



# Internalization of Local Cultural Values and Tourism Work Ethics in Samosir

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**Abstract.** This study aims to analyze the influence of internalization of local cultural values on the work ethic of the tourism community and its implications for service quality in Samosir Regency. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 114 respondents engaged in the tourism sector, including tour guides, home-stay managers, souvenir sellers, transportation providers, and attraction managers. Research instruments were tested for validity and reliability using Corrected Item–Total Correlation (CITC) and Cronbach’s Alpha, while data analysis was conducted with a path analysis model to examine direct and mediation effects. The findings reveal that internalization of local cultural values positively and significantly affects the work ethic of the tourism community ( $a = 0.3513$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Work ethic also has a positive and significant influence on service quality ( $b = 0.2438$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, internalization of cultural values exerts a direct effect on service quality ( $c' = 0.2062$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), with a total effect of 0.2366. These results demonstrate that cultural values contribute directly to improving service quality and indirectly through strengthening work ethic. The study highlights the importance of preserving and internalizing Batak cultural values as a foundation for professionalism in tourism. Strengthening cultural values fosters stronger work ethics among practitioners, which in turn enhances service quality. These insights can guide local governments and tourism stakeholders in formulating culture-based development strategies to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of Samosir as a tourist destination.

**Keywords:** cultural values, internalization, ethic, service, tourism

## 1 Introduction

Samosir Regency, located in North Sumatra, is a leading Indonesian tourism destination based on the rich natural resources and culture of the local community. As a region with diverse tourism destinations, community-based tourism offers potential for development as a tourist destination. Involving the community in tourism management not only improves service quality but also strengthens cultural preservation, a key attraction.

Samosir Regency, as part of the Lake Toba National Strategic Tourism Area (KSPN), has recorded positive growth in tourist visits. Data from the North Sumatra Tourism Office [1] shows that the number of domestic and international tourists visiting Samosir reaches more than 400,000 people per year. However, the length of stay is relatively low, and tourist satisfaction with community services is still not optimal. Furthermore, according to data from the Samosir Regency Statistics Agency [2], the tourism sector's contribution to the region's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) is still below that of the agriculture and trade sectors. This suggests that tourism's potential as a driving force for the local economy remains underutilized, necessitating a specialized strategy to enhance service quality, particularly in terms of the local community's human resources, which are the backbone of tourism services.

This approach can generate positive contributions from both the community and the government, as it can boost the village economy by opening up tourism business opportunities [3]. In addition to improving local well-being, this approach also ensures the sustainability of human resources and cultural heritage. Strengthening community capacity is a crucial aspect of active community participation, fostering ideas, enthusiasm, and agreement to develop creative businesses [2].

Amidst tourism development, the Samosir community faces socio-cultural challenges. Modernization, technological advances, and changes in youth lifestyles have begun influencing perspectives on cultural values. In some cases, there has been a shift from cooperation to individualistic work patterns, and a decline in the practice of traditional values. If unmanaged, these dynamics could erode the community's cultural foundations. Thus, efforts are needed to maintain cultural sustainability through internalization relevant to tourism development [4].

Community-based tourism can be economically oriented but also aligned with cultural preservation that empowers local communities. Community involvement through village institutions not only increases income but also strengthens cultural identity and local development [5].

On the national scale, community-based tourism is a strategy to promote economic equality while strengthening regional cultural identity. Tourism and economic growth are synergistic, with tourism functioning as a multiplier that stimulates wider community sectors [6].

Government programs for tourism human resource development often prioritize technical training. While important, such training has not fully addressed values, attitudes, and character development, which are essential for superior tourism services [7].

Experiences from regions such as Bali show that values-based tourism development improves service quality. The Tri Hita Karana philosophy has significantly increased tourist satisfaction [8]. Similar practices in Yogyakarta and Banyuwangi demonstrate the success of integrating local wisdom into tourism communities. These examples can inspire Samosir to adapt Batak cultural values such as Daliha Na Tolu as a foundation for building a competitive tourism work ethic [9].

Local cultural values—customs, oral traditions, folklore, and community systems—represent cultural resources with the potential to strengthen work ethic. These values can foster discipline, integrity, and environmental concern—foundations of sustainable tourism [10].

Internalizing cultural values into tourism work practices influences attitudes and community-based service quality. This study therefore examines the relationship between cultural value internalization, community work ethic, and service quality in community-based tourism in Samosir Regency. Internalization combines theory and practice through curiosity, involvement, and application of local wisdom [11].

