

Tourism Resilience and Sustainable Development: Evidence from Bali, Indonesia

Ida Bagus Putra Setiawan*

Tourism is a highly dynamic yet vulnerable sector, particularly in destinations with strong dependence on international travel. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed structural weaknesses in mass tourism systems and highlighted the urgent need for resilience-oriented development pathways. This study examines the relationship between tourism resilience and sustainable development in Bali, Indonesia, a destination significantly affected by global tourism disruptions. Adopting a qualitative descriptive research design, the study synthesizes peer-reviewed literature addressing tourism resilience across multiple analytical levels, including governance, community-based systems, and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). A thematic synthesis approach is employed to identify patterns of recovery, adaptation, and transformation within Bali's tourism system. The findings demonstrate that tourism resilience in Bali emerges from interconnected, multi-level processes rather than isolated interventions. Adaptive governance mechanisms enable flexible crisis management and policy learning, while community-based and culturally embedded institutions, such as the Subak system and tourism villages, strengthen social cohesion and environmental stewardship. At the economic level, the psychological and entrepreneurial resilience of MSMEs plays a crucial role in sustaining livelihoods and fostering innovation during prolonged crises. These dimensions collectively reinforce the social, environmental, and economic pillars of sustainable tourism development. Resilience should be understood not merely as a short-term recovery response but as a core principle of sustainable tourism development. Integrating adaptive governance, community empowerment, and business capacity-building is essential to reducing vulnerability and supporting long-term sustainability in highly tourism-dependent destinations such as Bali.

*Sanur Village Community
 ibsetiawan@gmail.com

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BACKGROUND

Tourism is recognized as one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy; nevertheless, it remains among the most fragile. Its human dependence mobility, views on security, environmental quality, and socio-cultural stability make tourism highly susceptible to external shocks, including natural disasters, health crises, and climate-related events. The COVID-19 pandemic starkly revealed these vulnerabilities, resulting in an unprecedented collapse of global tourism and exposing foundational flaws within mass tourism systems. Destinations with significant tourism dependency experienced acute economic contraction, social disruption, and institutional strain, pointing out the urgent need to seek improved resilience tourism development pathways.^{1,2}

Bali, Indonesia, serves as a paradigmatic example of both tourism exposure and recovery. Before the pandemic, Bali's economy was predominantly dependent on international tourism, which accounted for the majority of regional income and employment. The abrupt cessation of global travel caused considerable economic and social impacts, including broad job losses, business closures, and reduced household welfare. Recent studies contend that the pandemic acted as a critical stress test, exposing the risks of excessive dependence on tourism monoculture and limited economic diversification.^{3,4} These circumstances have increased academic and policy interest in tourism resilience as a framework for managing uncertainty and supporting lasting sustainability.

The concept related to resilience derives from the Latin term *resilio*, meaning "to spring back," and was originally developed in ecological and engineering

disciplines to describe a system's capacity to withstand disturbance and return to equilibrium.⁵ Over time, resilience theory has been extended to social, economic, and organizational contexts, focusing on the lack of only recovery as well as adaptation and transformation during continuing change.^{6,7} In current tourism scholarship, resilience is increasingly conceptualized as a multidimensional and dynamic process involving destinations, governance systems, businesses, and host communities.^{8,9}

Recent tourism research has further developed this conceptualization by positioning resilience as a fundamental element of sustainable tourism development. Ritchie and Jiang (2021) assert that resilient tourism destinations are characterized not by a simple return to pre-crisis conditions but by their ability to use crises as opportunities to restructure governance, diversify markets,

and improve community well-being. Similarly, Biggs et al. (2022) contend that tourism resilience is closely associated with adaptive capacity, social capital, and institutional learning, especially in destinations subject to recurrent shocks.¹⁰

In Bali, tourism resilience has become a primary focus for policy and research, given the island's ongoing exposure to multiple, overlapping pressures. In addition to pandemic-related disruptions, Bali contends with enduring issues such as environmental degradation, water scarcity, cultural commodification, and unequal economic benefits from tourism development. Empirical studies identify several dimensions concerning resilience within Bali's tourism system. For instance, Yasintha et al. (2022) analyse governmental resilience in managing tourism during the COVID-19 crisis, stressing the necessity of adjustable policy responses and inter-agency coordination.¹¹ Community-based resilience has also been assessed by traditional socio-ecological systems such as *Subak*, which illustrate the capacity of indigenous institutions to sustain livelihoods and maintain environmental balance.¹²

At the business and individual levels, recent research accentuates the significance of psychological and entrepreneurial resilience shown among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in tourism-dependent regions. Post-pandemic studies indicate that an adaptive mindset, innovation, and strong social support networks are critical factors influencing business survival and recovery.¹³ Additionally, the establishment of tourism villages and community-based tourism initiatives has been recognized as a plan to boost resilience via expanding income sources and increasing local participation in tourism governance.

