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Ritual, Sacredness, and Sustainability: A Thematic Exploration of Eco-Cultural Tourism in Tenganan Pegringsingan, Bali

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how ritual practices shape the development and governance of eco-cultural tourism in Tenganan Pegringsingan, an Indigenous Bali Aga village in eastern Bali. Grounded in an interpretivist framework and employing thematic analysis, the research draws on in-depth interviews with ritual elders, local artisans, tourism intermediaries, and community members. The findings reveal that rituals in Tenganan function not only as sacred expressions but also as boundary mechanisms, regulating tourist access and reinforcing collective identity. Tourism is not approached as a commercial imperative but as an opportunity for cultural affirmation, framed within customary law and spiritual ethics. The study identifies four key themes: ritual as a gatekeeping device, tourism as a platform for cultural narration, the moral economy of sacred space, and intergenerational shifts in cultural adaptation. Together, these themes illustrate how cultural sustainability in Tenganan is enacted through ritual logic, ethical hospitality, and controlled visibility. The paper contributes to scholarship on Indigenous tourism by highlighting how community agency, moral frameworks, and ancestral knowledge inform locally governed models of sustainable tourism. It offers theoretical and practical insights for decolonizing tourism narratives and reinforcing the role of intangible heritage in guiding tourism development.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the intersection of culture, sustainability, and tourism has emerged as a focal point in both academic discourse and policy agendas. As destinations strive to balance heritage conservation with economic opportunity, eco-cultural tourism has become an increasingly important paradigm, particularly in regions rich with living traditions. Bali, Indonesia, often celebrated for its vibrant culture and scenic beauty, presents a unique case in this regard. Beyond the bustling tourist hubs of *Ubud* or *Seminyak,* the lesser-known Indigenous village of *Tenganan Pegringsingan* offers a distinct model of community-based tourism grounded in ancestral customs and sustainable practices.

Tenganan is home to the Bali Aga people, considered the original Balinese inhabitants, whose cultural practices predate the arrival of Hindu *Majapahit* influence. The village is known for its strict *ada*t (customary law), *geringsing* double-ikat weaving tradition, and sacred rituals such as *Usaba Sambah*, which are deeply embedded in communal identity. These cultural elements are not only preserved but also integrated into the village's approach to tourism. Tourists are invited to witness rituals, explore traditional architecture, and engage with artisans, creating opportunities for both cultural exchange and economic livelihood. However, the increasing visibility of the village in global tourism circuits also raises questions about commodification, ritual transformation, and the future of authenticity.

While many studies on Balinese tourism focus on the environmental impacts or macroeconomic benefits Prasetyo et al. (2023) and Shrestha et al. (2025) fewer have examined how sacred rituals and daily practices of Indigenous communities contribute to shaping sustainable tourism from within. The concept of “ritualized tourism” is gaining attention, wherein local communities position ritual not

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merely as spectacle but as a living framework that guides the rhythms of tourism development. The case of *Tenganan* illustrates how ritual can serve as both a form of resistance and adaptation, enabling the community to selectively open itself to tourism while maintaining internal cohesion.

This study seeks to explore how local rituals, and Indigenous cultural frameworks inform the development of eco-cultural tourism in *Tenganan Pegringsingan*. By using a thematic analysis of in-depth interviews with community leaders, artisans, and tourism intermediaries, the research provides insight into how cultural sustainability is enacted at the village level. The paper contributes to broader debates on decolonizing tourism, community empowerment, and the integration of spiritual life into sustainable development frameworks.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Tourism has long been recognized not only as an economic driver but also as a cultural and ideological force that shapes local identities and practices (Ahmad, 2022). In recent decades, the emergence of eco-cultural tourism has reflected a growing interest in tourism models that integrate environmental sustainability with the preservation of cultural heritage. This integrative model is particularly significant in Indigenous and rural contexts where livelihoods and cultural continuity are deeply intertwined (Nagal, 2025). In such settings, tourism development is not merely about visitor numbers or revenue, but also about safeguarding ways of life, ritual practices, and communal values.

