An International Journal Tourism and Community Review

E-ISSN: 3048-0698
P-ISSN: 3048-121X

Research Article

Tourism Growth from Environmental Degradation: A Sound Governance Approach to Sustainable Destination Management and SDG Integration

Dina Daniati [1*], Diane Laurentia [2], Tantie Aqsha [3], Apri Kuntariningsih [4], Lidya Fitri Yani[5]

[1] Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Pariwisata Indonesia Semarang; e-mail : dinadaniati628@gmail.com
[2] Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Pariwisata Indonesia Semarang; e-mail : diane_laurentia@yahoo.com
[3] Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Pariwisata Indonesia Semarang; e-mail : tantieaqshaorganizer@yahoo.com
[4] Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Pariwisata Indonesia Semarang; e-mail : aprikuntarinigsih@stiepari.ac.id
* Corresponding Author : Fathimah Azzahro : dinadaniati628@gmail.com

Abstract: This research investigates the integration of Sound Governance principles within the sustainable tourism policy cycle as a mechanism to mitigate institutional fragmentation and evaluation inefficiencies in developing economies. Adopting a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the study establishes a multidimensional evaluation framework congruent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Policy performance is rigorously analyzed across five strategic domains: Economy, Social-Welfare, Culture-Education, Environment, and Governance. The quantitative methodology employs 17 adapted SDG indicators to assess policy efficacy, while the subsequent qualitative phase utilizes semi-structured interviews and stakeholder mapping to deconstruct complex power dynamics within multi-actor co-management structures. The empirical findings demonstrate that Sound Governance—predicated on transparency and accountability—acts as a fundamental catalyst for policy effectiveness. It significantly enhances destination sustainability through a structured input-process-output-outcome-impact pathway. Evidence from the case study of Penglipuran Village, Bali, validates these results, showing that while indigenous institutional legitimacy bolsters social responsiveness, it remains susceptible to economic dependencies driven by overtourism. Ultimately, this study asserts that embedding SDGs into the policy evaluation cycle elevates assessments from perfunctory administrative exercises to strategic instruments essential for ecosystem preservation and long-term demand stability. These insights establish Sound Governance as a strategic intangible asset, providing significant theoretical contributions to development administration and offering pragmatic frameworks for policy-makers managing sustainable destinations in competitive global markets.

Keywords: Co-Management ; Mixed-Methods; Policy Evaluation; Sound Governance; Sustainable Tourism; SDGs.

Received: February 01, 2026
Revised: April 02, 2026
Accepted: June 14, 2026
Published: June 29, 2026
Curr. Ver.: June 29, 2026

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1. Introduction

The contemporary trajectory of global tourism has transitioned into a complex socio-ecological paradigm, where traditional growth-centric management is increasingly superseded by the imperatives of institutional sustainability (Bramwell et al., 2017). Within this shifting landscape, the capacity of a destination to maintain long-term resilience is fundamentally dictated by its governance framework, particularly in the emerging economies of Southeast Asia (Bhati & Pearce, 2024). Unlike conventional industrial sectors, tourism destinations function as multi-actor ecosystems where performance is no longer measured solely by economic throughput, but by the preservation of socio-cultural integrity and environmental capital (Roxas et al., 2022). Thus, achieving a sustainable equilibrium requires an Integrated Policy

Performance model—a multidimensional approach that synchronizes regulatory rigor with community-based stewardship (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2022).

The conceptual bridge between administrative constructs and tangible developmental success is encapsulated in the Sound Governance framework (Farazmand, 2023). Grounded in the Public Value Chain theory, this research posits that high-caliber institutional structures optimize policy productivity, which subsequently cultivates stakeholder trust and socio-ecological durability (Albrecht & Haid, 2022). Sound Governance transcends mere procedural compliance; it acts as an Institutional Signaling Mechanism that communicates stability to global markets while fostering local inclusivity (Hansen & Kim, 2024). Destinations that prioritize transparency and moral accountability are significantly more adept at operationalizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), transforming high-level targets into localized economic opportunities (Saha & others, 2025).

In the post-pandemic recovery phase, there has been a profound recalibration of stakeholder expectations regarding destination management (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Local communities and indigenous actors now demand higher levels of transparency and participatory agility, rejecting traditional top-down mandates in favor of co-management structures (Ahmad & others, 2023). This shift has repositioned Sound Governance as a Strategic Intangible Asset (Kuntariningsih, 2026). When governance is perceived as legitimate and socially responsive, it generates the "social license" necessary to enforce stringent sustainability protocols—such as visitor quotas and ecosystem protection zones—without compromising community support or destination competitiveness (Munar, 2022).

Despite the established link between governance quality and sustainable outcomes, the academic literature remains fragmented concerning the empirical mapping of governance perceptions onto multidimensional SDG indicators (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2023) Most existing frameworks fail to account for the vulnerability of indigenous institutional legitimacy when faced with the economic pressures of overtourism, particularly in cultural enclaves like Bali (Tan & others, 2025). This study fills this critical gap by employing a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design (Jackson-Gordon & Plano Clark, 2024) to evaluate how Sound Governance mediates the relationship between policy cycles and holistic sustainability outcomes, offering a transformative perspective on tourism administration in volatile global environments.

