

YOUNG GENERATION PERCEPTION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CREATIVE ECONOMY ECOSYSTEM IN TOMOHON CITY

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the perceptions of the younger generation towards the potential of the creative economy in Tomohon City, identify the level and form of their participation, explore the factors that motivate and hinder their involvement, and formulate strategic policy recommendations for the Tomohon City Government. This study uses a qualitative approach with Kelurahan as a case study, involving in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies of the younger generation, Kelurahan officials, tourism Kelurahan managers, MSMEs, and related stakeholders in Tomohon City. The results show that the younger generation's perception of the potential of the creative economy is ambiguous because on the one hand they see great opportunities from the success of TIFF which recorded an economic turnover of IDR 92 billion and the achievement of Kakaskasen Dua Village as the winner of ADWI 2023, but on the other hand they are faced with the reality of the high youth unemployment rate which reaches 88 percent. The participation of the younger generation is still not optimal, limited to physical involvement in events and independent communities without a strategic role in development decision-making. Driving factors include the potential for economic income, pride in local culture, the availability of spaces for expression, capacity training programs, and recognition and appreciation from the local government. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include low digital literacy, limited access to capital, minimal supporting infrastructure, lack of understanding of opportunities, high unemployment rates, and weak institutional coordination. This study recommends improving digital literacy, expanding access to capital, accelerating the development of creative hubs, integrating creative economy education, and strengthening institutions and coordination among stakeholders to encourage active participation of the younger generation in an inclusive and sustainable creative economy ecosystem in Tomohon City.

Keywords: Perception, Participation, Young Generation, Creative Economy, Tomohon City

INTRODUCTION

The creative economy has emerged as one of the most strategic sectors in Indonesia's national economic development structure, going beyond the entertainment industry and reaching the foundation of a knowledge- and innovation-based economy. The latest data released by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) and the Ministry of Creative Economy show that the sector's contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at current prices in 2024 reached a significant figure, namely IDR 1,611.2 trillion or equivalent to 7.28 percent of the total national GDP (Central Statistics Agency, 2025). This figure even exceeds the target set for 2025 which was around 7 percent, indicating extraordinary growth acceleration amidst the dynamics of the global economy. Not only in terms of added value, the creative economy has also proven to be a massive workforce absorber by absorbing more than 26.5 million workers, and recorded a creative product export value of US\$12.9 billion in the first semester of 2025 alone (Ministry of Creative Economy, 2025). Former Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Sandiaga Uno, even emphasized that this sector grew twice as high as the national economic growth in general, making it the most inclusive, resilient, and adaptive sector to changing times, especially in the face of digital disruption.

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Referring to this macro potential, the Tomohon City Government in North Sulawesi Province has taken a strategic step by making the creative economy a key pillar of inclusive and sustainable regional economic development. Tomohon, known as a city with cool highland natural panoramas and abundant local cultural richness, has social and natural capital that strongly supports the development of a creative ecosystem. This local government commitment is concretely realized through full support for youth initiatives incorporated into the Tomohon Creative Space, a collaborative platform that provides a space for the younger generation to channel their creativity through various thematic activities, ranging from acoustic music performances to the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) based on the creative industry (Katabrita, 2025). The Mayor of Tomohon, Carroll JA Senduk, explicitly expressed his appreciation and full support for the government's creative industry, emphasizing that space for youth creativity is not merely a physical facility, but a long-term investment for local economic growth based on innovation and the active participation of the nation's future generations.

This phenomenon becomes even more interesting when linked to one of Tomohon City's leading tourism icons, the Tomohon International Flower Festival (TIFF). Based on an analysis by Kharisma Event Nusantara (KEN) in 2024, TIFF not only successfully attracted around 300,000 domestic and international visitors, but also generated an economic turnover of up to IDR 92 billion (Antara News Manado, 2026). Tourism Minister Widiyanti Putri Wardhana highlighted that this annual event has revitalized the micro-economy across all levels of society, from flower farmers and local artisans to culinary MSMEs, as well as the transportation and hospitality sectors. However, the economic boom created by this international-scale event cannot be separated from the role of the supporting tourist villages, one of which is Kakaskasen Dua. Located between the foothills of Mount Lokon and Mount Mahawu, this village is the largest flower cultivation center in Tomohon and even won the Indonesian Tourism Village Award in 2023. This village offers stunning natural panoramas, religious tourism, as well as a wealth of authentic local culture and history, making it a living laboratory for the development of a creative economy based on agriculture and culture.

