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Strengthening Service Excellence among Creative Economy Actors in Serangan Tourism Village to Promote Inclusive and Sustainable Tourism

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Abstract.
Service excellence plays a crucial role in strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of community-based tourism. However, many creative economy actors in tourism villages still face challenges related to professional communication, complaint handling, and standardized service practices. This community engagement program aimed to strengthen the service excellence competencies of creative economy actors in Serangan Tourism Village, Bali, through a participatory capacity-building approach. The program employed the Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) framework, integrating needs assessment, experiential learning, field mentoring, and the development of standardized service instruments. Twenty tourism frontliners participated in the program, including fishermen, boat operators, tourism drivers, and souvenir vendors. Program effectiveness was evaluated using a post-training questionnaire and qualitative feedback. The findings showed a high level of participant acceptance, with an overall mean score of 4.43 out of 5. Training material relevance achieved the highest evaluation score (4.70), followed by the program's contribution to strengthening the local creative economy (4.60). Participants also perceived the Service Excellence Module, Pocket Guide, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as practical tools for improving service consistency. The program demonstrates that integrating participatory capacity building, experiential learning, mentoring, and standardized service instruments provides a practical and replicable model for strengthening community-based tourism while supporting inclusive and sustainable tourism development.
Keywords: *Service excellence; Community-based tourism; Creative economy; Capacity building; Sustainable tourism*

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the world's fastest-growing economic sectors, generating substantial contributions to employment creation, regional economic development, and community welfare. Following the recovery of global tourism after the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus of tourism development has gradually shifted from increasing tourist arrivals toward improving

destination quality, resilience, inclusiveness, and sustainability. This transformation is closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), which emphasize productive employment, local economic empowerment, and sustainable community development. Consequently, tourism is increasingly recognized not merely as an economic sector but also as a catalyst for strengthening community resilience through local entrepreneurship, creative economy development, and community participation. Recent studies demonstrate that sustainable tourism competitiveness is highly dependent on the capacity of local communities to provide high-quality services and meaningful visitor experiences rather than relying solely on destination attractiveness. (Nguyen, T., Q. & Nguyen, Q., V., 2026; Muda, F., 2025).

Indonesia has experienced a similar development trend, with Bali maintaining its position as the country's primary tourism destination. The increasing number of domestic and international tourist arrivals has generated substantial opportunities for local creative economy actors, particularly those operating in transportation services, marine tourism, handicrafts, culinary businesses, and other tourism-supporting sectors. However, the economic benefits generated by tourism are not automatically distributed to local communities. Instead, they largely depend on the ability of tourism actors to deliver professional, reliable, and customer-oriented services that create memorable visitor experiences. Therefore, strengthening the competencies of frontline tourism actors has become an increasingly important strategy for improving destination competitiveness while ensuring that tourism contributes to inclusive local economic development (Marimuthu, M., et al., 2021). This perspective is particularly relevant within tourism villages, where tourists interact directly with community members throughout their travel experiences (Dewi, I., J., et al., 2022).

Serangan Tourism Village, located in South Denpasar, Bali, represents one of the tourism villages possessing considerable potential for community-based tourism and creative economy development. The village offers diverse tourism attractions, including marine tourism, sea turtle conservation, coastal cultural heritage, and locally produced handicrafts. Tourism activities in the village involve various community-based businesses operated by tourism drivers, fishermen, boat operators, and souvenir vendors who function as tourism frontliners because they interact directly with visitors throughout different stages of the tourism experience. These interactions play a strategic role in shaping tourists' perceptions of destination quality, visitor satisfaction, and destination image. Consequently, improving service competencies among these local economic actors is essential not only for enhancing visitor satisfaction but also for strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of Serangan Tourism Village.