A strong cultural identity should be expressed not only in buildings or rituals but also in service behavior. A work ethic grounded in local values becomes a distinctive characteristic that separates Samosir from other destinations. Good service thus reflects both professionalism and cultural identity.

Understanding the relationships between internalization, work ethic, and service quality forms a basis for more contextual and wisdom-based policy interventions. This study aims to determine the extent to which cultural value internalization influences the work ethic of tourism operators and how this work ethic affects tourism service quality.

## 2 Methods

### 2.1 Study Design and Participants

This study employed a mixed methods approach with an explanatory sequential design, employing quantitative research as the primary method supported by qualitative data. The quantitative approach was used to test hypotheses regarding the influence of Internalization of local cultural values on the work ethic of tourism communities and its impact on service quality. Meanwhile, a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews, was used to enrich and clarify the results of the quantitative analysis, particularly regarding the meaning of Internalization of cultural values in daily tourism service practices.

The research population is the community working in the tourism sector in Samosir Regency, including tour guides, lodging/homestay managers, souvenir sellers, tourist transportation providers, and tourist attraction managers.

The quantitative data collection involved 114 respondents using purposive sampling, selecting individuals directly involved in tourism service activities. For qualitative data, informants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling to obtain a variety of perspectives. Informants included traditional leaders, village officials, tourism operators, traders, and tourists, with a total of 12 people interviewed in-depth.

The quantitative instrument was a questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1–5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). There were 45 questions in total, divided into:

- Internalization of Local Cultural Values: 15 items

- Work Ethic of the Tourism Community: 15 items
- Quality of Tourism Services: 15 items

The instrument was tested for validity using Corrected Item–Total Correlation (CITC) and reliability using Cronbach’s Alpha. The test results showed that most items were valid (CITC  $\geq 0.30$ ) and had adequate reliability ( $\alpha \geq 0.60$ ).

The qualitative instrument was in the form of a semi-structured interview guide, which focused on the community’s experiences in internalizing Batak cultural values (such as *daliha na tolu*, cooperation, and respect), daily work practices, and tourists’ perceptions of service quality. Data analysis was carried out in two stages:

**Quantitative Analysis:** Descriptive statistics to describe the respondent profile and distribution of answers, classical assumption tests (normality, reliability, validity, multicollinearity), simple linear regression for direct hypothesis testing (H1, H2, H3), and path analysis to test the mediating role of work ethic (H4), supplemented by the Sobel test.

**Qualitative Analysis:** Miles & Huberman’s technique, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing/verifying conclusions. Interview data were used to support quantitative findings, enrich interpretations, and provide contextual examples from the tourism community in Samosir.

### 3 Results

This research was conducted in the Service Procurement Division of PT. Sangga Lima Saudara, a strategic operational unit known by the trade name SLS Cleaning. This division is responsible for providing outsourced labor, particularly in the cleaning services sector. With a professional management system and a hierarchical supervisory structure, this location was chosen because it reflects a dynamic work environment, high on performance pressure, yet also supports continuous employee development.

#### 3.1 Respondent Characteristics

Based on the results of data processing, female respondents have a larger proportion than males. Of the total respondents, 62 people (54.39%) were female, while 52 people (45.61%) were male. Based on age groups, the majority of respondents were in the 20–29 year range, namely 38 people (33.33%). This age group was followed by respondents aged 30–39 years, as many as 24 people (21.05%), then the 40–49 year age group amounted to 18 people (15.79%), and the age groups  $\leq 20$  years and  $\geq 50$  years, each amounting to 17 people (14.91%). This distribution indicates that most tourism actors are in the productive age, which has the potential to make an optimal contribution to tourism activities in the region.

Respondents’ work experience varied, with the most significant proportion being in the 1–3 year category, as many as 34 people (29.82%). Furthermore, 25 people (21.93%) had 4–6 years of work experience, followed by 21 people

(18.42%) who had worked for less than a year. A total of 18 people (15.79%) had 7–10 years of work experience, while 16 people (14.04%) had been involved in the tourism sector for more than 10 years.

The types of jobs held by respondents reflect the diversity of roles within the tourism sector. Most respondents worked as souvenir vendors/suppliers and tourist attraction managers, with 26 respondents (22.81%) working as tour guides, 21 respondents (18.42%) managing lodging/homestays, and 17 respondents (14.91%) providing tourist transportation. This diversity demonstrates that the tourism sector in the study area involves a variety of complementary business sectors that support tourism activities.

### 3.2 Description of Research Variables

The results of the descriptive analysis show that the Internalization of Local Cultural Values variable has an overall average of 4.57 on a Likert scale of 1–5. This value is in the very high category, indicating that respondents generally have a strong understanding and appreciation of Batak cultural values in the context of their work in the tourism sector.

