

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE OF COMPETITIVENESS IMPROVEMENT OF ELO RIVER RAFTING TOURISM MAGELANG REGENCY**

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### **Abstract**

*Local and foreign tourists visit potential in Elo River rafting tourism evinces an increase every year. Therefore, it is important to improve management and human resource skills. This community service (Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat/PKM) aims to improve Elo River rafting tourism competitiveness through the development of integrated website, Statutes and Bylaws (AD/ART), Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), and enhancement of English communication skill. The service methods are applied using direct methods from preparation, implementation, and evaluation. The results of activities implementation indicate that the activities are well implemented in accordance with the pre-determined targets and outcomes. The activities executed provide an illustration that it produces added values; thus it improves the competitiveness of Elo River operator association. Follow-up efforts of the implemented programs include cooperation between Universitas Tidar and the Elo River rafting association in the efforts of competitiveness improvement in terms of English Skills and the administration of competence test for tour guides.*

**Keywords:** *competitiveness, elo river rafting*

### **Abstrak**

Potensi kunjungan wisatawan lokal maupun mancanegara di wisata arung jeram Sungai Elo menunjukkan peningkatan setiap tahunnya. Oleh karena itu, penting untuk meningkatkan keterampilan manajemen dan sumber daya manusia. Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat (PKM) ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan daya saing wisata arung jeram Sungai Elo melalui pengembangan *website* terintegrasi, Anggaran Rumah Tangga (AD / ART), Standar Operasional Prosedur (SOP), dan peningkatan kemampuan komunikasi bahasa Inggris. Metode pelayanan diterapkan dengan menggunakan metode langsung mulai dari persiapan, pelaksanaan, dan evaluasi. Hasil pelaksanaan kegiatan menunjukkan bahwa kegiatan dilaksanakan dengan baik sesuai dengan target dan hasil yang telah ditetapkan. Kegiatan yang dilakukan memberikan gambaran bahwa menghasilkan nilai tambah; sehingga meningkatkan daya saing asosiasi operator Sungai Elo. Upaya tindak lanjut dari program yang dilaksanakan antara lain kerjasama antara Universitas Tidar dengan asosiasi arung jeram Sungai Elo dalam upaya peningkatan daya saing dalam hal Keterampilan Bahasa Inggris dan penyelenggaraan uji kompetensi bagi pemandu wisata.

**Kata Kunci:** *daya saing, arung jeram sungai elo*

## **INTRODUCTION**

A nation's economic independence can be realized if a village's economic could run independently. A village's potentials could support economy per capita if it is well managed and developed by considering an appropriate market share. One potential of a tourism village in Magelang Regency is Elo River rafting.

The Elo River rafting tourism object is a tourism activity package that includes activity of down the Elo River along 11 km using a rafting boat. The activity starts from Blondo Bridge up to Mungkid Bridge of Magelang Regency that lasts for 2.5 hours. The Elo River is located in Magelang at Jl. Raya Borobudur KM.3, Selag, Pabelan, Mungkid, Ngaseman, Magelang, Central Java. The close proximity of the river location to Borobudur Temple brings a potential for development to support the surrounding village communities. The number of tourist in 2018 is recorded at 6.36 million that consists of 5.9 million local tourists and 350,000 foreign tourists (Katadata, 2019). The river rafting starting point is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Starting Point of Elo River Rafting Magelang**  
(<https://www.tuguwisata.com/rafting-sungai-elo-magelang/>)

The Elo River rafting tourism object management currently manages by communities of rafting operators in Magelang. The operator communities play roles in the tourism development based on tourism elements of the rafting tourism

objects. The rafting communities are accommodated in a rafting operator association consisting of 20 operators. Each operator has their own tour guide members that comprises of 5-20 members (Cholishoh, 2018).

The tour guide employment status is divided into two groups, namely: full time and freelance employees. The fulltime employees are employees who come every day to serve the tourists, whereas freelance employees are those needed if the fulltime employees overwhelm by tourist service. The freelance employees usually require during school holidays, national holidays, and on the weekend. The number of freelance employees of each operator is more than ten. The tour guides currently have no skill of English communication due to lack of training provided for them to welcome foreign tourists.

The Elo River rafting tourism development currently manages by Elo River rafting operator association. The association is established as a tool to exchange information as well as evaluation tool between the operators. The association is officially established in August 2019. The operators now have their own management and marketing methods; thus, varied activity package system for tourists.

