

Fostering Sustainable Tourism through Local Leadership and Community Empowerment: The Seruni Mumbul Experience

Amrullah^{1*} , Muhammad Adi Junaidi² , Yogi Birrul Walid Sugandi³ , Yuliana Safitri⁴ , Siti Andriana⁵ , Eka Faradila Syahwi⁶ 

^{1*,2,3,4,5,6}Tourism Department, Faculty of Languages, Arts, and Humanities, Universitas Hamzanwadi

*Corresponding Author Email: amrullah@hamzanwadi.co.id

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Abstract: Purpose: This study analyzes human resource (HR) capacity-building strategies in the transformation of Denda Seruni Tourism Village, Indonesia. Specifically, it examines how these strategies overcome structural human capital constraints and institutional friction to achieve sustainable rural tourism development.

Design/methodology/approach: Grounded in Community-Based Tourism, Transformative Leadership, and Institutional theories, this study employs a qualitative single-case study design. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews (averaging 60 minutes) and participant observation with eight purposively selected informants, including the village head, BUMDes managers, the Pokdarwis chairperson, and five community members. The collected data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model.

Findings: The findings reveal that HR capacity development was successfully executed through institution-based training, strategic institutional integration, transformative leadership, and community-based creative economy initiatives. These strategies systematically enhanced community competencies, minimized institutional friction, and contributed 25 percent to Village Original Revenue. However, structural challenges persist, particularly regarding gender-based participation disparities and slow digital technology adoption.

Research limitations/implications: This study is limited by its single-site qualitative nature, which may restrict the direct generalizability of the findings to structurally diverse regional contexts.

Originality/value: The theoretical novelty lies in conceptualizing a transformative-emancipatory rural leadership model that bridges formal decentralization policies with local human capital enhancement. Moving beyond general economic indicators, this study extends the literature by showing how cohesive synergy between transformative local leadership and institutional alignment serves as a critical boundary condition for sustainable tourism. It offers actionable, practical frameworks for rural destination managers seeking to resolve institutional friction in developing economies.

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1. Introduction

Tourism has evolved into one of the largest and most dynamic economic sectors worldwide, making substantial contributions to economic growth, employment generation, and cross-cultural exchange among

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nations. Within the framework of the global development agenda, sustainable tourism has been recognized as a strategic instrument for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (decent work), SDG 11 (sustainable communities), and SDG 17 (partnerships) (Kumar et al., 2024; Rangkuti et al., 2025; Tran, 2025; Yuliawan et al., 2025). However, conventional growth-oriented expansion frequently generates adverse consequences for environmental and cultural preservation. Grounded in Murphy's (1985) community-based tourism (CBT) framework, the sustainable tourism paradigm functions as a critical corrective approach by positioning community empowerment, environmental conservation, and economic inclusivity as its fundamental pillars (Dolores Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025; Durrah et al., 2026; Lawasi et al., 2025).

Recent academic literature demonstrates increasing attention to tourism villages as sustainable development models, yet a critical debate persists regarding the friction between top-down institutional mandates and bottom-up readiness. While a systematic review by Wijijayanti et al. 2023 confirms that rural tourism possesses considerable potential, its success is highly contingent upon local capacity, a notion central to Becker's (1964) human capital theory. This creates a conceptual contradiction with studies prioritizing structural factors; for instance, Dolores Zambrano-Mieles et al. 2025 identify community participation as the primary predictor of sustainability, but note that persistent leader-member capacity disparities form recurring structural barriers. Although Tran, (2025), advocates for participatory co-creation and human-digital innovation to bridge this gap, and Durrah et al. (2026) highlight digital integration in CBT, both fail to address the underlying socio-political mechanism required to activate this human capital within highly bureaucratic rural settings (Lawasi et al., 2025; Mansyur & Hadi, 2025).

This theoretical vacuum is prominent in contemporary bibliometric studies, which consistently reveal that local human resource ecosystems remain underexplored (Kumar et al., 2024; Yuliawan et al., 2025). In Indonesia, limited human capital and fragmented governance constitute principal constraints hindering regional ecotourism development (Lawasi et al., 2025). Applying North's (1990) institutional theory, formal village entities like Village-Owned Enterprises (*BUMDes*) face institutional isomorphism, where research predominantly focuses on rigid financial accountability and transparency, while neglecting informal capacity-building ecosystems (Ismail & Amaliah, 2026). Consequently, collaborative destination management innovation cannot materialize without a structured framework that synthesizes skilled human capital with participatory institutional governance (Dolores Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025; Rangkuti et al., 2025).

