



## Optimizing the Strategic Communication of Gerbas Tani Community in Developing Tourist Village

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**Abstract:** *Gerbas Tani is an abbreviation from Gerakan Belanja Sayur dari Lahan Petani (Buying groceries from Farmers' Land) and was born in 2018 marked by the educational activity "Pick Tomatoes" for kindergarten students. Gerbas Tani's mascot is a 0.1-hectare flower garden in the middle of a total area of 2.5 ha of vegetable gardens. The total number of visitors when the flower garden is in bloom reaches 20,000 people, with an average of 30-50 visitors per day. However, during the pandemic selling vegetables was abolished and tourist visitors were limited. Seeing the potential that exists, assistance to the subject is an alternative that needs to be pursued. The mentoring process can strengthen group awareness, reconstruct systems, and strengthen ecosystem improvement through directed, measurable, and effective strategic communication concepts. Farmers' flower and vegetable gardens are assets that will be explored further on how to use them during the pandemic and in the future. The two things of this research focus are: how to optimize the strategic communication to develop the potential of the Gerbas Tani Tourism Village and the main continuity of assistance to change the awareness of the assisted community through the example shown by agents (Gerbas Tani members with the support of local community elements) and continuously striving to become actors of collective change to create sustainable and developing villages.*

**Keywords:** strategic communication, adaptive structure, Gerbas Tani, awareness, community

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### Introduction

Gerbas Tani is a community that shows high resilience and survival. Since being inaugurated collectively by the majority of farmers and environmentalists in Kedungrejo

in late 2019, members of Gerbas Tani have continued to show solidarity in promoting their village through the agriculture (vegetable and rice fields) sector.

The women and youth at Gerbas Tani have started to have initiatives to sell any products that have high durability to be marketed through the marketplace that has been created. Meanwhile, gentlemen members are quite supportive of efforts to strengthen the community through online basic skills and continue to foster solidarity among the group.

The main goal of the Gerbas Tani Community which is oriented towards the future progress of the farmers has been seen from their work. The potential for tourism village in Kedungrejo Village is an asset that is possibility to be developed, processed, and formed to advance the local village. Considering with these scientific facts, assistance to the subject is an alternative that needs to be pursued. The mentoring process can strengthen group awareness, reconstruct systems, and strengthen ecosystem improvement through directed, measurable, and effective strategic communication concepts. So that the community as a subject who will manage the potential object of the area runs on the corridor of their awareness and ability to develop and improve their position in the social life of society.

This article will explain the condition of the Gerbas Tani Community and how they are moving from pandemic losses to their growth in accepting social behavior in the post-pandemic era.

## Method

To optimize the strategic communication of the Gerbas Tani Community in developing a tourism village, the Assistance Team conducted an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. The stages of this assistance are as follows:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Blickem et al., "What Is Asset-Based Community Development and How Might It Improve the Health of People With Long-Term Conditions? A Realist Synthesis," *SAGE Open* 8, no. 3 (2018): 1–13; Mirza Maulana Al-Kautsari, "Asset-Based Community Development : Strategi Pengembangan Masyarakat," *Empower: Jurnal Pengembangan Masyarakat Islam* 4, no. 2 (2019): 259; Nurdiyanah dkk, *Panduan Pelatihan Dasar : Asset Based Community-Driven Development (ABCD)* (Makasar: , Seri Publikasi Kemitraan Universitas - masyarakat UIN Alaudin Makkasar, Cetakan 1, 2016); Nadhir Salahuddin, "Panduan KKN ABCD UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya Asset Based Community-Driven Development (ABCD)" (Surabaya: LP2M UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2015); Gord Cunningham and Alison Mathie, "Asset-Based Community Development --An Overview What Is ABCD?" (Bangkok, Thailand.: Synergos, 2002); UINSA KKN ABCD, *Panduan KKN ABCD UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya*, Cetakan ke. (Surabaya: LP2M UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2015); Cunningham and Mathie, "Asset-Based Community Development --An Overview What Is ABCD?"

***Stage 1, Discovery, carried out with:***

First, Identify and engage stakeholders. This stage involves identifying and engaging with all individuals or groups who have an interest in the Gerbas Tani community's development as a tourist village. This includes farmers, villagers, local government officials, and potential tourists. Engaging these stakeholders ensures that their perspectives and needs are considered throughout the development process.

