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MORALITY BEFORE KNOWLEDGE

Development of local wisdom-based ecotourism traditional houses in the digital age

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ABSTRACT
Background: In the post-pandemic era, Bali's tourism industry has shifted toward natural attractions to avoid mass tourism. In Sembung Village, Badung, the development of ecotourism rooted in tradition and culture is now integrated with digital technology. This study aims to analyze the development of ecotourism in the region while preserving the philosophical values of traditional Balinese houses from excessive commodification. **Methods**: This study uses a qualitative research approach to understand why and how the potential of traditional Balinese houses can be developed into a sustainable ecotourism model. **Findings:** The development of traditional house-based ecotourism in Sembung Village in the digital era is at the crossroads of conservation through commercialization and authenticity versus modernization. **Conclusion**: The key differentiator (strategic strength) of Sembung Village lies in the philosophical authenticity of its traditional houses, which modern resorts cannot replicate. The development strategy should focus on Digital Narrative-Based Marketing that uses in-depth storytelling to attract the sustainable tourism market segment that values ethics and education. Technology becomes a bridge to narrate philosophy, not just a tool for mass promotion. The most appropriate sustainable tourism model is the Education-Homestay model, managed through the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes). **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This research bridges the research gap by offering a development model in Sembung Village, where digital technology is not only used for promotion but also as an educational tool to preserve the philosophy of traditional houses.

KEYWORDS: Ecotourism; traditional Balinese houses; digitization.

1. Introduction

Natural tourist destinations have experienced rapid growth after the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of tourists vacationing at these destinations has also increased after the COVID-19 pandemic (Putra, 2023). In 2022, the number of foreign tourists vacationing in Bali reached 2,155,747. This number continues to increase, and by 2024, the number of tourist visits is expected to exceed 6 million people (BPS Provinsi Bali, 2025). This can be seen from the increasing activity at tourist attractions in tourist destination areas. Tourists come to tourist attractions to enjoy the various attractions available to gain new and unique experiences and to interact directly with the local community (Utari, 2017).

As a leading tourist destination in the world, Bali has tourist destinations that attract international and domestic tourists to come and experience its unique culture and nature.

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Destinations in this region have tropical natural charm with cool temperatures. This makes these destinations the choice of foreign and domestic tourists to come on vacation, because these destinations will provide a unique warm atmosphere and sensation (Wijayanti & Indrawati, 2020). Natural tourist destinations with a wide variety are scattered throughout the regencies/cities in the province of Bali. In the southern part of the island, particularly in Badung Regency, there are 30 (thirty) natural tourist destinations spread across northern and central Badung Regency (Dinas Pariwisata Provinsi Bali, 2022). The natural tourist destinations in this regency continue to undergo improvements in both tourist attractions and access infrastructure, such as improvements in the quality and capacity of roads, tourist attraction signage, and health facilities. Tourist attractions in this regency can encourage infrastructure development that can absorb labor, create new jobs, and become a source of regional income (Setda Bandung, 2024). Natural tourist attractions are an alternative for tourists who want to get away from mass tourism at a particular attraction, especially in southern Badung areas such as Seminyak, Canggu, Kuta, and Nusa Dua (Utama, 2025).

This type of tourism raises several issues that need further attention. Several areas in Badung are currently beginning to experience the negative impacts of mass tourism. This is often experienced by the community in the Dalung area, North Kuta sub-district. The community in the Dalung area is accustomed to experiencing clean water crises. Several times, Dalung residents have been seen queuing to get clean water from a tanker truck owned by Perumda Air Minum Tirta Mangutama at the Bukit Ungasan Permai Public Facility to meet their household needs, from bathing and washing to cooking (NusaBali.com, 2025). In addition to the clean water crisis, the biggest problem caused by mass tourism is traffic congestion. Almost all areas in the mass tourism region of Badung Regency experience traffic congestion every day. This is exacerbated by the varied and destructive behavior of road users, such as ignoring traffic signs (Yustiani, 2025). The issues caused by mass tourism will lead to the degradation of local culture due to commercialization and foreign influence, as well as socio-economic problems such as congestion, rising property prices that make it difficult for local residents, and violations by foreign tourists (Hm & Hulu, 2025). To overcome this, a concrete strategy related to sustainable tourism is needed through tourist restrictions and improvements to the tourism management system (Sudarmi & Rusdi, 2022). One ideal tourism solution implemented in Bali is ecotourism because it offers development that minimizes negative impacts and maximizes the conservation of nature, flora, fauna, and local culture, as well as sustainability (Saraswati et al., 2024).

The implementation of ecotourism in Bali, especially in Badung Regency, cannot be separated from the activities of the Balinese people, which are rich in tradition and culture, which is in line with the principles of ecotourism, namely building environmental awareness, culture, and respect (Said, 2020). One element of cultural art that is deeply ingrained in Balinese society is the architecture of traditional Balinese houses (Ata & Ekomadyo, 2018). The construction of traditional Balinese houses is imbued with profound philosophies that animate every inch of these houses.

There are certain requirements in building a traditional Balinese house, such as the application of the Tri Hita Karana and Hasta Kosala Kosali concepts (Parwata, 2011). The application of these profound philosophies provides a unique attraction for tourists who want to learn about Balinese architecture and culture. Traditional Balinese houses have a variety of decorations that express the beauty of symbols and serve as a means of communication. In addition, the decorative motifs used also feature fauna, which are often applied in the form of sculptures. The uniqueness of traditional Balinese houses is one of the local wisdoms that can be preserved as a means of education for the younger generation in continuing Balinese traditions (Agustin et al., 2025).