The Indonesian context reflects a severe structural disparity between the legal devolution of authority and local administrative readiness. Following the enactment of Village Law No. 6/2014, rural areas received unprecedented fiscal decentralization through Village Funds (*Dana Desa*). However, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (*Kemenparekraf*) data from 2023 indicate that out of 7,275 registered tourism villages nationwide, only 25.2% (1,831 villages) have achieved advanced and self-reliant status. The remaining 74.8% stagnate as developing or emerging destinations due to inadequate human resource capacity and weak local governance (Lawasi et al., 2025; Wijijayanti et al., 2023). In West Nusa Tenggara province, this challenge is intensified by low service innovation among Tourism Awareness Groups (*Pokdarwis*) and highly unequal economic benefit distribution (Dolores Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025; Durrah et al., 2026). Seruni Mumbul Village in Pringgabaya District, East Lombok Regency, presents a paradoxical empirical context. Prior to 2019, it was a degraded domestic waste disposal site characterized by high severe open unemployment. Yet, through the strategic utilization of decentralization policies and Village Funds, the village transformed into the "Denda Seruni" destination, securing a position in the Top 300 of the 2021 Indonesian Tourism Village Awards (ADWI).

Despite these empirical insights, a significant academic gap remains: existing CBT literature lacks a clear integration of Burns's (1978) and Bass's (1990) transformative leadership theory to explain how specific actors reconcile institutional rigidities with human capital development. Micro-level empirical evidence explaining how a village head, acting as the formal Budget Authority Holder (KPA), can theoretically align

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the conflicting interests of *BUMDes*, *Pokdarwis*, and marginalized community members in Eastern Indonesia is virtually non-existent. The scientific novelty of this qualitative single-case study lies in constructing a theoretically grounded model of transformative-emancipatory leadership that actively bridges North's institutional alignment with Becker's human capital enhancement within a vulnerable rural ecosystem.

Based on the aforementioned research gaps, this study aims to explore and critically analyze the human resource capacity-building strategies employed in the sustainable development of Seruni Mumbul Tourism Village. Specifically, this research evaluates how the village head applies transformative leadership behaviors to shift community mindsets from a waste-disposal context toward active tourism participation, while strategically deploying decentralized Village Funds to mitigate human capital constraints. Furthermore, particular attention is directed toward the dynamic institutional coordination between *Pokdarwis* and *BUMDes* under the village governance structure to prevent operational friction and ensure an equitable distribution of economic benefits. By addressing these dimensions, the study seeks to synthesize a transformative-emancipatory leadership model that conceptualizes how rural authorities can reconcile formal institutional frameworks with local capacity enhancement. Ultimately, these findings are expected to generate original theoretical propositions and practical recommendations that serve as valuable references for community-based tourism development across Eastern Indonesia and comparable rural destinations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Community-Based Sustainable Tourism and Institutional Governance

Community-based tourism (CBT) has increasingly evolved from a community empowerment approach into a comprehensive governance framework for achieving sustainable tourism development. Contemporary tourism literature no longer defines sustainability solely by economic performance or visitor growth, but by the capacity of destinations to integrate environmental conservation, social equity, cultural preservation, and inclusive economic opportunities through active community participation. Consequently, CBT is widely recognized as an operational mechanism for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those concerning decent work, sustainable communities, and multi-stakeholder partnerships (Arora & Chandel, 2024; Kumar et al., 2024; Rangkuti et al., 2025; Tran, 2025; Yuliawan et al., 2025). Recent bibliometric and systematic reviews consistently demonstrate that sustainable tourism destinations are characterized not only by community involvement but also by governance systems capable of balancing conservation objectives with local socio-economic development (Dolores Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025; Lawasi et al., 2025; Mansyur & Hadi, 2025). Recent scholarship has simultaneously shifted the focus of CBT from participation-oriented perspectives toward governance-oriented perspectives. While community participation remains a fundamental principle, participation alone rarely guarantees long-term sustainability because rural tourism frequently encounters fragmented institutions, overlapping authority, unequal power relations, and weak coordination among local stakeholders. These institutional conditions often limit communities' capacity to collectively manage tourism resources despite high levels of local commitment (Wijijayanti et al., 2023; Suyatna et al., 2024). As a result, collaborative governance has emerged as a critical mechanism for coordinating village governments, community organizations, *Pokdarwis*, *BUMDes*, private actors, and civil society within a shared decision-making process that enhances destination resilience and equitable benefit distribution (Ishak & Hos, 2025; Junipriansa et al., 2024; Sutopo et al., 2025). Recent conceptual analyses further argue that sustainable CBT should be understood as an adaptive governance system built upon institutional collaboration, social capital, and collective resource management rather than as a collection of isolated community initiatives.

The importance of institutional governance becomes even more evident in ecotourism destinations, where environmental protection must coexist with local livelihood improvement. Studies on mangrove ecotourism consistently indicate that successful conservation depends on institutional arrangements capable of integrating ecosystem management, tourism services, community empowerment, and equitable benefit-sharing across multiple stakeholders rather than relying solely on ecological interventions (Blanton et al., 2024;

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Moussa et al., 2024; Silalahi et al., 2024; Vipriyanti et al., 2024). Furthermore, the growing adoption of digital technologies and Industry 4.0 within tourism destinations introduces new governance challenges that require adaptive institutions capable of coordinating innovation while preserving community ownership, local knowledge, and participatory decision-making (Durrah et al., 2026; Kuo et al., 2026). From an institutional perspective, sustainable tourism emerges through the interaction between formal governance arrangements and informal community norms that collectively shape stakeholder behavior. Village governments therefore function not merely as administrative authorities but as institutional orchestrators responsible for aligning regulations, allocating public resources, facilitating inter-organizational collaboration, and strengthening local accountability mechanisms. Effective governance consequently requires institutional integration among village administrations, BUMDes, Pokdarwis, and community organizations to minimize organizational fragmentation while ensuring transparent and inclusive tourism management (Ardiputra et al., 2025; Ismail & Amaliah, 2026). This argument is consistent with recent evidence demonstrating that the long-term resilience of CBT depends less on the intensity of participation itself than on the capacity of local institutions to harmonize stakeholder interests through collaborative governance, adaptive coordination, and shared leadership processes.