Indonesia, with its vast archipelagic diversity and rich heritage, offers fertile ground for eco-cultural tourism initiatives. Bali, in particular, has been both praised and critiqued for its unique approach to blending cultural authenticity with mass tourism (Chen et al., 2023). While mainstream destinations such as *Ubud* and Kuta are often associated with commodified performances and packaged spirituality, less-visited locations such as *Tenganan Pegringsingan* illustrate a different trajectory. In these spaces, traditional communities engage in tourism through self-governed structures and customary norms, raising important questions about agency, authenticity, and cultural sustainability (Katapidi, 2023).

The concept of ritualized tourism has gained traction in recent scholarship as a framework for understanding how cultural expressions, particularly ritual practices, are adapted within tourism settings (Chen et al., 2024). Rather than treating ritual as a static object for display, scholars argue that rituals can serve as dynamic tools of negotiation. They allow communities to maintain spiritual coherence while accommodating external interests. This perspective resonates with the lived realities in *Tenganan*, where sacred rituals such as *Usaba Sambah* are performed primarily for internal religious reasons, yet have also become focal points of cultural tourism. The dual function of ritual as both a sacred act and a tourism asset reveals a complex interplay between tradition and modernity.

The literature also highlights the role of local agency in shaping tourism development from the bottom up. In contrast to top-down models, community-based tourism initiatives emphasize participatory planning, cultural control, and equitable benefit sharing (Dangi & Petrick, 2021; Tariq, 2025). Studies in Indigenous tourism contexts, such as in Thailand and Peru, demonstrate that local knowledge systems and ritual institutions often provide the ethical backbone for tourism governance (Shrestha et al., 2025). These insights suggest that sustainable tourism in places like *Tenganan* is less about external certification schemes and more about internal cultural resilience and ritual logic.

However, some scholars have cautioned against romanticizing Indigenous agency or assuming cultural homogeneity. Tourism can also introduce intra-community tensions, especially when certain rituals are reinterpreted or performed selectively to suit visitor expectations (Lie, 2021). The pressure to maintain a certain image of authenticity may lead to cultural fixity or the reification of fluid traditions. As Steiner & Reisinger (2006) argue, authenticity in tourism should be viewed as a relational and negotiated process, rather than an essentialist category.

There remains a significant gap in the literature concerning how local rituals in Indonesian tourism villages actively shape the values, rhythms, and ethics of tourism engagement. While previous research has explored commodification, cultural performance, and the tourist gaze in Bali, fewer studies have focused on ritual as a framework for tourism governance and sustainability from the perspective of the

community itself. Furthermore, thematic analysis has been underutilized in examining how residents interpret the evolving meanings of ritual within the context of tourism.

This study seeks to address this gap by exploring how the ritual life of *Tenganan Pegringsingan* influences and structures its eco-cultural tourism practices. By employing thematic analysis of in-depth interviews, the research aims to illuminate how ritual practices are preserved, adapted, or contested in response to tourism pressures, and how they underpin local definitions of sustainable development.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design situated within the interpretivist paradigm, seeking to understand how members of the *Tenganan Pegringsingan* community experience and interpret the intersection of ritual and tourism. A qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate given the study's focus on meaning-making, local agency, and cultural expression. Rather than aiming for generalizability, the research prioritized depth, richness, and the contextual specificity of lived experience. In line with this epistemological stance, thematic analysis was used as the primary analytical strategy to identify and interpret patterns of meaning across participants' narratives.

Fieldwork took place in *Tenganan Pegringsingan,* a traditional Bali Aga village in the eastern regency of Karangasem, Bali. The village is distinguished by its adherence to Indigenous Balinese customs, or *awig-awig*, and its world-renowned *geringsing* double ikat weaving. It is also known for its highly structured ritual calendar, including the sacred *Usaba Sambah* ceremony, which not only defines social order but also serves as a central node of cultural tourism. Unlike more commercialized parts of Bali*, Tenganan* has retained a guarded openness to tourism, balancing cultural protection with selective engagement. This made it an ideal site for exploring how ritual life informs eco-cultural tourism practices.