One area in Badung Regency that has great potential for ecotourism development is Sembung Village. Located in Mengwi District, this village has unique traditional and religious rituals that preserve traditional Balinese houses (Surpi et al., 2025). The people who live in this village have traditional Balinese houses that have been occupied from generation to generation. There are traditional houses that are still beautiful with natural

materials and traditional houses that have a modern touch that reflects unique cultures and traditions (Satria et al., 2022). In addition, in Sembung Village, there is also a historic temple, Pura Dalem Paruman or Pauman, which is a place for holding very unique religious rituals for the local religious community and is also an authentic cultural heritage. Furthermore, this village has a beautiful and scenic natural landscape, namely rice fields and plantations that are managed in a traditional way and unique to the subak culture (Lestari, 2020). This culture and tradition can be developed into a culture-based natural tourist attraction, namely ecotourism, by involving the local community as planners, implementers, and managers with the aim of community empowerment and sustainability because they are the owners of the culture in this village, so that knowledge of local traditions can be fully understood and applied in daily life (Widari, 2022). The local community is well aware of the geographical conditions of the local village in receiving the number of tourist visits, so that the socio-cultural aspects, local economy, and environmental awareness of attractions in ecotourism are not under pressure.

Traditional houses in Sembung village are a local cultural heritage with philosophical and cultural significance that can be integrated into the development of ecotourism based on local wisdom (Fauzi, 2022). This tradition stems from the ideas and work of the local community, which are based on an understanding of harmony with nature (Riyanisma et al., 2025). This harmony is the concept of Tri Hita Karana, which is a harmonious atmosphere between humans and their natural surroundings, humans and their fellow humans, and humans and God. The traditional Balinese houses in Sembung village have the potential to be packaged as ecotourism attractions because they are located within the area of 6 subak yeh and nine subak abian (Kristin & Anom, 2017). This is a cultural and natural attraction, so this potential can be developed by integrating traditional houses into existing tour packages, for example, by offering agrotourism or cultural tourism packages that include visits to these traditional houses.

Traditional houses, as the heritage of the local community, have philosophical and sociological significance. Philosophically, traditional houses often reflect the worldview, cosmology, and spiritual relationship of the community with nature and their ancestors, as seen in the orientation of the building facing a certain direction, such as towards a mountain or a crossroads, and the use of natural materials (Ramadhani et al., 2025). In traditional houses, families carry out their social, cultural, and religious rituals, thereby fostering harmonious family ties as Balinese families steeped in customs inspired by Hinduism.

In Balinese architecture, the layout of the house, known as Asta Kosala Kosali, is designed to facilitate daily activities and religious ceremonies, all of which are strongly rooted in the principles of Hinduism and local customs. Social interactions, daily offerings, and large family events in designated spaces within the house complex foster a deep sense of togetherness and identity (Purningsih et al., 2023).

The development of ecotourism in Sembung Village must also be adapted to current technological developments, where tourists have begun to shift from conventional tourism activities to digital era tourism. Digital transformation includes a digitization process with a focus on efficiency, and digital innovation with a focus on enhancing existing physical products with digital capabilities (Wardhani et al., 2024).

Ecotourism managers can utilize digital technology to improve operational efficiency, enhance service quality, improve the quality of the tourist experience, and increase environmental awareness (Berampu, 2023). It is imperative for ecotourism to create a concrete strategy to prepare itself to compete in the digital era. Therefore, this study analyzes the potential of the local wisdom of Balinese Traditional Houses in Sembung Village as an ecotourism attraction, formulates a model/strategy for the development and marketing of ecotourism based on Balinese Traditional Houses in the digital era, and identifies the social, cultural, and economic implications of such ecotourism development. This research is expected to contribute to the science of sustainable tourism and local wisdom and provide concrete recommendations for the local government, tourism village managers, and the community of Sembung Village.

2. Methods

This study aims to analyze the potential of traditional house local wisdom ecotourism attractions, formulate strategies, and identify the implications of developing ecotourism based on the local wisdom of traditional Balinese houses. This requires a deep understanding of integrating local wisdom and the Tri Hita Karana concept into traditional houses, alongside digital platforms, in the context of ecotourism development for economic equality, socio-cultural stability, and environmental awareness (Saputra, 2025). Therefore, the approach used must be able to capture the meaning, process, and perspective of the research subjects (Anebelle & Ramadhan, 2025). This study uses a qualitative research approach to understand why and how the potential of traditional Balinese houses can be developed into a sustainable ecotourism model, rather than simply measuring their impact (Surpi & Purwadi, 2021). This allows researchers to explore rich, in-depth, and contextual information about social and cultural processes and development strategies. The study location was specifically chosen in Sembung Village, Mengwi District, Badung Regency, Bali. Given its potential, this village is well-suited as a case study. The main object of research is the traditional Balinese houses in the village, with a focus on local wisdom values such as the Tri Hita Karana concept in architecture and spatial philosophy, which have the potential to be integrated into ecotourism packages and digital promotion.

Primary data were collected directly in the field, including in-depth interviews with key informants and direct observation of objects and activities at the research site. Secondary data was obtained from existing sources. This included village documents (Village Medium-Term Development Plan/RPJMDes, village statistical data) and relevant regulations (e.g., regional regulations on spatial planning, cultural preservation, or tourism). The collected data was analyzed using triangulation techniques to ensure the validity and depth of the information (Nurfajriani et al., 2024). In the initial stage, data from interviews and observations were transcribed, grouped by theme (coding), and presented in a rich and descriptive narrative form. The goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current conditions, the potential of local wisdom, and the challenges faced in developing traditional home ecotourism in the digital age (Afsari et al., 2021). After an in-depth description, a SWOT framework will be used as a strategic tool to formulate a development model.

