

FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN WEST LAMPUNG: A COMMUNITY SERVICE INITIATIVE STRENGTHENING UNIVERSITY–LOCAL GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION

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Abstract

West Lampung Regency possesses substantial ecotourism, geotourism, and cultural-tourism assets, yet their development is constrained by damaged road accessibility, persistent illegal levies, a tourism workforce with limited entrepreneurial readiness, and inadequate budget and supporting facilities. This community service initiative aimed to strengthen collaboration between Universitas Lampung and the local government in advancing sustainable tourism, taking the IDR 70 billion Lake Ranau Lumbok Seminung Thematic Tourism Market as its empirical anchor. The activity was carried out through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving public servants of the Office of Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, Industry and Trade (Koperindag) of West Lampung and a multidisciplinary team of Universitas Lampung lecturers, organised in three stages: pre-activity preparation, the discussion itself, and post-activity evaluation. Four thematic streams were examined: the role of local government, sociological dimensions, community and start-up empowerment, and digital marketing support. The findings show that the local government has actively supported sustainable tourism through the development of creative-economy partners, particularly micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and through emerging institutional coordination. Nevertheless, funding limitations, uneven community awareness, and infrastructure gaps remain salient barriers. The initiative confirms that multi-actor collaboration among universities, government, the private sector, and the media is a prerequisite for translating tourism potential into inclusive and resilient local development. The study recommends institutionalising participatory governance, embedding carrying-capacity assessment, and scaling digital promotion to increase visitor arrivals while safeguarding ecological and cultural integrity.

Keywords: Community Empowerment; Lake Ranau; MSMEs; Sustainable Tourism; University–Government Collaboration; West Lampung.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism has become a central paradigm in contemporary destination development because it reconciles economic growth with environmental conservation and social equity. In Indonesia, where tourism is positioned as a strategic pillar of regional economic transformation, the principle is not merely desirable but essential: unregulated tourism growth

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risks environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and social inequity, whereas a well-governed approach can balance economic, social, and ecological interests simultaneously. West Lampung Regency, located in the western part of Lampung Province, is endowed with rich natural landscapes, unique geosites, and vibrant cultural heritage, offering opportunities for economic growth and community development across ecotourism, geotourism, and cultural tourism segments. The region's Suoh aspiring geopark, for instance, contains scientifically significant geodiversity and geosites that have been formally assessed for designation as a national and potentially UNESCO Global Geopark, underscoring the breadth of the regency's tourism resource base (Muslim et al., 2022).

A salient illustration of West Lampung's tourism ambition is the Lake Ranau Lumbok Seminung Thematic Tourism Market (Pasar Tematik Wisata Jelajah Danau Ranau), inaugurated in June 2025 and built with an allocation exceeding IDR 70 billion the largest tourism-themed investment in Lampung Province. Designed around the integrated themes of tourism, culture, and trade, the market is intended to function not as an underutilised monument but as a sustainable engine of community welfare, drawing visitors with the panorama of Lake Ranau while providing a marketplace for local micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), farmers, and artisans. The central policy challenge, however, lies in ensuring the facility's long-term sustainability and effective utilisation so that it does not repeat the fate of earlier tourism infrastructure in the area that suffered from suboptimal use (Nurliana, 2025).

Despite this potential, the tourism sector in West Lampung confronts four interlocking constraints. First, road accessibility to key destinations remains damaged and limited, increasing travel friction and depressing visitor satisfaction. Second, illegal levies (pungutan liar) persist along tourism corridors, undermining visitor trust and the investment climate. Third, the quality of local human resources is uneven, with many tourism actors lacking a working understanding of the fundamentals of tourism enterprise. Fourth, budget allocation and supporting facilities are minimal relative to the scale of the destinations being promoted. These conditions echo the wider literature on community-based tourism, which identifies infrastructure gaps, human-resource limitations, fragmented governance, and the risk of elite capture as recurrent barriers to sustainability (Dasgupta & Beard, 2007; Pramono et al., 2026; Pramono & Juliana, 2025).

