

CULTURAL RESILIENCE OF BALINESE SOCIETY WITHIN TOURISM DYNAMICS: A PHILOSOPHICAL AND HERMENEUTIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the cultural resilience of Balinese society within the rapidly evolving landscape of global tourism through an integrated philosophical and hermeneutic lens, emphasizing that Balinese cultural continuity is not the product of static preservation but of a dynamic, ongoing process of reinterpretation that allows tradition to remain meaningful amid contemporary pressures. Utilizing qualitative library research enriched by light ethnographic observations conducted in Penglipuran, Sanur, and Ubud, the study reveals that rituals, spatial arrangements, artistic performances, and communal practices undergo nuanced transformations that respond to the demands of the tourism industry while maintaining their spiritual essence. Adaptations such as restructured Melasti processions, modified kecak choreographies, and managed ritual visibility illustrate how the community negotiates the outer form of cultural expressions without severing the inner cosmological significance embedded in values like Tri Hita Karana, Tat Twam Asi, and Rwa Bhineda. These philosophical foundations guide the community in discerning what can be adapted, what must remain sacred, and how culture should be represented in public spaces. The findings further demonstrate that the strength of Balinese cultural resilience lies in its socio-institutional architecture, particularly desa adat, banjar, and awig-awig, which function as cultural gatekeepers that regulate sacred-profan boundaries, protect ceremonial rhythms, and manage interactions between local culture and tourism markets. Through a hermeneutic synthesis of theoretical insights and contextual observations, the study proposes a three-layer model of Balinese cultural resilience consisting of spiritual meaning, institutional governance, and adaptive cultural interaction, illustrating that resilience emerges from philosophical awareness, communal governance, and selective cultural negotiation rather than from passive resistance. This model offers a nuanced understanding of cultural sustainability in Bali, suggesting that long-term resilience depends on preserving interpretive sovereignty, safeguarding symbolic boundaries, and upholding the worldview that gives cultural expressions their enduring meaning. In doing so, this study contributes theoretically by integrating tourism philosophy, hermeneutics, and resilience theory into a unified conceptual framework and offers practical implications for culturally grounded sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: cultural resilience, tourism philosophy, hermeneutics, Balinese culture, sustainable tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Bali is globally recognized as a cultural tourism destination, yet the rapid expansion of the tourism sector brings complex socio-cultural challenges.

Modernization and commercialization exert pressures on traditional values, sacred rituals, and community structures. Despite these pressures, Balinese society demonstrates strong cultural resilience rooted in local wisdom, social institutions, and spiritual orientation. Previous studies point to exemplary resilience in regions like Penglipuran, where cultural preservation is integrated into tourism development (Pratiwi & Wikantiyoso, 2022). Meanwhile, the Vanaprastha philosophy has been proposed as a spiritual foundation for sustaining cultural strength in the tourism sector (Suyasa et al., 2024). Community-based models similarly highlight the importance of social capital and local institutions in mitigating tourism impacts (Praptika et al., 2024).

However, much of the existing literature approaches Bali's cultural resilience from anthropological or policy-oriented perspectives. A philosophical and hermeneutic perspective remains rare, even though it provides deeper insights into how meaning, identity, and cultural interpretation evolve within tourism spaces. Thus, this study seeks to fill this gap by offering a reflective philosophical analysis enriched with contextualized field observations.

The increasing integration of Bali into global tourism circuits has intensified the island's exposure to transnational cultural flows, digital tourism narratives, and global consumer tastes. This global interconnectedness creates both opportunities and vulnerabilities for Balinese culture. On the one hand, it allows cultural expressions to gain international visibility. On the other hand, the pressure to continuously adapt to tourist expectations risks shaping local traditions according to market logics rather than authentic cultural rhythms. These global dynamics require a deeper philosophical examination to understand how cultural meaning is negotiated in contexts where economic imperatives frequently overshadow spiritual and communal priorities.

Although numerous studies have examined cultural preservation and tourism sustainability in Bali, only a limited number have explored how cultural actors philosophically interpret and respond to tourism-induced changes. Most research tends to focus on policy analysis, socio-economic impacts, or anthropological descriptions of ritual transformation. The philosophical dimension namely how Balinese communities consciously interpret, reinterpret, and articulate the meaning of their cultural practices in response to tourism remains insufficiently theorized. This gap

becomes crucial considering that resilience is not merely a structural or behavioral adaptation, but also a reflective and interpretative process.