Second, Conduct a community assessment. A comprehensive community assessment is crucial to identify the Gerbas Tani community's assets, including its natural resources, cultural heritage, skills and knowledge, and existing community organizations. Understanding these assets provides a foundation for developing effective communication strategies that leverage the community's unique strengths.

Third, Identify communication challenges. This stage involves identifying the specific challenges faced by the Gerbas Tani community in effectively communicating with tourists and promoting the tourist village. These challenges may include language barriers, lack of awareness among potential tourists, or ineffective marketing strategies. Understanding these challenges is essential for designing targeted communication solutions.

***Stage 2. Dream carried out with:***

First, Develop a shared vision. Facilitating a process for the Gerbas Tani community to develop a shared vision for the future of the tourist village is essential for aligning the community's efforts and ensuring that everyone is working towards a common goal. This shared vision should reflect the community's aspirations for the village's development and the unique experiences they want to offer to tourists.

Second, Identify potential projects. This stage involves identifying potential projects that can help achieve the community's communication goals. These projects may include developing a website, creating social media campaigns, or organizing cultural events. Identifying these projects helps the community prioritize their efforts and allocate resources effectively.

***Stage 3: Design, carried out with:***

First, Develop a communication plan. A comprehensive communication plan outlines the strategies, channels, and resources needed to achieve the community's communication goals. This plan should include a clear understanding of the target audience, messaging strategies, and communication channels that will be used.

Second, Design specific projects. This stage involves designing specific projects that will implement the communication plan. Each project should have a detailed plan, including timelines, budgets, and responsibilities for community members and partners.

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Clear project plans ensure that everyone is on the same page and that projects are completed efficiently.

Third, Build partnerships. Identifying and building partnerships with external organizations that can provide support and expertise in strategic communication is crucial for success. These partnerships can provide valuable resources, expertise, and connections that can enhance the community's communication efforts.

***Stage 4: Define, carry out with assigned responsibilities, and Develop an evaluation plan.*** Clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of community members and partners in implementing the communication plan is crucial for accountability and ensuring that everyone is contributing to the project's success.

An evaluation plan is essential for assessing the effectiveness of the communication plan and projects. This plan should outline the metrics that will be used to measure success, the frequency of evaluation, and the process for making adjustments as needed.

***Stage 5: Destiny, carried out with the implementation of the communication plan and Monitoring and evaluate.***

This stage involves implementing the communication plan and projects according to the agreed-upon timeline and budget. Careful execution of the plan ensures that the community's communication efforts are consistent and effective.

For Monitor and evaluate, continuously monitoring and evaluating the progress of the communication plan and projects is crucial for making adjustments and ensuring that the community's efforts are on track to achieve their goals.

Developing strategies to sustain the community's communication efforts beyond the initial project phase is crucial for long-term success. This may involve establishing ongoing funding mechanisms, training community members to continue communication activities, and developing partnerships for ongoing support.

## **Result**

### ***Discovery of Community Awareness of Local Potential Belonging***

The local potential will be restored and preserved by the local people, otherwise, it will vanish time by time. To be able to continue the goal, the community has to be in one boat, despite anything agreed and non-agreed, but bringing out the interest is also one hard thing. There must be a step and an adaptive phase the community can learn.

According to Barker<sup>2</sup>, the three dimensions in adaptive structuring that can encourage the movement of group awareness are first, interpretation/understanding, which states how agents understand something. Second, morality or direction, which states how something should be done. Third, power in action, which states how the agent achieves a willingness. The strategic communication arranged in the conception is the main objective of thought interpretation from internal group members assisted by external objects (facilitators).

In line with the sociocultural tradition, conceptual capital shows how individuals and groups conceptualize communication and its problems systematically and juxtapose them with new cultures that are acceptable to their society<sup>3</sup>. So, in line with this method, there are feelings, understanding, and awareness that are internalized within the group which will be continued in efforts to raise awareness more broadly, namely the components of the surrounding community.

