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## Forging Meaningful Pathways: Synergies for Sustainable Tourism Resilience in Challenging Times

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### ABSTRACT

This editorial synthesizes key insights through the lens of Arlt's Meaningful Tourism (MT) paradigm, which addresses sustainability fatigue by prioritizing simultaneous well-being for all six stakeholders: visitors, communities, employees, businesses, governments, and the environment. Research highlights five imperatives for resilience in an era of converging crises: (1) Holistic Stakeholder Alignment via transparent MT metrics; (2) Community Empowerment through models like upscale homestays (Dam) and blue-economy conservation; (3) Deep Experiences fulfilling meaning-seeking through spiritual tourism, music events, and emotional engagement; (4) Strategic Enablers like digital inspiration, workforce education, and management systems; and (5) Collaborative Governance to tackle infrastructure, equity, and environmental challenges. The volume advocates for integrated action aligning interests, centering communities, curating authenticity, leveraging technology, and fostering partnerships to transform tourism into a resilient force for shared prosperity and cultural-environmental vitality.

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## 1. Introduction

Technological disruption, shifting traveler expectations, and persistent socioeconomic inequalities; the imperative for resilient and *meaningful* tourism development has never been clearer. The diverse research presented in this volume of the *Bali Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Culture Research* offers invaluable insights, not as isolated studies, but as interconnected pieces illuminating pathways towards a more sustainable, equitable, and fulfilling future for our industry and the communities it touches. At the heart of this discourse lies a unifying theme: the transition from fragmented sustainability efforts towards holistic frameworks that deliver tangible benefits and foster genuine well-being for *all* stakeholders.

Arlt's compelling introduction of the Meaningful Tourism (MT) paradigm ([Article 1](#)) provides a crucial theoretical anchor for this volume. It directly confronts the "sustainability fatigue" plaguing traditional models, arguing convincingly for a shift from narratives of sacrifice to those of mutual flourishing. MT's core strength is its insistence on simultaneously delivering objective benefits and subjective satisfaction for the six essential stakeholder groups: Visitors, Host Community, Employees, Businesses, Governments, and Environment. This paradigm rejects zero-sum trade-offs, instead demanding aligned interests tracked through transparent, achievable SMART KPIs. It resonates powerfully as a practical, positive framework for navigating the very challenges explored in subsequent articles.

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Several studies underscore the critical role of empowering local communities as central stakeholders in sustainable tourism. Dam's research on upscale homestays in Sikkim (Article 2) highlights their potential for income generation and dispersing tourism pressure, yet reveals significant economic challenges for owners. The call for strategic upgrades and targeted marketing towards high-end segments aligns with MT's need for business viability and community benefit. Similarly, the exploration of Petak Village, Gianyar (Article 4) by Wisnawa & Widari, and Tajen Village, Tabanan (Article 6) by Endrayani et al., vividly illustrate the rich potential of Bali's rural landscapes. However, both emphasize persistent hurdles: inadequate infrastructure, fragmented coordination, lack of community participation frameworks, and the need for robust management strategies (like the AFITH-PEST analysis applied in Tajen). Achieving MT's community well-being goals necessitates overcoming these barriers through inclusive governance and capacity building.

The coral reef conservation initiative in Pandanan Beach, North Lombok (Article 12, Bratayasa et al.) exemplifies a promising multi-stakeholder approach directly linking environmental health (the MT Environment pillar) to the blue economy and community-based tourism. Such collaborative models, involving local groups, government, CSR, and academics, are vital for operationalizing sustainability and ensuring host communities reap tangible benefits.

Deepening the Visitor Experience: Spirituality, Connection, and Technology Understanding evolving visitor motivations is key to MT's subjective satisfaction pillar. Sudiarta et al.'s grounded theory exploration of spiritual tourism (Article 5) positions Bali as a global hub, driven by its unique culture and nature, but cautions against cultural commodification – a direct threat to authenticity and host community well-being. Sukamto et al.'s fascinating study on Gen Z workers in Jakarta (Article 3) reveals an unexpected dimension: music events (concerts, festivals) significantly enhance work-life balance and productivity, mediated by psychological recovery. This suggests experiential tourism offerings contribute not just to leisure satisfaction but potentially to broader societal well-being, aligning visitors' search for meaning with positive personal outcomes.

