



Assessing Tourists' Perceptions of Bali's Sustainable Tourism Actions

Anak Agung Ayu Sri Upadewi^{1*}, Janne Cassandra Amanda Harum²,
Egrinadhean Frilyana Avis³, Hanugerah Kristiono Listiandre⁴, I Nyoman Arya
Kusuma Antara⁵

Politeknik Pariwisata Bali

Corresponding Author: Anak Agung Ayu Sri Upadewi gungayu0110@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the evaluation of tourist impressions was to assess Bali's levels of dedication to sustainable tourism principles in terms of ecological, social, economic, and environmental aspects. The purpose of this study was to identify how tourists' perceptions of the destination's sustainability performance and expectations relate to each other. 328 foreign visitors from different nations participated in the study, which used a quantitative approach via a questionnaire and was examined using the Gap Analysis method and Importance Performance Analysis. It is suggested that the findings of this study serve as both a reference for future in-depth research on other aspects of sustainability and as assessment material for tourism stakeholders creating a more comprehensive sustainability strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Substantial economic gains have come from the growth of the global tourist industry during the past 20 years, but social, cultural, and environmental aspects have recently encountered substantial challenges. Tourism is not only a major contributor to the global economy, but also a significant aspect of daily life for millions of people worldwide (Berbeka et al., 2024). Bali, one of Indonesia's most popular travel destinations, is well known for its stunning natural surroundings, vibrant culture, and distinctive spiritual legacy. Bali is very competitive in the worldwide market, as evidenced by the rise in both domestic and foreign visitor arrivals (Statistics Indonesia – Bali Province, 2023). However, success in sustainable destination management does not always follow the amount of visitors. Uncontrolled tourist inflows can expose tourism's negative side, contributing to both social and environmental problems, including harmful consequences (Lee, 2020; Segara, 2025)

Sustainable tourism is a strategic idea focusing on these issues by emphasizing the need to strike a balance between environmental preservation, economic growth, and the welfare of local communities. These perspectives can be incorporated into long-term viability assessment to create a more precise, adaptable, and successful tourism framework that benefits the area, society and also tourists (Porrás-bueno, 2024). Therefore, environmental conservation, cultural heritage preservation, and destination appeal enhancement should be the top priorities of tourism projects rather than just increasing visitor numbers (Putra et al., 2024). This strategy incorporates the social responsibility of both industry stakeholders and visitors themselves, as well as the responsible management of natural resources and active community participation (Saputra, 2024).

Tourists are essential in determining the successful implementation of sustainability principles because they are the direct consumers of destination goods and services. As primary consumers, tourists play an essential role in the tourism supply chain by initiating and sustaining the flow of services and experiences (Atasoy & Eren, 2023). Moreover, their contribution and choices directly influence the effectiveness of sustainability efforts, as the successful implementation of sustainability actions in destinations strongly depends on tourists' attitudes and behaviors, which are influenced by their environmental norms and awareness (Wang et al., 2021). Diverse demographic groups experience and understand sustainability measures helps shape more responsive and equitable tourism planning (Karsokiene et al., 2025). That is why the quality of destination management can also be reflected in how visitors view and react to on-site sustainability initiatives.

Tourists' perceptions of a place are impacted not just by its unique characteristics but also by the way the management handles any problems. Tourists occasionally demonstrate an appreciation for local values, but they also voice discontent with poor management of ecological issues, such as environmental harm and the absence of eco-friendly activities (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023). However, tourists' strong awareness for environmental issues makes them more critical of the cleanliness, waste management, and preservation of

natural resources in tourist places (Dolnicar, 2020). The behaviors, preferences, and expectations of visitors directly influence the demand for sustainable tourism practices (da Silva et al., 2024). Based on these publications, it may be argued that visitor feedback is crucial for assessing how effectively tourism management is performing and for identifying travel destinations that prioritize social, economic, cultural, or environmental sustainability.

In light of this context, the study's objective is to assess, through the opinions of international tourists, how far Bali has embraced sustainable tourism. Environmental, social, cultural, economic, and ecological sustainability are the five primary dimensions of sustainability that are the subject of this study. It is anticipated that this study will provide an objective evaluation of Bali's sustainability implementation and act as a resource for stakeholders creating a more flexible and long-term focused tourism strategy by comparing visitors' expectations of sustainable practices with the reality that exists on reality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perception

The cognitive process of perception is created when information are absorbed through the five senses and then processed internally by the person. In addition to being sensory, this process also entails interpretation and judgment, which are impacted by social, cultural, and experiential background. (Nisa et al., 2023). A personal image of an object or situation is provided by perception, and this image may differ from the objective reality. (Sabarini et al., 2021) . Perception takes a significant impact in behavior since it shapes personal attitudes, which in turn affect the choices or behaviors made. In addition to reflecting what the senses pick up, perception is fundamental in determining how an individual reacts to their actions in relation to their surroundings.