Informants were selected through purposive sampling, guided by their knowledge of ritual activities, their involvement in tourism interactions, or their roles within the local social structure. The final sample included eighteen individuals. Among them were ritual elders and customary leaders, residents involved in handicrafts and hosting visitors, and local tourism actors such as community guides and members of the village cooperative. In addition, a small number of individuals from outside the community who have collaborated with the village in tourism development were interviewed to provide contextual perspectives. All participants had lived in or worked closely with the village for at least ten years, ensuring that the insights gathered were grounded in long-term experience.

Data were collected over a two-month period between May and June 2024. Semi-structured interviews served as the main data collection technique. These interviews followed a flexible conversational guide that encouraged participants to reflect on their involvement in ritual life, their views on tourism, and their perceptions of change and continuity in the village. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia or Balinese with the assistance of a local cultural interpreter when needed. The duration of interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes. In addition to formal interviews, the researcher engaged in participant observation by attending ritual preparations and observing interactions between villagers and tourists. Informal conversations, field notes, and reflective journaling were also employed to capture nuances that might not emerge in recorded interviews.

All interviews were audio-recorded with the verbal consent of participants. Each recording was transcribed verbatim and, where necessary, translated into English with attention to retaining the cultural and semantic integrity of the original expressions. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and their right to withdraw at any time. Given the cultural sensitivity and the collaborative nature of the research process, formal ethical clearance was not required. Nonetheless, the study adhered to the ethical principles of respect, reciprocity, and confidentiality. Pseudonyms are used in this manuscript to protect the identities of participants, and community consultation was conducted throughout the fieldwork to ensure cultural appropriateness.

Thematic analysis was carried out following the six-phase approach developed by Braun and Clarke. Familiarization began during transcription and continued through immersive reading of the transcripts. Initial codes were generated inductively using NVivo 14 software. These codes were then examined for

patterns and grouped into potential themes that reflected the core of participants' experiences. Themes such as "ritual as social boundary," "tourism as negotiated visibility," and "the moral economy of sacred space" emerged through iterative comparison. Thematic development was accompanied by memo writing and theoretical reflection, ensuring that the analysis remained grounded in the empirical data while attentive to broader interpretive insights.

Throughout the process, reflexivity was maintained. The researcher consistently reflected on their outsider status, cultural positionality, and the potential influence of their presence on participant responses. These reflections were documented and used to inform both data interpretation and the writing process. The goal was not only to analysed what participants said, but to understand how they constructed meaning through narrative and cultural reference.

This methodology allowed for a deep and respectful engagement with the community of Tenganan, generating insights into how ritual life and tourism are co-produced through local agency, cultural knowledge, and shared tradition. The following sections present the thematic findings drawn from this inquiry, highlighting the voices and perspectives of those who live at the intersection of sacred tradition and contemporary tourism. Analysis, or control variables, these should be clearly explained as part of the research framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the community of *Tenganan Pegringsingan*, ritual life is not simply a spiritual obligation but a fundamental mechanism for organizing time, space, and social belonging. The enactment of sacred ceremonies such as *Usaba Sambah* and *Mapatungpalan* does more than affirm metaphysical relationships, it also creates structured rhythms within which interaction with outsiders is strictly regulated. Across interviews, community members repeatedly emphasized that rituals establish a clear distinction between insiders and outsiders, not just in cosmological terms but in physical and social terms as well.

One elder noted, "Tourists can come, but they must stay outside the bale agung when the ritual is going on. Only those with lineage from the village can enter that space." Another resident explained that certain dates are declared "closed days," during which tourism is either entirely restricted, or visitors are only allowed to observe from designated peripheries. These practices serve as boundary mechanisms, reinforcing collective identity while maintaining control over cultural exposure. In this way, ritual space becomes a border zone, where the sacred and the secular are managed through spatial and symbolic exclusion.