Despite the considerable tourism potential of Serangan Tourism Village, preliminary observations, focus group discussions, and consultations conducted with community partners revealed several critical challenges. Most creative economy actors still rely on practical experience rather than structured service training, resulting in inconsistent service delivery, limited professional communication skills, inadequate complaint-handling competencies, and the absence of standardized service procedures. Furthermore, service quality has not yet been fully recognized as a strategic instrument for strengthening the local creative economy through experience-based marketing. These conditions limit the ability of local businesses to provide consistent visitor experiences and reduce opportunities to improve destination competitiveness through high-quality frontline services. Similar challenges have also been identified in recent studies, which emphasize

that many community-based tourism destinations continue to experience limitations in service standardization, human resource development, and capacity-building despite possessing significant tourism potential (Ariyanto et al., 2025; Phoncharoen, K., 2025).

Service excellence has become one of the most critical determinants of tourism competitiveness because tourism products are predominantly experiential, relying heavily on interactions between service providers and visitors. Unlike manufactured products, tourism services are characterized by simultaneity, intangibility, and direct customer participation, making the quality of interpersonal communication an essential component of visitor satisfaction. The SERVQUAL model proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) remains one of the most influential frameworks for assessing service quality through five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Although originally developed for commercial service industries, recent studies have demonstrated that these dimensions are equally applicable to community-based tourism destinations where local communities act as frontline service providers. High-quality service not only enhances tourist satisfaction but also strengthens destination image, visitor loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth, all of which contribute to long-term destination competitiveness (Stylidis, 2022).

Beyond service quality, recent tourism literature increasingly emphasizes the importance of human capital development and capacity building as fundamental strategies for strengthening community based tourism. Sustainable tourism cannot rely solely on physical infrastructure or destination promotion but requires continuous investment in community competencies, professional communication, organizational learning, and local innovation. Capacity-building initiatives enable community members to improve service performance, adapt to changing tourist expectations, and participate more effectively in tourism value chains. Accordingly, education and training have become strategic instruments for increasing local competitiveness while ensuring that economic benefits generated by tourism are distributed more equitably among community members (UN Tourism, 2024; OECD, 2024).

In addition, experiential learning has been widely recognized as one of the most effective approaches for developing practical competencies among adult learners. Rather than emphasizing passive knowledge transfer, experiential learning encourages participants to acquire competencies through direct experience, reflection, simulation, problem-solving, and practical application. Within tourism services, this approach is particularly appropriate because professional communication, hospitality, and complaint handling require behavioural change rather than merely cognitive understanding. Consequently, experiential learning has been increasingly adopted in tourism education and community capacity-building programs because it promotes confidence, adaptability, and long-term behavioural improvement among service providers (Azanza, G., et al, 2022; Kolb, 1984; Bartels, 2023).

Despite the growing literature on tourism service quality, several important gaps remain. First, previous studies have predominantly examined service quality within formal hospitality industries, including hotels, restaurants, airlines, and destination management organizations. Comparatively fewer studies have focused on strengthening service excellence among community-based creative economy actors operating in tourism villages, particularly those representing informal tourism occupations such as drivers, fishermen, boat operators, and souvenir vendors. Second, many community engagement initiatives continue to concentrate on entrepreneurship development, digital marketing, financial literacy, or destination promotion, whereas structured interventions integrating

service excellence, communication training, complaint handling, and standardized operational procedures remain relatively limited. Third, although several studies have highlighted the importance of community empowerment, practical models that integrate participatory needs assessment, experiential learning, continuous mentoring, standardized service guidelines, and systematic evaluation within a single capacity-building framework are still rarely reported in the literature.

These research and practice gaps are consistent with the conditions identified in Serangan Tourism Village. Preliminary observations, focus group discussions, and consultations with community partners revealed that tourism frontliners had not previously received structured service excellence training, lacked standardized operational guidelines, and relied primarily on personal experience when interacting with tourists. Furthermore, service quality had not yet been systematically utilized as a strategic instrument for strengthening the local creative economy through experience-based marketing. These findings indicate that improving frontline service competencies requires a more comprehensive intervention that combines practical training, mentoring, standardized service instruments, and continuous evaluation rather than one-time knowledge transfer alone.

