



Community Assistance in Pulau Bulangg in Tourism Marketing through Social Media and Digital Platforms for the Promotion of Cultural Heritage and Mangrove Ecotourism.

Yudha Wardani¹, Nensi Lapotulo², I Wayan Thariqy Kawakibi Pristiwasa³, Haufi Sukmamedian⁴

Manajemen Devisi Kamar^{1,2,3,4}, Politeknik Pariwisata Batam, Indonesia^{1,2,3,4}

e-mail: yudha@btp.ac.id¹, Nensi@btp.ac.id², thariqy.kawakibi@yahoo.co.id³, Haufi@btp.ac.id⁴

Abstract

This community service program aims to enhance the capacity of the Pulau Bulang community in tourism marketing through social media and digital platforms for the promotion of cultural heritage and mangrove ecotourism. Pulau Bulang possesses significant natural and cultural tourism potential; however, limited digital literacy and inadequate tourism marketing strategies have constrained its visibility and development as a sustainable tourism destination. The program was implemented using a participatory and community-based approach, involving local community members, youth groups, and tourism-related stakeholders. The activities were conducted through a series of mentoring sessions, interactive discussions, and hands-on practices focusing on digital content creation, social media utilization, and basic destination branding. Participants were guided to directly apply digital marketing concepts by producing and sharing tourism-related content that highlights local cultural heritage and mangrove ecosystems. Evaluation was carried out through observation, participant feedback, and assessment of digital outputs produced during the program. The results indicate an improvement in community awareness and skills in utilizing digital platforms for tourism promotion. Participants demonstrated increased confidence and ability to promote Pulau Bulang as a tourism destination in a more structured and sustainable manner. This program contributes to strengthening community participation in tourism development and supports sustainable tourism principles through the integration of environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and digital-based promotion strategies.

Keywords: community assistance; tourism marketing; social media; digital platforms; mangrove ecotourism

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism development has increasingly been recognized as a comprehensive strategy for balancing economic growth, environmental preservation, and social empowerment in destination communities. Particularly in coastal and island regions, integrating sustainable tourism with community involvement is essential to ensure that tourism benefits are equitably distributed while preserving cultural and natural assets. Community-based tourism (CBT) places local residents at the center of tourism planning and management, aligning tourism activities with community needs and long-term sustainability goals (Community-Based Tourism: A Catalyst for Achieving the United Nations SDGs, 2025) (Bonilla-Quijada et al., n.d.)





The digital transformation of tourism marketing has reshaped how destinations communicate with prospective visitors. Social media and digital platforms have become vital tools for destination promotion(Afriansyah et al., 2025), allowing communities to engage with broader audiences, increase visibility, and build destination brands with relatively low cost and high adaptability Current Research Trends on Social Media Marketing and Sustainable Tourism(Ogutu & Othieno, 2025). Research shows that user engagement and content quality on social media can influence tourist decisions and strengthen interest in visiting specific destinations, highlighting the importance of strategic digital marketing for emerging tourism areas.(Jackson, 2025)

Pulau Bulang, with its unique combination of cultural heritage and mangrove ecotourism potential, represents a promising case for applying sustainable tourism and digital marketing strategies. Despite its ecological and cultural richness, the island's tourism potential remains underutilized due to limited digital literacy and lack of structured marketing initiatives within the community. Therefore, this study focuses on enhancing the community's capacity in tourism marketing through the use of social media and digital platforms, aiming to support sustainable tourism development that benefits both local residents and the natural environment.

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Pulau Bulangg is a coastal island community that possesses considerable potential in both cultural heritage and mangrove-based ecotourism. The island is inhabited by local residents whose daily lives are closely connected to marine and coastal resources, particularly fisheries and mangrove ecosystems. In addition to its natural landscape, Pulau Bulangg reflects a strong local identity shaped by traditional coastal culture, communal values, and close social ties among residents. These characteristics form an important foundation for the development of community-based tourism that emphasizes sustainability, cultural preservation, and local participation.

The mangrove ecosystem in Pulau Bulangg represents one of the island's most valuable natural assets. Ecologically, mangroves function as natural coastal protection, biodiversity habitats, and breeding grounds for marine life, while also contributing to climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration. From a





tourism perspective, mangrove areas have the potential to be developed into ecotourism attractions, such as educational tours, nature-based recreation, and environmental awareness activities. However, despite these advantages, the mangrove ecosystem in Pulau Bulangg has not yet been optimally utilized as a tourism attraction due to limited planning, promotion, and community-based management.