2.2 Human Resource Capacity Building in Rural Tourism Development

Human resource capacity has become one of the most decisive factors influencing the sustainability and competitiveness of rural tourism destinations. While natural attractions and cultural assets provide the foundation for tourism development, their long-term value depends largely on the knowledge, competencies, and adaptive capabilities of local communities responsible for managing tourism activities. Human Capital Theory posits that investments in education, training, and skill development enhance individual productivity and generate broader socio-economic benefits, making human capital a strategic resource for sustainable development rather than merely a labor input (Becker, 1964). Within rural tourism, this perspective emphasizes that community members should be regarded as active creators of tourism value whose competencies determine destination quality, innovation, and resilience (Arora & Chandel, 2024; Hulu, 2025). Contemporary tourism literature conceptualizes capacity building as a multidimensional and continuous process that strengthens technical competencies, managerial capabilities, entrepreneurial skills, leadership, digital literacy, and adaptive learning among local communities. Rather than focusing solely on formal training programs, capacity building encompasses mentoring, knowledge sharing, experiential learning, institutional learning, and collaborative problem-solving that collectively improve community readiness to manage tourism resources independently (Junipriansa et al., 2024; Sutopo et al., 2025). Recent systematic reviews consistently identify human resource development as one of the strongest predictors of successful community-based tourism because it enhances service quality, innovation capacity, community participation, and local ownership of tourism initiatives (Dolores Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025; Mansyur & Hadi, 2025; Wijijayanti et al., 2023).

Despite its recognized importance, human resource development remains a persistent challenge across many rural tourism destinations, particularly in developing countries. Limited educational attainment, inadequate tourism knowledge, weak managerial competencies, low digital literacy, and restricted access to continuous learning frequently constrain local communities from participating effectively in tourism governance and destination management (Lawasi et al., 2025; Kumar et al., 2024). These challenges have become increasingly significant as tourism destinations undergo digital transformation, requiring local communities to acquire new competencies related to digital marketing, visitor experience management, innovation, and smart tourism technologies (Durrah et al., 2026; Kuo et al., 2026). Consequently, recent studies argue that sustainable tourism competitiveness depends not only on physical infrastructure but also on continuous investments in community learning ecosystems capable of fostering creativity, adaptability, and collaborative innovation (Tran, 2025; Yuliawan et al., 2025). Recent empirical evidence further suggests that capacity building produces sustainable outcomes only when supported by enabling institutional environments that facilitate collective learning and stakeholder collaboration. Human capital cannot be fully transformed

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into destination competitiveness without governance mechanisms that coordinate training programs, mobilize local organizations, and create opportunities for community participation in tourism decision-making (Ishak & Hos, 2025; Ardiputra et al., 2025). Accordingly, human resource capacity building should be understood as a dynamic institutional process that integrates individual competency development with organizational learning and community empowerment, thereby strengthening the adaptive capacity and long-term sustainability of rural tourism destinations. This perspective provides the theoretical foundation for examining how leadership can mobilize human capital and institutional collaboration simultaneously within community-based tourism development.

2.3 Transformative Leadership in Community-Based Tourism

Leadership has increasingly been recognized as a strategic determinant of sustainable tourism development, particularly in rural destinations where institutional complexity, limited resources, and diverse stakeholder interests require effective coordination. Unlike conventional administrative leadership that primarily emphasizes regulatory compliance and organizational control, transformative leadership focuses on inspiring collective action, fostering innovation, and empowering communities to achieve long-term social change. This perspective is particularly relevant to community-based tourism (CBT), where sustainable destination development depends not only on institutional arrangements but also on leaders' ability to mobilize local communities toward shared development goals (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1990; Raharja et al., 2026). Transformational Leadership Theory explains that effective leaders influence organizational and community transformation through four interrelated dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1990). These dimensions encourage leaders to establish a shared vision, stimulate innovative thinking, support individual development, and strengthen collective commitment to organizational change. Within rural tourism, these leadership behaviors facilitate stronger community participation, improve stakeholder collaboration, and create adaptive governance systems capable of responding to dynamic environmental, social, and economic challenges (Raharja et al., 2026; Arora & Chandel, 2024). Rather than functioning solely as administrators, local leaders become facilitators who cultivate trust, encourage collaboration, and create opportunities for continuous community learning.

