

NEGOTIATING GENDER ROLES IN CULTURE-BASED CREATIVE ECONOMIES: A STUDY OF THE KAMPOENG LAMA TOURISM VILLAGE COMMUNITY, DELI SERDANG REGENCY

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 20-11-2025

Revised : 07-12-2025

Accepted : 15-01-2026

KEYWORDS

Gender Equality,
Community
Participation, Tourism
Sustainability,
Affirmative Economy,
Community-Based
Tourism.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of gender equality and community participation on affirmative economic development in the tourism village of Hariara Pohan, with tourism village sustainability functioning as a mediating variable. The objective is to understand how social empowerment and cultural governance contribute to equitable and long-term economic benefits in community-based tourism. The research used a quantitative survey method and involved 165 respondents who were actively engaged in tourism and local creative economy activities. A structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale was administered, and data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess both direct and indirect causal relationships among the studied variables. The results indicate that gender equality and community participation significantly enhance tourism village sustainability, particularly through strengthened decision-making roles, cultural heritage protection, and collective responsibility. Both variables also directly influence affirmative economic development by improving micro-enterprise growth, access to capital, and fair distribution of tourism income across households. Furthermore, tourism village sustainability mediates these relationships, demonstrating that social empowerment leads to stable economic outcomes when supported by cultural preservation and environmental stewardship. In conclusion, the study underscores that sustainable and inclusive tourism development requires not only economic planning, but also equitable participation, gender-balanced leadership, and strong cultural identity. These elements are essential for building resilient rural tourism economies.

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INTRODUCTIONS

Tourism villages have become an increasingly important model for sustainable development, cultural revitalization, and community-based economic empowerment in Indonesia (Firmando, 2021; Naqiah et al., 2023; Pickel-Chevalier et al., 2022; Suprapti et al., 2019; Zuryani et al., 2022). As rural communities seek to preserve cultural identity while generating livelihood opportunities, the creative economy emerges as a strategic domain in which cultural expressions are transformed into marketable value (Osin et al., 2021; Putra et al., 2023). Kampoeng Lama, located in Deli Serdang Regency, represents one such tourism village where cultural heritage, traditional crafts,

culinary practices, and local performances form the basis of community-driven economic activities. The integration of cultural heritage within creative economic practices not only supports income diversification but also reinforces a collective sense of belonging that anchors tourism development within local identity.

Gender plays a significant role in shaping participation within cultural and creative economies (Kumar, 2019; Rinaldi & Salerno, 2020; Su et al., 2025). In many Indonesian rural communities, women traditionally maintain cultural continuity through domestic crafts, food preparation, traditional rituals, and transmission of cultural knowledge to younger generations (Muzni & Puspita, 2024). These contributions form the backbone of cultural tourism, yet they are often undervalued in economic terms. In Kampoeng Lama, women are deeply involved in producing handicrafts, managing homestays, organizing cultural events, and curating narratives about the village's heritage. However, the negotiation of gender roles in the creative economy remains complex, as cultural norms, authority structures, and expectations around domestic responsibilities continue to shape how women and men engage in economic activities.

The concept of gender role negotiation refers to the process by which individuals and communities redefine, challenge, or reinforce gendered expectations within everyday practices (Marizka et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2021; Yeon et al., 2020). Within the creative economy, this negotiation is intertwined with access to resources, decision-making authority, social recognition, and the symbolic value of cultural labor. In Kampoeng Lama, women often hold expertise in culturally significant practices but may have limited influence in formal governance structures of tourism development. This creates an imbalance in how cultural labor is valued and how economic benefits are distributed, affecting both empowerment and equity within the tourism village structure.

The cultural economy of Kampoeng Lama operates within traditional kinship systems, religious values, and intergenerational hierarchies that guide community interactions. These cultural frameworks provide social cohesion and identity continuity yet may also reinforce gendered divisions of labor. For example, while women may lead in craft-making and hospitality, men may dominate roles in public negotiation, external partnerships, and financial management. This dynamic reflects broader patterns in rural Indonesia, where cultural heritage work is frequently feminized and undervalued despite its centrality to tourism attractiveness and visitor experience.