Based on the aforementioned efforts are required in enhancing the rafting competitiveness through the association's integrated website utilization and English training for the tour guides. Therefore, a team of Universitas Tidar lecturer that consists of Dr. Ahmad Muhlisin, M. Pd., Moch. Malik Alfirdaus, M. Pd., and Siswanto, M. Pd will perform a community service through a training activity of integrated website operation of operator association and English training. The two skills are intended to improve the competitiveness of Elo River rafting tourism Magelang Regency.

The indicators for the achievement of this community service implementation are 1) improving operator skills in using the website as a promotional media; and 2) improvement of tour guide skills in English which include 1) fluency in pronouncing, 2) intonation, 3) systematic, 4) accuracy of word selection, and 5) pronunciation.

## **METHOD**

Training method applied to improve the competitiveness of Elo River rafting Magelang Regency was direct methods from preparation, implementation, and evaluation. The methods are elaborated as follows.

### **Activity Execution Preparation**

Activity execution preparation was conducted by the team by communicating with the administrators of the Elo River rafting operator association. It aimed to determine the execution place, time, and participants.

### **Activity Execution**

Activity execution carried out by providing guidance, training, and real practice in website utilization, AD/ART (statutes and Bylaws), SOP (standard operating procedures), and English skill.

### **Activity Evaluation**

Activity evaluation conducted using scores of website utilization practice and English skill. The English skill in this case included Planning Tour Itineraries, Asking and Giving Directions, Job of Tour Guide and Operator, Explaining Safety, Rules, Etiquette and Custom, and Hunting Souvenir.

The instrument used to measure the achievement of the skill indicators of using the website as a promotional medium with a checklist containing a list of website update menus that must be filled in by the operator or admin association of each river rafting operator, including 1) homepage; 2) articles & articles; 3) Vision and mission; 4) objectives; 5) membership; and 6) organizational structure. The instrument of English language skills for tour guides is obtained based on a scale table by means of each participant practicing English which integrates environmental education and how to guide rafting tours. The indicators consist of 1) fluency in sentences, 2) intonation, 3) systematic, 4) accuracy in choosing words, and 5) pronunciation.

Data analysis techniques measure skills in using the website by giving a score of 1 to participants who have successfully updated each menu and giving a value of 0 to participants who have not been able to update the menu on the website. Furthermore, in measuring English language skills by comparing the

average prestes and posttest which are further divided into four criteria with the following value interval information (Table 1).

**Table 1. Criteria Value**

| <b>Interval</b> | <b>Criteria</b> |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 16 - 28         | Not good        |
| 29 - 40         | Less            |
| 41 - 52         | Good            |
| 53 - 64         | Very good       |

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The community service activity entitled “Competitiveness Improvement of Elo River Rafting Magelang Regency” in improving management through association integrated website and English skill enhancement carried out by the UNTIDAR Team. The activity results explain in the following sections.

### **Integrated Association Management Training through Integrated Website**

Operator association administrators or administrators of each Elo River rafting operator participated in the training activities. Content delivered in the training consisted of knowledge of the importance of integrated management in an organization (AD/ART, SOP) and direct practice on how to update data in the integrated website. The AD/ART used by the Magelang rafting operator association comprised 1) name, site, work area, and period of time; 2) principles, vision, mission, and member obligation; 3) characteristics, roles, and functions; 4) business and activities; 5) membership, member rights and obligations; 6) monthly members meeting; 7) administrators; 8) administrator rights and obligations; 9) supervisor; 10) annual member meeting; 11) source of fund; 12) operational; 13) cooperative surplus; 14) book keeping; 15) changes on statutes; 16) sanctions; 17) the period of association establishment; 18) Bylaws and special rules; and 19) closure.

The AD/ART position in an organization plays an important role as a formal legal or a regulation in carrying out activities in the organization. AD/ART in an organization has several purposes, namely: 1) facilitate the achievement of organizational objectives and goals; 2) prevent uncertainty or confusion in activity

implementation in the organization; and 3) act as guidelines in the basic of preparation of rules imposed in the organization (Dewi, 2019). Administrative requirements as AD/ART and SOP are a quality benchmark of an organization (Wuryani, 2018).