The development of industrialization and consumerism cannot be separated from popular culture. The tradition of selfies with beautiful views at tourist sites is a 'relation of taste' which is included in the cultural assumption that is average (mean) and implies the meaning of 'most people'.<sup>4</sup>Because it is productivity-oriented, the profits generated both physical (income) and non-physical (fame) are important to jump-start the rate of consumers at a tourist spot or potential location.

Assistance is an external process from the group, this is needed to encourage group awareness in terms of conception in viewing popular culture, analyzing problems, and formulating relevant communication strategies. Effective utilization of new media technology through digital work will facilitate change.

The process of producing strategic communication messages requires concrete resources and actions to distinguish it from rhetoric. Appropriate direction and transfer of knowledge (direction and interpretation) from mentoring equips the community/agent with an understanding of the assets and potential of the group in particular and the village in general.

Some of the things that cause the tourism village Gerbas Tani not well promoted are as follows.

1. Lack of direction and advice in Gerbas Tani Community
2. There is no funding from the village or related parties for the long-term achievement of the tourist site

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<sup>2</sup> Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies* (Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Tenzin Dorjee Stella Ting-Toomey, *Communicating Across Cultures*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Yasraf Amir Piliang, *Teori Budaya Kontemporer*, 2nd Editio. (Yogyakarta: Cantrik Pustaka, 2018).

3. The Village authority and the Community has different angle and perspective on how to promote and develop the Gerbas Tani in the future

### *Dream, Design, and Destiny*

After asking questions from the residents, it turns out that Pak Heru, who used to be the head of Gerbas Tani said that he and the group are welcoming assistants and facilitators to improve and develop the goal of Gerbas Tani.

The Focus Group Discussion held during the research mentioned three aspects that the Community wants to approach:

1. Strategic Promotion for online and offline selling of the farmer's product
2. Market and good managerial in the system of chain includes prospect seller and buyer
3. Innovation of products that attract online buyer
4. Team that will maintain all the online system activities



*Figure 1.* Training with Community leaders of Gerbas Tani and FGD

The mapping of what is a positive thing for Kedungrejo residents and their village is carried out through FGDs in informal community spaces. Each companion's presence is accompanied by a field note and documentation of the results of the progress report. The achievement of this activity is to find out the reality of the village's initial conditions before and now, geographical conditions, striking and non-appearing potential, mobility trends, social interactions, community profiles, and a general description of problems

In general, the people in Kedungrejo have complained a lot about the uncertain price of fertilizer and crop prices through middlemen. With the current mobility trend, local mothers are starting to take advantage of online channels (WhatsApp status and WhatsApp groups) to market Gerbas Tani products, both processed and raw.

The name Gerbas Tani, which was initiated by the community, has now been recognized by the Village as an icon of Kedungrejo Village, for this reason, there is direct

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intervention from the village side with members of Gerbas Tani. Some people feel that this is a bad precedent, but some think that this is an opportunity for good collaboration between stakeholders and the community.

For the past two months, researchers with the community and the Gerbas Tani group have carried out the Dream stage, which comes from exploring the potential themes that have been obtained in the general mapping and then inviting community involvement through FGDs in cultural and non-cultural spaces to discuss the future potential of the village. The discussion that has been obtained, will then be explored using ABCD tools. At this stage, the facilitator and the community understand the assets and potential of the local group and village.

The community has started imagining and dreaming that in the future Gerbas Tani is feasible to develop, especially since the pandemic is over. Their hopes are starting to rest on the power of online sales which they should be able to have the way (how to). The members of Gerbas Tani also had time to discuss with the companion what other prospects they could develop other than flower gardens and selling vegetables. Interesting ideas emerged from them, such that the icon of Gerbas Tani in the future could be Jagung Pulut (purple color), the variant of which is still limited. They are also optimistic about the future of Gerbas Tani online and offline

In these months, researchers with the community and the Gerbas Tani group carry out a Design, namely a discussion plan that has been identified together. Evidence of the achievement of this activity is a description of the results of participation in community ideas, organizing group and individual potential, analysis of potential assets, and stakeholder partnerships. At this stage, budgeting and implementing organizations have also been carried out.

