Pemberdayaan UMKM; desa wisata; inovasi produk; branding media sosial; pengabdian masyarakat.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is widely recognized as a strategic sector and a potential new source of economic growth that contributes significantly to regional development and community welfare. In West Java, tourism development is supported by a wide range of natural attractions, cultural heritage sites, and village-based tourism destinations. The development of tourism villages represents an inclusive approach that integrates local resources, community participation, and the empowerment of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as drivers of local economic growth. Garut Regency is one of the prominent tourism areas in West Java, supported by strong local government commitment and national-level recognition in tourism performance. However, the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism villages depend not only on natural attractions but also on effective management, innovative MSME products, and adaptive marketing strategies that align with digital trends.

Empirically, despite its substantial tourism potential, Garut Regency experienced a decline in tourist arrivals in 2024 compared to the previous year, which has directly affected local economic activities. This decline has the potential to reduce community income, particularly for MSMEs that rely heavily on tourism-related demand. At the same time, poverty and unemployment rates in Garut Regency remain relatively high, indicating that tourism has not yet delivered its optimal economic multiplier effect. At the village level, including Domba Tourism Village in Rancabango, a clear gap exists between tourism potential and actual economic performance. Although the village offers unique attractions based on Garut sheep farming and a mountainous natural landscape, these advantages have not been fully translated into sustained visitor growth or improved MSME performance.

The problem identification process revealed that the primary challenges faced by Domba Tourism Village lie in limited product innovation, suboptimal product quality, and weak destination branding. MSME culinary products available at the site are generally generic, lack distinctive characteristics, and are perceived as less competitive in terms of quality and pricing, leading visitors to prefer bringing food from outside the destination. In addition, the management capacity of the village-owned enterprise (BUMDes) remains underdeveloped, as reflected in

insufficient coordination, limited business innovation, and minimal utilization of social media for promotion. Poorly maintained tourism facilities, inadequate visitor information, and limited accessibility for people with disabilities further reduce the attractiveness and competitiveness of the destination. These conditions have contributed to declining visitor numbers, stagnation in MSME development, and the closure of several local business units.



Figure 1. Rancabango Skipjack Tuna MSMEs

Based on these challenges, this community service program aims to strengthen the capacity of MSMEs and tourism village managers through product innovation, product quality improvement, and social media-based branding. Specifically, the program seeks to assist MSMEs in developing a distinctive local culinary product in the form of shredded smoked tuna (abon pindang ikan tongkol) as a signature product of Domba Tourism Village, enhance product quality to meet market standards, and build a strong destination identity through digital branding strategies. Furthermore, the program aims to reinforce the role of BUMDes as a strategic partner for MSMEs in managing and developing the tourism village in a sustainable manner.

The expected outcome of this community service initiative is the establishment of a sustainable MSME-based tourism village empowerment model that enhances destination attractiveness, strengthens the local economy, and improves community welfare. Through product innovation and social media branding, Domba Tourism Village is expected to develop a clear and recognizable identity, increase market visibility, and improve its competitiveness among tourism destinations in Garut Regency. Beyond its practical impact, this program is also expected to contribute to the academic literature and best practices in tourism village development and community-based economic empowerment, providing valuable insights for similar initiatives and policy formulation in other regions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials

The materials used in this community service program consisted of practical and context-based resources to support MSME empowerment in Desa Wisata Domba Rancabango, Kabupaten Garut. These materials included product innovation modules covering value-added processing and simple product differentiation, basic packaging and labeling examples, branding guidelines, and social media content templates tailored for tourism-based MSMEs. In addition, digital tools such as smartphones, internet access, and social media platforms (Instagram and WhatsApp Business) were utilized as primary media for branding practice. Supporting materials also included presentation slides, case studies of successful rural tourism MSMEs, and simple monitoring instruments to document participant progress and activity outcomes.

Methods

The methods applied in this program adopted a participatory and empowerment-oriented approach emphasizing active involvement of MSME actors throughout the service process. The program began with a situational analysis through field observations, informal interviews, and group discussions to identify key problems related to limited product innovation and weak digital branding. Based on the identified issues, capacity-building activities were implemented through interactive workshops, mentoring sessions, and hands-on practice focused on product development and social media branding. The problem-solving process followed a learning-by-doing method, allowing participants to directly apply new knowledge, receive feedback, and refine their products and branding strategies to better support the sustainability of tourism-based MSMEs in the village.



Figure 2. Core Stages of Community Service

The community service program was carried out through three main stages. The first stage was situational analysis and problem identification, which involved field observations, informal interviews, and group discussions with MSME actors and

village stakeholders in Desa Wisata Domba Rancabango. This stage aimed to identify key challenges related to limited product innovation and weak utilization of social media branding within the context of a tourism village.



Figure 3. Socialization with Rancabango Village Officials and Tarogong Kaler District Authorities

The second stage was capacity building and implementation, focusing on empowering MSME actors through interactive workshops and hands-on practice. At this stage, participants were guided to develop innovative product ideas, improve basic packaging, and create simple but consistent branding content for social media platforms. The learning-by-doing approach ensured that MSME actors directly applied the knowledge and skills acquired during the program.