Recent tourism studies demonstrate that leadership contributes significantly to destination sustainability by strengthening community empowerment and institutional collaboration. Sustainable tourism initiatives are more likely to succeed when local leaders promote participatory decision-making, facilitate knowledge exchange, resolve conflicts among stakeholders, and encourage inclusive economic participation across community groups (Tran, 2025; Dolores Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025). Likewise, collaborative ecotourism development requires leaders capable of integrating environmental conservation, community welfare, and local economic development within a coherent governance framework involving village governments, community organizations, tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis), Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), and private stakeholders (Lawasi et al., 2025; Ishak & Hos, 2025; Sutopo et al., 2025). Consequently, leadership is increasingly viewed as a catalyst that transforms fragmented institutional relationships into collaborative governance networks supporting sustainable destination management. Despite these advances, existing literature predominantly examines transformational leadership within organizational or business contexts, while its application in rural tourism governance remains relatively underexplored. Current studies generally emphasize leadership outcomes such as participation, innovation, or destination performance without sufficiently explaining the institutional mechanisms through which local leaders reconcile conflicting stakeholder interests, mobilize human capital, and strengthen collaborative governance in village tourism settings (Mansyur & Hadi, 2025; Durrah et al., 2026). Furthermore, research on Indonesian tourism villages has largely focused on community participation, policy implementation, or institutional accountability, leaving limited empirical understanding of how village heads strategically integrate formal institutions with informal community networks to facilitate sustainable tourism development (Junipriansa et al., 2024; Ismail & Amaliah, 2026).

Building upon Burns's theory of transformational change, Bass's transformational leadership framework, Becker's Human Capital Theory, and North's Institutional Theory, this study conceptualizes transformative-emancipatory leadership as a multidimensional governance mechanism that extends beyond motivational leadership. In this perspective, village leaders function as institutional orchestrators who align public policies, strengthen local capacities, facilitate collaboration among village institutions, and empower marginalized community members to actively participate in tourism development. Accordingly, transformative-emancipatory leadership is proposed as the theoretical bridge connecting institutional governance with human resource capacity building, thereby providing a comprehensive explanation of how sustainable community-based tourism can be achieved in rural destinations characterized by institutional fragmentation and human capital constraints.

3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach utilizing a single-case study design. This approach was selected because it seeks to achieve a holistic understanding of the phenomenon of village leadership in developing local tourism human resource capacity, a phenomenon that cannot be adequately reduced to numerical measurement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The single-case study design was considered appropriate as it enables an in-depth exploration of a bounded system through “how” and “why” research questions within its real-life context without researcher intervention (Yin, 2018). The research was conducted in Seruni Mumbul Village, Pringgabaya District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia, from May to June 2026. The site was purposively selected due to its successful transformation from a degraded area into a tourism destination recognized among the Top 300 Villages in the 2021 Indonesian Tourism Village Awards (*Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia/ADWI*), making it a theoretically informative and revelatory case (Yin, 2018). In qualitative inquiry, the researcher served as the primary instrument throughout the data collection process. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on their capacity, expertise, and relevance to the research focus (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study involved eight informants who were directly engaged in the development and management of the Denda Seruni Tourism Destination. To ensure the confidentiality of participants while facilitating data analysis and presentation, each informant was assigned a specific identification code, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Informant Codes

Informant Code	Informant Position
I1	Village Head of Seruni Mumbul
I2	Manager of Mandiri Sejahtera Village-Owned Enterprise (<i>BUMDes</i>)
I3	Head of the Tourism Awareness Group (<i>Pokdarwis</i>)
I4	Community Member 1
I5	Community Member 2
I6	Community Member 3
I7	Community Member 4
I8	Community Member 5

Source: Primary Research Data (2026)

Data were collected through the triangulation of three complementary techniques: semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation of tourism management activities and community participation, and documentation analysis of village development planning documents, Village Fund financial reports, and institutional records of both the Village-Owned Enterprise (*BUMDes*) and the Tourism Awareness Group (*Pokdarwis*) (Yin, 2018). In-depth interviews were conducted with all informants to obtain comprehensive insights into tourism human resource capacity-building strategies, the leadership role of the village head, the integration of village institutions, and the development of community-based creative economic activities. The data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which comprises

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three interconnected and iterative stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The data reduction stage involved identifying themes, patterns, and categories relevant to the research objectives. Subsequently, data were displayed through the construction of descriptive narratives supported by verbatim quotations from informants and findings derived from field observations. The final stage, namely conclusion drawing and verification, was conducted continuously throughout the research process to ensure consistency between empirical evidence and the researcher's interpretations.

The trustworthiness of the study was ensured through the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through source triangulation and member checking with the informants. Transferability was achieved by providing rich and detailed contextual descriptions of the research setting and the phenomenon under investigation. Dependability was maintained through the development of a comprehensive audit trail documenting the entire research process. Finally, confirmability was ensured through systematic researcher reflexivity aimed at minimizing potential biases during data interpretation and analysis.

4. Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

3.1.1 Training Activities and Institutional Actors in Tourism Human Resource Capacity Building

Tourism human resource capacity development in Denda Seruni Tourism Village was carried out through a series of training and mentoring activities coordinated across the village government, Mandiri Sejahtera BUMDes, and Pokdarwis. These activities were funded through Village Funds and directed at different stages and needs of the community, ranging from basic tourism management skills to digital promotion. The main training and capacity-building activities identified in this study are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Training and Capacity-Building Activities in Denda Seruni Tourism Village

No	Training/Mentoring Activity	Coordinating Institution	Target Group / Focus	Informant
1	Tourism management training	Village Government / BUMDes	Building foundational competencies for residents new to the tourism sector	12
2	Service quality improvement training	Pokdarwis	Frontline visitor-service skills	13
3	Culinary and souvenir business mentoring	BUMDes	Local entrepreneurs and MSME actors	15
4	Digital promotion and social media mentoring	Pokdarwis	Content creation and digital destination information management	13
5	Continuous on-site mentoring	BUMDes / Pokdarwis	Building community confidence in serving visitors	17

Table 2 shows that capacity-building activities in Seruni Mumbul Village were not limited to a single type of training but covered a range of competencies, from basic tourism management to digital literacy. According to the BUMDes manager, most community members involved during the initial stage of tourism development had little or no prior experience in the tourism sector, making training programs the primary mechanism for establishing the foundational competencies required for destination management (I2). The head of Pokdarwis further explained that community members received mentoring in the use of social media platforms, promotional content creation, and digital destination information management to expand the marketing reach of the destination (I3). Community members also reported tangible outcomes from these

activities: one participant noted that the training programs broadened local understanding of the economic opportunities generated by tourism, encouraging residents to establish businesses they had never previously considered (I5), while another stated that continuous mentoring increased confidence in serving visitors effectively (I7).

3.1.2 Institutional Structure and Division of Roles in Tourism Governance

The management of Denda Seruni Tourism Destination involves several village institutions, each holding a distinct role and function. The village government, Mandiri Sejahtera BUMDes, Pokdarwis, Karang Taruna, and PKK operate under a coordinated structure initiated by the village head. The role and coordination mechanism of each institution, as identified in the field, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Institutional Roles and Coordination Mechanisms in Tourism Governance

No	Institution	Main Role / Function	Coordination Mechanism
1	Village Government (Village Head)	Policy initiator, Budget Authority Holder (KPA), overall coordinator	Monthly coordination meetings
2	Mandiri Sejahtera BUMDes	Operational manager, financial administration, tourism product development	Monthly meetings, WhatsApp groups
3	Pokdarwis	Visitor services, environmental cleanliness, safety and security	Coordination forums
4	Karang Taruna (Youth Organization)	Tourism attractions, cultural performances, special events	Coordination forums
5	PKK (Family Welfare Movement)	Culinary enterprises	Coordination forums

As shown in Table 3, each institution carries a specific and complementary function within the tourism governance structure. The village head explained that tourism development cannot be effectively implemented by a single institution acting independently, as each organization possesses distinct functions and capacities that collectively contribute to destination sustainability (I1). Coordination among these institutions takes place through monthly meetings and WhatsApp groups, which, according to the BUMDes manager, give each institution the opportunity to express its aspirations, concerns, and operational needs (I2). In terms of economic contribution, research findings indicate that Mandiri Sejahtera BUMDes contributes approximately 25% of the village's locally generated revenue, most of which is reinvested into infrastructure and community development programs. One community member noted that tourism development has generated benefits extending beyond specific groups (I6), while another observed that new business ventures have emerged that previously did not exist within the village economy (I8).

3.1.3 The Village Head's Leadership Functions in Mobilizing Community Human Capital

Seruni Mumbul Village was previously known as an area associated with waste disposal, negative social activities, and high unemployment. Its transformation into a productive tourism destination is closely tied to the leadership role played by the village head, who directed local human capital through three interrelated functions, as summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Leadership Functions of the Village Head in Community Human Capital Mobilization

No	Leadership Function	Description of Activity	Informant
1	Motivator	Cultivating collective awareness and community optimism through socialization programs on tourism's economic benefits and public recognition of outstanding contributors	I1, I2
2	Facilitator	Strategically allocating Village Funds, as Budget Authority Holder (KPA), for facility construction, HR training, MSME	I3

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3	Mobilizer	support, and destination promotion Encouraging previously unemployed or underemployed residents, including youth, to engage in tourism-related enterprises	I5, I7
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Table 4 illustrates that the village head's leadership extended beyond administrative decision-making. According to the village head, tourism development would not succeed if local residents remained passive observers; therefore, all community members were encouraged to become active participants in the ongoing process of change (I1). The BUMDes manager noted that the village head's active presence in tourism-related activities provided strong moral encouragement for the community (I2), while the head of Pokdarwis stated that many current tourism programs would not have been possible without the village government's support in facilities, training, and mentoring (I3). At the community level, one member explained that the emergence of tourism created new opportunities that encouraged previously unemployed youth to become more economically active (I5), and another reported renewed hope for improving household welfare as a result (I7).