Although the literature on tourism resilience is expanding, research in Bali and comparable destinations often remains fragmented or sector-specific, with separate focus on governance, community systems, or business adaptation. Such compartmentalized approaches may neglect the interrelation of tourism systems, where resilience arises via the interconnection among institutions, communities, environmental

resources, and economic forces. To tackle this limitation, the present study adopts an integrative perspective, striving to illustrate how multiple dimensions of toughness collectively bolster sustainable tourism development. By synthesizing insights from governance, community, and economic domains, this article seeks to promote a more holistic insight into tourism endurance in destinations with high tourism dependency.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design, using data on tourism endurance in Bali. A qualitative descriptive approach is well-suited for synthesizing diverse empirical findings and understanding contextual variations amid complicated social systems such as tourism destinations, where resilience is determined by the interactions among policy, community, and market actors.¹⁴ The study merges existing scholarly evidence to develop a comprehensive, multi-level understanding of tourism resilience. Data sources include peer-reviewed journal articles and empirical research studies focused on tourism endurance in Bali and similar tourism-dependent destinations. The literature selection prioritized studies that explicitly address resilience-related themes, such as crisis response, adaptive governance, community-based tourism, and business recovery. To ensure analytical detail and relevance, selected studies represent multiple analytical levels: (1) governmental and policy responses to tourism crises, (2) community-based and indigenous institutions, (3) micro, small, and medium-sized tourism enterprises, and (4) destination management systems and planning frameworks. Publications were chosen for their theoretical relevance, empirical rigor, and contextual relevance in line with the Bali tourism system. This multi-level framework promotes a holistic analysis related to resilience processes across institutional, social, and economic domains.^{15 16}

The data analysis implemented thematic synthesis, a qualitative method appropriate for integrating insights from several studies while continuing to hold contextual nuance.¹⁷ The analytical

process comprised three primary stages: (1) initial coding of resilience-related concepts, (2) development of descriptive themes, and (3) generation of higher-order analytical themes. Special emphasis was placed on observing patterns of adaptation, recovery, and transformation within tourism systems, as these processes are central to contemporary resilience theory.¹⁸ The framework merges perspectives from institutional resilience theory, community resilience, and sustainable tourism. Institutional resilience concepts emphasize the capacity of institutions and tourism institutions to foresee, absorb, and adapt to shocks (McManus, 2008, as cited in Suryaningtyas, 2020).^{19 20} At the community level, resilience is understood as the ability of social systems to maintain core functions and shared prosperity in the midst of difficulties, drawing on pioneering studies by Garmezy (1991) and subsequent community resilience scholarship. These perspectives are complemented by sustainable tourism principles, particularly the triple bottom line framework, which evaluates resilience outcomes across social-cultural, environmental, and economic dimensions.^{21,22} Through findings across these conceptual lenses, this paper attempts to identify interconnections between institutional capacity, community adaptation, and sustainable development outcomes. The qualitative descriptive and thematic synthesis strategy facilitates analytical generalization rather than statistical inference, allowing broader conceptual awareness of tourism endurance in highly tourism-dependent destinations such as Bali.²³

DISCUSSION

The evidence shows that tourism capacity for recovery in Bali is determined by interconnected, multi-level mechanisms involving institutional governance, community-based systems, and individual economic actors. These dimensions interact dynamically, collectively influencing the adaptive capacity of the tourism system. This is consistent with contemporary resilience scholarship, which conceptualizes destinations as complex socio-ecological systems where resilience emerges from cross-scale

interactions more than than isolated actors or polAt the institutional level, the case of Gianyar Regency demonstrates in what way adaptive governance supports destination persistence during crises. The phased response, which included mobility restrictions, health protocol enforcement, gradual reopening, and market re-engagement, exemplifies key features of enterprise resilience such as learning, flexibility, and adaptive capacity. Yasintha et al. (2022) emphasize that this staged crisis management enabled local governments to coordinate public health priorities with economic recovery, consistent with post-pandemic tourism governance research that highlights adjustable policy cycles beyond rigid recovery models (Ritchie & Jiang, 2021; OECD, 2022).²⁴ This evidence emphasizes that institutional resilience is not only responsive but entails ongoing adaptation to changing risk environments. landscapes.

