



## Collaborative Strategy between Cooperatives and Jeep Groups in Digital Marketing to Improve the Competitiveness of Rural Ecotourism

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received : 1-12-2025

Revised : 29-1-2026

Accepted : 29-1-2026

#### Keywords

Collaborative Strategy,  
Digital Marketing, Rural  
Ecotourism

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### ABSTRACT

*Pamotan Village, Dampit Subdistrict, Malang Regency, East Java, is an area with promising ecotourism potential due to its rich natural resources, local culture, and stunning biodiversity. However, the potential of Dampit Village has not been optimally utilized by either the community or the village government. Therefore, the community service team encouraged collaboration between the Panorama Lereng Semeru cooperative and the Malang Willys Club Jeep group through the use of digital marketing technology. The methods used in this activity were Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and training in the use of information technology and digital marketing for cooperative administrators, the Jeep group, and village residents. The results of this activity were the mapping of issues and activity plans between the cooperative administrators and the Jeep group regarding the development of ecotourism and the emergence of community understanding of the use of digital marketing technology to promote the ecotourism potential in their area. It can be concluded that this collaboration strategy is able to integrate natural potential, local culture, and digital technology to enhance the competitiveness of ecotourism. Through digital marketing training and creative content on social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and several other social media platforms, it is hoped that the ecotourism potential of Panorama Lereng Semeru can be developed optimally.*

*Desa Pamotan, Kecamatan Dampit, Kabupaten Malang, Jawa Timur, merupakan wilayah yang memiliki potensi ekowisata menjanjikan karena kekayaan alam, budaya lokal, dan keanekaragaman hayati yang kaya dan memukau. Namun potensi yang ada di desa Dampit ini belum dimanfaatkan secara optimal baik oleh masyarakat maupun pihak pemerintah desa. Adapun, tim pengabdian Masyarakat mendorong upaya kolaborasi antara koperasi Panorama Lereng Semeru dengan kelompok Jeep Malang Willys Club yang diwujudkan melalui pemanfaatan teknologi pemasaran digital. Metode yang digunakan dalam kegiatan ini adalah Focus Group Discussion (FGD), pelatihan dalam penggunaan teknologi informasi dan pemasaran digital kepada pengurus koperasi, kelompok Jeep dan warga desa. Hasil dari kegiatan ini adalah terpetakannya permasalahan dan rencana kegiatan antara pengurus koperasi dan kelompok Jeep mengenai pengembangan ekowisata dan timbulnya pemahaman*

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*masyarakat mengenai penggunaan teknologi pemasaran digital untuk mempromosikan potensi ekowisata di wilayahnya. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa strategi kolaborasi ini mampu mengintegrasikan potensi alam, budaya lokal, dan teknologi digital untuk meningkatkan daya saing ekowisata. Melalui pelatihan pemasaran digital, dan konten kreatif di media sosial seperti Instagram, tiktok, dan beberapa media sosial lain diharapkan potensi ekowisata Panorama Lereng Semeru dapat dikembangkan dengan optimal.*

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Pamotan Village, Dampit District, Malang Regency, East Java, has promising ecotourism potential supported by abundant natural resources, distinctive local culture, and high biodiversity. These resources allow the development of attractions such as organic coffee educational tours, flower villages, natural springs (umbulan), and outdoor activities in the Semeru slopes area. Adventure-based tourism, including Jeep trails through tropical forests, further strengthens the village's capacity to offer nature-oriented and educational tourism experiences. Ecotourism itself integrates nature tourism with environmental learning, aiming to provide memorable experiences while increasing tourists' ecological awareness (Angela, 2023). However, despite this potential, ecotourism development in Pamotan Village remains fragmented and underperforming due to limited institutional collaboration and the absence of integrated digital marketing strategies among local tourism actors. This gap indicates that existing resources have not yet been translated into competitive and sustainable ecotourism services.

However, this potential has not been optimally utilized by either the community or the village government. Existing attractions remain fragmented, promotional efforts are limited, and local actors have not developed integrated tourism packages capable of competing with other rural ecotourism destinations in East Java. In fact, Pamotan has the necessary fundamentals biodiversity, forest ecosystems, and local agricultural culture to position itself as a leading ecotourism village. Activities such as organic coffee farming and Jeep-based nature trails present valuable opportunities for environmental education and adventure tourism, while local cultural practices such as farming traditions can be incorporated into tourism packages to increase economic value for the community. Understanding consumer behavior in tourism is crucial to design appropriate marketing strategies that meet market preferences (Taryono, 2023).