2.1 Research location and subjects

Sembung Village, Mengwi District, was chosen by the researcher as the location for research on traditional house-based ecotourism. There are 593 traditional Balinese houses in Sembung Village. These traditional houses are located in a village with rice fields and plantations divided into 15 subaks (6 subak yeh and 9 subak abian) and led by 6 pekasehs (farm group leaders).



Fig. 1. Balinese traditional building at Sembung's villager house

There are also 4 temples in Sembung Village, serving as supporting attractions in traditional Balinese home-based ecotourism. Sembung Village also has 13 springs, the sources of life for its people. This research was conducted from October to November 2025, approximately

2 (two) months. The first month of the research focused on data collection, and the following month on processing and presenting the data in a report.

2.2 Data collection methods

In this study, the researcher collected data by conducting direct observations at the research site. At the research site, the researcher observed the situation and conditions of the village, irrigation channels, natural potential in the form of rice fields and plantations, places of worship (*Pura Dalem Paruman*), public facilities such as markets, health centers, traditional meeting halls (*wantilan*), and traditional houses of the villagers (*Umah Bali*). In addition to observation, the researcher interviewed the village head of Sembung, community leaders, the head of the tourism awareness group, and tourism activists. At the location, the researcher documented information from informants, which would be used as data for analysis to answer the research questions in this article.

2.3 Data analysis techniques

The data collected at the traditional Balinese houses was processed, analyzed, and interpreted. The researchers analyzed the data in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The information obtained during the interviews was organized to sharpen the data analysis, enabling conclusions to be drawn in accordance with the objectives of this study.

To obtain a more in-depth analysis, the researcher used the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. The researcher presented the data to draw conclusions in the form of narratives, matrices, charts, networks, or diagrams. The researcher analyzed the data in a systematic and transparent manner to produce accurate conclusions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Potential for eco-tourism based on local wisdom in traditional Balinese houses

The traditional Balinese houses in Sembung Village have authentic characteristics. A number of traditional Balinese houses in Sembung Village are relatively well-maintained, authentic, and follow the philosophy of Asta Kosala Kosali (Bali's sacred spatial arrangement), making them different from ordinary modern homestays. In addition to traditional Balinese houses, Sembung Village also has a supportive natural landscape (rice fields, subak, markets, and sacred places, such as Dalem Paruman temples, which host unique rituals, and traditional markets) that can be integrated with cultural experiences (ecotourism). In developing eco-tourism based on local wisdom, traditional Balinese houses must operate without damaging the local environment and culture. This is also related to economic feasibility (profitability), including market potential and income generated by the eco-tourism concept. The readiness and participation of the Sembung Village community are also major factors in community-based eco-tourism operations. The Local tourism awareness groups/*kelompok sadar wisata* (POKDARWIS) in Sembung Village is willing to participate in community-based tourism (CBT) schemes.

In developing eco-tourism based on traditional Balinese houses, several challenges arise. One of them is the definition of a traditional house as a sacred space (*Niskala*). Opening traditional Balinese houses to the public may risk disturbing/damaging the sanctity of the house and the family's privacy. This can be mitigated by establishing strict village rules (*Perarem*) regarding access restrictions, visitor ethics, and a focus on cultural/philosophical education, not just accommodation. Choose houses that are spiritually and structurally ready. The development of eco-tourism based on traditional Balinese houses in Bali has also been implemented in many places. To highlight the differences in eco-tourism in Sembung Village, the focus can be on “Balinese Sacred

Architecture Education" and "Authentic Balinese Farmer Life Experience," integrated with the Subak system. The limitations of the traditional Balinese house infrastructure in Sembung Village, such as inadequate drainage and sanitation facilities, also pose a challenge, so a concept of "Luxury of Authenticity" must be applied. The limitations of the facilities in traditional houses can be communicated to visitors from the outset. Investment should be made in improving sanitation and supporting facilities in traditional houses, rather than modernizing them in a way that removes their character. The ecotourism potential in Sembung Village should not only focus on providing accommodation (homestays), but also be developed as a center for learning/education, and for sustainable cultural experiences. The following is a matrix of the concept of ecotourism based on traditional Balinese houses in Sembung Village.

Table 1. Matrix of the concept of ecotourism based on traditional Balinese houses

Component	Description and Unique Appeal	Ecotourism Integration
Traditional House (Accommodation)	Concept: Educational Homestay. Guests do not merely stay overnight, but live with local families. Hosts are systematically trained in hospitality ethics and basic foreign-language communication.	The number of rooms and guests is strictly limited to maintain the Cultural Carrying Capacity. Economic benefits are directly distributed to homeowner hosts, ensuring local ownership and empowerment.
Core Experience (Exploration)	Asta Kosala Kosali Tour: A structured, guided tour led by trained local guides to interpret the philosophical principles underlying the spatial organization of the traditional compound, including the *Natah* (courtyard), *Bale Daja*, *Pamerajan* (family shrine), *Bale Delod*, *Jineng* (rice barn), *Paon* (kitchen), and the *Kaja–Kelod* orientation system.	Emphasis on the use of locally sourced and natural materials for food and handicrafts, thereby minimizing the carbon footprint. The experience prioritizes philosophical and cultural narratives over performative displays.
Sustainable Activities	Subak and Culinary Workshops: Participants learn agricultural practices, post-harvest processing, and traditional cooking based on the nearby *Subak* irrigation system. Visitors also engage in simple daily rituals, such as preparing *Canang Sari* offerings.	Supports the preservation of the *Subak* system as a World Heritage cultural landscape. Provides supplementary income for farmers and customary stakeholders, strengthening local livelihoods.
Management	Managed collaboratively by the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) and the Village Customary Institution, ensuring equitable profit-sharing and maintaining cultural control within the community.	Revenue is allocated for the conservation of traditional houses not yet participating in the program and for local educational initiatives, reinforcing long-term sustainability.