Community service initiatives that bridge universities and local governments have emerged as effective vehicles for sustainable tourism development. Universities contribute research, education, and innovation, while local governments provide policy frameworks and facilitate stakeholder engagement; their complementary roles are essential for translating research and policy into impactful community service (Febriansyah et al., 2020; Karomani et al., 2021). This collaborative model is particularly relevant in West Lampung, where community empowerment, green infrastructure, and participatory governance are required to unlock tourism's full potential while safeguarding local assets and values (Riana & Fajri, 2024). Higher-education community programmes have also been documented as effective channels for disseminating innovation in West Lampung specifically, including in the Sekincau region of the regency, lending local precedent to the present collaboration (Manik et al., 2021).

Accordingly, this article reports a community service (Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat) initiative undertaken by a multidisciplinary team from Universitas Lampung in partnership with the Office of Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, Industry and Trade (Koperindag) of West Lampung Regency.

The initiative aimed to (1) examine the local government's role in managing sustainable tourism; (2) surface the sociological dimensions shaping community participation; (3) assess community and start-up empowerment, particularly among MSMEs; and (4) evaluate digital marketing and promotion as enablers of destination competitiveness. By anchoring these themes in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) held at the Koperindag office, the article contributes practical, context-sensitive evidence on how university–government collaboration can foster inclusive and resilient tourism development in a rural Indonesian setting.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This community service initiative employed a participatory, qualitative approach centred on a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as the primary method of engagement and data generation. The FGD format was selected because it enables structured, multi-stakeholder dialogue that surfaces tacit knowledge, aligns expectations, and builds shared ownership qualities consistent with participatory governance principles widely recommended for sustainable tourism (Nugraha et al., 2024). The activity drew on a related policy study of the same destination, which similarly combined FGDs, field study, and policy analysis to examine the development and sustainability of the Lake Ranau thematic market (Nurliana, 2025).

Location and Participants

The initiative was hosted at the Office of Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, Industry and Trade (Koperindag) of West Lampung Regency, the government agency responsible for the guidance, development, and financing facilitation of MSMEs in the region, which operates an integrated coaching service for local business actors. The FGD was convened at the Koperindag office over two days (24–25 June 2025). Participants comprised public servants from Koperindag and a multidisciplinary team of Universitas Lampung lecturers drawn from government science, sociology, business administration, and management, ensuring that the four thematic streams were each anchored by relevant disciplinary expertise.

Discussion Themes

The FGD was organised around four thematic streams, each led by a member of the academic team:

1. The role of local government in managing sustainable tourism;
2. Sociological dimensions in the management of sustainable tourism;
3. Community empowerment and start-ups in the management of sustainable tourism; and
4. Digital marketing and promotion support in the management of sustainable tourism.

Stages of Implementation

The community service activity was implemented in three sequential stages, as summarised in Figure 1:

- a) Pre-activity. This initial preparation stage was carried out by the community service team lecturers and students from Universitas Lampung and comprised identification of the location and participants, coordination with the local government of each village, and preparation of the instruments to be used in the FGD.

- b) Activity. At this stage the community service was conducted according to the agreed agenda, beginning with an opening session followed by structured group discussion across the four thematic streams.
- c) Post-activity. This final stage comprised evaluation, closing, and an expression of appreciation for the successful conduct of the activity, together with consolidation of the discussion outputs into recommendations.