The lack of utilization of this potential is due to limitations and ignorance among the public regarding marketing strategies, especially in digital marketing, improving service quality, and human resource capacity. Digital marketing is a marketing activity carried out by utilizing social media, which includes various channels in media such as websites, Instagram, TikTok, and search engines that enable an institution to reach consumers more effectively and efficiently (Shabiriani et al., 2024). Efforts to develop local tourism can be carried out through institutional strengthening in collaboration between cooperatives and jeep groups in Pamotan Village by formulating strategies that cover organizational, resource,



service, and cooperation network aspects, thereby creating a strong tourism village institution. Efforts to strengthen tourism village institutions can be carried out by improving organizational structures and strategic plans, as well as requiring continuous assistance for their development (Isa & Praswati, 2023).

The partnership between cooperatives and jeep groups must be supported by institutional capacity building through institutional strengthening in order to develop rapidly. Institutional capacity building is very important to ensure sustainability in tourism development (Saribanon et al., 2023). In this regard, training and assistance in digital marketing, financial management, and tourism product development are needed. In addition, effective partnerships in the tourism industry need to involve various stakeholders to achieve sustainable goals (Junaid, 2018).

Another aspect that needs to be considered in this partnership is the use of digital marketing technology. Good management in institutional aspects can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of product marketing (Listyorini et al., 2022). In the context of ecotourism, the use of digital platforms to promote tourist destinations and services offered by cooperatives and jeep groups can increase visibility and attract more tourists. Therefore, training in the use of information technology and digital marketing should be part of the institutional strengthening program. Thus, it is important to evaluate and monitor the partnerships that have been established.

In the process of strengthening institutions through partnership cooperation, there are several stages that must be passed, including human resource management, mapping of information and supporting infrastructure, and improving service quality and marketing through digital content. According to several experts, there are several approaches to human resource management that social practitioners need to understand, including mapping the capacity of actors, mapping actor networks, mapping the collective values shared among actors, and understanding the information and infrastructure support for human resource development (Christanto, 2014; Dharmawan, 2007). Mapping information and supporting infrastructure is a step taken by the community service team by finding out the strategies used by tourism managers and economic actors to access information in an effort to develop their activities. Opportunities for group members to be involved in workshops, training, mentoring, and other capacity building activities. According to (Syamsu Rijal et al., 2023) community capacity building in utilizing information technology needs to be improved in order to empower communities in social and economic development.

Infrastructure support also needs to be assessed because it will be related to the level of interest of stakeholders and other visitors to get involved in it. The infrastructure referred to includes road accessibility, accessibility to tourist attractions, and other forms of accessibility. Furthermore, there are activities to strengthen institutional cooperation partnerships in digital marketing. According to (Purbantina & Firmansyah, 2022 ; Sifwah et al., 2024), digital marketing is important for the community or business actors in increasing competitiveness, especially in terms of broader market access. Thus, it can be said that digital marketing provides opportunities for the community and business actors to reach a wider market. Digital marketing is also inseparable from the creation of digital content. According to (Hartono et al., 2024), digital marketing also includes the creation of content that promotes products creatively and is uploaded on social media such as Facebook and Instagram. This process also requires operational standards, as well as digital content through social media platforms by establishing SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) for Jeep ecotourism services. Based on these conditions, this article aims to analyze the collaborative strategy between the



Panorama Lereng Semeru cooperative and the Malang Willys Club Jeep group in utilizing digital marketing to enhance ecotourism competitiveness in Pamotan Village.

## **B. METHODS**

Community service activities in Pamotan Village employed several practical methods designed to facilitate the implementation process and strengthen local social capacity. Based on the identified problems – particularly the limited use of digital media as a marketing tool by the Panorama Semeru Pamotan Marketing Cooperative and the Jeep group – the team applied two main approaches: Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and capacity-building activities. The FGD involved 18 participants, consisting of cooperative administrators, Jeep group members, village representatives, and community actors engaged in ecotourism activities. In addition, capacity-building and digital marketing training sessions were attended by 25 participants, including cooperative members, Jeep operators, and local residents.