To support eco-tourism based on the wisdom of traditional Balinese houses in Sembung Village in the digital era, a concrete strategy is needed to ensure the marketing of this tourist attraction is carried out effectively. One such strategy is the creation of a "Volunteer Architects" network, a concept that invites local and international architects and artists to become conservation volunteers who help document, maintain, and promote traditional houses in Sembung, turning them into a global research center. Digitizing the tourist experience, such as creating a 3D (three-dimensional) virtual tour of selected traditional houses, could be a good strategy. This serves as both a promotional tool and a digital conservation tool (architectural records) in case of damage. The integration of renewable energy can also be an added value that attracts tourists amid energy crises in many places. Although the architecture remains traditional, the widespread application of renewable technologies, such as micro solar panels and natural wastewater treatment systems, strengthens the claim that it is a natural ecotourism destination. This model

combines Cultural Authenticity based on local wisdom (Traditional Houses) with Ecotourism Principles (Sustainability and Community Participation), ensuring that Sembung Village offers unique and high-value products amid Bali's tourism competition.

3.2 Strategies for developing eco-tourism based on traditional Balinese houses in the digital era

Developing ecotourism strategies in the digital era requires integrating technology, strong narratives, and a focus on authentic experiences. An analysis of tourist needs in the digital era highlights the importance of global visibility for the development of ecotourism in Sembung Village, which is easily overshadowed by the many other destinations in Bali. Deep narratives rooted in folklore also attract digital tourists seeking unique stories, not just accommodation. Tourist feedback can also be used as digital data for continuous improvement and development. Too much digitization can also have negative impacts, such as eliminating the warmth of community interactions and the threat of digital overtourism, where viralization can attract too many visitors, exceeding the cultural carrying capacity of the village. Digital Narrative-Based Marketing (The Storytelling Engine) is a pillar for attracting tourists who appreciate cultural depth, sustainability, and environmental awareness. Create short video content (for TikTok/Instagram Reels) and in-depth articles (for blogs/Medium) that explain Asta Kosala Kosali's philosophy as the foundation of traditional Balinese houses. Content ideas can discuss topics related to traditional Balinese houses, such as “Why should bedrooms face Mount Agung?” and “The meaning of the spacious courtyard (Natah) in Balinese family life,” which can be interpreted in greater depth. The media used can be focused on YouTube and the official website managed by Local tourism awareness groups/*kelompok sadar wisata* (POKDARWIS) Sembung Village. Behind-the-scenes campaigns and meet-the-hosts introduce the faces behind the homestays, such as homeowners, farmers, ranchers, craftsmen or artists, and traditional leaders. This builds trust and emphasizes the elements of Community-Based Tourism (CBT). Use high-quality professional photos that highlight the texture of wood, carvings, and the authentic atmosphere of traditional houses in contrast to hotels or resorts. Utilizing micro/niche influencers rather than mega-influencers, collaborating with travel bloggers and storytellers who focus on ecotourism, architecture, and sustainable culture. They bring a higher-quality audience that appreciates authentic/premium authenticity. This strategy adheres firmly to the philosophy of “Digitalization for Authenticity, not a Substitute for Authenticity.” Technology is used as a bridge to convey deep cultural values, manage tourist flows, responsibly campaign for environmental awareness, and ensure economic benefits return to the community.

3.3 SWOT analysis

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis is a highly effective tool for testing the feasibility and risks of ecotourism development strategies in Sembung Village (Hamin & Pongoliu, 2023). This analysis will be integrated with digital aspects and the philosophy of traditional Balinese houses. The core strengths of Sembung Village are relevant to traditional house-based ecotourism.

Table 2. Strengths analysis of Balinese traditional house–based ecotourism

Code	Strength	Relevance in the Digital Era
S1	Authenticity of Architecture and Philosophy (Asta Kosala Kosali). The Balinese traditional houses in Sembung possess intrinsic cultural value rather than being imitative or staged constructions.	Content Appeal: Provides rich, distinctive, and educational narratives that are highly attractive for digital content emphasizing cultural depth and authenticity.
S2	Strong Potential for a Community-Based Tourism (CBT) Model. Control and	Digital Trust: Enhances credibility among sustainable travelers seeking positive social impact. Transparency in fund allocation can

	participation are firmly embedded within the local community.	be effectively communicated through digital platforms.
S3	Integration of Culture and Nature (Subak). The village is embedded within a living and sustainable Subak agricultural system.	Digital Experience Packaging: Enables the marketing of integrated experiential packages (accommodation + farming activities, Subak trekking + culinary experiences, Balinese wellness) that can be efficiently promoted via village-based booking platforms.
S4	Limited Capacity as a Form of Uniqueness. The small number of traditional houses necessitates a premium and exclusive tourism model.	Scarcity Strategy: Encourages early booking and positions Sembung Village as a boutique destination that is intentionally "hard to access," thereby increasing its perceived digital market value.

Table 2 presents an analysis of the internal strengths of Balinese traditional house–based ecotourism in Sembung Village, highlighting cultural authenticity, community-based governance, and the integration of cultural and natural systems. These strengths demonstrate strategic relevance in the digital context, particularly as sources of narrative capital, market differentiation, and trust-building among sustainable tourism segments.