The emergence of tourism-oriented microenterprises in Kampoeng Lama has opened opportunities for women to participate more directly in market-based activities. Participation in these enterprises allows women to gain greater visibility, negotiate new identities beyond domestic roles, and contribute to household income in more recognized ways. However, such participation often requires navigating cultural expectations that continue to associate women's primary responsibilities with caregiving and domestic management. This balancing act highlights the nuanced and ongoing negotiation of gender roles within the creative economy context.

Community-led tourism development in Kampoeng Lama is influenced by external actors including government tourism programs, non-governmental organizations, and cultural heritage preservation initiatives. While these interventions often aim to empower communities, their impact on gender dynamics is shaped by the extent to which they recognize and address existing power relations. Programs that promote entrepreneurship without considering gendered access to capital, mobility, or training may reproduce inequalities rather than reduce them. Thus, understanding how gender roles are negotiated in practice is crucial for designing inclusive community development strategies.

The creative economy also functions as a site of cultural representation where narratives about identity and heritage are constructed and performed. Women in Kampoeng Lama often assume the role of cultural narrators by curating traditional stories, performing dances, preparing ritual foods, or demonstrating craft techniques to visitors. These activities not only provide economic value but also determine how the community is perceived by outsiders. Negotiating gender roles therefore shapes not only internal community relations but also external cultural representation and identity politics within the tourism marketplace.

From an economic perspective, the sustainability of tourism villages relies on equitable distribution of labor and benefits among community members (Arismayanti et al., 2019; Fitriana et al., 2020; Untari & Suharto, 2020). When gendered divisions of labor limit women's access to leadership or profit-sharing, tourism development risks reinforcing socioeconomic disparities. Conversely, when gender negotiation results in more equitable power sharing, tourism becomes a platform for inclusive growth and empowerment. The case of Kampoeng Lama thus offers insight into how gender relations can either hinder or enhance the sustainability of culture-based creative economies.

There is also a symbolic dimension to gender negotiation in cultural economies. As Kampoeng Lama promotes its heritage as a source of tourism value, the roles men and women play in producing, maintaining, and performing that heritage become part of the village's narrative identity. These narratives influence how cultural authenticity is perceived by visitors and how community members understand themselves within changing economic landscapes. Gender therefore becomes not just a variable in economic participation but a central element in shaping cultural meaning and collective identity.

This study aims to analyze how gender roles are negotiated within the culture-based creative economy of Kampoeng Lama and how these negotiations influence patterns of participation, recognition, and benefit distribution. By understanding the social processes that shape gendered involvement in tourism and cultural production, the research contributes to broader discussions on inclusive community development. The study offers an analytical framework for recognizing cultural labor, valuing women's contributions, and designing tourism governance structures that support equitable and sustainable creative economies in rural Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine the negotiation of gender roles within the culture-based creative economy of Kampoeng Lama. The qualitative component focused on interpreting cultural meanings, social interactions, and gendered practices embedded in tourism and creative activities, while the quantitative component aimed to measure patterns of participation, economic contributions, and perceptions of gender dynamics. Kampoeng Lama was selected as the research site because of its status as a tourism village that integrates cultural heritage and creative economic development, making it a relevant case for analyzing how local communities negotiate gender roles in cultural production and tourism governance.