The principal novelty of this community engagement program lies in the development and implementation of an integrated service excellence capacity-building model specifically designed for community-based tourism frontliners. Unlike previous community service programs that generally emphasize entrepreneurship training or tourism promotion, this program combines five complementary components: (1) participatory needs assessment through field observation and focus group discussions; (2) experiential learning-based training emphasizing practical simulations and role-playing; (3) structured mentoring through field assistance; (4) the development of standardized service instruments, including a Service Excellence Module, a Pocket Guide for Service Communication, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs); and (5) continuous improvement using the Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) framework. This integrated approach provides not only practical learning experiences but also institutional tools that support the sustainability and consistency of service quality within community-based tourism destinations. The model therefore offers a replicable framework that can be adapted by other tourism villages seeking to strengthen local creative economy competitiveness through service excellence.

Based on the above considerations, this community engagement program aims to strengthen the service excellence competencies of creative economy actors in Serangan Tourism Village through participatory capacity building, experiential learning, structured mentoring, and service standardization. Specifically, the program seeks to: (1) improve participants' competencies in professional communication, hospitality, and complaint handling; (2) develop standardized service instruments that support consistent service delivery among tourism frontliners; (3) evaluate the effectiveness of the capacity-building program in improving participants' perceptions and competencies; and (4) contribute to strengthening the competitiveness of the local creative economy while supporting inclusive and sustainable tourism development in accordance with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). These findings are expected to enrich the literature on community-based tourism and community engagement while providing a practical model that can be replicated in other tourism villages facing similar service quality challenges.

II. METHODS

This community engagement program was implemented in Serangan Tourism Village, South Denpasar District, Bali, Indonesia**,** using a participatory capacity-building approach to strengthen the service excellence competencies of local creative economy actors. The program was designed to actively involve community members throughout the intervention process, including needs identification, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. This participatory approach was selected because it enables community members to become active partners rather than passive

recipients, thereby enhancing program ownership and supporting the sustainability of outcomes (Widagdo, et al., 2025).

The intervention adopted the Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) continuous improvement framework to ensure systematic implementation and iterative program refinement. During the Plan stage, the project team conducted field observations, focus group discussions (FGDs), interviews with community representatives, and coordination meetings with village stakeholders to identify service

related challenges and determine priority needs. The assessment revealed three major issues: the absence of standardized service procedures, limited professional communication skills, and inadequate complaint-handling competencies among tourism frontliners. These findings informed the development of training materials and supporting service instruments.



Figure 1. Framework of the Community Engagement Program (PDCA Cycle)

During the Do stage, participants attended a structured training program emphasizing service excellence, professional communication, complaint handling, and experience-based marketing. The training employed an experiential learning approach by integrating interactive lectures, role-playing, case-based discussions, simulations, and reflective learning activities derived from authentic tourism service situations in Serangan Tourism Village. To facilitate the transfer of learning into daily practice, the project team developed three practical service instruments: (1) a

Service Excellence Module, (2) a Pocket Guide for Service Communication, and (3) simplified Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) specifically tailored to the operational characteristics of tourism drivers, fishermen, boat operators, and souvenir vendors (Susanto, et al., 2025; Winarno, et al., 2025).

The Check stage consisted of field mentoring and monitoring activities aimed at observing participants' implementation of the newly introduced service standards. Facilitators provided individualized feedback regarding communication practices, hospitality behaviour, and complaint handling techniques while monitoring participants' compliance with the developed SOPs. These mentoring activities enabled participants to apply newly acquired competencies in authentic service settings and reinforced continuous behavioural improvement.

The Act stage focused on program evaluation and continuous improvement. Evaluation was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected through a post-training evaluation questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire comprised ten evaluation indicators covering material relevance, presentation quality, understanding of service excellence, communication improvement, SOP implementation, practical simulation, contribution to the creative economy, service inclusiveness, usefulness of learning materials, and overall participant satisfaction. Qualitative data were obtained from participants' open-ended comments and facilitator observations during mentoring sessions to identify strengths, challenges, and recommendations for future program refinement.