The designs proposed and discussed together in the FGD forum with Gerbas Tani are:

First, Create a management system (communication strategy) that is appropriate, such as product data collection (data bank), sales distribution channels, distribution agents/recipients/buyers

Second, Providing an introduction (basic communication skills) to the online sales sector, presenting a variety of products, attractive packaging, as well as barcodes as well as nutritional content (labeling/packaging for urban buyers)

At the Destiny stage, the facilitator together with the community and the Gerbas Tani group carry out the implementation of the strategic communication design achievements that have been designed by carrying out activities and theorizing/reflecting on the assisted process. (1). Training for basic skills has been carried out but not yet intense; (2). The system already exists, but it needs evaluation

At this stage, the researcher carries out a continuation of the training that has been

designed in the Destiny stage.



Figure 2. Low-cost Market Gerbas Tani

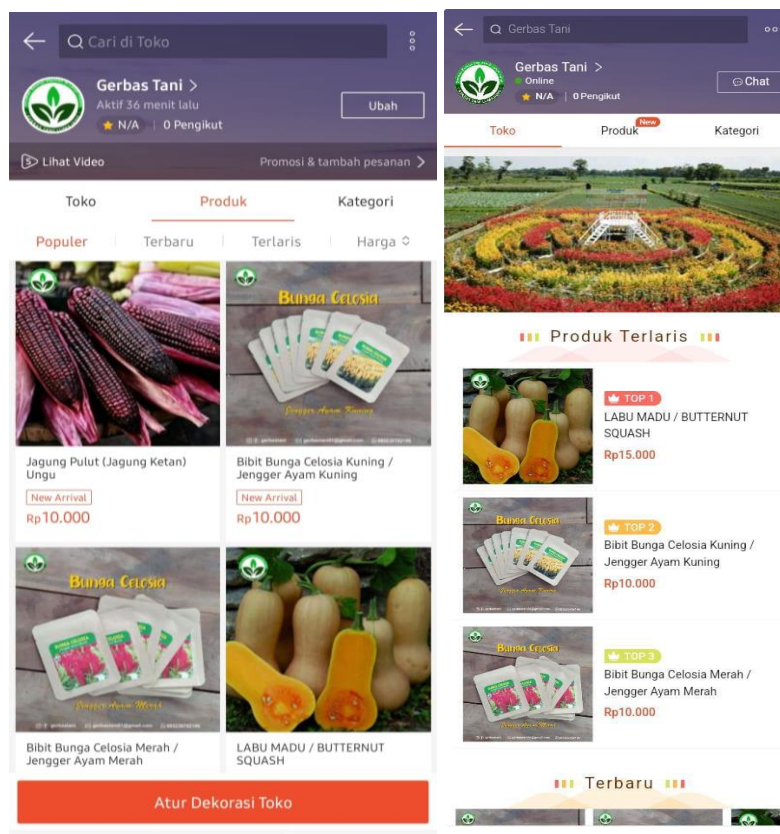


Figure 4. Online Market Market Gerbas Tani

Following those solutions, here are the accounts of starting selling using Marketplace, Tokopedia, and Shopee. Those two marketplaces were chosen because the majority of member Gerbas Tani community are familiar with them.

With the nice packaging and the right promotion (handled by ladies member of Gerbas Tani), and boys who are familiar with operating the marketplace by training, those two come with significant responses from various buyers.

An offline buyer appreciates if there is seed sold by Gerbas Tani, it must have



quality standards and good packaging. Also, the seed of flowers that are seen in garden flowers which are already in the end age of fertile, will proceed and be sent out and wrapped as nicely as appear.

## Discussion

Tourism Village is knowingly wider in the post-pandemic era, considering that citizen is strictly not allowed to do activities in the indoor area, they are finding activities in the outdoor area. The traffic on social media is also getting high, cause of the situation made it.

Kedungrejo is one of the potential areas in Lumajang that has favorable land for rice fields, fruits, and vegetables. Gerbas Tani also provides a flower garden tourism area of 0.1 Ha in the middle of a total area of 2.5 Ha of vegetable gardens. Among the flowers planted are refugia plants which serve as a diversion for pests that eat vegetables. The enthusiasm of visitors to the flower garden tour is worth a glance. The total number of visitors when the flower garden is in bloom reaches 20,000 people, with an average of 30-50 visitors per day. The Gerbas Tani flower garden has a perfect blooming schedule for a maximum of three months and is held twice a year.