Marques & Karta's analysis of experiential marketing at Café Atsabe, Timor-Leste (Article 10) reinforces the importance of crafting deep, emotional connections (Sense, Feel, Think, Act, Relate) to foster loyalty, with "Relate" proving most powerful. This directly feeds the MT goal of visitor satisfaction. Bendesa et al.'s work on digital video virtual tours (Article 13) highlights technology's role as an enabler. High-quality, feature-rich videos significantly enhance destination image, serving as powerful inspiration tools that can attract visitors seeking the authentic experiences documented here. This complements Grilo dos Santos et al.'s finding (Article 7) that Word-of-Mouth (WOM) is the strongest driver for visit intention to Jaco Island, Timor-Leste, underscoring the irreplaceable value of authentic personal recommendations stemming from positive experiences.

Sustainable resilience requires robust operational foundations. Widari et al.'s detailed case study of Aston Kuta Hotel & Residence (Article 8) provides a concrete blueprint. Their analysis of the 6M framework (Man, Money, Material, Method, Machine, Market) demonstrates how optimizing human capital, financial efficiency, and asset management drives both service quality and competitive sustainability in Bali's demanding market – a practical example of aligning Business, Employee, and potentially Visitor/Environmental goals. Looking to the future, Jayswal & Mishra's complex study on online tourism education in India (Article 9) reveals a critical insight: while educational infrastructure has a direct negative correlation with outcomes, its *indirect* positive impact, powerfully mediated by the teaching-learning environment, is paramount. This highlights the need for integrated systems (infrastructure + pedagogy) to develop the skilled workforce essential for the industry's long-term resilience and its ability to deliver on MT's promises.

## **2. Results and Discussion**

### **SYNTHESIZING THE PATH FORWARD**

The research in this volume, viewed cohesively through the lens of Meaningful Tourism (Arlt), paints a clear and actionable picture for building sustainable tourism resilience in our era of multifaceted challenges. Success demands an integrated approach centered on five critical imperatives. First, Holistic Stakeholder Alignment is non-negotiable. We must decisively move beyond fragmented benefits and zero-sum trade-offs. The Meaningful Tourism (MT) paradigm provides the essential framework: ensuring Visitors, Host Communities, Employees, Businesses, Governments, and the Environment *simultaneously* derive tangible value and genuine satisfaction. This requires

measurable, transparent progress tracked via SMART KPIs, aligning interests for mutual flourishing rather than compromise.

Second, Empowered Communities must be the cornerstone, not just beneficiaries. Local populations need integration as active partners and primary recipients of tourism's gains. Research highlights viable pathways: Dam's work on upscale homestays in Sikkim demonstrates potential for livelihood creation and dispersal, while studies on Petak Village (Wisnawa & Widari) and Tajen Village (Endrayani et al.) underscore the need for participatory governance and capacity building in Bali's rural settings. Bratayasa et al.'s analysis of Pandanan Beach further shows how conservation-linked blue economies can directly fuel community well-being and sustainable tourism.

Third, Deep & Authentic Experiences fulfill the modern traveler's search for meaning and drive resilience. Sudiarta et al.'s exploration of spiritual tourism confirms Bali's strength in offering profound connection, yet warns against commodification. Sukamto et al. reveal an unexpected dimension: music events serve as crucial psychological restoration for Gen Z, enhancing well-being beyond leisure. Marques & Karta's findings at Café Atsabe reinforce that crafting emotionally resonant experiences (Sense, Feel, Think, Act, Relate), particularly fostering connection ("Relate"), is paramount for visitor loyalty and satisfaction.

Fourth, Strategic Enablers provide the operational foundation for scale and impact. Technology, particularly high-quality digital video virtual tours (Bendesa et al.), is vital for inspiration and accessibility, shaping destination image powerfully. Investment in *integrated* education is crucial; Jayswal & Mishra demonstrate that while infrastructure alone isn't sufficient, its synergy with a strong teaching-learning environment is critical for developing the skilled workforce essential for the future. Robust management systems, exemplified by the 6M framework implementation at Aston Kuta (Widari et al.), ensure operational excellence and business viability within competitive markets.

Finally, Collaborative Governance is the essential mechanism for tackling systemic barriers. Complex challenges – inadequate infrastructure (Petak, Tajen), effective marketing, environmental protection, and equitable benefit sharing – demand multi-stakeholder solutions. The coral reef conservation initiative in Pandanan Beach, Lombok (Bratayasa et al.) serves as a prime model, uniting community groups, government, CSR, and academia for shared environmental and economic goals. This collaborative spirit must be replicated to overcome fragmentation and drive coordinated action.