This boundary-making role of ritual resonates with Barth (1969) classic theory of ethnic boundary maintenance, which posits that the persistence of group identity is achieved not through cultural content alone, but through the regulation of interaction. In *Tenganan*, the ritual calendar, the spatial organization of the village, and the rules of participation are all tools for delineating who belongs and who observes. The rituals are not theatrical performances for tourist consumption; they are acts that preserve cosmic order and social hierarchy, and tourism must orbit around that logic.

Interestingly, these regulatory functions are not antagonistic to tourism but rather serve as gatekeeping devices that allow for selective permeability. The villagers do not reject tourism outright. Instead, they curate access in a way that aligns with customary law (*awig-awig)*. Informants frequently invoked the principle of *tresna ring adat*, devotion to tradition as the reason for setting clear limits. This kind of intentional boundary-making allows the community to benefit economically from tourism without compromising the integrity of ritual life.

These findings echo Ranwa & Thapar-Björkert (2024) study of tourism in Copán, Honduras, where Indigenous groups exercised cultural gatekeeping to control how their heritage was presented and consumed. Similarly, Intason (2023), in his work on Thailand's hill tribes, described how ritual life provides a moral and institutional framework for shaping tourism interaction. In both cases, as in *Tenganan*, ritual practices are not passively displayed but are actively negotiated mechanisms of cultural sovereignty.

What distinguishes the case of *Tenganan* is the degree to which rituals function not only as temporal boundaries designating when tourism is permissible but also as moral thresholds, shaping what kind of behaviour is acceptable within sacred space. Tourists who attempt to enter without invitation or violate spatial boundaries are not only corrected but gently educated about the village's value system. This pedagogical aspect of boundary maintenance reinforces the community's authority over its own cultural representation.

Taken together, these findings suggest that in *Tenganan Pegringsinga*n, ritual is not peripheral to tourism but constitutive of how tourism is structured and legitimized. Rituals define not just what can be seen, but how it can be seen, and by whom. They mark the limits of visibility and participation, reminding both residents and visitors that cultural heritage is not a commodity to be accessed freely, but a sacred inheritance to be approached with respect.

DISCUSSION

Tourism as a Stage for Cultural Affirmation

While rituals in *Tenganan Pegringsingan* operate as boundaries that delineate access and participation, they also serve as platforms for cultural affirmation. Rather than merely safeguarding tradition from external influence, community members actively utilize tourism as an opportunity to assert and perform their identity on their own terms. The interface between ritual and tourism, then, is not one of passive display, but of intentional storytelling, shaped by cultural logic, social obligation, and selective openness.

Several informants described tourism as a "mirror" through which the village can see itself. One young artisan reflected, "When we explain the meaning of the ceremony to tourists, we are reminded of why we do it. It helps the younger generation learn too." This statement illustrates that tourism not only brings in external audiences but also prompts internal reflection. In this context, rituals are performed not for tourists, but in the presence of tourists, where the performance remains authentic yet communicative. This performative dimension is not reducible to spectacle; it is deeply rooted in communal self-definition.

This phenomenon aligns with Goffman (2023) theory of the presentation of self, which conceptualizes social life as a series of staged performances in which individuals and groups manage impressions. In the case of *Tenganan,* villagers are not "acting" inauthentically for tourists; rather, they are strategically framing their cultural expressions to reinforce internal values and external understanding. For example, the *Usaba Sambah* ceremony is carried out with all its customary complexity, yet the community assigns knowledgeable elders to interpret elements of the ritual for visitors, thereby shaping the tourist experience without altering the ritual content.

This process of cultural framing suggests a nuanced form of agency. The people of *Tenganan* are not passive objects of the tourist gaze, but active mediators of their own cultural visibility. Later authors have argued, the tourist gaze is not unilateral; it is co-constructed. Tourists bring expectations, but hosts have the power to guide, limit, and reorient those expectations through curated experience. In this way, rituals become more than objects of observation; they become occasions for intercultural dialogue, even if that dialogue is non-verbal or symbolic.