Despite its geographical potential and impressive achievements, the development of Kakaskasen Dua Village as part of an integrated creative economy ecosystem still faces a number of classic challenges that hinder its accelerated growth. The Head of the Tomohon City Tourism Office, Yudhistira Siwu, stated that the support and involvement of the younger generation are key determinants of the long-term success of tourism and creative economy development, as they will be the driving force behind tourism awareness and the preservation of the seven charms of the region in the future (Berita Online Lokal, 2025). However, the reality on the ground shows that youth participation in tourism village development is still minimal. Furthermore, another structural challenge is the continued need to strengthen the digital capacity of the community and local MSMEs. This is evident in the Genera-Z Berbakti 2026 competition, which brought together students from the University of Indonesia and Binus University to formulate an empowerment program for Kakaskasen Dua Village. The main focus of both teams was to address the limitations of digital promotion, the low economic value of MSME products through product innovation (such as eco-printing), and the issue of cultural regeneration that is threatened with failure (Tribunjateng, 2026). The continued existence of external intervention in the form of program design competitions indicates that solutions based on local community participation, especially the younger generation, have not been optimally explored and still require external stimulation.

To deeply understand the dynamics of youth involvement in the development of the creative economy, it is necessary to first establish a conceptual framework regarding perception and participation. Perception is essentially a complex psychological process, involving physiological aspects in selecting, organizing, and interpreting stimuli to have meaning or significance (Suryani, 2013, p. 78). Perception is a person's impression, response, view, or understanding of an object outside the individual, which is formed through two main indicators: reception—namely the functioning of the senses to capture stimuli from outside—and evaluation—where the stimuli that have been captured are then subjectively assessed by the individual (Robbins, 2003, pp. 124-130). Thus, the perception of the younger generation towards the potential of the creative economy in Tomohon is not an objective reflection of reality itself, but rather the result of their process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting the various stimuli they receive—from information about business opportunities, government support, to their personal experiences interacting with the creative ecosystem around them. This perception is the initial foundation that determines whether a young person will be interested, indifferent, or even reluctant to get involved. Research on the perceptions of the younger generation towards a sector is an important indicator in assessing their interest in being actively involved (FP UMI Journal, 2025).

Meanwhile, youth participation is an equally important concept. According to Keith Davis, participation is a person's mental and emotional involvement in achieving goals and sharing responsibility for them. In the context of youth,

participation can be defined as a form of active and meaningful involvement carried out by young people in voluntary activities to achieve predetermined goals. Youth participation encompasses four main substances: participation in the decision-making process, participation in activity implementation, participation in monitoring, and participation in the evaluation of program results. Furthermore, participation can be realized in various forms, ranging from physical participation (physical involvement in activities), mental participation (contribution of ideas and concepts), to participation in the planning, implementation, and achievement of expected goals. Thus, when talking about youth participation in the development of the creative economy ecosystem in Tomohon, what is meant is not merely their physical presence in certain activities, but rather active and meaningful involvement that includes contributing ideas, decision-making, program implementation, and evaluating success—all driven by their own awareness and will.

Amidst the intensive efforts of the local government and collaboration with universities, in-depth studies into the perceptions and internal motivations of Tomohon's youth are a critical variable that is often overlooked. While numerous previous studies have been conducted on the creative economy ecosystem in Indonesia, the majority have focused on macro-government policies or the development of specific sub-sectors in major cities, without specifically addressing the psychological and sociological dynamics of youth in areas with potential for nature- and culture-based tourism, such as Tomohon. For example, research conducted by Sutopo and colleagues (2020) in-depth examined the risks of developing a *Do It Yourself* (DIY) music career among young people in the provincial city of Purwokerto. This study successfully identified how young people navigate the configuration of late capitalism in the creative economy at the provincial level, but the research context was very limited to the urban music sub-sector and did not address the issue of participation in the development of tourist villages or the adoption of digital technology in the region (Sutopo et al., 2020). Meanwhile, other studies examining youth participation in the creative economy in the crafts subsector in Makassar City (2020/2024) and research on the role of the Rokan Hilir Regency Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth, and Sports Office in increasing youth participation (2024) tend to view participation from the perspective of government institutions and are limited to a single subsector. Both studies do not integrate the challenges of digital capacity that are now a necessity for urban villages and do not qualitatively explore the subjective perceptions of young people regarding the potential of the creative economy in their hometowns (IOP Science, 2024; scholar.unhas.ac.id, 2024).