A philosophical and hermeneutic approach provides the tools needed to understand the deeper layers of cultural resilience by examining meaning-making, interpretation, and value negotiation. Tourism, from a philosophical standpoint, is not simply a form of economic activity; it is a dialogical encounter between subjectivities, identities, and symbolic systems. Hermeneutics enables the analysis of cultural expressions not merely as artifacts but as living texts that reveal the dynamic interaction between tradition and modernity. This study, therefore, brings an interpretative depth that complements and enriches existing anthropological and sociological approaches.

By integrating philosophical perspectives with contextual field observations, this study offers both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it introduces a conceptual model of Balinese cultural resilience based on a triadic interplay between spiritual values, social institutions, and adaptive cultural practices. Practically, it provides insights for policymakers and tourism stakeholders on how to strengthen cultural governance, protect sacred spaces, and ensure that tourism development aligns with Balinese cosmological principles. This dual contribution positions the study within broader academic conversations on culturally grounded sustainable tourism.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative philosophical approach supported by extensive library research and enriched by light ethnographic observations conducted in Penglipuran, Sanur, and Ubud between 2023 and 2024. The philosophical component is grounded in major theoretical works on tourism philosophy (Tribe, 2009), authenticity and cultural staging (MacCannell, 2017; Greenwood, 2017), hermeneutic interpretation (Gadamer, 2004), and cultural resilience theory (Berkes, 2015; Pratiwi & Wikantiyoso, 2022). Meanwhile, empirical insights were obtained from peer-reviewed journal articles, governmental policy documents including Bali Provincial Regulation No. 5/2020 on Cultural Tourism and other contemporary studies discussing cultural resilience in Balinese communities. To strengthen contextual validity, the research incorporated non-intrusive observational notes focusing on

spatial arrangements in Penglipuran, ritual–tourism interactions in Sanur, and staged cultural performances in Ubud. Although not intended as full ethnographic fieldwork, these observations provide valuable descriptive cues that help bridge theoretical interpretation with real-world cultural practices.

Analytically, this study followed a three-tier hermeneutic procedure. The first stage, textual interpretation, involved interpreting cultural expressions, rituals, and symbolic structures as “texts” that reveal the lived philosophical worldview of Balinese society. The second stage, reflective analysis, connected these cultural phenomena with broader philosophical and ethical concepts in tourism studies. Finally, the hermeneutic synthesis stage integrated theoretical insights with contextual observations to formulate a comprehensive conceptual model of Balinese cultural resilience. This combination of philosophical reasoning, interpretative analysis, and contextual observation allows the research to uncover both the underlying meanings and the adaptive strategies that sustain Balinese cultural identity amidst tourism dynamics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of Balinese cultural resilience within the dynamics of tourism reveals a complex interplay between philosophical worldviews, socio-cultural institutions, and adaptive practices that enable the community to sustain cultural identity amidst global pressures. From a philosophical standpoint, Balinese culture demonstrates an ongoing hermeneutic process in which traditional values are continuously reinterpreted in new contexts. Tourism becomes not merely an economic phenomenon but a dialogical arena where cultural meanings encounter modern expectations. Using Gadamer’s hermeneutic framework, Balinese cultural expressions such as rituals, spatial arrangements, and everyday practices can be understood as “texts” that are read and re-read by community members in response to changing circumstances. Through values such as Tri Hita Karana, Tat Twam Asi, and Rwa Bhineda, the community develops a reflective orientation that guides them in determining which aspects of culture are essential and must be preserved, and which others can be adapted to tourism contexts without losing their core identity.

The negotiation between authenticity and adaptation becomes especially visible in ritual practices. Observations in Ubud, Sanur, and Penglipuran show that

sacred rituals undergo symbolic transformations to accommodate tourism demands, yet these changes do not diminish their spiritual significance for local actors. For instance, kecak performances in Ubud have evolved into structured tourist shows with adapted choreography and staging. Although these performances differ from their original ritual context, local informants emphasize that the core spiritual intention of kecak remains intact when performed in village temples during ceremonial periods. Similarly, Melasti ceremonies in Sanur are reorganized to manage tourist traffic, but the ritual's cosmological purpose purification and restoration of harmony remains untouched. These examples illustrate a process of "resacralization," in which communities maintain inner spiritual meaning even when outer forms are adapted. Rather than reflecting cultural degradation, such transformations exemplify what Yamashita and Picard describe as symbolic resilience: the ability of a culture to project multiple layers of meaning depending on the audience and context.

