

Surfing the Digital Wave: Building Business Capacity in Coastal Communities in Soetan Island, Pesisir Selatan Regency

Menjelajahi Gelombang Digital: Membangun Kapasitas Usaha Masyarakat Pesisir di Pulau Soetan, Kabupaten Pesisir Selatan

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Abstract

This community service aims to develop digital leadership through a digital marketing strategy for the Soetan Island tourism destination. The main goals of this community service consist of two activities. First, it strengthens the digital leadership of village-owned enterprises (Badan Usaha Milik Nagari-BUMNag) Management and local business actors around the tourist area and commercialization through a digital marketing strategy. Second, it socializes the importance of tourism service standards for marine tourism. The workshop activity is implemented in three steps: lecture method, practical method, and discussion. The main results of this activity consist of two outcomes. First, improving digital leadership competency through a digital marketing strategy. Second, increasing capacity in providing marine tourism services. This activity discusses efforts to improve the capabilities, knowledge, and skills of parties involved in marine tourism services on Soetan Island, so they can provide a better, safer, and more sustainable tourism experience. This activity was then evaluated by administering pre- and post-tests to participants. The results showed an increase in positive insights from the participants.

Keywords: marine tourism, digital leadership, digital marketing, soetan island, BUMNag

Abstrak

Pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan kepemimpinan digital melalui strategi pemasaran digital untuk destinasi wisata Pulau Soetan. Sasaran utama pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini terdiri dari dua kegiatan. Pertama, penguatan kepemimpinan digital Badan Usaha Milik Nagari (BUMNag) dan pelaku usaha lokal di sekitar kawasan wisata serta komersialisasinya melalui strategi pemasaran digital. Kedua, sosialisasi pentingnya standar layanan pariwisata untuk wisata bahari. Kegiatan lokakarya dilaksanakan dalam tiga tahap: metode ceramah, metode praktik, dan diskusi. Hasil utama kegiatan ini terdiri dari dua luaran. Pertama, peningkatan kompetensi kepemimpinan digital melalui strategi pemasaran digital. Kedua, peningkatan kapasitas dalam penyediaan layanan wisata bahari. Kegiatan ini membahas upaya peningkatan kapabilitas, pengetahuan, dan keterampilan para pihak yang terlibat dalam layanan wisata bahari di Pulau Soetan, sehingga dapat memberikan pengalaman wisata yang lebih baik, lebih aman, dan lebih berkelanjutan. Kegiatan ini kemudian dievaluasi dengan memberikan tes awal dan tes akhir kepada peserta. Hasil menunjukkan adanya peningkatan wawasan positif dari para peserta.

Kata kunci: wisata bahari, kepemimpinan digital, pemasaran digital, pulau soetan, BUMNag

1. INTRODUCTION

Post-Covid 19 pandemic, there has been a shift in the trend of people's interest in traveling (Kusumaningrum & Wachyuni, 2020). People tend to choose domestic tourist areas with open nature, environmentally friendly, safe, healthy, and far from the crowds and carry local wisdom (Fan et al., 2023). Promoting natural and outdoor attractions can be the first step to help the recovery of the entire tourism industry and critical assets in promoting sustainable tourism (Ijatuyi et al., 2025). Natural and outdoor attractions are more likely to be located in rural areas with relatively low density and less developed economies, and this change in preference has the potential to help narrow the economic gap between cities and villages, and alleviate problems (eg, ownership, traffic congestion) caused by over-tourism in big cities.

Meanwhile, the development of the tourism sector is one of the priority programs of the West Sumatra Provincial Government. Considering that West Sumatra has diverse natural and cultural tourism potential. Seeing the growing tourism trend and in accordance with the direction of the West Sumatra Province tourism development policy, one of the most potential tourist destinations to be developed is the island in the North Mande Region namely Pulau Soetan with the open nature, environmentally friendly, safe, healthy, and far from the crowds and carrying local wisdom. Nature-based outdoor recreation areas are a rational choice to reduce stress and risk during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hamidi & Zandiatashbar, 2021; Xiao et al., 2023).