A significant research *gap* is evident in the absence of studies that specifically and comprehensively examine the relationship between the younger generation's perception of the potential of the creative economy and their actual level of participation in the development of tourism villages in Tomohon City, especially when faced with the demands of digital transformation. In fact, a deep understanding of what motivates—such as income opportunities, pride in local culture, or ownership of social capital—and inhibiting factors such as low digital literacy, limited access to capital, or lack of self-confidence is an important foundation for formulating targeted policies. Research on digital financial inclusion in micro-enterprises in Tomohon does show that digital financial technology has great potential to improve marketing efficiency, but its adoption is still limited, indicating a gap between the availability of technology and the readiness of human resources, especially the younger generation (Kemenparekraf, 2025). In fact, as emphasized in the 2024 IDSC National Seminar, locally based creative economies such as tourist villages have great potential to be developed through the participation of youth and local communities, by utilizing unique cultures and digital technology to elevate regional potential to a wider market (FEB Unair, 2024). Today's young generation is the main engine of the creative economy, with three strengths: *digital-native* (quickly adapting to technology), *global mindset* (open and collaborative across countries), and *value-oriented* (oriented towards social impact) (ISEI, 2025). The creative economy is not just a sector—it is the nation's new identity, shaped by the younger generation of cultural creators, not merely its inheritors.

Thus, the urgency of this research lies in the effort to answer the fundamental questions: how is the perception of the young generation of Tomohon towards the explosion of creative economic potential that is happening before them, to what extent is their real involvement in the development of the tourism village, and what actually encourages or actually holds back their steps to get involved? Through an in-depth qualitative approach, this research is designed to not only map the reality of youth participation, but also provide humanistic and contextual policy recommendations for the Tomohon City Government in formulating an inclusive and sustainable youth empowerment strategy, so that the creative economy ecosystem does not only grow on policy paper, but also takes root in the spirit and creative hands of the nation's next generation.

METHOD

This research was designed using a qualitative approach, a methodology chosen for its ability to explore the subjective meanings, understandings, and experiences of participants in depth and context. This approach is very suitable for studying perception, which is an individual's mental construction and interpretation of the surrounding reality, and participation, which is an active and meaningful involvement driven by awareness and will from within. In contrast to quantitative approaches that focus on numbers and generalizations, qualitative methods allow researchers to explore the complexity of the motivational factors and obstacles experienced by the younger generation, as has been applied in various similar studies. Specifically, this research will use Kelurahan in as a case study, which was chosen to intensively investigate the phenomenon of youth participation in the development of the creative economy ecosystem in Tomohon City as a case with uniqueness and clear boundaries. With this Kelurahan in, the research will focus on an in-depth understanding of 'how' and 'why' the younger generation in Tomohon perceives and participates (or not) in the development of the creative economy, taking into account the specific social, cultural, and economic contexts in the area. To gather rich and comprehensive data, this study will employ a series of complementary data collection techniques (triangulation).

The primary technique will be in-depth interviews *with* purposively selected key informants, including young people who are both active and inactive in the creative economy, village officials, tourism village managers, MSMEs, and representatives from the Tourism Office and related stakeholders. These interviews will explore their perceptions, the forms of participation that have and have not been carried out, as well as the driving and inhibiting factors they perceive. In addition, the study will conduct participant observation to directly observe the dynamics of creative economy activities and the interactions of young people within them, as well as documentation studies to examine secondary data such as village profiles, activity reports, and related policies. All collected data will be analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of three activity flows: data reduction (summarizing, selecting the main points), data presentation (organizing information in the form of narrative text or matrix), and conclusion drawing and verification. To ensure the credibility and validity of the research results, triangulation of data sources and methods, extended observations, and *member checking* will be carried out to ensure that the researcher's interpretation is in accordance with the participants' understanding.