The FGD method is essentially a semi-structured group interview that allows participants to collectively explore issues and generate solutions. The stages included: (1) preparation by formulating objectives and determining discussion themes; (2) arranging technical aspects such as venue, participant roles, and discussion rules; and (3) conducting the session to elicit key points and conclude with an agreed summary (Fitriani & Azhar, 2019). The FGD involved members of the Panorama Marketing Cooperative and the Malang Willys Club Jeep group. It successfully identified several issues relevant to ecotourism development, including marketing constraints, infrastructural needs, and potential collaboration with external stakeholders.

In addition to FGDs, the program also implemented capacity-building activities, which aim to strengthen the abilities of individuals, organizations, or systems to achieve their intended goals (Ambonigtyas, 2018). Capacity building focused on enhancing the skills of cooperative administrators and Jeep group members through training on digital marketing, content creation, and ecotourism facility improvement. This approach not only improved human resource capabilities but also supported the institutional management of local tourism by fostering partnerships with external actors, including forestry officials and village governments. These collaborations became essential components in building a more coordinated and sustainable ecotourism governance framework.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Institutional and human resource capacity building in the framework of developing ecotourism on the slopes of Mount Semeru used several methods, including focus group discussions (FGDs) and capacity building. In practice, these two methods combined digital marketing activities and improvements to facilities and infrastructure aimed at increasing the competitiveness of ecotourism by introducing ecotourism on the slopes of Mount Semeru to a wider community. In addition to marketing training through digital media, the institutional strengthening that has been established between members of the Marketing Cooperative and members of the Jeep group needs to be expanded in order to broaden the work network and strengthen the legal cooperation network. Collaboration between the village government and the forestry agency is one of the keys to ensuring that ecotourism can run well in the future.

The implementation of activities refers to three main things, namely human resource management, information mapping and supporting infrastructure, and service quality



improvement through digital content. These activities require clear operational standards and implementation processes. This is illustrated more clearly in the following figure:

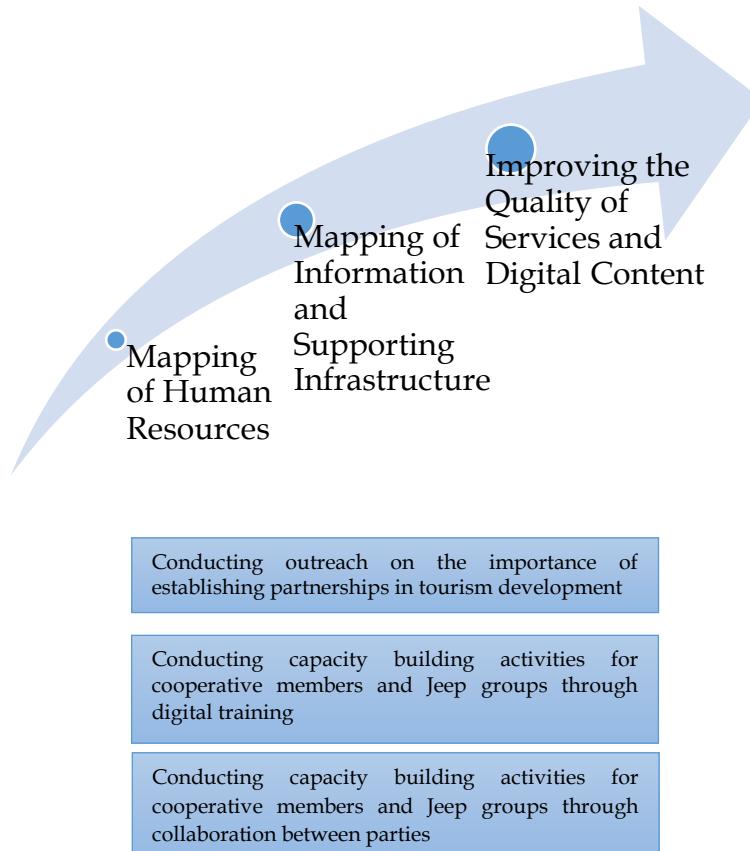


Figure 1. Design for Strengthening Institutional Partnership Cooperation in Ecotourism Development Between Cooperatives and Jeep Groups

The figure above is a framework for strengthening partnership cooperation in ecotourism development between cooperative members and Jeep groups. Each activity is interrelated to achieve common goals. Mapping is carried out not only on available human resources who are willing to be involved in ecotourism activities, but also on information and infrastructure in tourism development, which are important elements in supporting future tourism sustainability. After careful mapping, several clear pictures will be obtained regarding the problems and things that must be improved in institutional development to develop ecotourism. Through the pictures obtained, it was found that improving service quality and digital content are the main aspects needed for future ecotourism development.