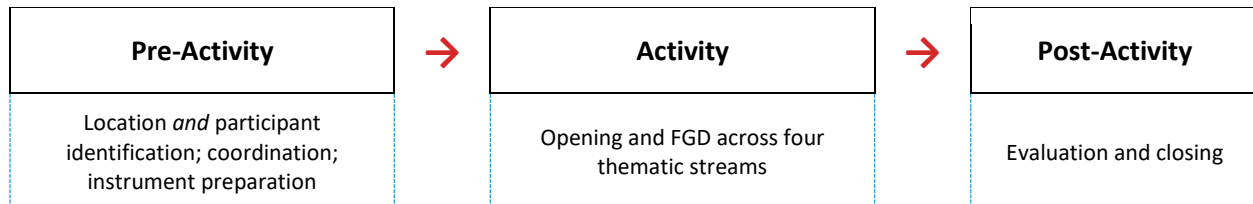


Figure 1. Stages of the community service (FGD) activity

The materials used in the activity comprised FGD guidelines structured along the four thematic streams, documentation of MSME products displayed at the thematic market, and field notes consolidated during the post-activity evaluation. Analysis proceeded through qualitative synthesis: discussion outputs were thematically coded against the four streams and interpreted in dialogue with the sustainable-tourism literature to derive transferable lessons and recommendations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The FGD generated a coherent picture of how sustainable tourism is being managed in West Lampung and where the principal leverage points lie. The results are organised below according to three cross-cutting findings that emerged across the four thematic streams: local-government support for sustainable tourism, community empowerment of creative-economy MSMEs, and institutional coordination. Each finding is discussed in relation to the broader evidence base on community-based tourism and university–government collaboration.

Local Government Support for Sustainable Tourism

The discussion confirmed that the local government of West Lampung, through Koperindag, has taken concrete steps to support sustainable tourism. The flagship Lake Ranau Lumbok Seminung Thematic Tourism Market developed with an allocation exceeding IDR 70 billion as part of a tourism-based economic development strategy exemplifies this commitment, deliberately designed around tourism, culture, and trade to attract visitors and enhance local welfare (Nurliana, 2025). This aligns with the literature’s characterisation of local governments as policy makers, regulators, and facilitators that create enabling environments for community participation and sustainable tourism (Nugraha et al., 2024). The thematic-market concept, in which the marketplace is organised around rotating themes such as agricultural-produce days, creative-product days, and cultural days, operationalises the integrated tourism-village logic that combines local entrepreneurship, cultural activities, and environmental stewardship (Pickel-Chevalier et al., 2021).

At the same time, participants were candid that government support, while necessary, is not yet sufficient. The four constraints framing this initiative road accessibility, illegal levies, human-resource readiness, and limited budget and facilities continue to temper the impact of public investment. This mirrors the wider finding that infrastructure gaps and fragmented governance impede effective tourism management, and that tailored infrastructure improvements such as roads, waste management, and accessibility features are prerequisites for converting destination potential into sustained visitor growth and satisfaction (Suthanaya & Suwarningsih, 2023). The policy implication is that capital investment in flagship facilities must be matched by complementary investment in enabling infrastructure and in the regulatory enforcement needed to eliminate illegal levies.

Community Empowerment of Creative-Economy MSMEs

A second clear finding is that community empowerment is already under way, most visibly through the coaching of creative-economy partners MSMEs (UMKM). The thematic market provides a physical and institutional platform for local actors: products observed at the venue ranged from locally roasted coffee under several West Lampung brands, to processed snacks and dried foods, to traditional woven crafts and bags bearing local motifs (Figures 2 and 3). This product diversity reflects the regency's creative-economy base and illustrates how a single destination can aggregate, showcase, and commercialise dispersed local enterprise. Such empowerment is consistent with evidence that community-based tourism drives local economic growth, job creation, and improved welfare (Riana & Fajri, 2024), and that strengthening MSMEs is central to sustaining the utilisation of tourism facilities such as the Lake Ranau market (Nurliana, 2025).