3.1.4 Community-Based Creative Economy Groups and Their Products

Beyond direct tourism services, the village head initiated the formation of several community-based creative economy groups to broaden participation and distribute the economic benefits of tourism more widely. Three main groups were identified in this study, as summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Community-Based Creative Economy Groups in Denda Seruni Tourism Village

No	Creative Economy Group	Main Products / Activities	Actors Involved	Informant
1	Food-processing group	Nile tilapia-based products (fish meatballs, shredded fish, fish crackers), following the release of 10,000 tilapia fingerlings in 2025	Residents not directly involved in tourism operations	I2
2	Handicraft group	Local souvenirs reflecting regional identity	Local artisans and residents	I3
3	Homestay management group	Home-based visitor accommodation	Housewives	I6, I8

As shown in Table 5, each creative economy group targets a different segment of the community and contributes a distinct product to the tourism value chain. According to the BUMDes manager, the development of tilapia-based products was intended to extend the economic benefits of tourism while creating entrepreneurial opportunities for residents not directly involved in tourism operations (I2). The head of Pokdarwis explained that locally produced handicrafts enhance destination attractiveness by providing visitors with authentic souvenirs (I3). At the household level, one participant explained that involvement in homestay management provided an additional income source while expanding interaction with visitors from different regions (I6), and another noted that homestay operations allowed families to participate in tourism without abandoning their existing occupations (I8). Beyond these three groups, the findings also show that creative economy activities have expanded community competencies in product development, business management, marketing network creation, and resource-based innovation.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Human Resource Capacity-Building Strategy through Village Institution-Based Training

This finding indicates that human resource development is positioned as a strategic long-term investment for maintaining destination sustainability, consistent with the arguments of Arora & Chandel (2024), Kumar et al. (2024), and Hulu (2025), who identify community skill enhancement as a fundamental

pillar of sustainable tourism development. This condition demonstrates that local institutions function not merely as tourism management organizations but also as social learning arenas that facilitate continuous knowledge transfer within the community. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Junipriansa et al. (2024), which highlights the importance of strengthening tourism village institutional capacity, and are further supported by the findings of Sutopo et al. (2025), Ishak and Hos (2025), and Mansyur & Hadi (2025), who position local institutions as central instruments in community-based capacity-building processes.

This strategy reflects the village government's awareness of the growing importance of digital transformation in destination development. According to Durrah et al. (2026), the integration of digital technologies enhances promotional effectiveness while simultaneously strengthening community participation within community-based tourism ecosystems. Similar perspectives are advanced by Tran (2025), Yuliawan et al. (2025), and Kuo et al. (2026), who argue that digital competence constitutes a crucial indicator of tourism human resource capacity development in the era of digital transformation. These findings indicate that training initiatives not only enhance technical skills but also foster behavioral and attitudinal changes toward the tourism sector. Zambrano-Mieles et al. (2025), Wijijayanti et al. (2023), and Lawasi et al. (2025) similarly argue that the effectiveness of community capacity-building programs is determined by their ability to generate changes in attitudes, participation levels, and local economic self-reliance.

The principal scientific finding of this study demonstrates that tourism human resource capacity development in Denda Seruni Tourism Village does not follow a conventional individual-oriented training model. Instead, it operates through a village institution-based training model that integrates the functions of the village government, BUMDes, and Pokdarwis within a unified system of collective learning. This model enables the simultaneous enhancement of individual competencies and the strengthening of local organizational capacities. Such an arrangement helps explain why the development of Denda Seruni Tourism Destination has not only improved tourism service quality but has also generated broader economic benefits for both the local community and the village as a whole. These findings extend the work of Ismail & Amaliah (2026), who conceptualized BUMDes primarily as an instrument of village economic governance, by demonstrating its additional role as a center for tourism human resource development. The novelty of this study lies in identifying the village head as a strategic integrator of development resources who connects training initiatives, local institutions, and community empowerment within a comprehensive and sustainable capacity-building ecosystem.

3.2.2 Village Institutional Integration as a Governance Mechanism for Sustainable Tourism Human Resource Management

Tourism governance in Seruni Mumbul Village has been constructed through a collaborative approach that positions each institution as an integral component of an interconnected and mutually reinforcing system. This perspective is consistent with the findings of Zambrano-Mieles et al. (2025), Tran (2025), and Wijijayanti et al. (2023), who emphasize that the success of community-based tourism is highly dependent upon the effectiveness of collaborative governance and the active involvement of diverse local actors in decision-making processes. This condition suggests that governance effectiveness is determined not solely by organizational structures but also by the quality of communication and coordination established among stakeholders. These findings reinforce the work of Ishak & Hos (2025), who highlight the importance of participation and communication in community-based tourism development, and are further supported by Mansyur & Hadi (2025), Lawasi et al. (2025), and Rangkuti et al. (2025), who identify collaborative stakeholder networks as critical factors in achieving destination sustainability. This phenomenon reflects a form of institutional specialization that enhances destination management effectiveness. According to Junipriansa et al. (2024), institutional structures characterized by clearly defined functions improve organizational efficiency and accelerate the achievement of tourism village development goals. This argument is further supported by Sutopo et al. (2025), Ismail & Amaliah (2026), and Yuliawan et al. (2025), who regard local institutions as the fundamental foundation for establishing professional and sustainable tourism

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governance systems. These findings demonstrate that effective institutional integration facilitates a broader and more equitable distribution of tourism-related economic benefits. According to Zambrano-Mieles et al. (2025), strong institutional participation enhances a community's capacity to manage and distribute tourism benefits in a more inclusive manner. Similar arguments are advanced by Kumar et al. (2024), Lawasi et al. (2025), and Rangkuti et al. (2025), who contend that destination sustainability is strongly influenced by the ability of local governance systems to balance economic, social, and institutional objectives.