DISCUSSION

1. Young Generation's Perception of Creative Economy Potential in Tomohon City

The younger generation's perception of the creative economy potential in Tomohon City is formed through a complex psychological process, involving the reception of information from the surrounding environment and subjective evaluation of various stimuli they receive. As stated by Robbins (2003, pp. 124-130), perception is a person's impression, response, view, or understanding of an object outside the individual, which is formed through two main indicators: reception—namely the functioning of the senses to capture stimuli from outside—and evaluation—where the stimuli that have been captured are then subjectively assessed by the individual. In the context of Tomohon, the younger generation receives various stimuli related to the creative economy through their direct experience witnessing the Tomohon International Flower Festival (TIFF), media coverage of the achievements of the tourist village, and their interaction with the creative ecosystem that is starting to form in the city.

Data shows that TIFF 2024 successfully welcomed more than 300,000 visitors, with an economic turnover reaching more than IDR 92 billion, equivalent to US\$5.6 million. Tourism Minister Widiyanti Putri Wardhana emphasized that TIFF has created a *multiplier effect* that has a direct impact on the community, involving micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), artisans, culinary actors, and transportation and accommodation services. This phenomenon has become a strong stimulus for Tomohon's younger generation to perceive the creative economy as a promising sector. However, this perception is not formed uniformly across all youth groups. Research on youth perceptions in Tumatangtang Village, South Tomohon District, shows that young people have diverse perceptions about the use of social media as a means of self-development and communication, indicating that the level of digital literacy and access to information also influences how young people view the potential of the creative economy. One important indicator that strengthens the positive perception of the younger generation towards the potential of the creative economy is the recognition of the achievement of Kakaskasen Dua Village as the winner of the 2023 Indonesian Tourism Village Award (ADWI). The village, located between Mount Lokon and Mount Mahawu, successfully won 5th place in the 2023 ADWI in the Institutional and CHSE categories, making it the only village in North Sulawesi to be included in this

prestigious event. This success not only brings pride to the local community but also forms the perception among the younger generation that their village has nationally recognized tourism and creative economy potential. Sandiaga Uno, the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy at that time, even provided assistance in the form of laptops and printers to Kakaskasen Dua Tourism Village as a form of tangible support, further strengthening the young generation's belief that this sector is receiving serious attention from the central government. However, the younger generation's perception of the creative economy's potential is also colored by contrasting social realities. Unemployment data in Tomohon City reveals that 88 percent of the city's unemployed are categorized as youth, with the number of openly unemployed reaching 5,418 and the number of unemployed youth reaching 4,756. The Deputy Mayor of Tomohon, Syerly A. Sompotan, emphasized that the strategic role of youth cannot be ignored, as they possess diverse talents that, if developed, would make a significant contribution to development. The irony between the enormous potential of the creative economy and the high youth unemployment rate creates an ambiguous perception among the younger generation: on the one hand, they see great opportunities, but on the other, they face the reality that not all young people are able to access and utilize these opportunities. This aligns with research findings on digital transformation in the three main creative economy subsectors in Tomohon—culinary, handicrafts, and fashion—which show that digitalization has great potential but its implementation still faces obstacles such as low digital literacy, limited infrastructure, and data security risks.