Soetan Island is managed by the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMNag) Bersama Mandeh Tarusan Jaya. This destination has been managed since 2020. BUMNag has implemented a community-based tourism approach to encourage active local participation in tourism activities. This model aims not only to boost the village economy but also to preserve the local environment and culture. Soetan Island offers unique natural charms, such as white sandy beaches, tropical forests, and a rich underwater world that is attractive for snorkeling and diving. These advantages make Soetan Island one of the main attractions in the Mandeh Marine Tourism Area. To support destination development, BUMNag has built basic infrastructure such as a small pier, accommodation facilities, and environmentally friendly trekking trails. However, access to information about the tourist area is still very limited, reaching mostly only local tourists. However, the potential is very promising for business and increasing regional income.

Tourist visits can be optimized by using a digital platform to reach a higher target market (Rangaswamy et al., 2020). Currently, there is no digital platform that specifically offers tours for Soetan Island. There is also no integrated digital platform for tourism activities. Furthermore, there is no digital platform for business-to-customer (direct selling). Meanwhile, for Soetan Island, the platform has not been provided. As the digital era continues to develop, people have become more willing and comfortable purchasing tourism products online (Amaro & Duarte, 2016). Adopting information technology allows managers to promote, operate, and interact with tourists.

Obstacles to the development of tourism destinations are likely from the packaging of tourist attractions, limited product diversification, poor quality of tourism services, ineffective promotion and communication, conventional business operating systems, and limited human resources (He et al., 2023). So that with these conditions, the potential for developing tourism in the Soetan Island cannot be optimized. Soetan Island Management has not built integrated cooperation between tourism business actors (Cottages, ships, food entrepreneurs, hotels). This condition has an impact on the limited market reach of the Soetan Island tourism destination. Therefore, in addition to developing technology, strengthening human resources is also needed to be more responsive in seeing opportunities and challenges in the digital era like today.

In accordance with the G20 priority issues related to digital economic transformation, this community service aims to develop digital leadership by strengthening the mindset and implementing digital marketing for the Soetan Island tourism destination. Through digital marketing, this destination will be widely commercialized and is expected to reach international tourists. Most importantly, it will maintain the continuity and stability of visitor numbers, market digitally, and further guide the sustainability of the marine tourism ecosystem in West Sumatra. Destination promotion is no longer limited to physical pamphlets or tourism exhibitions, but rather is carried out dynamically through engaging visual content, such as landscape photos, travel videos, and tourist testimonials. The narrative built on social media reflects the richness of local nature and culture, and arouses audience curiosity to visit. Furthermore, digital features such as Google Maps reviews and online booking systems make it easier for tourists to plan their visits, while organically expanding the destination's exposure.

This tourism destination can become a comprehensive business zone that contributes significantly to the regional economy. Through this community service, it is expected that there will be an acceleration in the development of tourism in the Soetan Island. This community service

will be able to encourage the marine tourism sector, especially in the Soetan Island area and will be able to provide a multiplier effect on the sustainable community economy.

2. METHOD

The main goals of this community service consist of two activities. First, it strengthens the digital leadership of BUMNag Management and local business actors around the tourist area and commercialization through a digital marketing strategy. Second, it socializes the importance of tourism service standards for marine tourism. To achieve these outcomes, several relevant and systematic methods are needed, tailored to the needs and able to bridge the gap between tourism managers (in this case, BUMNag), business actors in the Soetan Island tourist area, and the team from Andalas University.

The technical implementation will be carried out in the Soetan Island, Tarusan District, Pesisir Selatan Regency, West Sumatera, Indonesia. In addition, the implementation will also be carried out at Andalas University to conduct training and discussions on business development. We committed BUMNag Bersama Mandeh Tarusan Jaya as Soetan Island Management. The program implementation method used as a whole is as follows:

1. Socialization method.
2. Intervention to resources by using training, practice, and discussion.
3. Business consultation and mentorship.
4. Community development approach, by using partner as a subject and object with involve directly in business development.