The principal scientific contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that village institutional integration functions as the primary mechanism for establishing sustainable tourism human resource governance. Such integration not only facilitates inter-organizational coordination but also creates a system of collective learning, a clear distribution of responsibilities, and participatory decision-making mechanisms. These conditions help explain why Denda Seruni Tourism Destination has been able to maintain operational sustainability despite facing significant challenges, including the decline in visitor numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The novelty of this study resides in the finding that the success of tourism human resource development is not determined solely by individual competencies or training programs; rather, it is profoundly influenced by the village head's capacity to orchestrate relationships among village institutions and transform them into an integrated governance system. This governance model extends previous studies that have primarily emphasized community participation by demonstrating that institutional integration serves as a strategic mechanism linking human resource capacity, organizational effectiveness, and the long-term economic sustainability of tourism villages.

3.2.3 Transformative Village Leadership in Mobilizing Local Tourism Human Capital

Tourism village development in Seruni Mumbul was not initiated through infrastructure expansion alone but was preceded by the transformation of community consciousness as a critical form of social capital. This perspective aligns with the findings of Tran (2025), Zambrano-Mieles et al. (2025), Wijijayanti et al. (2023), and Kumar et al. (2024), who argue that the success of sustainable tourism development is strongly influenced by the ability of local leaders to foster community participation and collective commitment. This finding suggests that leadership motivation was not limited to verbal encouragement but was manifested through exemplary conduct and direct engagement in development activities. Such a phenomenon reflects the characteristics of transformative leadership, which inspires individuals to transcend personal interests and work collectively toward shared goals. This finding reinforces the study of Raharja et al. (2026), which identified transformative leadership as a critical driver of innovation in tourism villages. It is further supported by Mansyur & Hadi (2025), Rangkuti et al. (2025), and Yuliawan et al. (2025), who position local leadership as a decisive factor in community-based destination development.

This strategy demonstrates that the village head functioned not merely as an administrative decision-maker but also as a strategic actor capable of aligning development resources with community needs. These findings illustrate that leadership effectiveness is determined not only by the ability to influence people but also by the capacity to strategically manage and direct development resources. This study extends the findings of Ardiputra et al. (2025), who primarily emphasized the role of Village Funds in infrastructure development, by demonstrating that Village Funds can also function as instruments for human capital development and institutional capacity building. This argument is further supported by Arora & Chandel (2024), Lawasi et al. (2025), and Durrah et al. (2026), who underscore the importance of investing in human resources as a prerequisite for sustainable tourism development. These findings demonstrate that the village head's leadership successfully transformed previously underutilized human capital into a valuable development resource capable of generating economic benefits. According to Zambrano-Mieles et al. (2025), community participation in sustainable tourism increases when local leaders are able to cultivate trust, create economic opportunities, and encourage active citizen engagement in development processes. Similar conclusions have been reported by Hulu (2025), Sutopo et al. (2025), and Ishak & Hos (2025), who argue that leadership quality is closely associated with the level of community participation in tourism destination development.

The principal scientific contribution of this study demonstrates that leadership in Seruni Mumbul Village represents a model of transformative leadership that extends beyond the physical development of tourism infrastructure to encompass the transformation of human capital as the primary foundation of sustainable tourism development. This leadership model is manifested through three interrelated functions: as a motivator who cultivates collective community awareness, as a facilitator who aligns development resources with tourism development needs, and as a mobilizer who encourages diverse community groups to participate actively in tourism-related economic activities. These conditions help explain why the transformation of Seruni Mumbul Village has resulted not only in a growing tourism destination but also in widespread social and economic benefits experienced by the local community. The novelty of this study lies in the finding that the success of tourism human resource capacity development is influenced not only by training programs and village institutions but also by the village head's ability to transform local human capital into the principal driver of sustainable destination development. This finding contributes to the growing body of literature on sustainable tourism governance by highlighting transformative village leadership as a strategic mechanism for unlocking and mobilizing local human capital within rural tourism destinations.

3.2.4 Community-Based Creative Economy Innovation as a Strategy for Expanding Tourism Human Resource Capacity

This finding indicates that tourism human resource development in Seruni Mumbul Village is not merely understood as the enhancement of occupational skills but also as a process of generating new economic opportunities capable of maximizing local community potential. This perspective aligns with Yuliawan et al. (2025), who position entrepreneurship as a critical component of sustainable tourism development, while Tran (2025), Kumar et al. (2024), and Wijijayanti et al. (2023) emphasize that the success of community-based destinations depends significantly on the ability of local communities to create economic value from their indigenous resources. This phenomenon demonstrates that creative economy innovation not only diversifies tourism products but also establishes mutually reinforcing linkages between the tourism sector and the local economy. These findings support the studies of Vipriyanti et al. (2024), Blanton et al. (2024), Moussa et al. (2024), and Silalahi et al. (2024), which argue that the development of products based on local resources enhances destination sustainability through value creation and broader community engagement. This finding suggests that the creative economy and tourism sectors maintain a mutually reinforcing relationship in the creation of more comprehensive and meaningful tourism experiences. According to Rangkuti et al. (2025), the integration of cultural elements and local products into tourism activities strengthens destination competitiveness while simultaneously reinforcing community identity. Similar perspectives are advanced by Zambrano-Mieles et al. (2025), Lawasi et al. (2025), and Mansyur & Hadi (2025), who identify community participation in the production of tourism-related goods and services as a key indicator of sustainable community-based tourism development.