The FGD nonetheless surfaced the familiar challenge of uneven community awareness and capacity. Many tourism actors do not yet fully grasp the fundamentals of tourism enterprise, a human-resource limitation that constrains service quality and competitiveness. The literature is unambiguous that training programmes improve workforce readiness, service quality, and economic outcomes (Lee-Anant & Kungwansith, 2025), and that capacity building paired with equitable benefit-sharing is essential for long-term sustainability and community empowerment (Fadlurrahman et al., 2025). For West Lampung, this points to a structured, continuing programme of MSME capacity building covering product quality, packaging, pricing, and service standards ideally linked to recognised certification to enhance competitiveness. It also signals the value of university service-learning, in which students act as facilitators and knowledge brokers who empower local ventures, a role universities are particularly well placed to play (Bawole, 2024).



Figure 2. Local MSME products (coffee) at the thematic market



Figure 3. Local MSME products (woven crafts) at the thematic market

Institutional Coordination for Sustainable Tourism

The third finding concerns emerging institutional coordination. The FGD itself convening Koperindag public servants alongside a multidisciplinary university team enacted in miniature the kind of cross-sector collaboration that the destination requires. Related policy analysis of the Lake Ranau market reaches the same conclusion: its development and sustainability depend on robust regulation, cross-sector collaboration, and community empowerment (Nurliana, 2025). This resonates with established partnership models in the literature. The Triple Helix model of university–industry–government collaboration enhances community empowerment and poverty reduction (Nuraini et al., 2025), while the Hexa Helix model extends this to include media, NGOs, and local communities for more comprehensive and inclusive management (Suprastiyo et al., 2026). Formal agreements such as memoranda of understanding clarify roles and responsibilities and support entrepreneurship and inclusive governance (Untari & Suharto, 2021).

Within this collaborative architecture, the role of digital platforms and marketing emerged as a particularly promising lever. Collaborative digital platforms enhance stakeholder skills, interaction, and destination competitiveness (Rumanti et al., 2025), and digital marketing supports the rapid growth and visibility of rural tourism organisations (Bestin et al., 2026; Laksmi et al., 2026). For a destination such as the Lake Ranau thematic market, whose appeal rests on the visual draw of the lake and the distinctiveness of its local products, a coordinated digital-promotion strategy can materially expand reach and visitor arrivals. Participants accordingly identified the strengthening of collaboration among universities, the private sector, and the media as a priority for driving promotion and increasing tourist visits.

Taken together, the three findings indicate that West Lampung is moving in the right direction public investment, MSME empowerment, and nascent coordination are all in evidence but that sustainability will hinge on consolidating these gains into durable, participatory governance. Effective governance frameworks are participatory, transparent, and context-sensitive, with institutional mechanisms that sustain benefits and prevent elite capture (Pradana et al., 2026). Embedding such mechanisms, alongside carrying-capacity assessment to keep tourism within ecological limits (Rahmafritia & Nurazizah, 2022), would help ensure that

the regency's flagship investments mature into a genuinely inclusive and resilient tourism economy.

CONCLUSION

This community service initiative demonstrates that the local government of West Lampung Regency, through Koperindag, has actively supported the development of sustainable tourism most concretely through the empowerment of creative-economy MSMEs. Emerging institutional coordination, enacted in the FGD between Universitas Lampung and Koperindag, further signals a maturing collaborative environment. Nevertheless, substantial challenges persist: funding limitations, uneven community awareness, and infrastructure gaps continue to constrain the translation of tourism potential into sustained welfare gains.

The central lesson is that flagship public investment must be complemented by continuing MSME capacity building, participatory and transparent governance, carrying-capacity-based planning, and an intensified digital-promotion strategy. Above all, collaboration among actors universities, the private sector, and the media in particular needs to be strengthened to drive promotion and increase visitor arrivals. University–local government collaboration, of the kind reported here, offers a practical and replicable mechanism for advancing inclusive, resilient, and culturally grounded sustainable tourism in West Lampung. Future community service and research should focus on longitudinal evaluation of carrying-capacity assessment, the impact of digital platforms on participatory governance and inclusivity, and comparative analysis of collaboration models across rural Indonesian destinations.

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