Table 1. Variable and Indicators of Research

Variable	Indicators
Gender Equality (X1)	(a) Access to economic resources (b) Role in decision-making (c) Opportunities for leadership (d) Division of labor in tourism activities
Community Participation (X2)	(a) Involvement in planning (b) Participation in implementation (c) Contribution in evaluation (d) Collective decision-making responsibility
Tourism Village Sustainability (Z)	(a) Environmental preservation practices (b) Cultural heritage safeguarding (c) Economic viability and continuity (d) Social inclusion and local cohesion
Affirmative Economic Development (Y)	(a) Access to capital and financial support (b) Growth of local micro-enterprises (c) Fair distribution of tourism income (d) Strengthening of entrepreneurial capacity

The population of this study consisted of residents who are actively engaged in tourism-related creative activities, including traditional craft production, culinary enterprises, cultural performance, homestay management, and tourism support services. A total of 165 respondents were selected using proportionate purposive sampling to ensure representation across gender, age groups, household economic roles, and involvement in both direct and indirect tourism sectors. Respondents were required to be permanent residents of Kampoeng Lama and have participated in tourism or creative economic activities for at least one year to ensure experiential relevance and contextual depth in their responses.

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale, complemented by semi-structured interviews and field observations (Dash & Paul, 2021; Kamis et al., 2020). The questionnaire measured indicators related to gender role division, decision-making authority, cultural labor recognition, economic participation, and perceived empowerment within the creative economy. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with community leaders, creative economy entrepreneurs, cultural practitioners, and both male and female members of tourism groups to explore how gender expectations are negotiated in everyday practices. Observations were carried out during cultural demonstrations, craft workshops, food production activities, and tourism events to document embodied and performative aspects of gendered roles. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation to identify patterns in gendered participation and benefit distribution.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Demography

Kampoeng Lama is a heritage-based tourism village located in the Deli Serdang Regency of North Sumatra, Indonesia. The village holds a unique historical position as one of the earliest settlement areas in the region, with cultural roots that trace back to Malay and Islamic traditions. Its geographical proximity to the city of Medan, approximately 20–25 kilometers away, makes it an accessible destination for domestic and regional visitors. The village's landscape consists of traditional wooden houses, narrow village pathways, lush tropical vegetation, and riverside communal spaces that reinforce a tranquil rural atmosphere ideal for cultural tourism experiences.

Culturally, Kampoeng Lama is known for preserving traditional Malay customs, oral storytelling, religious festivals, and community rituals that reinforce local identity. The village maintains several cultural heritage sites, including old suraus (small prayer houses), ancestral cemeteries, and traditional craft spaces that serve as living repositories of historical memory. These cultural expressions are not merely symbolic but are actively performed through music, dance, food preparation, and ceremonial practices that carry significant social meaning within the community. As such, Kampoeng Lama represents an environment where cultural heritage functions both as a communal identity marker and an economic resource.

The development of Kampoeng Lama as a tourism village is supported by local government initiatives aimed at promoting community-based tourism as a means of rural economic development. The village participates in regional tourism programs that emphasize cultural preservation, community empowerment, and sustainable creative economy practices. Tourism activities in Kampoeng Lama are therefore designed to be small-scale, locally managed, and aligned with cultural authenticity. These principles distinguish the village from mass-tourism destinations and position it as a model of culturally grounded tourism development.

Economic activity in Kampoeng Lama is largely based on micro-scale creative enterprises led by households and neighborhood groups. Local products such as woven crafts, embroidered textiles, traditional cakes, herbal products, and cultural performance services form the backbone of the village's creative economy. The culinary sector plays a particularly important role, with women predominantly responsible for preparing traditional dishes that are sold during tourism events and local festivals. This integration of cultural knowledge with production practices creates a tourism experience that is both sensory and narrative in nature.

The social structure of Kampoeng Lama is organized around kinship networks, neighborhood associations, and religious community groups. Social cohesion is strong, and decisions regarding tourism development often occur through informal consultation and collective discussion. Cultural norms emphasizing respect for elders, community consensus, and shared responsibility shape everyday interactions. These values contribute to stability and cooperation within the community, but they also influence how authority and labor are distributed across gender lines.

In terms of facilities, Kampoeng Lama has developed several tourism-supporting infrastructures such as homestays, cultural performance stages, craft houses, and community training centers. These facilities are managed collectively through village tourism groups and local cooperatives. While infrastructure development has enhanced

tourism accessibility, the village remains committed to maintaining environmental balance and avoiding over-commercialization. This careful approach is viewed as essential for sustaining cultural integrity and community well-being.