Table 1. Stages of Community Engagement Program

Phase	Main Activities	Expected Output
Plan	Observation, FGD, Interviews	Identification of service problems
Do	Training and simulation	Improved competencies
Check	Mentoring and monitoring	Implementation of SOPs
Act	Evaluation and reflection	Program improvement

The program involved 20 community members representing the primary tourism frontliners in Serangan Tourism Village, consisting of six fishermen, six boat operators, four tourism drivers, and four souvenir vendors. Participants were selected purposively because they interact directly with domestic and international tourists and therefore play a strategic role in shaping visitor experiences and destination image.

Table 2. Participant Characteristic

Characteristics	n	Percentage
Driver	4	20%
Fishermen	6	30%
Boat Operators	6	30%
Souvenir Vendors	4	20%

Male	11	55%
Female	9	45%

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and percentage distributions for each evaluation indicator. Participant responses were also compared across occupational groups through descriptive cross-tabulation to explore similarities and differences in perceived program effectiveness. Qualitative responses were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes related to participant experiences, perceived benefits, implementation challenges, and recommendations for sustaining service excellence practices. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enabled a comprehensive assessment of program effectiveness while informing recommendations for continuous improvement and future replication in other tourism villages.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Needs Assessment and Identification of Service Challenges

The community engagement program commenced with a comprehensive needs assessment to identify the priority challenges faced by creative economy actors in Serangan Tourism Village. This preliminary stage adopted a participatory approach involving direct field observations, focus group discussions (FGDs), interviews with community representatives, and consultations with village stakeholders. Rather than assuming the community's needs, the assessment actively involved tourism frontliners in identifying operational constraints and determining the competencies required to improve service quality. This approach ensured that the intervention was grounded in the actual conditions experienced by local tourism actors and enhanced community ownership throughout the implementation process.



Figure 2. Participants Completing the Preliminary Program Activities Prior to the Service Excellence Training

The assessment involved 20 community members representing the principal tourism frontliners in Serangan Tourism Village, comprising six fishermen, six boat operators, four tourism drivers, and four souvenir vendors. These occupational groups were purposively involved because they constitute the first point of contact between visitors and the destination, thereby playing a strategic

role in shaping tourists' first impressions and overall service experiences. The participant composition also reflected a balanced representation of gender, consisting of 11 males and 9 females, indicating that the program incorporated an inclusive approach in strengthening local tourism capacity.

The needs assessment identified three interrelated service challenges that constrained the delivery of high-quality tourism services. First, tourism frontliners demonstrated limited competencies in applying service excellence principles, resulting in inconsistent service practices across different occupational groups. Most participants relied primarily on personal experience and informal learning rather than structured training, causing considerable variation in communication styles, hospitality practices, and customer service performance. As tourism services are inherently intangible and highly dependent on interpersonal interaction, inconsistent service delivery may reduce the quality of visitor experiences and limit the competitiveness of community-based tourism destinations. These findings are consistent with previous studies highlighting that service quality is fundamentally influenced by the competence and professionalism of frontline service providers, particularly within community based tourism settings where residents directly interact with visitors (Hariman et al., 2021).

The second challenge concerned the absence of standardized service procedures. Prior to the intervention, participants did not possess practical service guidelines or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) governing customer interactions, communication etiquette, or complaint-handling procedures. Consequently, service practices were largely spontaneous and depended on individual judgement, making it difficult to ensure consistency in service quality across tourism actors. The lack of standardized operational guidance also reduced opportunities for knowledge transfer among community members and limited the sustainability of service improvement initiatives. The findings support previous arguments that service standardization is an important mechanism for strengthening reliability, consistency, and professionalism in tourism service delivery while simultaneously supporting organizational learning within community-based tourism enterprises (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

The third challenge related to the limited utilization of service quality as a strategic instrument for strengthening the local creative economy. Although tourism actors recognized the importance of providing friendly services, they had not yet considered service excellence as part of an experience based marketing strategy capable of creating memorable visitor experiences, encouraging positive word-of-mouth, and supporting destination branding. Instead, tourism services were primarily viewed as routine operational activities rather than strategic assets capable of generating long-term competitive advantages for the destination. This finding indicates that the issue was not solely related to technical service skills but also to participants' understanding of the strategic relationship between service quality, visitor experiences, and local economic development.

