

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE ECOTOURISM VILLAGE: A MODEL FROM KERANGGAN ECOTOURISM VILLAGE

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Abstract

Ecotourism is based on three core principles: environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and local economic development. In Keranggan Ecotourism Village, however, ecotourism's contribution to local livelihoods remains shaped by income inequalities among women and gender-based disparities in access to tourism-related entrepreneurial opportunities. This study aims to develop an ecotourism model based on community empowerment to enhance women's participation and support local economic growth. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and questionnaires distributed to 75 respondents. The proposed model emphasizes the participation of women in managing ecotourism, particularly in creating environmentally friendly products and providing tourism services. By involving women across the ecotourism value chain, this approach is expected to improve their income while supporting inclusive and sustainable tourism practices. Keranggan Ecotourism Village is expected to become a model of inclusive tourism village development, where women's contributions are recognized and integrated into broader ecotourism management.

Keywords: *ecotourism, inclusive development, village tourism, women's empowerment*

Introduction

Ecotourism, frequently referred to as sustainable tourism, constitutes a form of travel that emphasizes the conscientious utilization and preservation of natural resources while aiming to deliver optimal socio-economic benefits to local populations. It involves purposeful visitation to natural settings with the intent of appreciating ecological landscapes, biodiversity, and both tangible and intangible cultural heritage from past and present societies (Tiwari et al., 2024). By facilitating revenue generation for long-term environmental stewardship, fostering employment opportunities within local communities, and promoting a collective sense of ownership and responsibility, ecotourism serves as a catalyst for inclusive economic development and the conservation of ecologically sensitive and protected areas (Jalani, 2012).

Research has shown that ecotourism has a significant connection to specific aspects such as women's empowerment (Lenao & Basupi, 2016). There are three key reasons why gender considerations are vital in ecotourism. Firstly, gender inclusion contributes to improved natural resource management and conservation through ecotourism. Secondly, it allows the development of ecotourism to harness the diverse skills and knowledge within local communities. Thirdly, gender equality is rooted in fundamental human rights, as recognized in the Millennium Development Goals. These three aspects support the notion that both women and men should have equal opportunities in decision-making processes related to ecotourism planning and management, as well as equitable access to its benefits (Irandu & Shah, 2016).

Inclusive tourism as promoted by International Trade Center (2008) is the sustainable development approach that aligns closely with the principles of ecotourism. This inclusive model emphasizes community participation, environmental conservation, and socio-economic benefits for local populations. Both approaches advocate for tourism that is not only environmentally responsible but also socially equitable, ensuring that marginalized groups, particularly women actively participate and benefit from tourism-related opportunities (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018; Strelnikova et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, the development of ecotourism villages has become a national priority. Kampung Ekowisata Keranggan in South Tangerang represents a significant case. Keranggan Ecotourism Village is located within the buffer zone that delineates the urban environment of South Tangerang from the conservation area surrounding the Cisadane River. As a peri-urban tourism village, Keranggan faces the challenges associated with urbanization while concurrently endeavoring to uphold socio-economic equality, its local cultural heritage and ecological integrity. The economic impact on women in Keranggan

Ecotourism Village reveals significant disparities reflective of enduring gender inequality. Data collected by researcher in 2024 from a sample of 75 female respondents indicates a concerning financial landscape. Specifically, 48% of these women, equating to 36 respondents, reported monthly incomes below 1,500,000 IDR. Conversely, only 12% of the participants comprising 9 women reported earnings above 3,000,000 IDR per month. This distribution highlights a systemic issue where economic opportunities are not equitably accessible, suggesting that the prevailing economic activities within the village do not adequately encompass or support the majority of women.

This study addresses this gap by developing a inclusive tourism model that centres on women's economic empowerment and encouraging their active participation in ecotourism destination (Moswete & Lacey, 2015; Scheyvens, 2000). Using a qualitative case study approach, the research explores strategies to enhance the equality of women's economic participation across the tourism value chain through capacity-building initiatives in ecotourism (Samal & Dash, 2023). By aligning with inclusive tourism development approach, this model aspires to position Kampung Ekowisata Keranggan as a replicable example of inclusive, gender-equitable, and sustainable tourism development.