Normative approach, to make sure every activity in line with norm, rule, and law to fulfil legality aspect.

Digital leadership refers to a leader's ability to manage change, leverage digital technology, and create value in a digitalized environment (Putra et al., 2024). Digital marketing strategies are not only promotional tools but also arenas for leaders to demonstrate adaptability, creativity, and data-driven decision-making (Putra et al., 2023). Developing digital leadership through digital marketing strategies in this activity focused on two activities: 1) Mastering Digital Platforms: Soetan Island managers learned to understand the dynamics of social media, SEO, content marketing, and email marketing as strategic communication tools; 2) Developing Personal and Organizational Brands: Through digital narratives and content on social media, managers build their image and strive to attract more tourists.

Strengthening digital leadership and digital marketing was carried out through workshops with Soetan Island managers and business owners around the Soetan Island tourist area. The workshop material was divided into five sections: Awareness, Exploration, Implementation, Evaluation, and Transformation. These stages are explained in more detail in Table 1.

Table 1. Steps in explaining workshop material

Step	Focus	Impact for leader
Awareness	Understand digital marketing trends	Understand the digital landscape strategically
Exploration	Experiment with content and channels	Build digital confidence
Implementation	Develop and execute digital campaigns	Enhance data-driven execution capabilities
Evaluation	Analyze and optimize results.	Strengthen critical and adaptive thinking
Transformation	Align digital with the organization's mission	Be a pioneer in digital change

Meanwhile the workshop activity is implemented in three steps. First, the lecture method is to provide material information about the importance of leading and managing social media, good social media content, and the use of video editing skills using applications. Second, the practical method is to train participants to gain direct experience in creating good content and learning how to take good video footage, as well as simple video editing using applications on smartphones. Third, the question-and-answer and discussion method: to answer questions from training participants and measure the extent of participants' understanding after the lecture method and during the practical method carried out by the service team, as well as jointly conducting dialogue regarding the creation of good content and the role of leader to bring business in the digital era. In addition, in the implementation of this activity, a normative approach is also carried out to ensure that each activity is in accordance with applicable norms, regulations and legislation so that it meets the legal aspects of law.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main results of this activity consist of two outcomes. First, improving digital leadership competency through digital marketing strategies. Participants understand the role of digital leaders in the digital era. They understand the importance of data and digital trends in business decision-making. They improve their ability to manage digital teams and projects. They understand digital marketing strategies. Participants understand digital marketing concepts such as SEO, SEM, content marketing, social media, and email marketing. They understand the importance of digital marketing planning tailored to target audiences and business objectives. They are also taught how to regularly evaluate and optimize digital campaigns.

To assess the effectiveness of this training, a 20-question pre- and post-training evaluation test was administered. The goal was to measure the extent to which participants experienced improved competency in digital leadership and the implementation of digital marketing strategies. Examples of the test questions included: What is the main goal of digital marketing through social media? Which social media platforms are best suited for promoting products or services? What are three benefits of using social media for business? What is the difference between digital marketing and traditional marketing? How can social media help increase brand awareness? What is a content strategy and why is it important in social media? What are the basic steps in creating a content calendar? How do you define your target audience for a social media campaign? What type of content do you find most effective in engaging customers? Why is it important to be consistent in your visual style and brand messaging? Operations and Account Management - What are the benefits of using social media management tools like Canva, Hootsuite, or Meta Business Suite? How important is engaging with your followers in building customer loyalty? How do you handle negative comments professionally on social media? What is a CTA (Call-To-Action) and how should it be used in posts? Why is it important to measure the performance of each piece of content? Analytics & Optimization - What are the key metrics for social media evaluation (e.g., reach, engagement, conversion)? How do you know if a social media campaign is successful? What are the benefits of conducting regular audience analysis? How can social media support a broader digital marketing strategy? What steps can be taken to improve the effectiveness of future social media campaigns?