Table 3. Weaknesses Analysis of Balinese Traditional House–Based Ecotourism

Code	Weakness	Impact on Digital Development
W1	Non-Global Accommodation Standards. Traditional houses may not meet modern hospitality facility standards (e.g., air conditioning, hotel-standard en-suite bathrooms).	Risk of Negative Reviews: This limitation must be anticipated and communicated very clearly on digital platforms (websites and OTAs) to manage visitor expectations.
W2	Local Digital Literacy Gap. Limited human resource capacity within the village to manage booking platforms, respond to online reviews, and produce high-quality digital content.	External Dependency: Requires substantial initial investment in local community training or the recruitment of external professionals.
W3	Challenges in Quality Control. Ensuring consistent cleanliness and standardized homestay service quality across all traditional houses.	Digital Reputation Risk: A single negative review can damage the image of the entire village if control mechanisms and training systems are not rigorously enforced.
W4	Limited Internet and Electricity Coverage. Digital infrastructure in certain traditional house areas may be suboptimal.	Operational Disruptions: Interferes with check-in processes, guest communication, and the on-site use of AR/VR technologies.

Despite its substantial cultural and structural strengths, the development of traditional house–based ecotourism in Sembung Village is constrained by several internal limitations. Accordingly, Table 3 examines key weaknesses related to accommodation standards, local digital capacity, quality control, and digital infrastructure, all of which may affect operational performance and online reputation.

Table 4. Opportunities analysis of Balinese traditional house–based ecotourism

Code	Opportunity	Digital Utilization Strategy
O1	Growth of the Global Sustainable Tourism Segment. Increasing demand from travelers who prioritize ethics, cultural authenticity, and environmental impact.	SEO and Content Optimization: Apply targeted keywords such as "Cultural Heritage Stay," "Sustainable Bali Trip," and "Authentic Balinese Architecture" across all digital content.
O2	Advancement of Immersive Technologies (AR/VR/360°). These technologies enable deep storytelling without compromising physical authenticity.	AR/VR Implementation: Develop on-site AR educational tours and 360° VR tours for global pre-visit marketing (Strategy B.2).
O3	High Engagement with Cultural Content on Social Media. Algorithms tend to prioritize educational and distinctive content.	Social Media Activation: Focus on short-form video formats and authentic

		storytelling (Strategies A.1 & A.2) to achieve organic virality.
O4	Supportive Local and National Government Policies for CBT. Availability of village funds and facilitation programs for community-based tourism development.	Digital Access to Information: Utilize digital channels to identify, apply for, and manage funding and capacity-building programs offered by government agencies.

Beyond internal factors, the external environment offers significant opportunities for the advancement of ecotourism in Sembung Village. Table 4 outlines major opportunities arising from shifting global tourism preferences, rapid advancements in digital and immersive technologies, high engagement with cultural content on social media, and supportive government policies, which can be strategically leveraged through targeted digital initiatives.

Nevertheless, these opportunities coexist with external threats that may undermine the long-term sustainability of the destination if left unaddressed. Table 5 identifies critical threats, including competition from established traditional villages, risks of overtourism, evolving digital regulations, and global crises, underscoring the importance of integrated digital and community-based mitigation strategies.

Table 5. Threats analysis of Balinese traditional house–based ecotourism

Code	Threat	Digital and Community-Based Mitigation
T1	Competition from Other Traditional Village Destinations. Other villages (e.g., Penglipuran and Tenganan) are already well known and supported by more developed tourism infrastructure.	Digital Differentiation: Clearly articulate Sembung's distinct positioning by emphasizing philosophical interpretation and Subak-based educational authenticity, rather than accommodation alone.
T2	Overtourism and Excessive Commercialization. Successful digital exposure may attract visitor numbers that exceed local cultural tolerance thresholds.	Strengthening a Digital Code of Conduct: Implement digital gatekeeping mechanisms (Strategy B.1) requiring ethical consent prior to booking, and enforce daily or weekly visitor quotas through booking platforms.
T3	Changes in Digital and Data Privacy Regulations. New regulations governing guest data management and the use of digital and social media platforms.	Digital Compliance: Local communities should collaborate with legal and technology experts to ensure that websites and data-processing practices comply with applicable regulations.
T4	Natural Disasters or Global Pandemics. External crises that disrupt travel flows and tourism supply chains.	Digital Revenue Diversification: Develop non-travel digital products (e.g., e-books on Balinese architecture or conservation-oriented NFTs) as alternative and resilient income streams.

The SWOT analysis presented in Tables 2–5 reveals that Balinese traditional house–based ecotourism in Sembung Village is structurally well-positioned to compete within the contemporary digital tourism landscape, provided that its development is guided by strategic selectivity and strong community governance. The primary strengths of the destination lie in its architectural and philosophical authenticity, grounded in Asta Kosala Kosali, and in the strong potential for a Community-Based Tourism (CBT) model that ensures local control and benefit distribution. These attributes represent a form of cultural capital that is highly compatible with digital storytelling, enabling Sembung Village to construct a differentiated destination narrative that emphasizes depth of meaning rather than mass consumption. Furthermore, the integration of cultural practices with the living Subak agricultural system enhances the experiential value of the destination, allowing for the development of integrated, experience-based tourism products that align with the preferences of sustainable travelers. Importantly, the village's limited accommodation capacity, often perceived as a constraint, functions strategically as a mechanism of

exclusivity, supporting a premium positioning within digital markets through scarcity-based branding.

Despite these advantages, the analysis also highlights several internal weaknesses that may hinder effective digital engagement if left unaddressed. Non-global accommodation standards inherent to traditional houses pose a tangible risk to online reputation, particularly in review-driven digital ecosystems. In addition, gaps in local digital literacy and human resource capacity limit the village's ability to independently manage booking systems, online communication, and content production, thereby increasing reliance on external actors. Challenges in maintaining consistent service quality across multiple households further exacerbate reputational vulnerability, as negative digital feedback can rapidly scale beyond individual providers. These limitations underscore the necessity of institutionalized quality control mechanisms, targeted capacity-building programs, and transparent digital communication strategies to manage visitor expectations.