Developing the potential of a tourism village requires two things to be achieved, it is participation and control.<sup>5</sup> However, the current condition is less promoted and less managed for long-term tourism, making tourists reluctant to visit the village. The community needs to be assisted and advised to do some promoting and strategic phases for achieving the long-term goal of the tourism village.<sup>6</sup> The community itself has done

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<sup>5</sup> Deditiani Tri dkk Indrianti, "Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Melalui Pengembangan Desa Wisata Organik Di Kabupaten Bondowoso," *Journal of Nonformal Education and Community Empowerment* 3 (1) (2019): 13-19.

<sup>6</sup> Indrianti, "Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Melalui Pengembangan Desa Wisata Organik Di Kabupaten Bondowoso"; AHMAD NURCHOLIS, SYAIKHU IHSAN, and SYAIKHU IHSAN, "PENGEMBANGAN ECO EDUWISATA KOI DALAM MENINGKATKAN INCOME KELOMPOK WANITA TANI DI KELURAHAN NGLEGOK KABUPATEN BLITAR," *Dinamika Penelitian: Media Komunikasi Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 19, no. 2 (2020); N.L. Kartini and N.G.K. Roni, "PENGEMBANGAN DESA BUAHAN SEBAGAI SENTRA AGROWISATA ORGANIC FARMING DI KECAMATAN KINTAMANI, KABUPATEN BANGLI," *Buletin Udayana Mengabdi* 19, no. 1 (2020); Sri Wiyatiningsih et al., "PERSEPSI MASYARAKAT TERHADAP UPAYA PENGEMBANGAN DESA WISATA JERUK PAMELO ORGANIK DI DESA TAMBAKMAS, KECAMATAN SUKOMORO, KABUPATEN MAGETAN," *Jurnal Abadimas Adi Buana* 3, no. 2 (2019); Siti Hodijah et al., "Pendampingan Desa Tanjung Lanjut Dalam Pemanfaatan Limbah Organik Melalui Optimalisasi Limbah Rumah Tangga Menuju Desa Wisata Berkelanjutan," *Studium: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 2, no. 1 (2022); . Sarno, "PEMBERDAYAAN MASYARAKAT DESA PAGAK BANJARNEGARA MELALUI TRANSFER TEKNOLOGI HIDROPONIK SAYURAN ORGANIK," *Adimas: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 2, no. 1 (2018); Deditiani Tri Indrianti, Lutfi Ariefianto, and Dinar Halimi, "Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Melalui Pengembangan Desa Wisata Organik Di Kabupaten Bondowoso," *Journal of Nonformal Education and Community Empowerment* 3, no. 1 (2019); V L Fadriani and E W Endarti, "Efektivitas Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Melalui Pengembangan Desa Wisata Organik Di Desa Lombok Kulon Kabupaten Bondowoso," *JISP (Jurnal Inovasi Sektor Publik)* 1, no. 2 (2021).

great work to continue the tourism village, such as every year they hold a big event namely “Pasar Sayur Murah Gerbas Tani” during a harvest month.

By bringing the power of community and promotion strategy, they start to live up again the atmosphere of the flower garden Gerbas Tani. By this condition, it is always not enough. The strategic step is much needed by the end for achieving and gaining much attraction of the tourist.



*Figure 3.* Aerial condition of garden flower (left) and Garden flower as an icon of Gerbas Tani Tourism Village

## **Conclusion**

The Gerbas Tani community is solid and has a high goal to preserve their village as a tourism village. In addition to persuasive communication with youth and youth to become part of Gerbas Tani, this service is changing the awareness of the assisted community through the example shown by agents (Gerbas Tani members with the support of personnel from local youth and youth) continuously striving to become actors of change collectively to realize a sustainable and developing village (sustain and develop).

It all has been proved by their action and hard work. By bringing awareness to each member, Gerbas Tani has set their goal to reach out to online selling, while also preserving offline selling by holding different events each trimester of the year. The capability from training held by the facilitator has shown as a massive approach amidst the post-pandemic era trend.

In addition, it will raise the local knowledge of each member, and also strengthen the Community in the future.

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