Tourist

The existence tourist is a central element in tourism activities. According to Law Number 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism, people that travel to a certain location, either alone or with others, for leisure, self-improvement, or to learn about tourist sites within a specific time frame are referred to as tourists. This concept highlights that visitors participate in the social, cultural, and economic dynamics of the place they are visiting in addition to acting as consumers of tourism services. In reality, visitors are viewed as individuals who actively investigate and react to many dimensions of the travel experience (Nurinsari et al., 2020).

Tourism

Tourism is an activity supported by facilities and services from the community, business, and the government, as stated in Law Number 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism . Beyond only being a physical activity, tourism is acknowledged as a social phenomena that stems from people's demand for leisure, wellbeing, and beauty appreciation. Because of developments in the trade, manufacturing, and transportation sectors, this phenomena is expanding

in tandem with an increase in worldwide interactions. (Riani, 2021). Tourism should be understood in the same way through its sociological dimension, where tourists act as social actors whose behaviors and experiences are part of cultural norms, social structures, and power relations. This perspective highlights that tourism is not just about movement and consumption, but also about the negotiation of identity, social status, and intercultural encounters (Cohen & Cohen, 2019).

Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism is a component of sustainable development, which places an emphasis on wise resource management to satisfy present day travel expectations without undermining those of future generations (Sutarya et al., 2023). This idea emphasizes social and cultural responsibility in destination development in addition to environmental considerations. Thus, keeping the environment intact, honoring local traditions, and actively contributing to the sustainability of tourist places are all part of its implementation (Silviana & Mubarak, 2020). Sustainable Tourism refers to a tourism development approach that aims to balance economic growth, cultural heritage preservation, and environmental conservation. It has emerged as a response to various challenges and is being applied in numerous destinations (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Segara, 2025).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative approach by comparing expectations and actual conditions to assess how foreign visitors perceive Bali's use of sustainable tourism concepts using Gap Analysis and Importance Performance Analysis (IPA). Gap analysis and quadrant analysis are the two primary components of the Importance Performance Analysis approach, which has been extensively utilized to identify the difference between an element's performance and importance (Phadermrod et al., 2019), while quadrat analysis is used to prioritize quality improvement based on four evaluation quadrants, gap analysis is used to investigate the the level of discrepancy between tourists' perceptions and expectations (Saputro, 2022).

The research tool was a four-point Likert scale questionnaire. In order to limit respondents' propensity to select the center response (central tendency effect) and prevent ambiguity in neutral (undecided) options, this scale was selected as a modification of the five-point scale (Melianti et al., 2020). Prior to being deployed, the validity and reliability of the instruments were examined. A statement was considered reliable in the particular context of this study if its reliability value was above the standard limit of 6.00 and valid if its pearson correlation value was more than the critical value of 0.361. SPSS software was used to evaluate the total data gathered from 328 foreign visitors that are currently or have previously visited Bali.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The fact that a large portion of the study's respondents were from Australia (18.9%), South Korea (10.7%), and India (10.4%) indicates that Bali is a

well-liked travel destination for people from these nations, and their opinions are crucial in determining how well sustainable tourism is being implemented. The majority of respondents (62.2%) are female, indicating that the perspectives and experiences of female tourists in Bali have a greater influence on the perceived results of this study. Additionally, the majority of respondents (50.6%) are between the ages of 26 and 40, followed by those between the ages of 18 and 25 (32.0%). This suggests that the study's conclusions are based on productive age groups that are typically active and critical of sustainability issues.