At the same time, the external environment presents substantial opportunities that reinforce the strategic relevance of digital transformation. The growing global demand for sustainable, ethical, and culturally grounded tourism experiences creates a favorable market context for destinations such as Sembung Village. Advances in immersive technologies, including AR, VR, and 360-degree media, offer innovative tools for conveying complex cultural narratives without compromising physical authenticity. High engagement rates for cultural content on social media further amplify the potential for organic digital visibility, while supportive government policies and funding schemes for CBT provide an enabling institutional framework. Collectively, these opportunities suggest that digital platforms should not merely function as promotional tools but as interpretive and governance instruments that mediate access, education, and ethical participation.

Nevertheless, the analysis also identifies significant external threats that necessitate a precautionary and adaptive strategy. Competition from well-established traditional villages with more mature tourism infrastructure increases the risk of market marginalization if differentiation is not clearly articulated. Moreover, the success of digital exposure carries the inherent danger of overtourism and cultural commodification, potentially eroding the very values that constitute the destination's core appeal. Regulatory uncertainty related to data privacy and digital governance adds another layer of risk, particularly for community-managed platforms with limited technical expertise. Finally, global disruptions such as natural disasters or pandemics highlight the vulnerability of tourism-dependent livelihoods, reinforcing the importance of digital income diversification beyond physical visitation.

Taken together, the SWOT analysis demonstrates that the sustainability of traditional house–based ecotourism in Sembung Village depends not on maximizing visitor numbers, but on strategically aligning cultural authenticity, digital mediation, and community control. Digitalization, in this context, should be understood as a selective and ethical process that enhances resilience, safeguards cultural integrity, and strengthens local agency, rather than as a mechanism for unchecked growth.

3.4 Implications of developing eco-tourism based on traditional Balinese houses in Sembung village in the digital era on socio-cultural, economic, and environmental aspects

The development of eco-tourism based on traditional Balinese houses in Sembung village in the digital era has profound and complex implications on the three pillars of sustainability: socio-cultural, economic, and environmental. This analysis considers how the integration of digital technology strengthens or weakens these impacts. The socio-cultural implications center on how this development affects the identity, values, and structure of the local community.

The table illustrates that the development of Balinese traditional house–based ecotourism in Sembung Village generates complex socio-cultural implications characterized by both reinforcing and destabilizing dynamics. From the perspective of cultural preservation, tourism functions as a double-edged process. On the one hand, the integration

of traditional houses into ecotourism revitalizes core philosophical frameworks such as Asta Kosala Kosali and Tri Hita Karana, transforming them into living knowledge systems rather than static heritage. Their increased visibility and economic relevance motivate younger generations to engage with traditional architecture and spatial philosophy, which might otherwise be marginalized in contemporary life. On the other hand, the same process risks cultural commodification, where sacred (niskala) values are simplified, staged, or selectively presen=ted to meet tourist expectations, potentially eroding ritual authenticity and ethical depth.

Table 6. Implications of the development of eco-tourism based on traditional Balinese houses in Sembung Village on socio-cultural aspects

Aspect	Positive Impacts (Benefits)	Negative Impacts (Risks)
Cultural Preservation	Revitalization of Philosophical Values: Strengthening the understanding and practice of *Asta Kosala Kosali* (sacred spatial order) and *Tri Hita Karana* (harmonious relationships), as these values gain renewed relevance through tourism. Younger generations are increasingly motivated to learn and preserve traditional architectural knowledge.	Cultural Commodification: Sacred (niskala) values risk being transformed into market-oriented (skala) commodities. Daily ethics and rituals may be simplified or distorted to accommodate tourist expectations.
Community Engagement	Enhanced Participation in CBT: Digitalization through community-managed platforms facilitates transparent benefit distribution and ensures that narrative control remains within the local community, thereby strengthening collective ownership.	Social Conflict and Digital Inequality: Potential social jealousy may arise between participating and non-participating households. Families with lower digital literacy risk marginalization from operational and economic benefits.
Education and Identity	Digital Educational Pathways: AR/VR technologies can be used to communicate architectural and philosophical meanings to visitors and, more critically, to function as conservation-oriented educational tools for local children.	Erosion of Core Values: Intensive interaction with external cultures through social media and tourism exposure may influence behavioral change, lifestyle shifts, or the abandonment of traditions in favor of global trends.

In terms of community engagement, the table demonstrates that digitalization plays a critical mediating role in shaping outcomes. Community-managed digital platforms enhance transparency, strengthen local control over narratives, and reinforce the principles of Community-Based Tourism (CBT), thereby fostering a stronger sense of collective ownership. However, these benefits are unevenly distributed. Differential access to digital skills and participation opportunities may generate social tensions between households involved in tourism activities and those excluded from them. Without inclusive governance mechanisms, digitalization risks reproducing internal inequalities rather than mitigating them.

The educational and identity-related impacts further underscore the transformative power of digital tools. Immersive technologies such as AR and VR offer significant opportunities to translate complex architectural philosophies into accessible educational content, not only for visitors but also for local children, positioning digital media as instruments of cultural conservation. Nevertheless, sustained exposure to global cultural flows through tourism and social media introduces the risk of identity dilution. Changes in behavior, lifestyle aspirations, and value systems may gradually displace local traditions, particularly among younger community members, if cultural education does not remain grounded in local epistemologies.