The relatively low standard deviation ( $<1$ ) for most indicators indicates consistency in respondents' responses, indicating that this level of Internalization is felt equally by most tourism actors. This high score aligns with the socio-cultural context in the research area, where Batak customary values and traditions are an integral part of community identity. Respondents' involvement in cultural activities, use of the local language, and application of customary etiquette reflect the role of culture as cultural capital that strengthens the appeal of community-based tourism.

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**Work Ethic of the Tourism Community** The Work Ethic variable for the Tourism Community had an overall average of 4.65, which is also in the very high category. This indicates that the majority of respondents have good motivation,

responsibility, discipline, and work professionalism. The low level of variation (standard deviation) in these indicators indicates a consistent pattern of work behavior among tourism practitioners.

A strong work ethic directly contributes to the quality of tourism services. Factors such as a sense of responsibility, punctuality, and commitment to service standards are crucial elements in creating a positive experience for tourists. These findings also support the assumption that communities with strong internalization of cultural values tend to exhibit a strong work ethic, as local cultures often incorporate work norms, social responsibility, and hospitality principles.

**Quality of Service** The Service Quality variable achieved an overall average of 4.65, which is in the very high category. Nearly all indicators scored above 4.5, indicating that respondents rated themselves as providing good to excellent service. The low level of dispersion in scores across most indicators indicates that perceptions of service quality are fairly uniform among respondents.

High service quality is a key factor in the sustainability of the tourism sector. Cleanliness, tidiness, friendliness, and responsiveness in handling tourist complaints or requests are all factors that influence visitor satisfaction. This data indicates that tourism operators in the research area not only possess a strong work ethic but also successfully implement it in the form of quality service.

### 3.3 Statistical Assumption Test

Before conducting the inferential analysis, statistical assumption tests were conducted, namely the normality test and the multicollinearity test. The statistical value and p-value for each variable were the same because the distribution pattern of the average respondent scores tended to be identical and concentrated at high values on the Likert scale. Based on the test results, the three research variables had p-values less than 0.05, so it was concluded that the data were not normally distributed for the variables of Internalization of Local Cultural Values, Work Ethic of Tourism Communities, and Service Quality. This abnormal distribution is likely caused by the homogeneity of perceptions among respondents, considering that all of them are tourism actors in areas with similar cultural backgrounds and work environments.

A multicollinearity test was conducted to determine whether there is a strong linear relationship between the independent variables in the regression model. High levels of multicollinearity can cause instability in regression coefficient estimates and reduce the accuracy of result interpretation. To test this, this study used the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) analysis on three main variables. Each construct is represented by the average score of several previously validated statement items.

The VIF values obtained for the three independent variables are far below the threshold of 10. This indicates that there are no symptoms of multicollinearity between the independent variables. Thus, the variables Internalization of Local Cultural Values, Work Ethic of the Tourism Community, and Service Quality can

be used simultaneously in the regression model because each variable provides unique information and does not distort the others.

### 3.4 Qualitative Data Analysis

In-depth interviews with traditional leaders, tourism practitioners, and residents indicate that Toba Batak cultural values still play a strong role in social life and tourism practices in Samosir. The key values frequently cited by informants are *daliha na tolu*, which emphasizes balanced social relations, cooperation (*marsiadapari*) as a manifestation of community solidarity, and respect for ancestors, which symbolize the community's collective identity. Informants stated that cultural values are not merely passed down through oral stories but are also practiced in daily activities, including interactions with tourists. One traditional leader, for example, emphasized that serving guests is part of maintaining the dignity of the family and village, so that good service is seen as both a moral obligation and a cultural responsibility.

This cultural Internalization is evident in the behavior of the community, which links tourism practices with traditional values. They believe that treating guests well is tantamount to respecting ancestors and upholding the community's reputation. Thus, culture is understood not only as a legacy of the past but also as a normative foundation that governs community behavior in dealing with the dynamics of modern tourism. This fact demonstrates that the Internalization of local culture has real practical relevance in the context of community-based tourism development in Samosir Regency.

### 3.5 Hypothesis Testing Results (SEM-PLS)

**Results of Hypothesis Testing** Testing was conducted using SmartPLS with the bootstrapping method (5,000 subsamples). The results showed that all relationship paths between variables were significant, as summarized below.