Inclusive Development Conceptual

The concept of inclusivity is frequently associated with tourism and development more broadly, both from academic and industry perspectives. Inclusive tourism is increasingly recognized as a mechanism for fostering social integration within Europe, particularly against the backdrop of escalating global inequalities driven by, on the one hand, the accommodation of refugees, and on the other, the evolving imperatives of sustainable development (Strelnikova et al., 2023). Meanwhile, inclusive development, as explained by Rauniyar and Kanbur (2010), extends beyond economic metrics by addressing inequality and improving the welfare of marginalized groups. In tourism, this is reflected in transformative approaches that promote ethical participation, equitable benefit distribution, and foster deeper understanding across social divides challenging stereotypes and ensuring minority voices are included (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018) depicted the concept of inclusive tourism in the seven elements which are:

1. *Marginalized people as tourism producers*

According to Scheyvens and Biddulph (2008), inclusive tourism increasingly encourages diverse social groups to take active roles in tourism production, focusing on mainstream providers that can support this by promoting fair wages, inclusive sourcing practices, staff participation in decisions making process, facilitating local entrepreneurship through mentorship, quality training, and decent working conditions.

2. *Marginalized people as tourism consumers*

Tourism can be more inclusive by ensuring shared access for locals and visitors through domestic marketing, educational trips, and social tourism programs. These efforts not only boost local economies but also foster cultural understanding, strengthen national identity, and promote equitable revenue distribution, especially in under-visited regions (Mawdsley, 2009; Scheyvens, 2007).

3. *Changing tourism map to involve new people and places*

Traditionally overlooked areas such as underprivileged or economically disadvantaged neighborhoods can be reconceptualized as part of the tourism landscape, thereby gaining visibility and recognition as legitimate tourist destinations. This reimagining allows visitors to engage with these spaces in more complex and meaningful ways (Edensor, 2015). Reframing the tourism map by involving low-income locals as tour operators or micro, small, medium enterprises (MSMEs) create new business opportunities and voices in tourism. This shift not only provides livelihoods but also promotes social integration by challenging traditional power structures and fostering deeper connections between visitors and marginalized communities (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

4. *Widening of participation in tourism decision-making*

Tourism's role in inclusive development depends on who controls decision-making. When dominated by private interests, it often leads to voluntary, superficial reforms rather than systemic changes needed to address structural inequalities (Pingot, 2014). However, government supports effectively stimulate the participation of local communities by organizing the community-managed tourism and increasing financial supports (Rifdah & Kusdiwanggo, 2024). Moreover, Timothy (2007) emphasizes that devolving decision-making authority to local communities can result in more equitable and effective development outcomes (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). Tibetan youth in suburban Lhasa expressed that local ownership is often more aligned with the aspirations of residents than outside investment, even when the latter promises capital and expertise (Wu & Pearce, 2017). Their engagement with local stakeholders led them to argue that tourism strategies should reflect community preferences.

5. *Promotion of mutual understanding and respect*

While government authorities frequently emphasize the economic outcomes of tourism development, its social contributions are equally significant. An inclusive tourism model has the potential to foster greater social cohesion across diverse settings whether in rural areas, urban neighborhoods, or coastal regions by promoting a safer, more welcoming environment and enhancing community well-being. In the context of widening socio-economic disparities and the resulting social tensions observed across both the Global North and South, there is increasing recognition of tourism's capacity to bridge divisions between different societal groups. This includes fostering mutual understanding among residents of segregated urban zones and challenging entrenched stereotypes that may hinder social integration (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