Several processes have been carried out to identify problems and needs in strengthening institutional cooperation partnerships for ecotourism development, and only then can activities to be implemented be designed. These activities or programs began with the dissemination of information on the importance of establishing partnerships in ecotourism development, followed by capacity building activities between members of the Panorama marketing cooperative and members of the Jeep group in terms of digital marketing, and then capacity building activities between members of the Panorama cooperative and the Jeep group through collaboration between parties, such as the village government and the forestry agency.



### 1.1. Socialization in Building Partnerships

Socialization plays a significant role in building a partnership between members of the Panorama Marketing Cooperative and members of the Jeep group. This socialization process aims to align the perceptions of these two different institutions so that they share the same goal of developing ecotourism on the slopes of Mount Semeru. In addition to being a means of aligning perceptions, this socialization can also be a means for the two groups to build trust. Thus, once trust is established, both groups will have the same goal in developing ecotourism. Having the same goal will strengthen communication between the groups, which is expected to lead to strong and sustainable cooperation.

This socialization activity was carried out using the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method, through which both groups were involved in a participatory manner in identifying various existing potentials. This socialization process was guided by a team of facilitators. The FGD mapped out both the natural resource potential and human resource potential that could be involved in a sustainable manner in the development of ecotourism. They were free to provide ideas on how to manage tourism based on the community while still promoting educational tourism and nature tourism as a leading brand. Several issues found in this activity are explained in the following table:

**Table 1. Issues identified and future activity plans**

Issues	Activity Plan
Limited Understanding of Digital Marketing	Digital marketing training utilizing social media and other digital platforms such as Canva and Cap Cut
Tour Package Pricing System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Conduct comparative studies on similar tourist locations nearby to calculate the costs for tourists</li><li>- Calculate initial costs such as gasoline, pick-up, and entrance tickets to several destinations. This includes the cost of a tour guide. Then set an appropriate price</li></ul>
Tour route licensing	Establishing communication and collaboration with the forestry agency and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry in licensing tourist routes that pass through forestry areas
Lack of public facilities for tourists	Building rest areas equipped with supporting facilities such as toilets, simple prayer rooms, and spots for food and beverage vendors

Source: Author's compilation 2025

Several issues identified during the FGD indicate that the development of ecotourism requires various solutions needed by the community. The involvement of both parties in developing an action plan is one way to ensure that the development of ecotourism on the slopes of Mount Semeru not only proceeds but also serves as a first step toward future collaboration.



The results of the FGD not only successfully mapped out the problems and future activity plans, but also formed a joint commitment between the members of the Panorama Marketing Cooperative and the Jeep group members. This joint commitment is legal and recognized in the form of an MoU, which is a memorandum of understanding that regulates several matters such as the division of tasks and regular meetings. This socialization successfully encouraged new initiatives in both groups. Thus, through socialization, cooperation is not only the main foundation but also a catalyst in the development of inclusive and sustainable community-based ecotourism.

## 1.2 Implementation of Digital Marketing Training

The implementation of ecotourism development activities on the slopes of Mount Semeru is not only focused on collaboration between various related parties, but also includes marketing aspects. In today's modern era, everything is related to digitalization, so in these marketing activities, the community is trained to use digital media as a platform for marketing. Simple media that is commonly used by the community on a daily basis is used to facilitate the introduction of digital media as a marketing tool. The social media platforms used in this training include Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and WhatsApp. These social media platforms are commonly used by the community in various ways, especially for communication and viewing the outside world.