The enhancement of Elo River operator association competitiveness also carried out through the development of information technology-based integrated website accessible anytime and anywhere. The integrated website contains information on the association profile, AD/ART, and general information. The integrated website of the Elo River operator association Magelang Regency is displayed in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. Integrated Website of Elo River Rafting Operator Association**

The integrated website utilization facilitates the improvement of rafting tourism competitiveness. Moreover, it is also a technology-based information medium accessible by visitors to get them familiar with Elo River rafting. The utilization of .com or WordPress-based website as an effective alternative medium in promoting creative industry products is due to the community that currently prefers online media to printed media (Arifin, 2016). Website can be utilized as an effective strategy to enhance marketing as it has wide area coverage (Susanto et al., 2013). In addition, it could increase marketing strategies that have impact on product sale (Mumtahana et al., 2017).

### **English Skill Training for Tour Guides**

Communication skill training especially English was intended for tour guides so they could provide amenities for both local and foreign tourists. The training was an applicative-based training instead of a theoretical training. The purposes were to have the tour guides understand and practice sentences needed in daily life. The activity was generally divided into two stages. The first stage was indoor learning stage using props in group. The indoor training is depicted in Figure 3.



**Figure 3. Indoor English Training using Props**

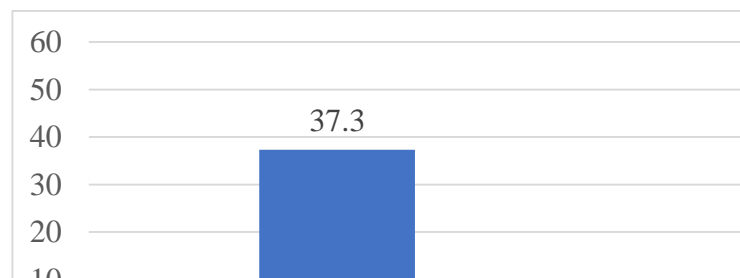
To expedite the tour guides in practicing their English communication, the second stage was learning activity through direct practice using props and real environment simulation (in a condition of serving a tourist). The simulation activity in English is illustrated in Figure 4.



**Figure 4. English Communication Simulation Activity by Tour Guides**

The success of English training was evaluated by comparing pretest and posttest scores in the activity implementation. The pretest and posttest carried out by providing five questions of making conversation sentences related to explaining 1) Planning Tour Itineraries; 2) rafting SOP; 3) hunting souvenir; 4) Job of Tour Guide and Operator; and 5) how to maintain the environment during the rafting activities.

There were only two participants who were capable of explaining two of the five questions provided during the pretest, whereas the other participants were still unable to do it. The posttest, however, indicated different results. Posttest evaluation carried out to all participants by practicing to convey the above five questions without the reference texts. The average pre-test and post-test scores for English language skills can be seen in Figure 5.



**Figure 5. The Average Pre-test and Post-test Scores for English Language Skills**

Based on Figure 5, it shows that the average post-test English skill score is higher than the pretest average score. Furthermore, in detail based on the category of English language skills can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2. Recapitulation of English Language Skills by Interval and Category**

| Value    | Category (Amount%) |      |      |           |
|----------|--------------------|------|------|-----------|
|          | Not good           | Less | Good | Very good |
| Pretest  | 0                  | 95,3 | 4,7  | 0         |
| Posttest | 0                  | 0    | 61,9 | 38,1      |

Based on Table 1, it can be concluded that the English language training is effective to improve the tour guide's skills in speaking English. The results suggested that all participants were able to practice conveying the information



using English well. The success was supported as direct practice is able to improve participants' understanding and skills (Syahputra, 2014; Febriani et al., 2019).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the conducted activities conclusion could be drawn that the PKM activity of competitiveness improvement of Elo River Rafting Tourism Magelang Regency conducted by UNTIDAR TEAM consisted of Dr. Ahmad Muhlisin, M. Pd., Moch. Malik Alfirdaus, M. Pd., and Siswanto, M. Pd was run well according to the pre-determined targets and outcomes. The targets and outcomes included information technology-based integrated website, AD/ART, SOP, and tour guides' communication skills enhancement especially in English. The activities implemented provided an illustration that it generated added values thus it improved the competitiveness of Elo River rafting operator association in Magelang Regency. Follow-up efforts of the program include cooperation between UNTIDAR and the Elo River rafting association to improve competitiveness. The next follow-up effort is cooperation to enhance English skill and the administration of competence test for tour guides.

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