6. *Self-representation in dignified and appropriate ways*

Tourism often commodifies local cultures, turning communities into spectacles and reinforcing exotic stereotypes even in pursuits of 'authentic' experiences. This is evident in practices like orphanage tourism or certain models of volunteerism, where vulnerable groups are objectified or become passive attractions rather than active participants. In contrast, inclusive tourism empowers communities, especially Indigenous and marginalized groups, to control their narratives and engage on their own terms. (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

7. *Power relations transformed in and beyond tourism*

Efforts to challenge entrenched power dynamics within tourism or broader societal systems often face significant resistance, as the institutional and structural conditions that perpetuate marginalization tend to be deeply rooted and resistant to change (Baird et al., 2017). Despite challenges, some transformative models promote inclusive tourism. One example is employee-owned enterprises, where former workers share equal decision-making power on key business matters. This participatory approach benefits both staff and the wider community through local reinvestment and accessible services (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

Women's empowerment in ecotourism

According to The International Ecotourism Society (TIES, 2006), ecotourism refers to a professionally managed travel activity facilitated by trained personnel, which integrates educational components and operates as part of the economic sector. It is characterized by a strong emphasis on the conservation of natural resources and the environment, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the active participation and improved well-being of local communities by involving in ecotourism operations and in the provision of knowledge, services, facilities and products (Nugroho et al., 2011; Simanjuntaka & Manalu, 2019). Hence, ecotourism consists of nature-based tourism product or activities as well as services that supports conservation, fosters environmental awareness through education, and promotes sustainability for the environment, communities, and the economy (Chan, 2021; Torsney et al., 2025). In the context of ecotourism, this form of tourism differs from conventional models by actively promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in local communities to participate in sustainable economic activities and to involve in leadership roles, decision-making processes, and entrepreneurship particularly in areas such as conservation, hospitality, and traditional crafts (Samal & Dash, 2024; Scheyvens, 2000).

The relevance of women's empowerment remains paramount today, particularly within the broader agenda of sustainability as championed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In an effort to contextualize empowerment within tourism, Aghazamani and Hunt (2017) proposed a definition that emphasizes its multidimensional, evolving, and context-sensitive nature (McCall & Mearns, 2021). They describe it as a dynamic process that enhances individual or collective agency, autonomy, and capacity for improving life quality through active participation in tourism. Interpreted in relation to this study, empowerment in tourism is a multifaceted and situationally dependent process that evolves over time, offering individuals and communities increased autonomy, freedom of choice, and opportunities to enhance their socioeconomic well-being (Aghazamani & Hunt, 2017). Meanwhile, economic benefits are unevenly distributed at Keranggan Ecotourism Village, indicating that the existing economic structures within the village fail to inclusively engage or adequately benefit the majority of women. It could be caused by limited skills and business capital, namely internal obstacles. While in community environment, there are still lack of intensive coordination and cooperation across sectoral (Setiawan, 2023).

Economic empowerment, as defined by Timothy (2002), entails the distribution of sustainable financial benefits throughout local communities. This is evident when women's involvement in tourism enables access to employment and contributes meaningfully to their household economies (McCall & Mearns, 2021). Wardhani's research illustrates this transformation in Indrayanti Beach: women who were previously confined to domestic roles or unstable agricultural work have gained economic agency by engaging in ecotourism. Their participation not only improves their own livelihoods but also supports their families, signifying a shift toward financial independence and enhanced welfare (Wardhani & Susilowati, 2021).

Economic empowerment boosts women's confidence and household decision-making power (OECD, 2010; McCall & Mearns, 2021). However, persistent cultural, social, and economic barriers still limit their full agency (Narayan & Parker, 2005). When ecotourism focuses solely on conservation, it can harm local livelihoods especially for women, if community needs are overlooked. Economic empowerment in this context involves supporting local entrepreneurship and access to income opportunities (Scheyvens, 2000). Based on case study from women entrepreneur in Karimun Jawa show that women in tourism services often see increased income, along with gains in confidence, skills, and decision-making roles through entrepreneurial involvement (Setiawan, 2023). Moreover, Mwinnoure's study found that such initiatives offer women skill-building opportunities and facilitate access to microfinance, enabling them to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Mwinnoure & Dzitse, 2024). These endeavors not only generate income but also enhance women's capacity to support their families, improving household stability and personal fulfillment (Irandu & Shah, 2016).