Table.1 Characteristics of Respondents

No	Categories	Sub Categories	Frekuensi	Percentage
1	County of Origin	Australia	62	18.9
		South Korea	35	10.7
		India	34	10.4
2	Gender	Male	124	37.8
		Female	204	62.2
3	Age	26-40 Years Old	166	50.6
		18-25 Years Old	105	32.0
		41-55 Years Old	42	12.8
4	Job	Entrepreneur	95	29.0
		Professional	89	27.1
		Private Employee	53	16.2
5	Length of Stay	< 7 Days	120	36.6
		> 7 Days	208	63.4
6	Frequency of Visits	1 Time	162	19.5
		2-3 Times	102	31.1
		More than 3 Times	64	19.5

Source : Analyzed Data,2025

Respondents were predominantly self-employed (29.0%), professionals (27.1%), and private employees (16.2%), who generally have high mobility and travel experiences that shape awareness of destination quality. Most respondents stayed more than seven days (63.4%), which gave them sufficient time to evaluate sustainability practices on the ground. In terms of frequency of visits, almost half were first-time visitors (49.4%), while the rest were repeat visitors, indicating a combination of new experiences and comparative observations. Overall, these characteristics indicate that the respondents have an experientially strong profile, so their perceptions of the adoption of sustainable tourism principles in Bali can be considered valid and reliable.

Table 2. Calculation of Performance Score and Important Score of Environmental Sustainability

No	Statement	Average Performance Score	Average Important Score
Environmental Sustainability			
1	Bali creates tourist attractions with energy efficient principles	2.98	3.49
2	Sustainable tourism in Bali represents a low-carbon commitment	3.02	3.41

3	Bali is switching from fossil transport to bicycle use for low-carbon tourism.	3.01	3.33
4	Tourism areas in Bali are free of excessive air pollution.	3.08	3.36
5	Limitation of visitors to natural areas to protect the environment.	3.1	3.41
6	Bali manages nature sustainably to protect the ecosystem.	3.21	3.41
7	Tourism infrastructure in Bali is built in an eco-friendly way	3.11	3.36
8	Bali's wastewater management capable of maintaining clean waters	3.15	3.39
9	Bali provides separate trash bins by waste type (organic, non-organic, recycling).	3.26	3.38
10	Bali tourism is built without the risk of natural disasters.	3.18	3.3

Source : Analyzed Data,2025

Tourist expectations and perceived execution differ noticeably in a number of important areas, according to the results of the calculation of the average performance and importance scores in the environmental dimension. Despite having the greatest priority score (3.49), the statement "Bali creates tourist attractions with energy efficient principles" received the lowest performance score (2.98), highlighting the concern of tourists for energy efficiency in tourism infrastructure. The statement "Bali provides separate trash bins by waste type (organic, non-organic, recycling)" had the highest performance score (3.26), indicating that waste management procedures have been perceived by tourists as being more effective and noticeable. However, the pattern of high priority scores across almost all categories indicates that environmental responsibility is highly valued by tourists, and even while present performance levels are acceptable, they still fall short of their expectations.

Table 3. Calculation of Performance Score and Important Score of Culture Sustainability

No	Statement	Average Performance Score	Average Important Score
Culture Sustainability			
1	Tourist traffic does not damage Balinese culture.	3.12	3.37
2	Tourism supports the sustainability of Bali's local cultural arts	3.47	3.26
3	Tourism does not disrupt the daily activities of local people	3.2	3.2
4	Bali tourism has not destroyed traditional agricultural space.	3.39	2.95

Source : Analyzed Data,2025

Tourists' interest for the preservation of Balinese culture is evident from the cultural sustainability dimension. This is demonstrated by the assertion that "Tourism does not damage Balinese culture" (3.37), which is given a high degree

of value despite the performance being only modest (3.12). Support for regional cultural arts, on the other hand, has the highest performance rating (3.47), indicating an understanding of how important tourism is to preserving customs. It's interesting to note that tourists gave the preservation of traditional agricultural areas the least amount of attention (2.95 importance), despite the fact that its execution was rated as rather well (3.39 performance). This suggests that agrarian-based cultural issues are not given enough attention.

Table 4. Calculation of Performance Score and Important Score of Social Sustainability

No	Statement	Average Performance Score	Average Important Score
Social Sustainability			
1	Historic buildings in Bali are well preserved	3.4	3.43
2	Local communities take an active role in tourism management.	3.31	3.17
3	Tourism improves the economic well-being of local communities. .	3.21	3.34
4	Tourism in Bali has not led to greater social inequality	3.34	3.4
5	Crime rate in Bali is well controlled	3.31	3.1
6	Bali tourism grows together with nature preservation.	3.09	3.26
7	Bali tourism grows together with nature preservation.	3.13	3.43
8	Tourism in Bali is memorable because of the friendliness of the locals.	3.4	3.43

Source : Analyzed Data,2025

With the highest performance and importance scores (3.40; 3.43), tourists gave the preservation of historic buildings and the goodwill of locals high marks on the social dimension. Despite having a lesser level of relevance (3.17), local community participation was still given a very positive rating (performance 3.31). The statement "Tourism grows in line with nature conservation," on the other hand, had the lowest performance score (3.09), indicating that this area still requires improvement. Travelers generally value the social components of Bali tourism, particularly the preservation and exchange of cultures.