The interplay of affirmation and negotiation was also evident in the community's material culture. The production and explanation of *geringsing* textiles, for instance, were frequently described by artisans as "a way of continuing the spirit of our ancestors." These cloths are sold to tourists, but the process of weaving, storytelling, and symbolic explanation provides a context in which economic transactions are embedded in cultural meaning. This reflects Giovine (2020) observations on how ritual *labor* can become a medium for expressing heritage in ways that are both authentic and adaptive.

Nevertheless, participants were keenly aware of the risks of over-performance and commodification. One village guide emphasized, "We do not schedule rituals for tourists. They can come if they want, but the ceremony follows our calendar, not theirs." This subtle but firm statement reflects the community's effort to affirm cultural sovereignty while participating in tourism. The refusal

to alter ritual timing for touristic convenience signals a deliberate resistance to external structuring, ensuring that cultural affirmation remains on Indigenous terms.

The Moral Economy of Sacred Space

In *Tenganan Pegringsingan*, tourism unfolds within a moral landscape deeply shaped by ritual values, customary law, and spiritual obligations. While tourism generates livelihood opportunities, decisions about access, participation, and commercialization are not governed purely by market logic. Instead, they are filtered through a collective ethical framework grounded in *adat* and the sanctity of space. This produces what can be described as a moral economy of sacred space, wherein tourism is evaluated not merely by profit but by its alignment with communal and spiritual priorities.

Participants repeatedly articulated a moral distinction between "tourism that respects" and "tourism that disturbs." One ritual elder explained, "This land is not ours. It belongs to the ancestors and the spirits. We are only caretakers. So, whatever we do, including tourism, must ask for permission not just from the head of the village, but from the invisible ones." This comment underscores a metaphysical dimension of tourism governance rarely captured in conventional tourism planning frameworks. Here, sacredness is not symbolic; it is ontological. The land and the rituals it host are inhabited by unseen beings, and decisions about tourism must reflect this spiritual accountability.

This ethic is institutionalized through the village's *awig-awig*, a set of customary laws that regulate not only social behaviour but also the interface between the sacred and the secular. Tourism-related decisions such as where visitors may walk, when they may enter, and what they may photograph are adjudicated within this normative system. One member of the local cooperative noted that certain houses and ritual compounds are off-limits even to domestic tourists, and that permission for photography must be granted only after the ceremony concludes. These boundaries are not imposed arbitrarily, but reflect an internal moral calculus aimed at preserving balance *(seimbang)* between the human, natural, and spiritual realms.

This localized ethical framework contrasts with the external economic imperatives often associated with destination competitiveness. Instead of maximizing tourist flow or enhancing visibility, the community prioritizes cultural integrity, spiritual resonance, and intergenerational continuity. These findings align with notion of the "sacred economy" in religious tourism, where sacredness functions as a non-negotiable axis of value, resisting full subsumption into market logic. Similarly, Knight (2021) emphasize that in many heritage communities, ritual sites are not simply cultural capital but are moral terrains structured by obligations to ancestors, deities, and cosmological order.

The operation of this moral economy becomes especially evident during key ceremonial periods, when the village may choose to restrict tourism entirely. For example, during the preparatory days leading up to Usaba Sambah, access roads are closed, signage is removed, and guides suspend their services. Such decisions are not made in consultation with tourism authorities or travel platforms but through community consensus based on ritual propriety. One resident explained, "When the ritual is heavy, we must be clean. Not just the body, but the village must be clean. Tourists may bring energy we cannot manage." This statement reflects a form of spiritual risk management rooted in ancestral wisdom rather than secular policy.

Yet the community does not reject tourism. Instead, they engage in what might be called ethical hospitality, a conditional openness premised on mutual respect, ritual awareness, and moral alignment. Tourists are welcome, but they are expected to enter as learners, not consumers. Those who ask questions, express humility, and follow local guidance are often invited to witness more deeply. In contrast, those who intrude or trivialize sacred space may be corrected or gently redirected. This differential engagement is not driven by prejudice, but by a moral logic of reciprocity, where respect is both a prerequisite and a reward.