The tourism village has gradually gained recognition as a site for cultural learning, heritage education, and creative workshops. Visitors include students, researchers, cultural organizations, and family groups seeking authentic local experiences. Events such as cultural festivals, craft exhibitions, culinary fairs, and religious celebrations serve as key platforms for showcasing Kampoeng Lama's heritage. These activities strengthen cultural pride while generating income for households involved in creative production.

However, the growth of tourism has also introduced new negotiations regarding social roles, particularly gender roles. As tourism commercializes cultural labor, questions arise about who organizes cultural activities, who receives financial benefits, and whose voices influence tourism planning. These negotiations form the central focus of this study, as Kampoeng Lama provides an important context for examining how cultural heritage economies reshape the roles and identities of men and women within a tourism-driven environment.

Dirrec Effect

The results of the structural model show that Gender Equality has a strong and significant positive effect on Tourism Village Sustainability. This finding indicates that when women and men have balanced opportunities in tourism roles, decision-making authority, and access to economic resources, the overall structure of tourism governance becomes more resilient and collaborative. In Hariara Pohan, empowering women to lead cultural performances, manage homestays, and co-direct community tourism programs strengthens collective responsibility for environmental protection, cultural continuity, and social cohesion.

Tabel 2. Direct Effect

Path	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Gender Equality → Tourism Village Sustainability	0.41	3.52	0.001	Significant
Community Participation → Tourism Village Sustainability	0.47	4.11	0.000	Significant
Gender Equality → Affirmative Economic Development	0.33	2.78	0.006	Significant
Community Participation → Affirmative Economic Development	0.29	2.45	0.015	Significant
Tourism Village Sustainability → Affirmative Economic Development	0.52	5.26	0.000	Significant

Community Participation also demonstrates a significant positive relationship with Tourism Village Sustainability, suggesting that active involvement of local residents in planning, implementation, and evaluation of tourism activities contributes to more grounded and culturally respectful tourism development. When villagers feel ownership over tourism initiatives, they are more committed to preserving natural resources, reinforcing traditional cultural practices, and ensuring tourism benefits align with community values.

The Gender Equality → Affirmative Economic Development path is also significant. This finding emphasizes that equitable access to capital and leadership opportunities directly enhances the capacity of households to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Women's increased participation in income-generating tourism sectors—such as traditional craft-making, culinary production, cultural event management, and guest services—contributes to diversified family income and improves economic resilience at the village level.

The direct effect of Community Participation on Affirmative Economic Development suggests that collective involvement in tourism strengthens economic inclusion. Participation does not only reflect physical involvement in tourism services but also the ability to contribute ideas, evaluate outcomes, and influence decision-making processes.

This ensures that tourism profits are not monopolized by a small group but are shared more evenly among community members, reducing potential economic inequality.

The strongest direct effect observed in the model is between Tourism Village Sustainability and Affirmative Economic Development, confirming sustainability as the key foundation for long-term economic gains. When environmental preservation, cultural safeguarding, social inclusion, and economic continuity function together, tourism becomes a stable livelihood source. Households benefit from consistent tourist flows, increased cultural attraction value, and strengthened entrepreneurial capacity supported by sustained market demand.

These results illustrate that social empowerment is a prerequisite for economic empowerment. Gender equality and community participation create the social infrastructure necessary to support sustainable tourism practices. Without inclusive decision-making and shared cultural stewardship, tourism development risks becoming extractive, unstable, or externally dominated.

The findings are aligned with the principles of community-based tourism, where local agency, collective identity, and cultural continuity define the success of tourism development. Rather than viewing tourism solely as an economic activity, the study confirms that tourism is a social system shaped by community interaction, cultural values, and negotiated social roles.

Overall, the direct effect results highlight that affirmative economic development in tourism villages cannot be achieved without gender inclusion, collective participation, and strong sustainability governance. Tourism becomes a tool for empowerment only when local communities hold authority over the cultural and ecological assets that give tourism its value.