However, women's involvement in ecotourism through various roles such as tour guides, cultural performers, community workers, food vendors, and hosts can serve as an entry point for economic empowerment (Mwinnoure & Dzitse, 2024). Skill development is central to this process, equipping women with the capabilities to manage ecotourism-related enterprises such as shea butter production, moringa farming, local beverage brewing, and livestock processing within conservation areas (Mwinnoure & Dzitse, 2024). These initiatives help women gain economic control and contribute to their overall autonomy (Scheyvens, 2000). Furthermore, by fostering economic independence, such programs encourage women to take on leadership roles in promoting sustainable tourism practices and environmental stewardship thus supporting long-term ecological preservation and biodiversity conservation (Mwinnoure & Dzitse, 2024).

Methods

This study adopts a case study methodology, which is particularly well-suited for qualitative research (Tristanti et al., 2024). Case study research represents a qualitative method where the researcher investigates a defined system (a single case) or several defined systems (multiple cases) across a specific period. This is done by gathering rich, in-depth information from various sources such as interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials and presenting the findings through descriptive narratives and case-specific thematic analysis (Harrison et al., 2017).

The research focuses on a specific case that aligns with Creswell's (2014) criteria for case studies, including: (a) the existence of a women's empowerment initiative through inclusive ecotourism development, specifically implemented through Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE); (b) the case has a defined timeframe, as Keranggan Ecotourism Village has been officially recognized as a developing stage tourism village and is uniquely identified as the only urban-based tourism village that simultaneously functions as a buffer zone as well as already integrated with 3A (Accessibility, Amenities, and Attraction); (c) data collection involves multiple sources, including tourism village managers, local women, community

members; and (d) the researcher actively participated in community activities during the data collection process (Tristanti et al., 2024).

Data collection was conducted in April 2024 through the distribution of questionnaires to 75 women residing in the vicinity of the Keranggan Ecotourism Village, complemented by in-depth interviews with the Head of the Keranggan Ecotourism Village Management Team and its members responsible for inclusive education development. The selection of participants was conducted through purposive sampling. Additional key informants included one of the culinary's Small Medium Enterprises. Supplementary informants were community members from these groups who provided further insights to support the qualitative analysis and interpretation.

Results and Discussions

Keranggan Ecotourism Village spans 1.7 km² with 280 households, 40% engaged in home industries. Nestled along the Cisadane River, its hilly terrain and preserved natural environment enhance its appeal. It is located 3 km from the sub-district center and 60 km from the provincial capital (Pramono et al., 2021). Based on data collected from 75 female respondents residing within 1 kilometer of the Keranggan Ecotourism Village, it was found that the majority work as housewives with varying levels of income. As illustrated in Figure 1, 69% (52 women) identified as housewives, of whom 45 earn an average monthly income below IDR 3,000,000. Meanwhile, only 7 women are considered economically well-off with monthly earnings above IDR 3,000,000.

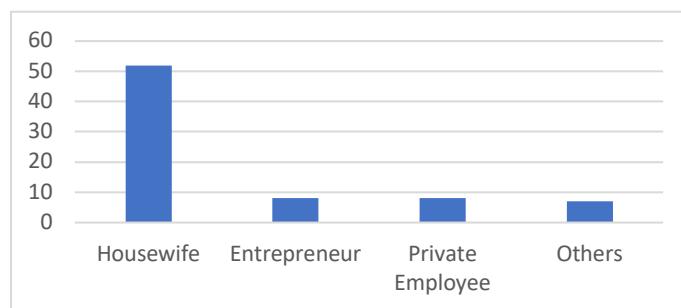


Diagram 1
Women's Occupation (source: Data Processing Results, 2024)