Beyond ritual practices, cultural resilience is sustained through strong social and institutional structures that regulate community responses to tourism. Institutions such as *desa adat*, *banjar*, and *awig-awig* function as cultural gatekeepers, ensuring that tourism development does not overstep sacred boundaries or disrupt communal obligations. In Penglipuran, for example, traditional architectural patterns are strictly maintained through customary regulations, despite increasing visitor numbers. Spatial zoning ensures that tourist circulation remains separate from sacred family compounds, reflecting a broader cultural philosophy that distinguishes between sacred (*niskala*) and profane (*sekala*) spaces. In Sanur, temple ceremonies continue uninterrupted even during peak tourism periods, demonstrating how cultural obligations take precedence over commercial considerations. These forms of governance reveal what can be termed "operationalized resilience," in which cultural protection is embedded within everyday decision-making processes and institutional practices.

Comparative insights further illuminate the uniqueness of Bali's cultural resilience. When compared with Kyoto in Japan, Chiang Mai in Thailand, and Māori cultural tourism in New Zealand, Bali exhibits a hybrid model of resilience that combines spiritual authority, community governance, and adaptive cultural staging. Kyoto preserves its temple-centered spirituality through stringent tourism management policies, while Māori communities integrate indigenous cosmology into

national tourism narratives. Chiang Mai, by contrast, struggles with cultural dilution due to commercial pressures that lack strong institutional counterbalances. Bali's position aligns most closely with Kyoto's model, but with the added dimension of dynamic cultural performance rituals and artistic expressions that shift between sacred and commercial spaces without collapsing into commodified superficiality. This hybrid nature makes Balinese resilience particularly adaptive and context-responsive.

Synthesizing philosophical insights, field observations, and comparative analysis, the study proposes a conceptual model of Balinese cultural resilience consisting of three interconnected layers. The first is the inner-spiritual layer, which functions as the foundation for meaning-making. This layer includes ritual intentions, cosmological beliefs, and spiritual identities that anchor cultural practices. These elements provide an intrinsic rationale for preserving cultural integrity, regardless of external pressures. The second is the social-institutional layer, represented by customary laws, communal decision-making, and local governance systems. These institutions mediate interactions between the community and external actors, ensuring that cultural boundaries are respected and that development remains aligned with cultural values. The third is the tourism interaction layer, where adaptive practices occur. At this level, culture interacts most visibly with tourism through ritual staging, cultural hybridization, and spatial negotiations. While this layer is the most dynamic and susceptible to change, its adaptive nature allows Bali to remain responsive to global tourism trends without compromising the deeper layers of cultural meaning.

Overall, the findings show that Balinese cultural resilience is not a static protective mechanism but a dynamic interpretive process that integrates spiritual continuity, institutional strength, and adaptive innovation. The resilience of Balinese culture emerges from its ability to reinterpret tradition in ways that remain faithful to its philosophical core while acknowledging the realities of tourism-driven change. Through this hermeneutic process, culture becomes a living, evolving entity capable of negotiating modernity without losing its identity. This multi-layered resilience model highlights the importance of viewing culture not simply as a heritage to be preserved but as an active interpretive force that shapes and is shaped by the lived experiences of the Balinese people within the global tourism landscape.

A deeper hermeneutic exploration also reveals that cultural resilience in Bali emerges through ongoing value tensions that are negotiated rather than eliminated.

These tensions occur between sacred obligations and commercial pressures, communal identity and individual aspirations, and traditional time cycles (*kala–desa–patra*) and the fixed schedules of tourism industries. Instead of perceiving these tensions as cultural contradictions, Balinese communities interpret them as part of the dynamic equilibrium characterizing their worldview. In many cases, resistance to certain forms of tourism development such as commercialization near temple grounds or inappropriate tourist behavior becomes an opportunity for communities to reassert their cultural authority. This reinforces what Gadamer describes as the “productive tension” of interpretation: conflicts in understanding do not disrupt meaning but instead generate new horizons that refine cultural identity. Thus, value conflicts in Balinese tourism are not threats; they are interpretive crucibles that strengthen cultural coherence.