Embracing these interconnected imperatives provides the roadmap. By aligning stakeholders holistically, empowering communities authentically, curating meaningful experiences, leveraging strategic enablers effectively, and fostering collaborative governance relentlessly, the tourism sector can build the resilience and deliver the shared prosperity demanded by our challenging times. The research within this volume offers both the justification and the practical guidance for this essential journey forward.

The journey towards truly meaningful and resilient tourism is complex and ongoing. This volume contributes significantly by providing evidence-based insights, practical models, and a powerful unifying framework. As editors, we commend the authors for their rigorous contributions and encourage researchers, policymakers, industry leaders, and communities to engage deeply with these findings. Let us continue to collaborate, innovate, and measure our progress transparently, ensuring tourism becomes an undeniable force for shared prosperity, cultural vitality, environmental stewardship, and profound human fulfillment in the challenging decades ahead.

### **3. Conclusion**

The converging crises of our time – climate volatility, technological disruption, and shifting socioeconomic landscapes – demand a fundamental reimagining of tourism's purpose and practice. Sustainability, while essential, is no longer sufficient if pursued through fragmented efforts or narratives of sacrifice. The research presented in this volume compellingly argues for Meaningful Tourism (MT) as the transformative paradigm for resilient, equitable, and fulfilling futures. Arlt's framework provides the critical lens: tourism must deliver *simultaneous* tangible value and subjective satisfaction for all six core stakeholders – visitors, host communities, employees, businesses, governments, and the environment. This is not idealism; it is operational necessity.

The path forward for sustainable tourism resilience, illuminated by diverse studies spanning Bali, Sikkim, Lombok, Timor-Leste, India, and Jakarta, rests firmly on five interconnected pillars. Each is essential for translating the Meaningful Tourism (MT) paradigm into actionable reality. First, Holistic Stakeholder Alignment must be achieved through the establishment of transparent, measurable MT goals. This requires moving beyond fragmented benefits and ensuring that *all six core stakeholders* – visitors, host communities, employees, businesses, governments, and the environment – simultaneously derive tangible value and genuine satisfaction. Success hinges on defining clear, trackable outcomes that align interests for mutual flourishing.

Second, Genuine Community Empowerment is non-negotiable. Local populations must transition from passive beneficiaries to active partners and primary recipients of tourism's benefits. Research underscores the viability of models like upgraded homestays, well-managed tourism villages, and conservation-linked blue economies, but these require frameworks ensuring communities hold real agency in development and profit-sharing.

Third, the deliberate curation of Deep & Authentic Experiences is paramount. Tourism offerings must fulfill the fundamental human search for meaning, connection, and psychological restoration. This encompasses spiritual journeys, emotionally resonant encounters fostered by experiential marketing, and events providing psychological recovery, directly feeding visitor satisfaction and well-being.

Fourth, the Strategic Deployment of Enablers provides the operational backbone. This includes leveraging technology (like digital marketing and virtual tours) for inspiration and access, investing in integrated education for workforce development, and implementing robust management systems (such as the 6M framework) to ensure efficiency, quality, and long-term business viability within competitive markets.

Finally, effective Collaborative Governance structures are critical. Tackling systemic challenges – inadequate infrastructure, equitable benefit distribution, environmental protection, and cohesive marketing – demands sustained, multi-stakeholder partnerships. This pillar enables coordinated action, pooling resources and expertise across community groups, government bodies, private enterprises, and academia to address complex barriers no single entity can overcome alone. These five pillars, acting in concert, form the essential foundation for building meaningful and resilient tourism futures.

Achieving this vision requires collective courage and commitment. Policymakers must craft regulations incentivizing multi-stakeholder value creation. Industry leaders need to embed MT principles into core operations, investing in communities, employees, and green innovation. Researchers must continue refining metrics and models for impact assessment. Most crucially, host communities must be central architects of their tourism destiny.

This volume is not merely a collection of insights; it is a roadmap. By embracing Meaningful Tourism's holistic, positive, and measurable approach, we can transform the sector from a potential stressor into an undeniable engine for shared prosperity, cultural vitality, environmental stewardship, and profound human fulfillment. The time for incremental change is over. Let this research ignite the integrated action our era demands.

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