Table 5. Calculation of Performance Score and Important Score of Economic Sustainability

No	Statement	Average Performance Score	Average Important Score
Economic Sustainability			
1	Workers in the tourism sector are mostly from the local community.	3.29	3.18
2	Bali tourism brings job opportunities for economic equality.	3.36	3.42

3	Bali tourism gives equal opportunities to men and women.	3.17	3.28
4	Local people actively form communities to develop locally-based tourism.	3.38	3.38
5	Lots of businesses in the tourism sector in Bali are already eco-certified.	3.16	3.06
6	Tourism is capable of creating jobs for local communities.	3.42	3.14

Source : Analyzed Data,2025

The economic aspect shows that visitors recognize how tourism improves local communities. In terms of performance (3.42) and impression of the involvement of local communities (3.38), the creation of jobs is the most prominent feature. Green certification and equal opportunities for women, however, continue to receive low ratings (both below 3.3) for both performance and relevance. This research suggests that tourists are more interested in short-term financial gains than in long-term sustainability factors like corporate certification.

Table 6. Calculation of Performance Score and Important Score of Ecological Sustainability

No	Statement	Average Performance Score	Average Important Score
Ecological Sustainability			
1	Eco-friendly transport used to reduce air pollution in Bali.	3.08	3.07
2	Tourism facilities in Bali are created while still protecting natural habitats	3.25	3.41
3	Tourist attractions in Bali have programs to protect rare animals.	3.25	3.38
4	Hotels in Bali have implemented efficient water management systems to reduce water wastage.	3.25	3.42

Source : Analyzed Data,2025

Tourists believe that ecological preservation initiatives have been applied quite consistently on the ecological component, particularly in hotels and other tourism facilities. Habitat protection, the preservation of rare animals, and hotels' efficient use of water all had performance scores of 3.25, with the water management system receiving the highest priority (3.42). Eco-friendly transportation, on the other hand, had the lowest scores for both performance (3.08) and importance (3.07), suggesting that this program is not yet well known or a significant issue. In general, eco-friendly transportation technologies are not as valued by tourists as services that preserve the environment.

Table. 7 Average Score Difference

No	Dimensions	Average Performance Score	Average Important Score	GAP
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1	Environmental	3.11	3.38	-0,27
2	Culture	3.30	3,20	0.10
3	Social	3.27	3.32	-0,05
4	Economy	3.30	3.24	0.06
5	Ecology	3.21	3.32	-0.11
Average Score		3.24	3.29	-0.05

Source : Analyzed Data,2025

Based on each dimension, the difference between perceived performance and tourists' expectations is quite significant. The environmental sustainability dimension shows the largest negative difference with a gap value of -0.27, which indicates that environmental aspects-such as waste management, air pollution, and energy efficiency- are still unable to optimally satisfy tourists' expectations. On the other side, the ecological dimension also showed a negative gap of -0.11, indicating that tourists are still worry about the sustainability of ecosystems, conservation of flora and fauna, and the impact of tourism development on the environment. Meanwhile, two other dimensions showed positive gap values, including cultural sustainability with a gap of +0.10 and economic sustainability of +0.06, both indicating that tourists appreciate Bali's efforts in preserving local culture and equitable distribution of economic benefits from tourism. These findings confirm that while Bali is excellent at preserving cultural values and providing positive economic impacts.