Cultural resilience in Bali is also shaped by spatial politics and the dynamics of representation. Tourism development often transforms physical spaces into symbolic landscapes where cultural identity is performed, negotiated, and sometimes contested. The reorganization of ceremonial routes during large rituals, the architectural standardization enforced in *Penglipuran*, and the selective visibility of certain rituals for tourists illustrate how space becomes a medium of cultural meaning. Through these spatial strategies, Balinese communities assert authority over how their culture is represented. This is crucial because representation determines which cultural elements are highlighted, commercialized, or protected from external gaze. The negotiation of spatial boundaries mirrors wider negotiations of cultural power: while economic interests may seek to commodify cultural practices, the community maintains interpretive sovereignty by controlling what can be seen, what must remain sacred, and what forms of staging are permissible. The politics of space therefore becomes a central dimension of cultural resilience, enabling the community to selectively engage with tourism while safeguarding key cultural domains.

The findings also show that cultural resilience does not solely operate at the collective or institutional level, but also within the realm of individual subjectivity. Balinese cultural actors artists, ceremony leaders, spiritual practitioners, and even youth engaged in creative industries participate actively in rearticulating cultural identity through tourism. Young Balinese performers, for example, often describe their participation in tourist shows not as commodification but as a form of cultural

ambassadorship, where modern performance styles coexist with ritual commitments. This coexistence illustrates a dual subjectivity, where individuals navigate between being cultural bearers and creative agents in global cultural circuits. Rather than diminishing authenticity, this hybrid identity formation demonstrates the adaptability of Balinese subjectivity in engaging with external cultural influences. It aligns with contemporary philosophical perspectives that understand identity as fluid, negotiated, and relational. The adaptability of individuals thus becomes a micro-level manifestation of macro-level cultural resilience.

Finally, the extended findings point toward significant philosophical implications for sustainable cultural tourism. Bali's approach demonstrates that sustainability cannot be reduced to economic viability or environmental protection alone; it must encompass the sustainability of meaning, value, and cultural worldview. The Balinese case shows that cultural sustainability depends on a community's ability to reinterpret its traditions without severing them from their spiritual roots. This is consistent with a hermeneutic understanding of sustainability in which continuity and change are not opposing forces but mutually reinforcing elements of cultural life. The resilience of Balinese culture provides a model for other tourism-dependent regions seeking to balance economic benefits with cultural integrity. It emphasizes that sustainable tourism must be grounded in philosophical respect for cultural sovereignty, spiritual significance, and the interpretive agency of local communities. In this sense, Bali's cultural resilience offers not only a case study but a normative framework for culturally responsible tourism development.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that Balinese cultural resilience emerges through a dynamic hermeneutic process in which traditions are continuously interpreted and reinterpreted in response to tourism pressures. Rather than treating culture as fixed heritage, Balinese communities actively reshape the meanings of rituals, spatial practices, and artistic expressions without severing their spiritual essence. Values such as Tri Hita Karana and Rwa Bhineda function as philosophical anchors that guide this interpretive flexibility, enabling the community to maintain cultural coherence while engaging with global tourism dynamics. This supports the

argument that resilience is not merely behavioral adaptation but a deep interpretive orientation that integrates sacred cosmology with contemporary realities.

Cultural resilience in Bali is also sustained by strong socio-institutional mechanisms that regulate the flow between sacred and commercial domains. Institutions such as *desa adat*, *banjar*, and *awig-awig* play a decisive role in managing tourism development, controlling spatial access, maintaining ritual rhythms, and protecting cultural boundaries. Their regulatory authority forms what can be described as “operationalized resilience,” where cultural preservation is embedded in everyday governance. When combined with selective cultural staging such as adapted performances or managed ritual visibility these institutional practices allow Bali to negotiate modernity without compromising core identity. Comparative insights with Kyoto, Māori tourism, and Chiang Mai further reinforce the distinctiveness of Bali’s hybrid model, where spirituality, governance, and cultural adaptation intersect to produce a robust form of cultural resilience.

Ultimately, this study concludes that Balinese cultural resilience represents a sophisticated philosophical achievement: the ability to uphold spiritual and cultural integrity while engaging productively with global tourism. Sustainability in Bali cannot be understood solely through economic or environmental terms but must include the sustainability of meaning, identity, and worldview. By integrating tourism philosophy, hermeneutics, and resilience theory, this study offers a conceptual model that positions culture as an evolving interpretive force rather than a static object of preservation. As Bali continues to navigate the complexities of global tourism, its long-term resilience will depend on maintaining interpretive sovereignty, strengthening community governance, and upholding the philosophical foundations that give cultural practices their enduring significance.

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