At the community level, the example of *Subak* Pulagan draws attention to the importance of cultural and symbolic capital in improving tourism resilience. The *Subak* system, designated as a UNESCO World Heritage cultural environment, enabled local communities to utilize traditional governance arrangements and cultural legitimacy to address resource conflicts related to water scarcity and tourism growth. This is consistent with recent community resilience literature, which stresses the value of endogenous resources such as cultural identity, social cohesion, and collective norms in protecting adaptive capacity under outside pressures.^{25,26} Rather than simply resisting change, *Subak* Pulagan illustrates how cultural institutions can serve as adaptive approaches that balance tourism advancement with ecological. Economic resilience is further supported at the micro level by individual psychological capacities, particularly among micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). A study by Pratama et al. (2025) in Bedugul indicates that self-efficacy and motivational resilience significantly affect entrepreneurs' ability to manage crisis-induced uncertainty. This finding is consistent with recent empirical research demonstrating that psychological strength, optimism, and problem-focused

coping approaches aid business survival and innovation in tourism-dependent regions.¹³ This evidence builds upon Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory by depicting how belief in personal capability fosters adaptive entrepreneurial behavior over prolonged crises. crises.

Apart from individual and organizational elements, community empowerment initiatives such as tourism village development in Penglipuran are essential for encouraging socio-cultural and environmental robustness. Such programs promote local participation, protect cultural values, and encourage environmentally responsible tourism practices, consequently enhancing community ownership of tourism development. Recent research emphasizes that community-based tourism enhances resilience via diversifying income sources, reinforcing local governance, and integrating sustainability principles within everyday practices.^{2,27} Cooperative governance mechanisms therefore act as a link between resilience and sustainability, making certain that recovery efforts do prevent the continuation of pre-crisis vulnerabilities.

Taken together, the results indicate that tourism resilience, along with sustainability are closely interrelated. Resilience supports sustainability by enabling tourism systems to absorb shocks, adapt to structural changes, and maintain long-term social cohesion, environmental health, and economic sustainability. Conversely, sustainability-oriented practices, including community empowerment, cultural conservation, and environmental management, reinforce resilience through reducing inherent susceptibilities. This interdependent relationship supports recent arguments that resilience should be regarded not as a temporary crisis response, but as a core principle for sustainable tourism development in destinations with high tourism dependency, such as Bali.^{10,28}

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that tourism resilience is a core foundation of sustainable tourism development, especially in destinations with high levels of tourism dependency, such as Bali. The findings show that

resilience does not result from a single intervention or actor, but emerges through the interconnected dynamics of multiple dimensions, encompassing adaptive governance structures, community-based cultural and social capital, psychological resilience exhibited by tourism business actors, and participatory empowerment processes at the local level. Together, these dimensions correspond closely with the social-cultural, environmental, and economic pillars of sustainable tourism, strengthening the interdependence between resilience and sustainability. This suggests that resilience functions more than simply a mechanism for short-term crisis recovery, but as a paradigm-shifting capacity that enables tourism systems to adapt, reorganize, and innovate in response to extended uncertainty and systemic shocks. Adaptive governance practices facilitate policy learning and institutional flexibility, while culturally embedded community institutions contribute to resource management and community cohesion. At the same time, the psychological strength and adaptive skills of micro, small, and medium-sized tourism enterprises play a decisive role in sustaining livelihoods and economic continuity during periods of disruption.

From a policy and managerial standpoint, enhancing tourism resilience necessitates integrated and future-oriented strategies that go beyond emergency response and incremental recovery measures. Policymakers and destination managers are advised to emphasize collaborative, multi-level governance arrangements, support community-based resource management based on local cultural values, and invest in competency enhancement activities that strengthen entrepreneurial skills, innovation, and psychological resilience exhibited by tourism stakeholders. These approaches are crucial for lowering structural vulnerability and encouraging sustained sustainability.

Further studies ought to advance resilience scholarship via the application of comparative and longitudinal methodologies. Investigating how resilience mechanisms evolve throughout different destinations, governance contexts, and types of crises would yield

a more thorough analysis of the temporal and spatial dynamics of tourism resilience. Longitudinal studies, in particular, might elucidate the manner in which adaptive capacities become institutionalized over time and how resilience contributes to transformative pathways toward more resilient and just tourism systems.

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