This theme underscores the inadequacy of conventional tourism models that treat space as neutral or universally accessible. In *Tenganan, s*pace is sacred, and tourism that enters it must do so with care. The economy of tourism is always already moralized, shaped by intangible relationships and ritual obligations. This insight contributes to ongoing debates about the decolonization of tourism planning,

particularly in contexts were Indigenous cosmologies and spiritual geographies challenge extractive and secular logics.

In sum, the people of *Tenganan* do not evaluate tourism solely in economic terms. Their decisions are embedded in a moral economy where sacredness, custom, and ethical responsibility guide what is permissible. By foregrounding these values, the community not only protects its spiritual landscape but also redefines what sustainable tourism can mean, an approach grounded not in metrics but in meaning, and not in growth but in balance.

Thus, the presence of tourists in *Tenganan* does not dilute the authenticity of ritual practice; rather, it becomes an opportunity for reasserting collective identity, particularly in an era where globalization often threatens cultural particularity. By using tourism as a stage for cultural affirmation, the villagers cultivate a form of visibility that is neither imposed nor uncritical. It is reflexive, strategic, and rooted in the lived experience of tradition.

This finding contributes to broader conversations in tourism studies about host agency, negotiated authenticity, and performativity in Indigenous contexts. It supports the view that cultural tourism, when community-controlled, can become a space for empowerment, not merely extraction or display. In *Tenganan,* ritual is not diluted for the gaze of the outsider, it is refracted, translated, and reaffirmed in ways that deepen its meaning for both community and visitor alike.

Intergenerational Shifts and Cultural Adaptation

Amid *Tenganan Pegringsingan's* adherence to ritual continuity and cultural boundaries, there is an undercurrent of change driven by younger generations. Although the village strongly upholds customary law and ritual timekeeping, the ways in which youth engage with tourism and cultural heritage reflect subtle yet significant processes of intergenerational adaptation. Rather than simply replicating the roles of their elders, younger residents are finding ways to mediate tradition and innovation, navigating their identity between ancestral expectations and contemporary tourism dynamics.

Younger participants in this study spoke openly about the tension between preserving tradition and seeking economic opportunities. One young artisan who had recently completed vocational training outside the village shared, "We must respect the elders, but we also see that we can use social media to promote our weaving or explain our culture. If we do not do it, someone else will tell our story, maybe not correctly." This statement reveals an emerging sense of responsibility, not only to protect culture, but to represent it proactively, often using digital platforms to control the narrative.

Digital literacy and external education were often cited as tools of empowerment. Several younger informants discussed their roles in interpreting rituals for visitors or producing explanatory signage and pamphlets with cultural context. In doing so, they positioned themselves not as passive carriers of tradition, but as cultural mediators who translate village values for external audiences without altering their substance. This form of adaptation reflects what Smith & Waterton (2013) describe as heritage work, the ongoing negotiation of identity through selective practices of remembering, preserving, and communicating.

Yet, the process is not without its complexities. Some elders expressed concern that the digital mediation of culture could lead to simplification or distortion. One senior ritual figure remarked, "They [the youth] are smart, but the screen cannot carry the spirit. *Geringsing* is not just a cloth. It is prayer, ritual, and patience. If they forget that, the cloth will be empty." This comment illustrates a generational disjuncture: while both elders and youth value the transmission of heritage, they differ in how it should be done and for what purpose. Whereas the older generation emphasizes spiritual integrity and ritual form, the younger generation seeks relevance, reach, and recognition in a changing world.

Nonetheless, this intergenerational dynamic is not characterized by rupture, but by dialogue and recalibration. Youth are not rejecting tradition; they are reframing it. They attend ceremonies, learn sacred texts, and participate in communal labour, but they also ask questions and propose innovations. In several cases, younger villagers had taken initiative in guiding foreign researchers or collaborating with NGOs to develop responsible tourism guidelines that align with *adat* principles. These hybrid

efforts suggest a growing capacity for adaptive resilience, in which the cultural system absorbs change while maintaining core values.