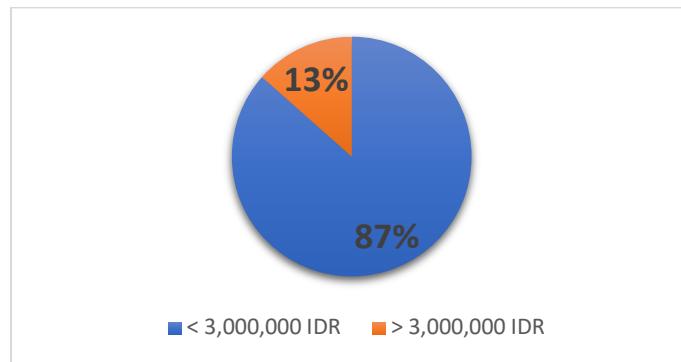


Figure 1
Women's Monthly Incomes (source: Data Processing Results, 2024)

This data highlights an evident income disparity among women with the same profession. Housewives with earnings above IDR 3,000,000 are typically those operating Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), while others working as small traders or vendors tend to earn less. One notable SME has operated for 25 years in the local culinary sector, generating a monthly income of over IDR 5,000,000. Most of these products are sold directly to consumers or through resellers and are also promoted as local souvenirs. Keranggan Ecotourism Village is well known for its household-based culinary products, particularly traditional Sundanese and Betawi snacks such as banana chips, cassava crackers, "opak," "jipang," roasted peanuts, "enye-enye," "rengginang," and "akar kelapa" predominantly produced by

housewives. Tourism-related business opportunities have gradually expanded with the development of the ecotourism village, including homestays, guided tours (jungle trekking, rafting, culinary and art experiences), restaurants, and cultural activities. However, according to field surveys conducted by the researcher in 2024, among the eight established tourism businesses, only one is owned and operated by a woman. This indicates that equal entrepreneurial opportunities for women in the tourism sector have yet to be fully realized. The model of women's empowerment in the economic aspect of tourism through inclusive ecotourism development can be illustrated through the conceptual framework developed by Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018). This framework shows interconnected stages in which women, regardless of profession, can be empowered to achieve income equality through their involvement in Keranggan Ecotourism Village. The economic activities embedded in the framework reflect the potential for inclusive ecotourism to foster transformation of power relations, especially for women from marginalized economic backgrounds.



Figure 2
Model of women's empowerment with inclusive ecotourism approach (adapted from Scheyven & Biddulph, 2018)

1. Involve local people as producers for long terms

In community-based ecotourism at Keranggan Ecotourism Village, women generate income by marketing their traditional handicrafts or culinary, whereas the younger population contributes by working as local tour guides (Adom, 2019). In Keranggan Village, it is evident that many women are missing out on the opportunity to engage in the ecotourism business due to a limited entrepreneurial mindset. This attitude reflects individuals' perceptions of potential entrepreneurial experiences, suggesting that a more positive outlook toward starting a business is associated with a stronger entrepreneurial intention (Aghdasi et al., 2023).

A woman as Pokdarwis Members said,

“Mostly women in Keranggan have lack of sense of belonging towards this ecotourism village, because of the influence of some other women. Their attitude influences each other, so they do not have desire to engage in ecotourism business.”

Hence, the opportunities of ecotourism business appear that women in Keranggan Village is able to gain experience in hospitality-related roles, such as hosting tourists, running eco-friendly lodges or managing sustainable souvenir shops. These responsibilities are carried out with a strong focus on hygiene, cleanliness, and providing well-prepared meals, ensuring ethical standards and customer satisfaction in the business (Samal & Dash, 2023; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). As

part of their efforts toward economic empowerment, women's communities have undertaken ecologically sustainable practices, such as beekeeping and the development of tree nurseries (Barry, 2012). Small farmers produce local fresh for restaurants, culinary producers encourage tourist to eat at local restaurant or purchase all product from local producers (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