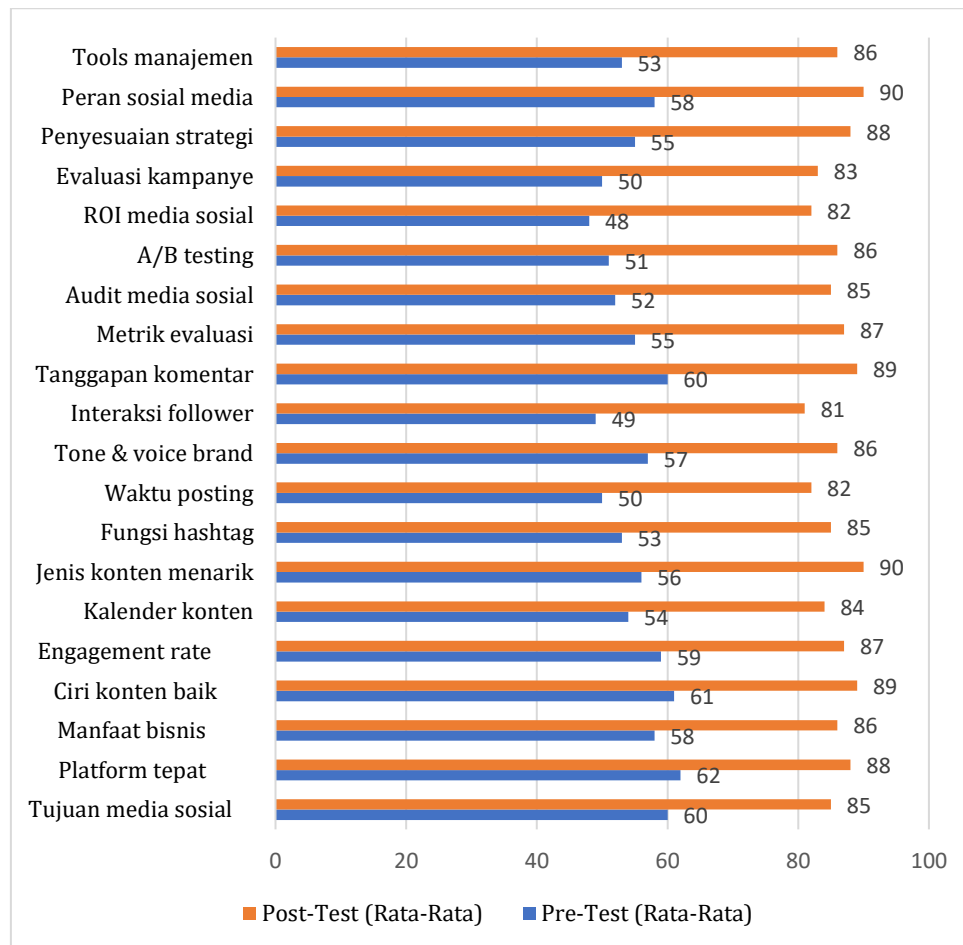


Figure 1 Improving Digital Leadership Training Evaluation Results through digital marketing strategies

Second, capacity building in providing marine tourism services. This activity discussed efforts to improve the capabilities, knowledge, and skills of those involved in marine tourism services on Soetan Island, so they can provide a better, safer, and more sustainable tourism experience. Improving the quality of human resources in marine tourism is a crucial step in creating professional, safe, and memorable services for visitors. Tourism operators, such as dive guides, boat operators, lifeguards, and homestay managers, need to be equipped with technical skills and in-depth knowledge of marine ecosystems, safety standards, and customer communication. In terms of service and soft skills, the ability to communicate in a friendly, polite, and responsive manner is crucial for tourist comfort. Proficiency in foreign languages and service ethics are added values in attracting international tourists. Equally important, tourism operators also need to understand the principles of sustainability, including marine environmental conservation, waste management, and visitor management to avoid habitat damage. With superior human resources, marine tourism will not only become a destination but also a heartwarming experience that preserves the environment.