Overall, the table highlights that the socio-cultural sustainability of traditional house–based ecotourism depends less on tourism growth itself than on how cultural meaning, digital mediation, and community governance are strategically aligned. Positive impacts

emerge when digitalization is employed as a tool for education, empowerment, and ethical interpretation, whereas negative impacts intensify when market logic overrides cultural boundaries. Consequently, safeguarding cultural integrity requires deliberate institutional frameworks that balance economic incentives with normative controls rooted in local values.

Table 7. Economic implications of Balinese traditional house–based ecotourism development

Aspect	Positive Impacts (Benefits)	Negative Impacts (Risks)
Income Diversification	Inclusive Revenue Generation: Ecotourism provides new income streams for homeowners, local guides, and farmers through local food supply chains. Village funds (BUMDes) can be reinvested in public and communal services.	Single-Sector Dependency: The community may become overly dependent on tourism. External shocks (e.g., pandemics or economic crises) could immediately disrupt the village economy.
Premium Value Creation	Digital Premium Pricing: By emphasizing strong narratives of authenticity and sustainability on digital platforms, Sembung Village can attract high-value market segments and command premium prices rather than compete with mass-market hotels.	Economic Leakage: If construction materials, food supplies, or skilled labor are sourced from outside the village due to limited local capacity, a significant portion of tourism revenue may leak out of the local economy.
Innovation and Capacity Building	Human Resource Capacity Enhancement: The need to manage digital booking systems, social media promotion, and AR-based tours drives digital skills training and capacity building among village youth (as identified in SWOT W2).	High Digital Start-up Costs: Developing secure booking platforms, acquiring hardware (e.g., cameras, AR devices), and training human resources require substantial and sustained initial investment.

While Table 7 highlights the economic implications of Balinese traditional house–based ecotourism in Sembung Village, particularly in terms of income diversification, premium value creation, and capacity building-economic outcomes alone do not fully capture the sustainability of the development model. Therefore, Table 8 extends the analysis by examining the environmental implications of this ecotourism approach, emphasizing how economic incentives interact with physical conservation, resource management, and environmental education, as well as the associated ecological risks.

Table 8. Environmental implications of Balinese traditional house–based ecotourism development

Aspect	Positive Impacts (Benefits)	Negative Impacts (Risks)
Physical Conservation	Architectural Preservation: Economic incentives generated through homestay activities encourage homeowners to maintain and restore traditional houses using appropriate natural materials, rather than replacing them with energy-intensive modern concrete buildings.	Increased Carbon Footprint: Tourist arrivals, even when controlled, increase demand for clean water, waste management, and energy. Digital operations (servers, devices, and online platforms) also contribute to a growing digital carbon footprint.
Resource Management	Support for the Subak System: Ecotourism integrated with the Subak irrigation system enhances the economic value of agricultural land, reducing pressure to sell fertile land for concrete-based resort development.	Latent Urbanization: Tourist demand for modern amenities (24-hour electricity, high-speed Wi-Fi, hot water) may indirectly stimulate the development of non-ecological and unsustainable infrastructure.
Environmental Education	Global Environmental Awareness: Digital platforms enable Sembung Village to promote local waste-management practices (e.g., waste separation and	Digital Visual Pollution: Overly aggressive digital marketing may encourage increased air travel, contributing to carbon emissions, and lead to unethical photographic

reuse) and the Subak irrigation system as best practices that can be adopted globally.	practices in sacred spaces ("photo pollution").

Based on the analysis of the implications of Balinese traditional house–based ecotourism development in Sembung Village within the digital era, this study finds that the concept operates at the intersection of conservation through commercialization and the tension between authenticity and modernization. Its success is highly dependent on the capacity of the community, operating under a Community-Based Tourism (CBT) framework, to retain control over development processes by positioning digital technology as a tool for governance and education rather than as a channel for mass marketing. Strategic interventions must therefore actively mitigate the risks of cultural commodification, through the implementation of a digital code of conduct and the reinforcement of philosophical education, while simultaneously addressing digital divides through targeted community training, in order to maximize positive outcomes.