This phenomenon demonstrates that community-based creative economy development can foster an inclusive empowerment model by engaging diverse social groups within the community. These findings are consistent with the studies of Ishak & Hos (2025), Sutopo et al. (2025), and Zambrano-Mieles et al. (2025), which emphasize that equitable distribution of economic benefits constitutes one of the primary indicators of successful community-based tourism development.

This perspective reinforces the argument of Yuliawan et al. (2025), who identify local entrepreneurship as a critical factor in strengthening the economic resilience of tourism destinations. Similarly, Arora & Chandel (2024), Kumar et al. (2024), and Durrah et al. (2026) argue that community skill development should be directed toward sustainable value creation in order to simultaneously enhance destination competitiveness and community welfare.

The principal scientific contribution of this study demonstrates that community-based creative economy innovation serves as a strategic mechanism for expanding tourism human resource capacity, enabling the economic benefits of tourism to reach broader segments of society. The establishment of local food-processing groups, handicraft groups, and homestay management groups not only generates new employment

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opportunities but also extends the tourism value chain through the integration of tourism attractions, local products, and supporting services. The novelty of this study lies in its finding that tourism human resource capacity development occurs not only through training initiatives and institutional strengthening but also through the creation of a creative economy ecosystem that enables community members to transform skills, local resources, and tourism opportunities into productive and sustainable economic activities. This finding contributes to the growing discourse on sustainable tourism development by highlighting the role of community-based creative economy innovation as a critical pathway for enhancing local human capital and broadening the socio-economic impacts of rural tourism destinations.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the sustainable development of Denda Seruni Tourism Destination is fundamentally driven by an integrated human resource governance model in which institutional capacity, transformative leadership, and community-based economic innovation function as mutually reinforcing components. Rather than relying solely on conventional training or physical infrastructure development, the village government has established a governance system that integrates the roles of the village government, BUMDes, Pokdarwis, Karang Taruna, and PKK to continuously strengthen local human capital. Within this system, the village head serves not only as an administrative authority but also as a transformative leader who mobilizes community participation, strategically allocates Village Funds for human capital development, and coordinates institutional collaboration toward shared development goals. The findings further reveal that human resource capacity development extends beyond tourism service competencies through the establishment of community-based creative economy groups, including food processing, handicrafts, and homestay management, thereby expanding tourism participation and distributing economic benefits more equitably across the community. These interconnected strategies have enabled Denda Seruni Tourism Destination to strengthen institutional resilience, improve community participation, diversify local livelihoods, and sustain tourism development even under external challenges.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends human capital theory, community-based tourism, institutional theory, and transformative leadership by demonstrating that sustainable tourism human resource development is achieved through the integration of institutional governance, leadership, and inclusive local economic innovation rather than through isolated capacity-building interventions. The principal novelty of this research lies in the proposed transformative-institutional human capital governance model, which conceptualizes the village head as a strategic integrator linking leadership, village institutions, capacity-building programs, and community-based creative economy development into a unified governance ecosystem. This model provides a broader theoretical understanding of how rural tourism destinations can transform local human capital into a sustainable driver of economic resilience, institutional effectiveness, and inclusive community development, while offering practical guidance for policymakers and village governments seeking to strengthen the long-term sustainability of community-based tourism destinations.

Recommendation

Future research is encouraged to examine the transformative leadership and tourism human resource capacity-building model identified in Seruni Mumbul Village within different tourism village contexts in order to obtain broader empirical validation. Comparative studies across tourism villages are also recommended to identify the factors influencing the success of institutional integration and community-based creative economy development. Several challenges that may affect the sustainability of tourism human resource development include limited training budgets, dependence on particular leadership figures, fluctuations in tourist arrivals, and the community's capacity to adapt to rapid digital technological changes. Greater attention to these factors is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability and resilience of tourism village development initiatives.

Data availability

The qualitative and quantitative data supporting the findings of this study are included within the article. Additional raw data, interview transcripts, and specific capacity-building records are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, ensuring informant confidentiality.

Declaration of the use of artificial intelligence (AI)

During the preparation of this work, the authors used artificial intelligence tools to improve the manuscript's grammatical clarity and structure, as well as to assist in preliminary qualitative data analysis. However, the authors personally translated, verified, and synthesized the analyzed data, maintaining full academic responsibility for the final content.

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Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or institutional conflicts of interest that could have appeared to influence the work, findings, or objective analysis reported in this paper.

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