This training introduced the concept that digital marketing can be done simply through familiar social media because these media also allow users to edit photos and videos easily and simply. However, the results cannot last long because these media only display videos briefly. To create brochures, banners, and other products such as signboards, as well as to edit photos to make them more appealing, the community service team also provided training using a simple editing application platform called Canva. Meanwhile, to edit videos to make them more interesting with various effects and richer modes, the community service team also provided training using the Cap Cut platform. On this occasion, the community was actively involved in self-development to channel all their creativity and ideas into promotional videos and images.

The community was actively involved in self-development to express their creativity and ideas in the form of promotional videos and images. Attractive descriptions and hashtags that often appear in search engines will make it easier for people to find the uploaded videos and images. Thus, the Lereng Semeru ecotourism location will be easier to find and become more widely known by the public. An introduction to websites was also given to the training participants, most of whom had no understanding of the functions and uses of websites. On this occasion, training participants were given a detailed explanation of the functions, how to use, and the operation of a website. Only a few participants understood websites, but had never used them directly.

*Capacity building* training is one of the main tools for the sustainability of digital marketing strategies. Cooperative members and Jeep groups participated in digital marketing training on content creation using the Canva and Capcut applications, as well as how to upload and provide interesting captions for the content they have created. It is hoped that in the future, this training will have a positive impact in terms of marketing and introducing Semeru Slopes ecotourism to a wider audience, thereby boosting the economy in Pamotan Village in a sustainable manner. Although technical challenges and resource constraints are inevitable, these must be addressed with adaptive solutions in the future, while inter-



institutional collaboration must strengthen the impact of these marketing strategies in a sustainable manner.

## D. CONCLUSION

The collaboration strategy between Panorama Cooperative and the Jeep group in Pamotan Village has successfully integrated natural potential, local culture, and digital technology to enhance the competitiveness of ecotourism. Through digital marketing training and creative content on social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and several other social media platforms, this destination strives to attract tourists and introduce the potential of ecotourism to a wider audience. This collaboration also utilizes participatory focus group discussions (FGD) to design integrated tourism packages with neighboring villages through destinations such as the Flower Village, Magersari Vegetable Village, and Umbulan Water Tourism. This demonstrates that Pamotan Village is committed to developing sustainable and inclusive tourism.

*Capacity building* training and collaboration systems have successfully overcome several obstacles related to licensing issues for the use of tourist routes managed by Perhutani. Stakeholder support, such as from village governments and Perhutani, in providing infrastructure and regulations has also strengthened the ecotourism ecosystem. The development of ecotourism on the slopes of Mount Semeru needs to be maintained through the strengthening of digital infrastructure, the expansion of regional marketing networks, and the innovation of community-based tourism packages. Long-term recommendations include collaboration with the private sector for national and international promotion, as well as the use of analytical data to optimize marketing strategies. Thus, this multidimensional collaboration becomes the foundation for the development of inclusive, sustainable, and globally competitive rural ecotourism.

## E. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to the Village Government of Pamotan, Dampit District, Malang Regency, for their support and active participation throughout the community engagement activities. Special thanks are extended to the Panorama Lereng Semeru Cooperative and the Malang Willys Club Jeep Group for their collaboration, openness, and commitment during the Focus Group Discussions and capacity-building sessions. The authors also acknowledge the valuable assistance of forestry officers and local community members whose contributions greatly facilitated the implementation of the program. Lastly, the authors convey their gratitude to Universitas Brawijaya for providing institutional and administrative support that enabled the successful completion of this community engagement initiative.

## F. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

This community engagement activity and the preparation of this article were carried out through the collaborative work of all authors. Darsono Wisadirana (DW), Diyah Ayu Amalia Avina (DAA), Ajeng Yuri Eka Sasmita Sari (AYESS), and Vildan Cresanda Hutama Putera (VCHP) were responsible for implementing field activities, including the technical coordination of FGDs and capacity-building sessions. The conceptual design of the program



and institutional coordination were conducted by DW and Qurnia Indah Permata Sari (QIPS). Digital marketing training materials were developed by QIPS and DAA, while data collection was undertaken by DAA, AYESS, and VCHP. Data analysis and interpretation were led by QIPS and DAA. The initial draft of the manuscript was prepared by QIPS and AYESS, and the presentation of results and visualizations was completed by AYESS and VCHP. Article revision and final editing were conducted by QIPS and DW, with DW providing administrative and institutional support. Overall supervision of the project and manuscript development was carried out by QIPS.

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