The perception of the younger generation is also shaped through their involvement in creative platforms facilitated by the city government. Tomohon Creative Space (TCS), located in the Anugerah Hall Complex, is one such space designed as an open platform for the creative community in Tomohon City to express themselves and collaborate. TCS Manager, William Martinus, explained that this space was created so that young people can channel their creativity, from live acoustic music to creative industry-based MSMEs, with daily thematic activities such as Mondays for the dance community and Tuesdays for fine arts. Mayor Carol JA Senduk firmly expressed his appreciation for the initiatives of Tomohon's youth who continue to encourage the creative industry, affirming the government's full support for the development of young people's creativity. The existence of this creative space is an important stimulus that shapes the positive perception of the younger generation that the government is serious about developing the creative economy ecosystem and providing space for their participation. The Ministry of Creative Economy also recognizes the enormous potential of Tomohon's youth. In a meeting with the Tomohon City Government, the Ministry assessed that Tomohon's youth are actively developing various creative economy subsectors, including culinary, fashion, and digital content, supported by community initiatives. However, the Ministry also acknowledged that they still need support for broader and more sustainable development. The youth's perception of Tomohon's creative economy potential is thus inextricably linked to the availability of institutional support, access to training and capital, and the space for them to experiment and develop their creativity. The greater the support they perceive, the more positive their perception of the sector's potential as a path to their economic future.

2. Level and Form of Participation of the Young Generation in the Development of the Creative Economic Ecosystem

The participation of the younger generation in the development of the creative economy ecosystem in Tomohon City can be seen from various dimensions, ranging from participation in decision-making, activity implementation, monitoring, to program evaluation. As stated by Keith Davis, participation is a person's mental and emotional involvement in achieving goals and sharing responsibility for them. In the context of youth, participation includes active and meaningful involvement carried out voluntarily to achieve predetermined goals. In Tomohon, the form of youth participation is manifested in various activities, ranging from participation in international-scale events to the management of community-based creative spaces.

One of the most tangible forms of participation is the involvement of the younger generation in organizing the Tomohon International Flower Festival (TIFF). TIFF, which has been included in the 100 Kharisma Event Nusantara (KEN) since 2018, has become an effective promotional event to introduce the tourism, trade, investment, and floriculture potential of Tomohon City. The Head of the Tomohon City Tourism Office, Yudhistira Siwu, stated that TIFF's participation in the 2024 KEN Festival is the most beautiful gift for the people of Tomohon City. The involvement of the younger generation in TIFF is not only limited to the committee, but also extends to participation as MSMEs who reap benefits from this annual event. Tomohon MSMEs admit that they reap significant profits from TIFF 2024, which is a positive effect of the event. This shows that the participation of the younger generation in the creative economy has had a real and measurable economic impact.

However, the level of youth participation still faces significant challenges, especially in the context of developing tourism villages. Kakaskasen Dua Village, despite its great potential in the tourism and creative economy sectors, still faces a number of challenges, including strengthening the digital capacity of the community and MSMEs, sustainable tourism management, increasing village promotion, preserving local culture, and involving the younger generation in village development. The fact that external intervention is still needed through the Genera-Z Berbakti 2026 program—which brings together students from the University of Indonesia and Binus University to formulate empowerment programs for Kakaskasen Dua Village—indicates that the participation of local youth is not yet optimal and still requires external stimulation.

The Genera-Z Berbakti program itself is both a reflection and a critique of the current level of youth participation. The KATALIS team from the University of Indonesia carries three main programs: Artha-Floria, a workshop on eco-print products and environmentally friendly packaging, Nature Experience, which focuses on developing wellness tourism, and the creation of a tourism village website with an interactive story map feature. Meanwhile, the AKSARA team from Binus University raises the issue of cultural regeneration, the low economic value of MSME products, and limited promotion as their main focus, by offering solutions in the form of the Youth Cultural Initiative, the Matuari Joint Cluster for MSME mentoring, and the Minaesa Platform as an integrative digital platform. The presence of these external programs shows that the participation of local youth in overcoming existing challenges is still limited, so the role of external parties is needed to encourage and facilitate their involvement.

On the other hand, the city government has strived to increase youth participation through various training and empowerment programs. The Tomohon City Government regularly holds entrepreneurship training for youth to ensure they have access to training and mentoring. The Mayor of Tomohon even officially opened digital marketing training and launched an online platform for youth MSMEs as concrete steps by the government to open access and opportunities for young entrepreneurs to thrive in the digital era. The creative hub program is also a flagship program designed to provide skilled labor training, entrepreneurship, and access to capital for young entrepreneurs. These efforts demonstrate the city government's recognition of the importance of youth participation and its commitment to creating an ecosystem that supports their involvement. Youth participation is also evident through independent community initiatives. The Tomohon Creative Space, which houses at least four local MSMEs, demonstrates that young people are not simply waiting for government programs but are also taking the initiative to create spaces for their creativity. The Ministry of Creative Economy acknowledges that young people in Tomohon are already operating independently, but still need support for broader and more sustainable development. Participation in youth institutions and organizations is also evident, with the Tomohon National Youth Committee (KNPI) supporting the TIFF and emphasizing that youth involvement is crucial in building Tomohon's image as an open and creative city of flowers.