To assess the effectiveness of this training, a 20-question evaluation test was administered before and after the training (pre-test and post-test). The goal is to measure the extent to which participants have improved their competency in providing tourism services. Some of the questions given include: What is the main objective of marine tourism service training? What are the important elements in marine tourism safety? Who are included in marine tourism service providers? What is the first step before diving activities begin? Why is marine ecosystem preservation so important for marine tourism? What is the ideal attitude of tourism providers when serving guests? What are the benefits of mastering a foreign language in tourism services?

Provide examples of professional communication with visitors. What is meant by service ethics in the context of marine tourism? Why are soft skills important for tourism providers? What is the main goal of marine environmental conservation? How does waste management affect the quality of tourist destinations? What is the impact of good tourist visit management? How should tourism providers respond to tourists' wishes to bring coral? What is the definition of sustainable marine tourism? Why is training necessary for marine tourism providers? State the characteristics of professional tourism services. Why is knowledge of the sea important for tourism providers? How can local potential support the tourism experience? What are the long-term impacts of increasing the capacity of marine tourism human resources?

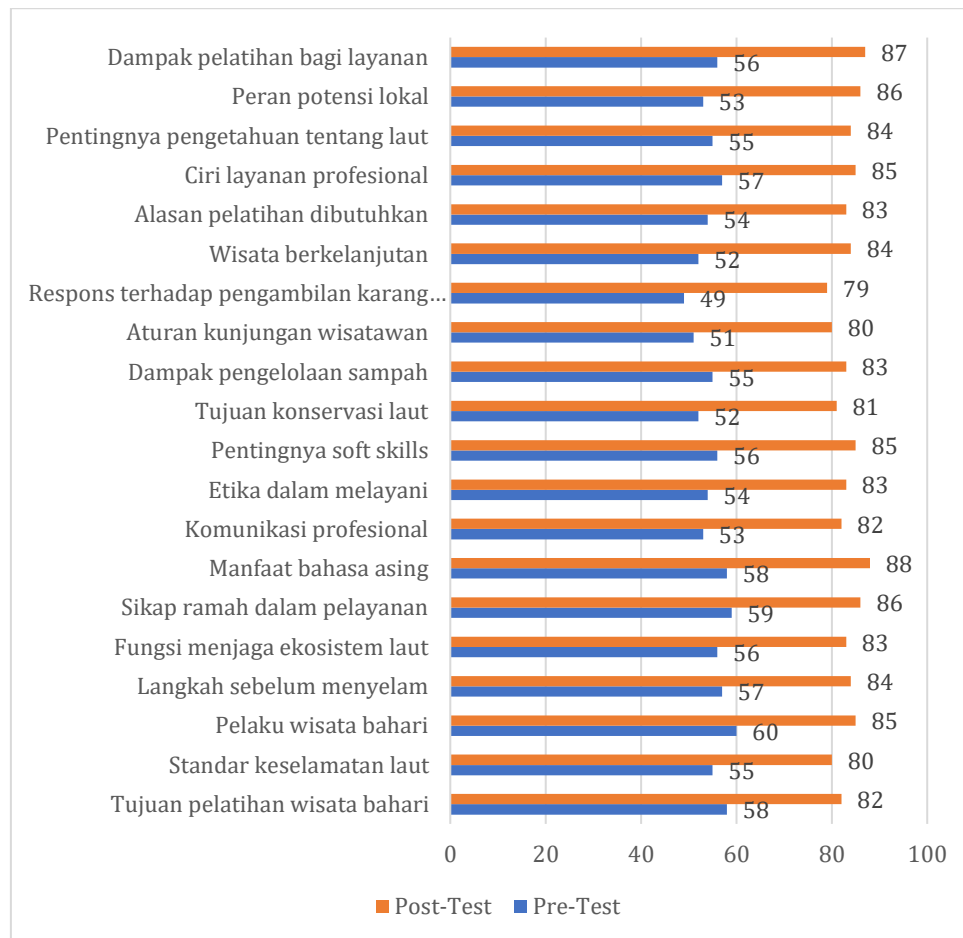


Figure 2 Marine Tourism Service Training Evaluation Results

By improving the quality of human resources for Soetan Island managers, and local business actors around the tourist area, it can promote island tourism through social media and online platforms, so as to increase visitor awareness and interest. Island tourism managers can also develop more attractive and competitive tour packages using digital technology. Island tourism managers can analyze visitor data to improve service quality and tourism development. Island tourism managers can interact with visitors through social media and online platforms, so as to increase visitor satisfaction. Island tourism managers can increase the number of visitors by using digital technology for promotion and marketing. Island tourism managers can increase revenue by using digital technology for tourism management and ticket sales. Island tourism managers can develop other businesses, such as merchandise sales and other services, using digital technology. Thus, digital transformation has brought many benefits to island tourism managers, including improving abilities and skills, service quality, competitiveness, and income.

This community service activity has been covered by the Padang Ekspres Print Media on November 11, 2024, which is the largest local newspaper in West Sumatra. The community service activities that have been carried out have received attention from the largest local newspaper media in West Sumatra. This coverage is an acknowledgment of the importance of community service activities and the positive impacts that have been generated (Alsalami & Al-Zaman, 2021). Media coverage can increase public awareness of the importance of community service activities and the positive impacts that can be generated and increase support from the community and other parties for similar community service activities in the future.