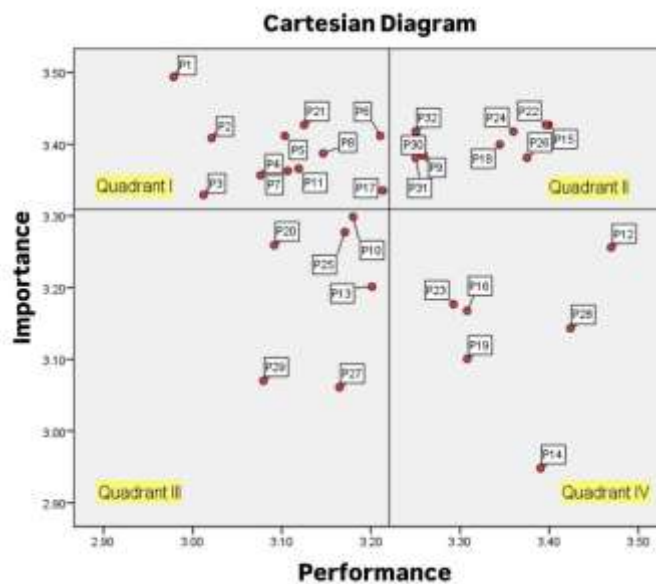


Figure 1. Cartesian Diagram between Performance and Important Scores

In order to determine the priority of improvement in the implementation of sustainable tourism in Bali, classification was carried out using a Cartesian Diagram based on the average performance and expectation scores of all measured indicators. This diagram separates the 32 indicators into four quadrants, each representing a priority level based on the position of expectation and performance values. Stakeholders can identify which components are

operating successfully and which need immediate attention by using this analytical technique.

Starting with the most urgent, the indicators in Quadrant I should be the primary focus of improvement immediately because they are very significant but perform weakly. This quadrant's indicators reflect what visitors expect from Bali's dedication to cultural and environmental preservation, which turns out to be weak while they are there. Energy-efficient tourist attraction construction (P1), low-carbon tourism support (P2), pollution-free areas (P4), limitations on natural area visits (P5), sustainable natural resource management (P6), environmentally friendly infrastructure development (P7), protecting local culture from the effects of tourism (P11), and active community involvement in tourism policy (P17) are some significant indicators that fall into this category. The existence of these indicators indicates that tourists are becoming more conscious of the socio-environmental effects of tourism. Therefore, proactively filling in these gaps is essential to matching expectations of tourists and enhancing implementation on reality.

On the other hand, the indicators placed in Quadrant II have equally high levels of performance and importance, indicating that field implementation is in line with the expectations of visitors. Historical building preservation (P15), community involvement in tourism management (P18), equal employment opportunities in the tourism industry (P24), local tourism community activities (P26), and hotel water management efficiency (P32) are some of the indicators in this quadrant. These indicators' existence shows Bali's ability to effectively handle social, cultural, and economic elements in a sustainable way. Whether by effective environmental management, cultural heritage protection, or community involvement, travelers value activities that indicate sustainability. As a result, this achievement must be preserved and improved in consistently to continue to be a significant factor in increasing tourist happiness and loyalty.

In comparison, the indicators grouped in Quadrant III indicators have equally low performance and importance scores, indicating elements that tourists are currently not particularly concerned about. This category includes two indicators: insufficient measures to mitigate visual and noise pollution (P29) and the absence of eco-certification of tourism firms (P27). This indicates that travelers do not give these two factors much thought while evaluating the quality of their Bali vacation. This is not to say, however, that these indicators should be disregarded entirely. In order for destination management to continue adapting to shifting trends and expectations, monitoring and evaluation are still required to predict the potential for future increases in visitor concern for sustainability issues.

Despite their solid performance, the indicators in Quadrant IV are considered to have low relevance by tourists. This indicates that even while the implementation has gone smoothly, tourists are not looking at these elements as the primary determinants of their level of happiness. This quadrant's indicators include the adoption of ecologically friendly automobiles (P28) and the low danger of natural disasters as a result of tourism (P14). Although the high performance of these indicators shows how committed tourism stakeholders are,

the low level of tourist concern may make these investments less effective. A purposeful reallocation of resources to areas with greater urgency is necessary in this situation, especially for the indicators in Quadrant I, where performance is still below expectations despite high expectations.

Tourists' perception priorities for destination sustainability are indirectly represented by the Cartesian Diagram's results. Indicators included in Quadrant I indicate that tourists have high sensitivity to environmental issues and sustainable management, but have not seen the same level of implementation on the ground. On the other hand, Bali's strengths in culture and community empowerment have been responded positively by tourists, as seen from the indicators that remain in Quadrant II. This imbalance enriches our understanding of how tourist perceptions are created, and opens up space for comparing it with others previous research.