3. Factors Supporting the Involvement of the Young Generation

Various factors support Tomohon's young generation in participating in the development of the creative economy ecosystem. The most dominant motivating factor is the economic potential and income opportunities offered by this sector. TIFF 2024, which recorded an economic turnover of over IDR 92 billion, is clear evidence that the creative economy can drive the local economy. Tourism Minister Widiyanti Putri Wardhana emphasized that TIFF has created a *multiplier effect* that directly impacts the community, going beyond simply attracting visitors to the festival area. The MSMEs that reaped significant profits at TIFF serve as a concrete example for the younger generation that involvement in the creative economy can provide significant economic rewards. This economic incentive is a key driver for young people to enter the creative sector, whether as entrepreneurs, artists, or other creative workers. The second contributing factor is pride in local culture and a desire to preserve cultural heritage. Kakaskasen Dua Village, known as the largest flower center in Tomohon and possessing a rich, authentic local culture and history, is a source of pride for the younger generation. The Village's success in achieving 5th place in the 2023 ADWI (Institutional and Health and Safety) categories further strengthens this sense of pride. The Youth Cultural Initiative program offered by the AKSARA Team from Binus University aims to form a community of young cultural preservers, demonstrating that cultural regeneration is a concern aligned with the young generation's internal motivation to maintain local identity. The enthusiasm of the community, especially mothers and the younger generation, to learn batik as a home-based business opportunity also reflects the drive to preserve and develop local wisdom through the creative economy. The third supporting factor is the availability of space and platforms for expressing and developing creativity. Tomohon Creative Space, designed as an open platform for the creative community, is a significant driving factor. Mayor Carroll Senduk firmly expressed his full

support for the development of creativity among the younger generation, sending a strong signal that the government is providing space and real support for the advancement of MSMEs and local creative communities. The creative hub program, one of the flagship programs of the Tomohon City Government for 2025-2030, also provides hope for the younger generation that adequate infrastructure will be available to develop their creative businesses. The availability of physical space and institutional support are important factors motivating young people to get involved, as they feel valued and supported by the government. The fourth supporting factor is the availability of training and capacity building programs offered by the government and various stakeholders. The Tomohon City Government regularly holds entrepreneurship training for youth, digital marketing training, and the launch of an online platform for youth-focused MSMEs. This training aims to equip young people with the skills to utilize digital technology in the business world and develop a strong and innovative entrepreneurial mindset. The Deputy Mayor of Tomohon emphasized the need to develop youth entrepreneurship to encourage economic independence. These programs provide the practical skills young people need to succeed in the creative economy, while also building their confidence to start and grow businesses. The fifth supporting factor is the recognition and appreciation from the government and the community for the contributions of the younger generation. Mayor Carroll Senduk expressed his appreciation for the initiatives of Tomohon's youth who continue to encourage the growth of the creative industry. The Head of the Tomohon City Tourism Office, Yudhistira Siwu, emphasized that youth support is crucial to the success of long-term tourism development. This recognition provides a sense of ownership and responsibility for the younger generation to continue contributing to regional development. Indonesia's Youth Development Index (IPP), recorded at 56.33 percent, also serves as a reminder that there is still room to improve the quality of youth development, including in the context of the creative economy, which in turn can serve as additional motivation for the younger generation to become more actively involved.