Figure 3 Mass Media Publication "Padang Ekspres"

In addition to print media publications, a documentary video of Soetan Island tourism has also been released on the Youtube Channel with the following video link: <https://youtu.be/fRdQ3fEpRYs?si=vyWZ11FWu9BQQTR0>.

4. CONCLUSION

The community service activities implemented have yielded two significant primary impacts in the context of digital empowerment and sustainable tourism development: 1) Enhanced Digital Leadership Competence. The training successfully enhanced digital leadership capacity through digital marketing strategies. Participants understood the roles and responsibilities of leaders in the digital era. They were able to implement data-driven digital marketing and current trends. They mastered digital tools and concepts such as SEO, SEM, content marketing, social media, and email marketing. They were able to systematically plan, execute, and optimize digital campaigns. 2) Enhanced Marine Tourism Service Quality. The training successfully strengthened the capacity of local human resources on Soetan Island to provide tourism services that are: Safe, friendly, professional, and sustainable. They are grounded in

technical knowledge, customer communication skills, and an understanding of environmental conservation. They prioritize ethical service, soft skills, and foreign language proficiency.

The activity received attention from local media outlet Padang Ekspres, signaling recognition of its positive impact. The publication of a documentary video on YouTube increased the activity's exposure to the wider community. Overall, this activity not only strengthened the capacity of individuals and institutions but also strengthened digital transformation as a foundation for regional social and economic development.

The benefits of this activity for universities are that lecturers have experience in the industrial world, especially the tourism industry. This experience can be used in class to enrich learning enrichment in courses. So that lectures become more interesting and inspiring for students. Benefits for Partners and the community that partners through activities are greatly assisted in increasing tourism marketing activities through digital media, in an effort to expand market reach. In addition, providing input and suggestions for business sustainability and scaling up business in the future. The benefits for students involved in this activity are learning and understanding how to run a tourism business, especially island tourism, from the beginning to marketing. Students are actively involved and gain a lot of knowledge from Partners, communities and tourism actors involved. With this experience, it is hoped that students in the future can also be independent in developing tourism businesses after graduating from their studies.

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