In terms of cultural heritage, Pulau Bulangg holds various forms of local wisdom, traditions, and community practices that can enrich the tourism experience. These cultural elements, when integrated with natural attractions, can create a distinctive tourism identity for the island. Nevertheless, the promotion of cultural heritage in Pulau Bulangg remains minimal, largely due to the absence of structured tourism marketing strategies and limited exposure to wider audiences. As a result, Pulau Bulangg has not yet been widely recognized as a tourism destination, despite its strong cultural and environmental appeal.

The development of information and communication technology, particularly social media and digital platforms, offers significant opportunities for communities such as Pulau Bulangg to promote tourism independently and effectively. Digital platforms enable local communities to showcase their natural and cultural attractions, build destination branding, and reach potential visitors without relying solely on conventional marketing channels. However, most members of the Pulau Bulangg community still face challenges in utilizing these digital tools due to limited digital literacy, lack of technical skills, and insufficient understanding of tourism marketing concepts. Therefore, community assistance in tourism marketing through social media and digital platforms is essential for Pulau Bulangg. This assistance is intended to strengthen community capacity in managing and promoting cultural heritage and mangrove ecotourism in a sustainable and participatory manner. By enhancing digital skills and marketing awareness, the community is expected to become the main actor in tourism development rather than merely a passive beneficiary. Ultimately, this approach aims to support sustainable tourism development that improves local economic opportunities while preserving the cultural and environmental integrity of Pulau Bulangg.





Figure 1. Community Service Team Members and Partners on 2025

METHODOLOGY

This community service activity was designed using a participatory and community-based approach, focusing on strengthening the capacity of the Pulau Bulang community in tourism marketing through social media and digital platforms. The methodology emphasizes active community involvement, practical learning, and contextual adaptation to local cultural and environmental conditions. The program was implemented through a series of mentoring, training, and hands-on practice activities aimed at enabling the community to independently promote cultural heritage and mangrove ecotourism in a sustainable manner.

The implementation of the program involved close coordination with community leaders and local stakeholders in Pulau Bulang to ensure that the activities were aligned with community needs and existing tourism potential. The mentoring process combined theoretical explanations with practical exercises, allowing participants to directly apply digital marketing concepts using their own social media accounts and available digital tools. This approach was intended to improve digital literacy, enhance understanding of destination branding, and encourage community ownership of tourism promotion initiatives.

1. Target Community

The target participants of this community service activity were members of the Pulau Bulang community, including local tourism awareness groups, youth





representatives, small-scale tourism actors, and community members involved in mangrove conservation and cultural activities. These participants were selected based on their potential role in tourism development and their willingness to actively engage in digital-based tourism marketing. By involving diverse community members, the program aimed to foster collaboration and shared responsibility in promoting Pulau Bulang as a tourism destination.

2. Activity Methods

The methods used in this community service program were designed to be interactive and practice-oriented in order to maximize learning outcomes. The activities included the following:

a. Material Delivery and Discussion

Training sessions were conducted through interactive lectures and group discussions covering topics such as community-based tourism, cultural heritage promotion, mangrove ecotourism, social media marketing, and digital destination branding. Participants were encouraged to share their experiences and challenges related to tourism promotion in Pulau Bulang.

b. Hands-on Practice and Mentoring

Participants were guided to create and manage tourism-related content on social media platforms, including writing promotional captions, taking basic promotional photos and videos, and utilizing hashtags and digital storytelling techniques. Mentoring was provided to ensure participants could directly apply the concepts learned during the sessions.

c. Evaluation and Feedback

An evaluation process was conducted to assess participants' understanding and skills in digital tourism marketing. Feedback was gathered through discussions, observation, and simple assessments of participants' digital content. The evaluation aimed to identify improvements in digital skills and provide recommendations for future tourism promotion activities in Pulau Bulang.





Figure 2. Community Service Team Members and Partners on 2025

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Based on observations during the implementation of the program, several supporting and inhibiting factors were identified:

a. Supporting Factors

High enthusiasm and active participation from community members during the mentoring sessions. Strong support from local leaders and community organizations in Pulau Bulang. Availability of basic digital devices such as smartphones and access to social media platforms.

b. Inhibiting Factors

Limited time for mentoring activities, which restricted the depth of material delivery. Variations in participants' digital literacy levels, requiring different



learning paces. Limited internet connectivity in certain areas of Pulau Bulang, affecting real-time practice.