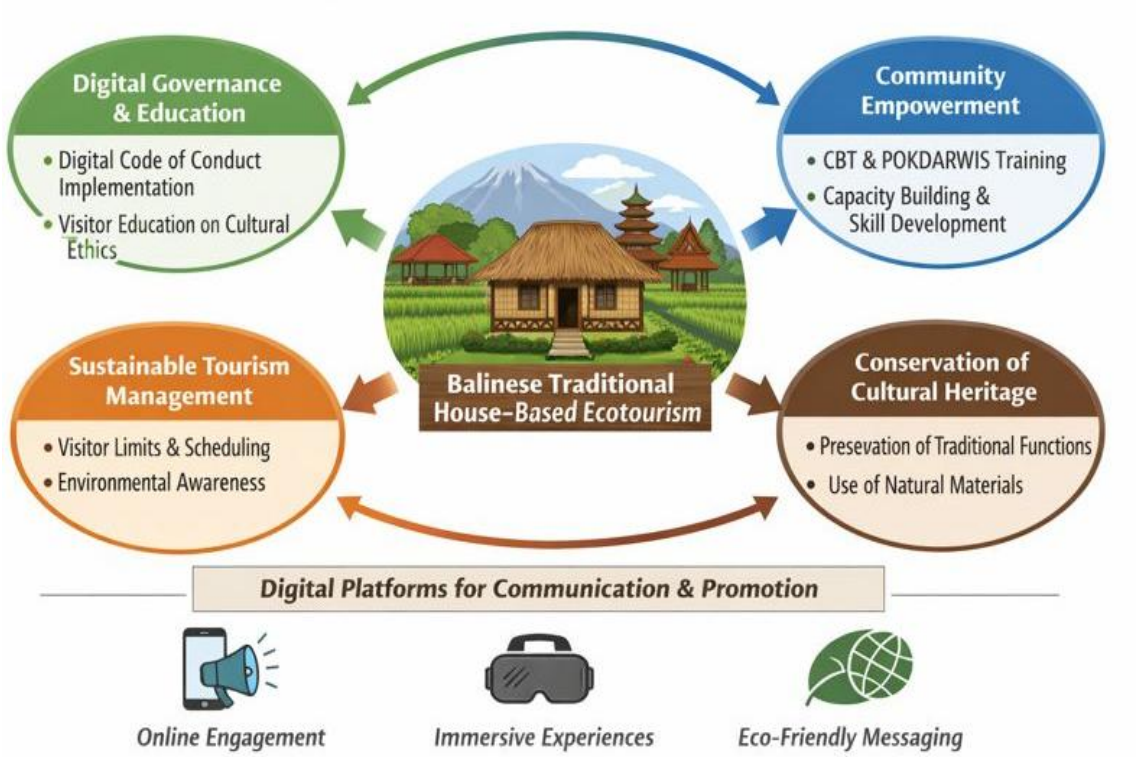


Fig. 2. Ecotourism development concept in the digital era with cultural value preservation

Local tourism awareness groups/*kelompok sadar wisata* (POKDARWIS) can be systematically empowered to enhance human resource capacity, positioning community members as the primary agents of ecotourism development in Sembung Village with adequate knowledge and awareness of the conservation benefits associated with traditional houses. In this context, traditional houses should be understood not merely as physical structures but as living spaces endowed with social, functional, and philosophical meanings that sustain daily life and support customary and religious rituals. The Balinese traditional houses of Sembung Village, with their distinctive functions and embedded social and philosophical values, can be integrated into ecotourism development without altering their original meanings or uses. This integration is achievable by framing traditional houses as cultural attractions grounded in interpretation rather than transformation. Furthermore, local communities can integrate ecotourism initiatives with digital platforms to educate visitors at an early stage regarding ethical conduct and to regulate daily and weekly visitation limits, thereby safeguarding the authenticity and uniqueness of traditional houses. As illustrated in Figure 2, the proposed ecotourism development concept

demonstrates how digital-era tourism can be aligned with the preservation of cultural values.

The utilization of digital technology by local managers and community groups also enhances operational efficiency by enabling direct engagement with consumers for the promotion of tourism products available in Sembung Village. Digital platforms can improve service quality and enrich visitor experiences through interpretive and immersive digital tools. Moreover, early-stage digital communication allows managers to raise visitor awareness regarding environmental responsibility, including the importance of using natural and locally appropriate materials within the ecotourism setting of Sembung Village.

4. Conclusions

The development of Balinese traditional house–based ecotourism in Sembung Village in the digital era constitutes a strategy that is philosophically grounded and economically promising; however, its success depends on controlled implementation and a strong commitment to authentic cultural values. This initiative does not merely commodify accommodation but offers a form of "luxury of authenticity" through the philosophical education of Asta Kosala Kosali embedded in traditional house architecture and its integration with the sustainable Subak system.

The key strategic differentiation of Sembung Village lies in the philosophical authenticity of its traditional houses, an attribute that cannot be replicated by modern resorts. Development strategies should therefore prioritize digital narrative–based marketing, employing deep storytelling approaches to attract sustainable travelers who value ethics, education, and cultural meaning. In this context, digital technology functions as a narrative bridge for philosophical interpretation rather than as a tool for mass promotion. The most appropriate sustainable tourism model for Sembung Village is the educational homestay approach managed through the Village-Owned Enterprise/*Badan Usaha Milik Desa* (BUMDes), ensuring that the principles of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) are effectively implemented. Under this model, tourism revenues are transparently allocated toward the physical conservation of traditional houses and the development of local human resources.

Digitalization, particularly through a community-based reservation platform, should serve as an instrument of transparency and governance rather than market liberalization. The most critical challenges identified include the risk of cultural commodification and the persistence of local digital literacy gaps. To mitigate these risks, Sembung Village must explicitly implement a digital control gate in the form of mandatory visitor consent to a Digital Code of Conduct as a prerequisite for booking. Simultaneously, sustained investment in digital capacity building for BUMDes personnel is essential to address internal weaknesses and prevent economic leakage resulting from dependence on external actors.

Ultimately, the success of ecotourism development in Sembung Village hinges on adherence to the principle of "digitalization for authenticity, not as a substitute for authenticity." The broader implication of this approach is the reinforcement of socio-cultural conservation alongside inclusive economic diversification integrated with environmental stewardship through the Subak system. In doing so, Sembung Village has the potential to serve as a model case demonstrating how digital technology can strengthen local identity and foster premium, ethical, and sustainable tourism within the context of globalization. Future research is recommended to design context-specific digital training modules for BUMDes human resources and to formulate binding village-level regulations (*Perarem*) governing the ethical use of digital technology in tourism development.

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Author Contribution
I. K. S., participated in the information search, designed the experiments, validated the data obtained using various statistical tools, and worked on editing the document P.T.T., compiled information and participated in writing and editing the document.

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Ethical review and approval were waived for this study due to the nature of the research, which did not involve interventions, experiments, or procedures that posed risks to participants. The study relied on voluntary participation and informed consent, with all data collected and analyzed in a manner that ensured confidentiality and anonymity of the informants.

Informed Consent Statement
Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and their participation was voluntary.

Data Availability Statement
The data presented in this study are not publicly available due to ethical and privacy restrictions, as they contain information that could compromise the confidentiality of research participants. Data may be available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI Use
During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used ChatGPT to assist in improving language clarity, grammar, and overall academic tone of the manuscript. After using this tool, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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