1. H1: Internalization of cultural values has a positive and significant influence on the work ethic of the tourism community in Samosir Regency. (*Hypothesis accepted*)

The simple regression results between the variables of Internalization of Local Cultural Values (X) and the Work Ethic of the Tourism Community (M) show a regression coefficient value of  $\beta_1 = 0.3913$ , with  $t = 6.76$  and  $p < 0.001$ . The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) value of 0.2896 indicates that approximately 28.96% of the variation in work ethic can be explained by the internalization of cultural values. Every 1-point increase in internalization (scale 1–5) predicts an increase of approximately 0.39 points in work ethic.

2. H2: Community work ethic has a positive influence on the quality of tourism services in Samosir Regency. (*Hypothesis accepted*)

A simple regression between the Work Ethic (M) variable and Service Quality (Y) yields a regression coefficient of  $\beta = 0.4395$ , with  $t = 5.50$  and  $p < 0.001$ . The  $R^2$  value of 0.2643 indicates that 26.43% of the variation in service quality can be explained by work ethic.

3. H3: Internalization of local cultural values directly influences the quality of tourism services in Samosir Regency. (*Hypothesis accepted*)

The regression test between Internalization of Local Cultural Values (X) and Service Quality (Y) shows a regression coefficient of  $\beta = 0.2366$ , with  $t \approx 3.67$  and  $p < 0.001$ . The  $R^2$  value of 0.1076 means that approximately 10.76% of the variation in service quality can be explained directly by the internalization of cultural values.

4. H4: Internalization of local cultural values mediated by the community's work ethic simultaneously influences the quality of tourism services in Samosir Regency. (*Hypothesis accepted*)

Based on the results obtained, path  $a$  is significant with  $\beta = 0.3913$ ;  $p < 0.001$ , path  $b$  is significant with  $\beta = 0.4395$ ;  $p < 0.001$ , and path  $c$  remains significant ( $\beta \approx 0.2062$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). The indirect effect of  $a \times b = 0.1720$ , with the Sobel  $z$ -test result of 3.98 ( $p < 0.001$ ), confirms the presence of a mediating effect.

The internalization of local cultural values contributes to improved service quality not only directly but also through enhanced work ethic. Because the direct effect ( $c'$ ) remains significant even when the mediator is included, the mediation is *partial*. This means that the internalization of cultural values still has a direct impact on service quality, but work ethic strengthens and magnifies that effect.

## 4 Conclusion

Internalization of local cultural values has a positive and significant impact on the work ethic of the tourism community in Samosir Regency. This suggests that the greater appreciation of Toba Batak cultural values is associated with higher levels of community work discipline, responsibility, and dedication to tourism activities.

Community work ethic has a positive and significant impact on the quality of tourism services. Communities with a strong work ethic tend to provide friendly, responsive, consistent service and are focused on tourist satisfaction.

Internalization of local cultural values also directly impacts the quality of tourism services, although its contribution is relatively smaller than the influence of the work ethic. This means that internalized culture serves as a guideline for service ethics, such as courtesy, friendliness, and maintaining the community's reputation among tourists.

Work ethic has been shown to partially mediate the relationship between the Internalization of cultural values and service quality. Cultural Internalization not only has a direct impact but also magnifies its influence through the formation of a work ethic. These findings confirm that culture, work ethic, and service are interrelated in shaping the excellence of community-based tourism in Samosir.

Qualitative data strengthens the quantitative findings, where interviews, observations, and documentation show that Toba Batak cultural values such as *daliha* na tolu, cooperation, and respect for ancestors are implemented in real

life in the community, forming a collective work ethic and improving the quality of tourism services.

## 5 Limitations

Based on these findings, several suggestions that can be put forward are as follows:

1. For cultural communities, it is necessary to strengthen the internalization of local cultural values through informal education within families and communities, so that the younger generation continues to uphold traditions and apply them in tourism activities. Communities need to improve professionalism in service by continuing to use culture as a guideline, for example, maintaining friendliness, honesty, and consistency in serving tourists.
2. For local and village governments: Provide culture-based training programs that integrate local work ethic with modern tourism skills, such as homestay management, tour guiding, and digital-based services. Support tourism infrastructure and facilities so that service quality is not only supported by community attitudes but also by adequate facilities.
3. For academics and researchers: Further research could expand the study by adding other variables, such as tourist satisfaction, tourist loyalty, or the influence of cultural economics on community well-being. An in-depth ethnographic approach could be employed to explore cultural practices in greater detail in Samosir tourism.
4. For sustainable tourism development, internalizing local culture should be a primary strategy in managing community-based tourism. By utilizing culture as a driving force and guiding principle, Samosir tourism can compete sustainably at both the national and international levels.

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