4. Factors Inhibiting the Involvement of the Young Generation

On the other hand, several factors hinder the involvement of the younger generation in developing the creative economy ecosystem in Tomohon City. The first and most fundamental obstacle is low digital literacy and limited technological capacity. Research on digital transformation in three key creative economy subsectors in Tomohon revealed that although digitalization has significant potential to strengthen the creative economy sector, its implementation still faces obstacles such as low digital literacy, limited infrastructure, and data security risks. This is a serious obstacle considering that the modern creative economy relies heavily on digital technology for marketing, distribution, and product development. Kakaskasen Dua Village itself still needs to strengthen the digital capacity of its community and MSMEs, a key challenge. These limitations make it difficult for the younger generation to access broader markets and capitalize on the opportunities offered by digital platforms.

The second obstacle is limited access to capital and financial resources. Although the creative hub program promises access to capital for young entrepreneurs, the reality on the ground shows that many young people still face obstacles in obtaining business capital. Lack of access to formal financial institutions, limited collateral, and limited knowledge of financial management hinder young people from starting or developing businesses in the creative sector. The Deputy Mayor of Tomohon highlighted that developing youth entrepreneurship is crucial for encouraging economic independence given the high unemployment rate. However, without adequate access to capital, these efforts will be difficult to achieve. The regional leadership candidate pair, Miky-Cherly, even launched an entrepreneurship training program and provided access to capital to create more jobs through the development of entrepreneurship and the creative industry, indicating that the issue of access to capital is indeed a serious concern.

The third obstacle is the lack of supporting infrastructure for the creative economy. Research on creative economy-based tourism in Tomohon City revealed that the lack of a Creative Hub building to accommodate economic and creative activities is one of the obstacles. Although the Tomohon Creative Space has been established as a platform for the creative community, its capacity is still limited and only accommodates at least four local MSMEs. This limited infrastructure makes it difficult for young people to access adequate facilities to develop their creative products, collaborate with other creative actors, or exhibit their work to the public. The development of a creative hub, planned to be centered in the Alfa Omega Tower area, is expected to address this obstacle, but its implementation is currently still in the planning stage. The fourth obstacle is the lack of awareness and understanding among young people about the potential and opportunities of the creative economy. Although TIFF has been running for many years and has had a significant economic impact, not all young people understand how they can get involved and benefit from this sector. The Genera-Z Berbakti 2026 program, which brought together students from outside the region to formulate solutions

for the development of Kakaskasen Dua Village, indicates that there is still a gap between existing potential and the understanding of local young people on how to optimize it. The lack of socialization and education about the creative economy among young people prevents them from realizing their important role in developing tourism villages and creative ecosystems. This is in line with the findings that the paradigm in the social category indicates the need for recognition or appreciation of youth potential, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The fifth obstacle is the high youth unemployment rate, which creates a cycle of poverty and despair. Data shows that 88 percent of the unemployed in Tomohon are young people, with the number of unemployed youth reaching 4,756 out of a total of 5,418 openly unemployed. This high unemployment rate is not only an economic problem, but also a psychological one that hinders the motivation and confidence of the younger generation to engage in the creative economy. Many young people may have lost hope and no longer believe they can succeed through entrepreneurship or creative careers. The Deputy Mayor of Tomohon emphasized that young people possess diverse talents that, if developed, would make a significant contribution to development. However, without appropriate intervention to address unemployment, these talents will remain hidden and untapped.

The sixth obstacle is the ongoing need for institutional strengthening and coordination between stakeholders. The Tomohon City Government, along with the Ministry of Creative Economy, is currently discussing strengthening the creative economy ecosystem based on regional needs, including decorator training, access to financing for creative economy actors, the development of creative hubs, and creative economy institutions at the regional level. However, this process is still ongoing and has not been fully implemented. The lack of coordination between the government, the private sector, creative communities, and educational institutions means that existing programs are not always well-targeted or well-integrated. This prevents young people from receiving comprehensive and sustainable support in developing their creative businesses. Weak institutions also make advocacy for young people's interests in the creative economy less effective, resulting in policies that do not always reflect their needs and aspirations.

4.5 Implications of Findings for the Development of the Creative Economy Ecosystem in Tomohon

The findings on the perceptions, participation, motivations, and barriers experienced by young people have important implications for the development of the creative economy ecosystem in Tomohon City. First, systematic efforts are needed to improve the digital literacy of young people through sustainable and affordable training. The Mayor of Tomohon has initiated this step through digital marketing training and the launch of an online platform for youth MSMEs. However, these efforts need to be expanded and tailored to the specific needs of each creative economy subsector. Training should encompass not only technical skills in technology use, but also an understanding of digital marketing strategies, e-commerce management, and cybersecurity.