The final stage was evaluation and reflection, which assessed the outcomes of the empowerment activities through observation and discussion. This stage examined changes in participants' skills, mindset, and business practices, particularly in product innovation and digital branding, while also identifying lessons learned and potential follow-up actions to support the sustainability of MSMEs in Desa Wisata Domba Rancabango.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Situational Analysis and Problem Identification

The initial stage of the community service program revealed fundamental challenges faced by MSMEs in Desa Wisata Domba Rancabango within the context of a developing tourism village. Field observations and group discussions indicated that most MSME products lacked differentiation and were marketed using conventional approaches. Product innovation was limited, packaging was simple, and branding was not considered a strategic business component. In addition, social media usage was largely informal and inconsistent, with MSME actors having minimal understanding of how digital platforms could support tourism-based market

expansion. These findings confirm the empirical gap identified in the background of the study, where local tourism potential had not yet been optimally integrated into MSME product development and branding strategies.

2. Product Innovation as a Strategy for MSME Empowerment

Following the identification of key problems, the implementation stage focused on strengthening MSME capacity in product innovation. The results show a significant improvement in participants' ability to evaluate their products and identify opportunities for enhancement based on local identity and tourism appeal. Through mentoring and hands-on practice, MSME actors successfully reformulated existing products, introduced new variants, and improved basic packaging and labeling. These innovations enhanced both the functional and symbolic value of the products, making them more suitable as tourism-related goods and souvenirs. This finding supports the program's objective of empowering MSMEs by aligning product development with local resources and the unique characteristics of Desa Wisata Domba.

3. Strengthening Branding through Social Media Integration



Figure 4. Implementation of a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on Social Media Branding

Another key outcome of the program was the improvement in branding awareness and digital marketing practices among MSME actors. Prior to the intervention, branding was perceived merely as a product name without visual or narrative consistency. After participating in social media branding activities, MSMEs demonstrated the ability to develop simple yet coherent brand identities, including consistent visual elements, clear product descriptions, and storytelling that reflected the rural tourism experience and sheep-based tourism concept. The integration of local narratives into branding content increased the perceived value of MSME products and strengthened their alignment with the overall image of Desa

Wisata Domba Rancabango.

4. Digital Capability Development and Learning-by-Doing Approach



Figure 5. Handover of Technology Materials and Equipment Grants

The results further indicate that the learning-by-doing method played a crucial role in enhancing MSME digital capabilities. The establishment and optimization of Instagram and WhatsApp Business accounts enabled participants to actively engage in digital promotion and customer interaction. MSME actors were able to independently create promotional content, such as product photos, short videos, and captions, using their smartphones. This practical engagement increased participants' confidence and reduced resistance to digital technology. The findings highlight the effectiveness of participatory and practice-oriented methods in overcoming digital literacy barriers commonly faced by rural MSMEs.

5. Behavioral Change and Entrepreneurial Mindset Transformation



Figure 6. Change and Entrepreneurial Mindset Transformation

Beyond technical outcomes, the program contributed to meaningful changes in entrepreneurial mindset and behavior. MSME actors began to perceive innovation and branding as continuous and strategic processes rather than one-time activities. This shift reflects a deeper level of empowerment, where participants developed a proactive and market-oriented perspective. The mentoring process encouraged experimentation, reflection, and adaptation, which are essential for business sustainability in a competitive tourism environment. Such behavioral transformation

is a key indicator of successful community empowerment and aligns with the long-term objectives of tourism-based MSME development.

6. Implications for Tourism Village Development

Overall, the consistency between the program's objectives, methods, and outcomes demonstrates that a participatory, context-specific, and practice-oriented approach is effective in empowering MSMEs in tourism villages. The integration of product innovation and social media branding not only strengthened individual MSME performance but also contributed to the collective image and competitiveness of Desa Wisata Domba Rancabango as a tourism destination. These results suggest that the empowerment model applied in this program has strong potential for replication in other tourism villages seeking to enhance local economic development through MSME innovation and digital transformation.

CONCLUSION

This community service program was implemented through a structured process consisting of situational analysis and problem identification conducted via field observations, group discussions, and informal interviews, followed by capacity-building activities through interactive workshops, mentoring, and hands-on practice in product innovation and social media branding, and concluded with evaluation and reflection to assess changes in MSME practices. The main measurable contribution of the program lies in the improved capacity of MSME actors in Desa Wisata Domba Rancabango to develop innovative, tourism-oriented products, enhance basic packaging and branding, and actively utilize social media platforms for marketing, which collectively increased product attractiveness, digital visibility, and entrepreneurial confidence. These impacts contribute directly to strengthening the role of MSMEs in supporting the sustainability of the tourism village economy. However, the results of the program are limited by the relatively short duration of assistance, varying levels of digital literacy among participants, and the absence of long-term quantitative performance indicators such as sales growth or market expansion. Based on these limitations, future community service activities are recommended to include longer-term mentoring, advanced digital marketing training, and systematic monitoring of business performance to ensure sustained impact. Furthermore, future work may expand the scope of empowerment by

integrating MSME development with broader tourism management strategies, cross-sector collaboration, and digital ecosystem support to enhance the competitiveness of tourism villages in a wider regional and national context.

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