The identification of these three priority challenges became the principal foundation for designing the community engagement program. Instead of implementing a generic tourism training program, the intervention was specifically structured to address the needs identified during the assessment. Consequently, the training curriculum emphasized four complementary competency areas: service excellence**,** professional communication**,** complaint handling, and experience-based marketing. In addition, practical service instruments—including a Service Excellence Module**,** a Pocket Guide for Service Communication, and simplified Standard Operating Procedures

(SOPs)—were developed to provide continuous operational guidance beyond the training sessions. This alignment between identified needs and intervention design reflects the principles of participatory capacity building, whereby community members actively influence both the content and implementation of development programs.

From a broader perspective, the needs assessment demonstrates that strengthening community-based tourism requires more than infrastructure development or destination promotion. Human resource development remains a critical prerequisite because tourism experiences are largely co-created through interactions between visitors and local communities. The challenges identified in Serangan

Tourism Village therefore illustrate that sustainable tourism development depends not only on increasing tourist arrivals but also on improving the competencies of community members who directly deliver tourism services. Similar observations have been reported in community-based tourism literature, which emphasizes that strengthening local capacities through participatory training and institutional support contributes to more inclusive and sustainable tourism development. In this context, the needs assessment provided a robust empirical foundation for designing a targeted capacity-building intervention while ensuring that the proposed solutions directly addressed the operational realities faced by tourism frontliners in Serangan Tourism Village.

3.2. Implementation of the Service Excellence Capacity-Building Program



Figure 3. Community service at Serangan Village

The capacity-building program was implemented based on the priority needs identified during the preliminary assessment. Guided by the Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) framework, the intervention combined experiential learning, field mentoring, and the development of standardized service instruments to strengthen the competencies of tourism frontliners in Serangan Tourism Village. The training focused on four key areas: service excellence, professional communication, complaint handling, and experience-based marketing, all of which directly addressed the challenges identified during the needs assessment.

An experiential learning approach was adopted to encourage active participation through

interactive discussions, role-playing, case studies, and service simulations. These activities enabled participants to relate the learning materials to authentic service situations encountered in their daily work. Such an approach is particularly relevant for tourism services, where communication skills, hospitality, and complaint handling are primarily developed through practice and reflection rather than theoretical instruction alone.

A key outcome of the program was the development of three standardized service instruments: a Service Excellence Module**,** a Pocket Guide for Service Communication**,** and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) tailored to the operational characteristics of tourism drivers, fishermen, boat operators, and souvenir vendors. These instruments provide practical guidance for implementing consistent service standards and support the sustainability of learning beyond the training sessions.

Following the training, field mentoring was conducted to assist participants in applying the newly acquired competencies within authentic tourism service settings. Facilitators provided feedback on communication practices, hospitality, and service delivery while encouraging participants to reflect on their experiences and identify opportunities for continuous improvement. The mentoring process also promoted peer learning, allowing participants to exchange experiences and discuss practical solutions to common service challenges.

Overall, the implementation demonstrates that strengthening service quality in community-based tourism requires more than short-term training. The integration of experiential learning, standardized service instruments, and field mentoring established a practical capacity-building model that supports continuous learning and more consistent service delivery. This integrated approach represents an important contribution of the program because it provides a structured and replicable framework for improving service excellence among community-based tourism actors while supporting the long-term sustainability of local tourism development.