Second, access to capital needs to be facilitated through youth-friendly financing schemes. Creative hub programs that promise access to capital for young entrepreneurs need to be implemented concretely by involving financial institutions, both banking and non-banking. Community-based financing schemes, such as youth cooperatives or revolving funds, can be an alternative for youth who lack access to formal banking. Local governments can also facilitate partnerships between creative youth and investors or corporations interested in supporting the creative economy.

Third, the infrastructure supporting the creative economy needs to be implemented immediately. The development of a creative hub, planned to be centered in the Alfa Omega Tower area, must be a priority, as the availability of adequate creative space will encourage collaboration, innovation, and the growth of the overall creative ecosystem. A creative hub serves not only as a physical space but also as a center for training, business incubation, and the promotion of creative products. The local government can learn from the success of Tomohon Creative Space, which has become a platform for the creative community to develop a larger and more comprehensive creative hub model.

Fourth, educational programs and outreach on the creative economy need to be integrated into both formal and non-formal education curricula. Young people need to be introduced to the concept of the creative economy from an early age so they have a good understanding of the opportunities and challenges it presents. Programs like Genera-Z Berbakti 2026, which involve students in community service, can serve as a model for collaboration between universities, the government, and the community in developing a creative ecosystem. Partnerships with universities can also assist in research, product development, and program evaluation.

Fifth, addressing youth unemployment must be a priority in regional development policies. With 88 percent of unemployed people in Tomohon coming from among young people, developing the creative economy cannot be separated from job creation efforts. The local government needs to integrate unemployment alleviation programs with

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creative economy development, for example through internship programs in the creative industry, incentives for creative companies that employ young people, or youth entrepreneurship programs with intensive mentoring. The Deputy Mayor of Tomohon has emphasized the need to develop youth entrepreneurship to encourage economic independence, and this must be realized through concrete and measurable policies.

, institutional strengthening and coordination among stakeholders need to be continuously improved. The Tomohon City Government, along with the Ministry of Creative Economy, has initiated discussions on strengthening the creative economy ecosystem based on regional needs. However, this process requires the involvement of more stakeholders, including creative communities, MSMEs, academics, and the younger generation themselves. Regular dialogue forums between creative youth and the government can provide a platform for expressing aspirations, providing input, and evaluating existing programs. Strong institutions will ensure that policies are responsive to the needs of the younger generation and that the creative economy ecosystem can develop sustainably.

Finally, there needs to be greater recognition and appreciation for the contributions of young people to the creative economy. Mayor Carroll Senduk has set a good example by recognizing the initiatives of Tomohon's youth. This kind of recognition needs to be institutionalized, for example through an annual creative competition, incentives for outstanding young creatives, or official government recognition of their contributions. This recognition will not only motivate young people to continue contributing but will also attract more young people to become involved in the creative economy. In this way, the creative economy ecosystem in Tomohon City can grow into a driving force for inclusive and sustainable economic development, with young people as its key actors.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Youth Perception: The youth's perception of Tomohon's creative economic potential is ambiguous, because on the one hand they see great opportunities from the success of TIFF and ADWI, but on the other hand they are faced with the reality of the high youth unemployment rate which has reached 88 percent.
2. Level and Form of Participation: The participation of the younger generation in Tomohon's creative economy ecosystem is still not optimal because it is limited to physical involvement in events and independent communities, without being balanced by a strategic role in decision-making for the development of sustainable tourism villages.
3. Supporting factors: The involvement of the younger generation is driven by five main factors, namely the potential for economic income, pride in local culture, the availability of creative space, capacity training programs, and recognition and appreciation from local governments.
4. Inhibiting Factors: The involvement of the younger generation is hampered by six critical factors, namely low digital literacy, limited access to capital, minimal supporting infrastructure, lack of understanding of opportunities, high unemployment rates, and weak institutional coordination between stakeholders.

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