Indirect Effect

The mediation analysis demonstrates that Tourism Village Sustainability plays a significant role in shaping how Gender Equality influences Affirmative Economic Development. Although gender equality has a direct positive effect on economic outcomes, the presence of sustainability strengthens and stabilizes this relationship. When gender equality is embedded within a sustainable tourism framework, women's increased access to leadership, capital, and entrepreneurial activities directly contributes to long-term income continuity rather than temporary gains.

The indirect effect through sustainability indicates that gender equality alone is not sufficient to guarantee equitable economic development. Instead, the cultural, environmental, and social foundations of sustainable tourism are necessary to transform gender empowerment into durable economic structures. For example, even when women are empowered to produce crafts or manage culinary enterprises, the economic impact is greater when tourism activities are managed systematically, heritage is preserved, and tourism flows remain consistent over time.

The second mediated pathway shows that Community Participation also affects Affirmative Economic Development through Tourism Village Sustainability. Participation strengthens the legitimacy of tourism governance, reinforces collective identity, and encourages shared responsibility in tourism operations. These collective practices ensure that tourism development does not become fragmented or dominated by a few actors. With sustainability present as a mediating mechanism, participation translates into balanced income distribution and stronger micro-enterprise growth across households.

Table 3 Indirect Effect

Indirect Path	Mediator	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Mediation Type	Interpretation
Gender Equality → Affirmative Economic Development	Tourism Village Sustainability	0.21	3.27	0.002	Partial Mediation	Significant

Community → Affirmative Development	Participation Economic	Tourism Sustainability	Village	0.24	3.85	0.000	Partial Mediation	Significant
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This mediation pathway highlights that participation does not only contribute labor but also strengthens cultural continuity and social trust. When residents work collaboratively to maintain cultural sites, develop tourism events, and agree on benefit-sharing systems, the sustainability of tourism ensures that community-wide economic benefits continue across seasons and generations. In this way, sustainability becomes the institutional foundation for inclusive economic participation.

The classification of the mediation as partial mediation indicates that both gender equality and participation can independently influence economic development, but their influence becomes significantly stronger when aligned with sustainability. This means that empowerment initiatives should not only focus on providing training or funding but must also address governance, cultural preservation, ecological stewardship, and community cohesion.

These findings reflect broader theoretical perspectives in community-based tourism stating that tourism development must integrate social equity and cultural safeguarding to produce long-term livelihood benefits. Without sustainability, empowerment can result in short-lived economic improvements that may collapse when markets shift or external pressures emerge. Sustainability ensures continuity, resilience, and cultural relevance of tourism activities.

The results also suggest that sustainability acts as a bridge variable, linking social empowerment to economic performance. Gender equality and participation contribute to cooperative behavior, shared decisions, and collective ownership social conditions that make sustainability possible. Sustainability then converts these social conditions into stable economic outcomes through market consistency and cohesive cultural value.

Overall, the mediation findings confirm that affirmative economic development in tourism villages is not an automatic outcome of empowerment, but a result of empowerment embedded in sustainable cultural and environmental systems. Tourism becomes a sustainable livelihood strategy only when community members share power, protect heritage, maintain social cohesion, and participate inclusively in every stage of tourism development.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that gender equality plays a significant role in enhancing tourism village sustainability, which aligns with the position of Kabeer (2020), who argues that inclusive access to decision-making and economic opportunities strengthens social cooperation and community resilience. In Hariara Pohan, women who previously held limited public roles have increasingly participated in homestay management, cultural performance coordination, and craft-based enterprises, which reflects a shift toward more balanced gendered power relations. This finding is consistent with Schildberg-Hörisch et al. (2023), who observe that women's engagement in cultural tourism often contributes not only to household income but also to community identity and social stability.

The positive influence of community participation on tourism sustainability also resonates with the research of Suryawati et al. (2021), who emphasize that participatory involvement in tourism planning increases local ownership and ensures that tourism decisions reflect shared values rather than external commercial pressures. In Hariara Pohan, participation through village tourism groups and cultural discussion forums has strengthened collective responsibility in maintaining cultural sites and environmental resources. This reinforces Byomantara (2024), who asserts that tourism sustainability cannot be separated from community-led governance practices.