2. Tourism access for excluded communities

Women can participate in small-scale tourism activities such as food production, guiding, hospitality services, and local crafts, women can gain financial independence and actively contribute to their local economies. Accessible information is the key to understanding loans, market risks, and opportunities. Without it, women-owned businesses struggle to reach their full potential (Xaba & Adanlawo, 2024). At Keranggan Ecotourism Village, women are actively involved in service provision, ecotourism management, and environmental stewardship. The opportunities for women's empowerment are provided by private-public partnership with Keranggan Ecotourism Village Management including women's access to ecotourism education and training opportunities. Importantly, empowerment in tourism must also consider marginalized groups as *tourism consumers*, not merely as passive beneficiaries or service providers. Head of POKDARWIS said,

"We have already many collaborations with public private sector that provide us to improve our capacity building, including sustainable practises, entrepreneurial and marketing skils not only for men but also women who have interest to make Keranggan Village more visible."

Access to technology enables women to obtain information, enhance their knowledge, and make informed decisions, helping them navigate and overcome social, political, and economic barriers (Niroo & Crompton, 2022).

3. Diversifying destinations and engaging new communities

By remapping tourism to include under-resourced or lower socio-economic areas, new opportunities arise for residents to participate in tourism as both hosts and entrepreneurs. The management of Keranggan Ecotourism Village creates the construction of an eco-friendly lodge or ecolodge using local material to create a unique design. Ecolodges are managed and operated by local people. The following is Head of POKDARWIS's statement,

"We already operate three eco-friendly lodges made from bamboos that accommodate the tourist for stay at night with affordable prices."

On the other hand, diversified activities include honey harvesting, picking vegetable or fruit from the local farmer garden, joining traditional dance, and making local crafts could be conservation projects to realize benefits from wildlife or cultural use, to develop benefits from other natural resource use e.g landscape, bee-keeping, bird, and arts (Irandu & Shah, 2016).

4. Inclusive participation in tourism decision-making

Ecotourism is a management tool that promotes women's empowerment and participation, and conservation of the natural resources in the area (Kry et al., 2020; Moswete & Lacey, 2015). Empowering local populations, particularly women, through decentralized governance structures enables more equitable participation and control over tourism resources, which is essential for fostering women's economic and social empowerment within the sector (Timothy, 2007; Wu & Pearce, 2016). In the context of Keranggan Ecotourism Village Management, the roles of local communities are well represented within the organizational structure, namely Kelompok Sadar Wisata (POKDARWIS) which includes the active involvement of women and has been legally registered under government advisor. POKDARWIS are community-based institutions promoting a supportive tourism environment through active local participation and the *Sapta Pesona* values (safe, orderly, clean, cool, beautiful, friendly, and memorable). In Keranggan, residents recognize their role as hosts and aspire to be tourism actors by sharing daily culture and creative experiences. The following is structural organization of Keranggan Ecotourism Village:

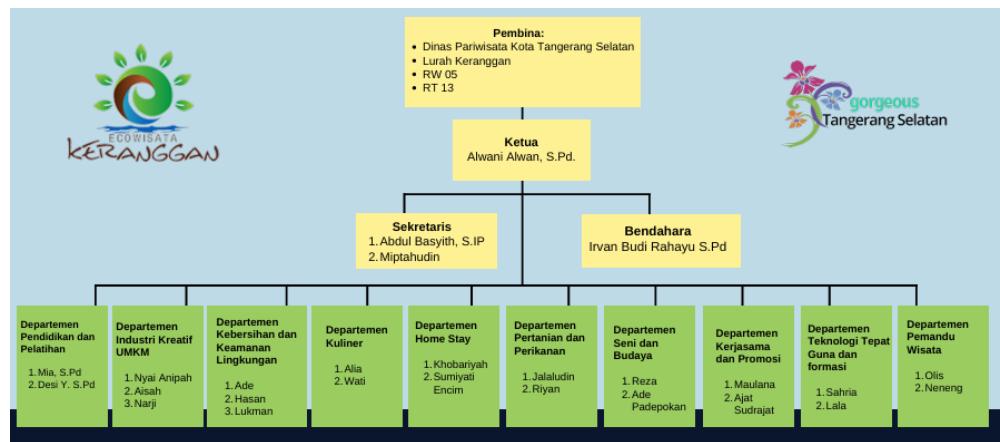


Figure 2
Structural Organization

5. Cultural exchange and mutual respect

Inclusive tourism offers significant potential for women's empowerment by fostering social cohesion, enhancing safety, and promoting equitable participation in tourism-related economic activities. In Keranggan, ecotourism village has been used as a vehicle to support marginalized groups including women through new employment, cultural recognition, and community-driven development. Programs aimed at building ecotourism capacity can enhance the empowerment of local communities particularly women and economically marginalized groups through training in skills and leadership development (Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011). These inclusive strategies align with broader gender equality goals by creating environments where women can safely engage in public life, develop skills, and contribute meaningfully to society.

6. Dignified self-representation of marginalized voices

Inclusive tourism challenges exploitative cultural portrayals by enabling marginalized women to share their own stories. This reclaiming of narrative fosters self-determination and strengthens gender empowerment through cultural negotiation (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). In Keranggan Ecotourism Village, women engage in cultural negotiation by actively presenting their traditions through home industries and guided experiences. By sharing their own narratives and values, rather than simply showcasing products, these women emphasize the skills, family stories, and values behind their work, offering a deeper narrative of community resilience and entrepreneurship. Thus, they assert cultural agency, promote authentic representation, and strengthen inclusive, community-based tourism.

A woman entrepreneur said,

When Keranggan Ecotourism Village held a tourist's program, some of them come to here to see our traditional cooking process. I preserve this cooking technique for over two decades, I am not sure, it will be changed with machines even though it could be efficient."

7. Transformation of power relations in and beyond tourism

Models of inclusive tourism that redistribute ownership and control, such as employee-owned enterprises or community-based tourism ventures, offer significant potential to support gender-transformative empowerment in ecotourism settings (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). Power exists in all social relations, shaped through communication and individual agency. In Sepahat Tourism Village, this is reflected in shifting dynamics where local communities increasingly influence tourism decisions, signaling a transformation of power relations (Sidiq et al., 2023). In Kampung Ekowisata Keranggan, involving women in tourism management organization and decision-making helps challenge gender norms and promotes economic independence. The following is a woman as the members of POKDARWIS's statement:

"I am responsible for creating eco-friendly education in Keranggan by diversifying activities for youth and housewives."

This reflects global findings that meaningful participation in tourism boosts women's income, confidence, and social standing, it could elevate their status in the community. Therefore, ecotourism in Keranggan must not only aim to conserve the environment but also facilitate the equitable participation and empowerment of local women, ensuring they are not merely labor providers but co-owners and co-creators of the tourism experience.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study proposes a conceptual framework for inclusive ecotourism development aimed at advancing women's empowerment in economic development, with a focus on Keranggan Ecotourism Village. The framework integrates critical dimensions such as access to resources, capacity-building, leadership, and decision-making, all within an inclusive and participatory tourism model. This study addresses a model that not only promotes equitable participation but also aligns with broader development goals, including poverty reduction and gender equality.

Nevertheless, the development of inclusive tourism still faces several challenges. Keranggan Ecotourism Village needs the community champion as people who can influence policies, opinions, or actions in community. The personalities and potential to become leaders, need to take on an important role in developing inclusive tourism (Andari et al., 2023). Local champions should have three primary characteristics: mediators, mobilizers, and facilitators (Yuwono et al., 2022). With greater access to mobile apps and social media, Keranggan Ecotourism Village can adopt digital marketing as a transformative strategy to empower women by enhancing their confidence and income stability. Future research should empirically test the proposed framework to validate its applicability across diverse ecotourism contexts, and should also refine the model by measuring the women empowerment level in some dimensions which are economic, social, political, and psychological as well as environmental and legal.

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