This process can also be understood through the lens of cultural sustainability, particularly in its emphasis on intergenerational equity and cultural agency. According to Tribedy (2024) sustainable heritage is not merely about preservation but about enabling communities to evolve meaningfully. In *Tenganan*, cultural adaptation is not imposed by external forces alone. It is co-produced within the village, through everyday conversations, ritual participation, and decisions about how best to live with tourism. Youth are increasingly becoming agents of continuity, embodying both reverence for the past and imagination for the future.

Importantly, intergenerational shifts are also reshaping the emotional geography of tourism. While elders may approach tourists with caution, younger residents express a degree of curiosity and confidence in engaging with outsiders. This has implications for how rituals are explained, how tourism is negotiated, and how cultural values are communicated. The affective tone of tourism is thus evolving, not in opposition to sacredness, but in a manner that reconfigures sacred hospitality through the language and medium of the next generation.

Overall, the intergenerational dynamics in *Tenganan Pegringsingan* demonstrate that cultural sustainability is not static. It is lived and contested across generations, shaped by new tools, technologies, and temporalities. Far from *signaling* erosion, these shifts reflect a community's capacity to adapt while remaining anchored in ritual knowledge and ancestral obligation. The challenge and the opportunity lies in ensuring that this adaptation is intentional, dialogic, and grounded in shared values that can guide both present action and future inheritance.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored how local ritual life in *Tenganan Pegringsingan* shapes the contours of eco-cultural tourism in ways that prioritize cultural sovereignty, ethical hospitality, and intergenerational resilience. Through thematic analysis of interviews with community members, the findings reveal that ritual in *Tenganan* is not simply a spiritual or ceremonial practice. It serves as a regulatory mechanism, a platform for identity affirmation, a moral compass for tourism engagement, and a medium of intergenerational dialogue. Rituals define when tourism is appropriate, who may participate, and how cultural meaning is shared with outsiders.

The first theme, “Ritual as Boundary and Gatekeeping Device,” illustrates how ritual is employed to manage access and reinforce community identity, aligning closely with theories of boundary maintenance and cultural sovereignty. The second theme, “Tourism as a Stage for Cultural Affirmation,” highlights how rituals are performed in the presence of tourists without being altered for them, thus allowing the community to assert its narrative on its own terms. The third theme, “The Moral Economy of Sacred Space,” reveals that tourism is not governed by market logic alone but by spiritual accountability and communal ethics embedded in *ada*t. The fourth theme, “Intergenerational Shifts and Cultural Adaptation,” demonstrates how younger residents are not disengaged from tradition but are actively reframing it through new tools and interpretive practices, ensuring its relevance in a changing tourism landscape.

Collectively, these findings challenge instrumental or extractive views of tourism in rural and Indigenous contexts. They suggest that in *Tenganan,* sustainable tourism emerges not from policy imposition or external certification, but from the lived grammar of ritual, the authority of customary law, and the community’s careful stewardship of cultural meaning. This form of tourism is inherently decolonial, grounded in local knowledge systems and spiritual values that precede and in many ways, exceed the logic of tourism itself.

By foregrounding the voices of T*enganan* villagers, this research contributes to broader conversations about cultural sustainability, Indigenous tourism governance, and the relational ethics of hosting. It underscores the need to move beyond frameworks that view ritual as static heritage or spectacle, and instead recognize it as an active, strategic, and morally structured response to tourism engagement.

In doing so, the study affirms that sacredness and sustainability are not mutually exclusive. When community control is respected and ritual frameworks are honored, tourism can become a channel not only for economic development, but for the reaffirmation of identity, the transmission of values, and the protection of intangible heritage. *Tenganan Pegringsingan* offers an instructive example for other communities navigating the delicate interface between cultural integrity and tourism visibility, a reminder that the future of sustainable tourism may well depend on the past, and on those who carry it forward with care.

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Data Availability
The data is available upon reasonable request.

Author Contribution
The authors of this study contributed equally.

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