3.3. Evaluation of Program Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the community engagement program was evaluated through a post-training questionnaire completed by all 20 participants. The evaluation assessed participants' perceptions of training relevance, learning outcomes, communication improvement, implementation of standardized service practices, and overall satisfaction using a five-point Likert scale. Overall, the program received a high level of participant acceptance, with an average score of 4.43 out of 5, indicating that the capacity-building activities were perceived as relevant and beneficial for strengthening service competencies among tourism frontliners.

Table 3. Results of Participant Evaluation

No.	Evaluation Indicator	Mean Score	Interpretation
1	Relevance of training materials	4.70	Very High
2	Contribution of the program to strengthening the local creative economy	4.60	Very High
3	Overall understanding of service excellence concepts	4.50	Very High
4	Quality of training delivery and facilitation	4.45	High
5	Practical usefulness of role-playing and	4.40	High

	simulation activities		
6	Applicability of the Service Excellence Module, Pocket Guide, and SOPs	4.35	High
7	Improvement in communication skills	4.20	High
Overall Mean		4.43	High

The highest evaluation score was obtained for the relevance of the training materials (mean = 4.70), suggesting that the program successfully addressed the practical needs identified during the preliminary assessment. Participants considered the learning materials directly applicable to their daily interactions with tourists, particularly in improving hospitality, professional communication, and customer service practices. Likewise, the indicator measuring the program's contribution to strengthening the local creative economy achieved a high mean score (4.60), reflecting participants' recognition that service quality plays an important role in supporting the sustainability of tourism

based livelihoods.

Among the evaluated indicators, communication improvement received the lowest mean score (4.20), although it remained within the high category. This finding indicates that communication competence requires continuous practice and reinforcement beyond a single training intervention. Unlike technical knowledge, interpersonal communication develops gradually through repeated interaction, feedback, and practical experience. The mentoring sessions further confirmed this observation, as several participants expressed the need for additional opportunities to practice communication techniques in authentic tourism service situations.

Qualitative feedback collected during the evaluation also demonstrated positive participant responses toward the program. Participants reported that the training increased their understanding of service excellence principles, improved their confidence in interacting with visitors, and provided practical guidance through the Service Excellence Module, Pocket Guide, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). At the same time, several participants recommended extending the duration of practical simulations and mentoring sessions to further strengthen communication and complaint-handling skills. These suggestions indicate that participants perceived the program as valuable while recognizing the importance of continuous learning to achieve sustainable improvements in service quality.

Table 4. Summary of Participants' Qualitative Feedback

Theme	Representative Findings	Implication
Training relevance	Participants considered the materials highly relevant to their daily tourism service activities.	The program successfully addressed the priority needs identified during the needs assessment.

Service competence	Participants reported improved understanding of service excellence, hospitality, and complaint handling.	The training enhanced participants' awareness of professional service practices.
Standardized service instruments	The Service Excellence Module, Pocket Guide, and SOPs were perceived as practical references for daily service delivery.	Standardized instruments may support more consistent service implementation.
Future improvement	Participants suggested extending mentoring sessions and increasing opportunities for practical simulations.	Continuous mentoring is recommended to reinforce communication and interpersonal skills

Overall, the evaluation findings demonstrate that the program effectively addressed the priority needs identified during the initial assessment by providing practical knowledge, standardized service guidance, and opportunities for experiential learning. Rather than indicating definitive improvements in tourism performance or visitor satisfaction—which were beyond the scope of this community engagement program—the evaluation confirms that participants perceived the intervention as relevant, useful, and applicable to their daily service activities. These findings support the use of participatory capacity-building approaches that integrate experiential learning, mentoring, and standardized service instruments as practical strategies for strengthening service excellence within community-based tourism destinations.

3.4. Practical Implications for Sustainable Community-Based Tourism

The findings of this community engagement program provide several practical implications for strengthening community-based tourism through service excellence capacity building. First, the program demonstrates that improving tourism services should not rely solely on promotional activities or infrastructure development. Instead, strengthening the competencies of tourism frontliners is equally important because visitors' experiences are largely shaped by direct interactions with local communities. The positive evaluation results indicate that capacity-building programs tailored to local needs can enhance participants' understanding of professional communication, hospitality, and standardized service practices, thereby providing a practical foundation for improving service quality in tourism villages.