Figure 3. Community Service Team Members and Partners on 2025

SUSTAINABLE RESULT AND POTENSIAL

1. Sustainable Results of the Program

The implementation of community assistance in Pulau Bulang has resulted in improved community awareness and capacity in utilizing social media and digital platforms for tourism marketing. Community members demonstrated increased understanding of digital content creation, basic destination branding, and the importance of consistent online promotion. These outcomes indicate a positive shift toward community-driven tourism marketing practices that can be sustained beyond the duration of the program.

The program has also strengthened community participation in promoting cultural heritage and mangrove ecotourism. By actively engaging in the creation and dissemination of tourism-related digital content, the community began to recognize the value of preserving cultural and environmental assets as key components of tourism appeal. This awareness supports long-term sustainability by aligning tourism development with environmental conservation and cultural preservation.

2. Potential for Sustainable Development





Pulau Bulang has strong potential to be developed as a sustainable tourism destination through continued application of digital-based marketing strategies. The availability of unique mangrove ecosystems and local cultural heritage provides a solid foundation for ecotourism development that emphasizes education, conservation, and community empowerment. With consistent digital promotion, Pulau Bulang can increase its visibility and attract environmentally conscious tourists.

Furthermore, the skills and knowledge gained by the community during this program can be expanded into broader tourism-related economic activities, such as community-managed ecotourism services, local product promotion, and cultural tourism experiences. With ongoing support from stakeholders and local government, the integration of digital marketing, community-based tourism management, and environmental conservation has the potential to generate sustainable economic benefits while maintaining the ecological and cultural integrity of Pulau Bulang.

CONCLUSION

The community assistance program in Pulau Bulang focusing on tourism marketing through social media and digital platforms has demonstrated positive outcomes in enhancing community awareness and capacity in promoting cultural heritage and mangrove ecotourism. Through participatory mentoring and hands-on practice, community members gained a better understanding of the importance of digital-based tourism marketing as a strategic tool to increase destination visibility and competitiveness. This program has contributed to strengthening the role of the local community as active participants in tourism development rather than passive beneficiaries.

The implementation of digital marketing mentoring has also encouraged the community to recognize the value of integrating natural and cultural assets in tourism promotion. By utilizing social media and digital platforms, participants were able to create and share tourism-related content that reflects the unique identity of Pulau Bulang, particularly its mangrove ecosystem and local cultural heritage. This approach supports sustainable tourism principles by promoting environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and community-based economic opportunities.





Overall, the community assistance activity has proven to be relevant and effective in addressing the challenges faced by the Pulau Bulang community in tourism promotion. Despite several limitations, such as varying levels of digital literacy and limited time for implementation, the program has laid an important foundation for the continued development of community-driven tourism marketing. With ongoing support and further capacity-building initiatives, Pulau Bulang has strong potential to develop into a sustainable tourism destination that benefits the local community while preserving its cultural and environmental resources.

SUGGESTION

1. Sustained Digital Marketing Mentorship

It is recommended that continuous mentoring and follow-up training be provided to the Pulau Bulang community to strengthen digital marketing skills, particularly in content creation, social media management, and destination branding. Ongoing assistance will help ensure the sustainability of tourism promotion efforts and enable the community to adapt to evolving digital trends.

2. Development of Community-Based Tourism Management

The local community should be encouraged to establish or strengthen community-based tourism organizations that focus on managing and promoting cultural heritage and mangrove ecotourism. Clear roles, collaborative management, and community involvement are essential to ensure that tourism development remains inclusive and sustainable.

3. Improvement of Digital Infrastructure and Accessibility

Support from local government and related stakeholders is needed to improve internet connectivity and digital infrastructure in Pulau Bulang. Enhanced access to reliable digital services will significantly support online tourism promotion and allow community members to more effectively utilize social media and digital platforms.

4. Integration of Environmental Conservation and Tourism Promotion

Future tourism development initiatives in Pulau Bulang should integrate environmental conservation, particularly mangrove protection, with tourism promotion strategies. Educational content related to environmental





awareness should be incorporated into digital marketing efforts to promote responsible tourism and long-term sustainability.

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