The study also found that gender equality directly strengthens affirmative economic development. This aligns with the findings of Fitriana et al. (2020), who demonstrate that women's control over cultural labor and financial contribution increases household economic diversification and enhances entrepreneurial resilience. However, unlike some studies that focus solely on women's empowerment through microfinance or training programs, this study

highlights broader shifts in gender role negotiation rooted in cultural identity and community leadership structures. Thus, empowerment here is not only economic but also symbolic and relational.

The positive direct effect of community participation on affirmative economic development is in line with the research of Widiastuti et al. (2019), who note that community collaboration widens the distribution of tourism benefits, preventing economic centralization and elite capture. In Hariara Pohan, shared participation in tourism production networks ensures that even households with indirect roles such as agricultural providers, craft suppliers, and transportation service actors gain economic benefits. This supports the view of Gil et al. (2019), who highlight that community participation minimizes economic conflict and fosters social harmony in tourism villages.

The mediation results, which show that tourism sustainability strengthens the economic impact of gender equality and participation, further support the findings of Kumar (2019) and Iqbal et al. (2023). Both studies argue that sustainability functions as a structural condition that stabilizes tourism revenue by preserving cultural heritage, environmental quality, and community cohesion. In Hariara Pohan, sustainability practices such as cultural conservation and eco-conscious tourism management ensure that tourism continues to generate income beyond seasonal fluctuations.

This study extends previous research by demonstrating that sustainability not only preserves cultural resources but also restructures the relationship between gender and economic participation. The model aligns with Istriyani (2024), who show that culturally rooted tourism strengthens emotional connection between community identity and tourism production. However, this study goes further by showing that sustainability serves as the bridge variable that transforms empowerment into long-term economic capacity.

Another contribution of this study lies in illustrating that empowerment in tourism villages is both structural and negotiated, rather than simply learned through training-based interventions. This supports Deshpande & Ramachandran (2019), who notes that gender transformation in rural cultural contexts occurs through everyday negotiation of household roles, symbolic authority, and collective cultural memory. The findings emphasize that empowerment must be integrated into cultural decision-making processes rather than introduced as external development programs.

The study affirms that affirmative economic development in tourism villages emerges when gender inclusion and community participation are embedded within sustainable cultural tourism systems. This conclusion strengthens the theoretical foundation of community-based tourism by showing that economic benefits depend on cultural governance, social equity, and collective agency. The case of Hariara Pohan illustrates that tourism can serve as a platform for both cultural stewardship and equitable economic transformation when the underlying social structures support shared power and inclusive participation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that gender equality and community participation are critical drivers of tourism village sustainability in Hariara Pohan. When women gain access to leadership roles, decision-making authority, and economic resources, the community benefits from strengthened cultural identity and enhanced social cohesion. Similarly, community participation in planning and managing tourism activities reinforces collective responsibility and ensures that tourism aligns with shared cultural values. These findings support the broader understanding that sustainable tourism development must be grounded in local agency and equitable participation.

The research also demonstrates that tourism village sustainability serves as a mediating mechanism that amplifies the economic benefits of gender equality and community participation. Sustainable governance, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship provide the structural stability necessary for long-term affirmative economic development. Through sustainability, social empowerment is translated into consistent income generation,

entrepreneurial growth, and fair distribution of tourism benefits. This confirms that empowerment must be embedded within cultural and environmental systems to create enduring economic impact.

The findings highlight that affirmative economic development in tourism villages is not solely dependent on market expansion or tourism promotion, but on inclusive cultural governance and equitable social relations. Strengthening gender equality and community participation, alongside sustaining cultural heritage, provides a holistic foundation for both economic resilience and cultural vitality. This study therefore reinforces the importance of community-based tourism strategies that prioritize empowerment, sustainability, and cultural dignity as interconnected pillars of rural development.

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