Examining the significance of the results to those of (Liestiandre, 2021), who assessed travelers' opinions of Bali's destination quality, is crucial to improving the interpretation of this study's findings. The findings of this research, which rated the environment and governance dimensions as the lowest performance areas based on tourists' perceptions, are consistent with the findings of another study that focused on aspects of destination services and facilities generally and found that indicators related to accessibility, safety, sanitation, and destination management were in the top priority category for improvement. Similarities were also noted in the sociocultural dimension, where both studies indicated a strong appreciation for the local culture's richness and the people's warmth. This supports the study's finding that, despite Bali's strong cultural appeal, environmental and governance concerns continue to be significant barriers to the overall sustainability of the destination.

The findings of this study are further supported by the results of other studies, which also point in a similar direction. This is especially relevant with regard to the environmental and ecological dimensions of the destination, which are important factors in tourist's assessments of a destination sustainability. The findings of Sari et al. (2024), who analyzed the perceptions of domestic visitors in the Sanur area, support the discussion of the results in this article that show a gap between expectations and performance in the environmental and ecological dimensions. Environmental factors including pollution and waste management were assessed as neutral and weak even though visitors gave positive ratings to social and economic effects. It's also consistent with our study's findings, which categorized a number of environmental indicators into the priority improvement quadrant, including waste management, energy efficiency, and limitations on access to natural areas. This fact definitely supports the claim that Bali's sustainability plan has to improve its focus on environmental issues, which many domestic and international tourists believe to be a weak spot.

Combined with our results showing that the cultural and economic dimensions obtained relatively high performance scores, which are also supported by Suasapha (2022) research in Penglipuran Village, which found that tourists highly appreciated cleanliness, environmental order, and community friendliness-indicators that are also reflected in our findings through the preservation of local

culture and the active role of the community. Accordingly, research conducted in Karya Sari Village by (Sukariyanto & Susila, 2023) highlighted the value of a community-based approach in the development of ecotourism, which is also included in the recommendations made in this article about community involvement as an active stakeholder in sustainability policies. As a result, both studies not only support the validity of our findings but also deepen our understanding of the significance of sociocultural factors and community involvement as pillars in the pursuit of a sustainable and responsible destination.

The findings of this study align with those of De Marchi et al. (2022), who developed the Tourism Sustainability Index (TSI) using the ETIS Toolkit and sentiment analysis. Both studies indicate that environmental pillars often receive lower satisfaction scores from tourists, while social dimensions and destination management are generally viewed more positively. Similarly, MacEachern et al. (2024) highlight the increasing awareness among Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) about climate change impacts, yet reveal that practical adaptation and mitigation measures remain limited. These parallels reinforce the need for Bali's tourism stakeholders to not only maintain strengths in cultural and social aspects but also to intensify efforts in addressing environmental challenges through concrete, collaborative, and adaptive strategies that align with tourists' growing expectations of sustainability.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The cultural and economic aspects of Bali's sustainable tourism implementation are appreciated strongly by tourists, according to this survey, and are thought to be well-managed. However, a notable difference exists in the ecological and environmental components, indicating that these elements have not totally fulfilled the expectations of tourists. These results show that although Bali's cultural and economic aspects continue to be important assets, there is still potential for progress in the Bali's capability to handle environmental sustainability issues.

For this reason, strategic efforts are urgently needed to improve performance on high-priority indicators, especially related to environmental management, energy efficiency, and community involvement in decision-making. Local governments and tourism industry actors need to improve collaboration across sectors to support the transformation into more responsible tourism. On the other hand, the successes in the cultural and economic dimensions must be consistently maintained as the foundation in building a sustainable and globally competitive image of Bali.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

One of the limitations of this study lies in the relatively homogeneous profile of respondents, who are predominantly from certain countries and within productive age groups. Consequently, the results may not fully represent the views of a broader range of tourists, such as older individuals or those from countries with different cultural backgrounds and travel preferences. Moreover, this study limits its scope to the perspectives of tourists, excluding the viewpoints of other critical stakeholders in the tourism industry, such as; local residents,

decision makers, and tourism business players, whose involvement plays a crucial role in driving sustainable tourism forward.

For future research, it is recommended that the scope of respondents be expanded geographically and demographically so that the results are more globally representative. Future research can also adopt a mixed-method model by combining quantitative surveys and in-depth interviews to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of sustainability perceptions and implementation in tourist destinations such as Bali.

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study still offer valuable input for local tourism stakeholders. They highlight specific areas that require attention, particularly in environmental performance and participatory governance. These insights can support the development of more responsive, inclusive, and strategic actions that not only align with tourist expectations but also strengthen Bali's positioning as a sustainable and competitive tourism destination in the global context.

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