Second, the integration of a Service Excellence Module**,** a Pocket Guide for Service Communication**,** and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) represents an important institutional outcome of the program. These learning resources extend the impact of the training beyond the implementation period by providing practical references that participants can apply in their daily service activities. The availability of standardized service instruments also facilitates knowledge transfer among community members and supports greater consistency in service delivery across different tourism occupations. Such institutional support is particularly important in community-based tourism, where service quality often depends on individual experience rather than formal organizational systems.

Third, the participatory approach adopted throughout the program offers a replicable model for future community engagement initiatives. By combining needs assessment, experiential learning, mentoring, and continuous evaluation, the program ensured that the intervention

responded directly to local priorities while encouraging active community participation. This approach may be adapted by local governments, tourism village management organizations, and higher education institutions implementing similar capacity-building programs in other destinations with comparable characteristics.

Finally, the program contributes to the broader agenda of sustainable tourism development by strengthening local human capital and supporting inclusive economic participation. Although the present evaluation focused on participant perceptions rather than long-term tourism performance, the findings suggest that continuous investment in community competencies constitutes an essential element of sustainable destination management. Future initiatives should therefore incorporate periodic mentoring, follow-up evaluations, and collaboration among universities, local governments, and community organizations to ensure that service excellence practices continue to develop beyond the duration of individual community engagement projects.

3.5 Limitations and Future Directions

This community engagement program has several limitations. First, the evaluation relied primarily on participants' self-reported perceptions collected immediately after the training and therefore does not yet capture long-term behavioural changes or organizational impacts. Second, the program involved a relatively small number of participants from a single tourism village, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other community-based tourism destinations. Third, the evaluation did not include tourists' perceptions or objective indicators of service performance. Future community engagement initiatives are therefore encouraged to incorporate longitudinal evaluations, visitor satisfaction assessments, and broader stakeholder participation to examine the sustainability and wider impacts of service excellence capacity-building programs.

IV. CONCLUSION

This community engagement program successfully strengthened the service excellence competencies of creative economy actors in Serangan Tourism Village through a participatory capacity-building approach that integrated needs assessment, experiential learning, field mentoring, and standardized service instruments. The preliminary assessment identified three priority challenges, namely limited service excellence competencies, the absence of standardized service procedures, and insufficient understanding of service quality as a strategic component of experience-based tourism services. These findings provided the basis for designing a targeted intervention that addressed the practical needs of tourism frontliners.

The implementation of the program resulted in positive participant evaluations, reflected by a high overall satisfaction score (mean = 4.43), indicating that the training materials, learning activities, and supporting service instruments were perceived as relevant and applicable to participants' daily tourism service practices. The development of a Service Excellence Module**,** a Pocket Guide for Service Communication**,** and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) represents an important practical outcome because these resources provide continuous guidance for improving service consistency beyond the training period. Rather than functioning solely as educational materials, these instruments contribute to the institutionalization of service excellence practices within the tourism village.

This program also contributes to the community engagement literature by demonstrating that service excellence capacity building can be strengthened through the integration of participatory

needs assessment, experiential learning, mentoring, and standardized service resources within a single intervention framework. The approach provides a practical and replicable model for strengthening the competencies of community-based tourism actors while supporting more sustainable tourism development through human resource empowerment.

Nevertheless, this program has several limitations. The evaluation was primarily based on participants' post-training perceptions and did not assess long-term behavioural changes, visitor perceptions, or objective indicators of tourism performance. Future community engagement initiatives are therefore recommended to incorporate longitudinal evaluations, visitor-based service assessments, and broader stakeholder collaboration to examine the sustainability and wider impacts of service excellence interventions across different tourism destinations.

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