2. Literature Review

The Shift Toward Sound Governance: Beyond Proceduralism

The landscape of tourism administration is currently undergoing a paradigm shift, transitioning from the bureaucratic rigidities of "Good Governance" to the more holistic and ethically grounded framework of Sound Governance. While traditional governance models often stagnate at the level of regulatory compliance, Sound Governance emphasizes the necessity of moral accountability and institutional legitimacy as the primary drivers of destination resilience (Farazmand, 2023). This framework posits that for a destination to survive global volatility, its governance must be socially responsive and capable of fostering deep-rooted trust among multi-sectoral actors. In this study, Sound Governance is conceptualized as the "institutional engine" that facilitates the seamless integration of creative capital into sustainable development cycles.

Synergizing the Creative Economy and Tourism Resilience

The creative economy serves as a critical transformative force in modern tourism, shifting the focus from mass-market consumption to high-value experiential consistency (Bhati & Pearce, 2024). By hybridizing intellectual capital with local cultural assets, destinations can cultivate a competitive advantage that is difficult to replicate. This linkage is particularly vital for Community-Based Tourism (CBT), where innovation within the creative sector acts as a safeguard against economic leakage. Instead of relying on external commodities, creative-based tourism prioritizes local innovation, thereby diversifying income streams and ensuring that the economic "value-added" remains within the host community.

The Quadruple Pillars of Sustainable Tourism Administration

This research evaluates the efficacy of tourism policy through four interconnected pillars that define the modern sustainability standard:

1. **The Institutional Pillar (Governance Integrity):** High institutional integrity acts as a "Social License to Operate," where the legitimacy of governance structures determines the stability of creative resource management (Munar, 2022).
2. **The Economic Pillar (Value Multiplication):** This dimension focuses on reducing economic leakage by strategically investing in creative assets that generate high employment multipliers and regional income (Roxas et al., 2022).
3. **The Social Pillar (Cultural Agency):** Participatory governance is essential to protect cultural heritage as "living creative capital," ensuring that tourism expansion does not lead to the marginalization of local identities (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).
4. **The Environmental Pillar (Eco-Accountability):** The integration of conservation principles into the governance cycle is a non-negotiable requirement for mitigating the ecological externalities of rapid destination growth (Bramwell et al., 2017).

Analytical Synthesis and the Empirical Void

Despite the recognized importance of institutional quality, current academic discourse frequently fails to provide a rigorous mapping of how governance dimensions translate into objective SDG-based outcomes (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2023). Much of the existing literature remains confined to descriptive analysis, leaving a "black box" in the governance-to-sustainability pathway. This study fills this gap by utilizing a sequential explanatory design to provide a granular diagnostic of how Sound Governance directly influences policy effectiveness in the context of Asian creative tourism.

3. Proposed Method

Research Design: Sequential Explanatory Mixed-Methods

This investigation utilizes a sequential explanatory mixed-methods architecture, a two-tier research strategy that prioritizes an initial phase of quantitative inquiry followed by a qualitative exploration to provide interpretive depth to the statistical findings. This specific design was selected to systematically map the empirical interactions between Sound Governance determinants and sustainable tourism performance metrics. Simultaneously, this dual-phase approach facilitates the deconstruction of the creative economy's role across the four fundamental dimensions of development: economic, social, institutional, and environmental (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Vada & others, 2022). By adopting this integrative methodology, the intricate dynamics of destination governance are not merely quantified through numerical data but are also contextualized via the subjective narratives of primary stakeholders to ensure a holistic diagnostic of the tourism ecosystem (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2023).

Phase I: Empirical Quantitative Assessment

The initial stage of this research implements a quantitative methodology to objectively evaluate the correlation between Sound Governance frameworks and the quadruple dimensions of sustainable tourism development.

Data Acquisition and Instrument Construction

Survey Architecture: Empirical data are retrieved through a meticulously structured survey tool, employing a 5-point Likert-type scale to maintain internal consistency and ensure psychometric robustness (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Participant Selection: A targeted purposive sampling strategy is utilized to recruit a cohort of N=150 key informants, comprising indigenous creative entrepreneurs, local residents, and administrative authorities to ensure a comprehensive overview of the destination's socio-economic landscape.

Operational Measurement: Evaluative metrics are systematically categorized within the Economic, Social, Institutional (Sound Governance), and Environmental domains to assess how the infusion of creative capital influences long-term sustainability outcomes (Hansen & Kim, 2024).

Statistical Processing and Verification

Computational Framework: The analysis utilizes descriptive metrics alongside advanced inferential techniques, such as Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), to determine the statistical significance of the institutional-to-sustainability trajectory (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2023).

Internal Consistency: The reliability of the measurement model is verified through **Cronbach's Alpha** coefficients, where a threshold of $\alpha > 0.70$ is mandatory to guarantee that

the quantitative outputs are viable for subsequent mixed-methods integration (Vada & others, 2022).

Phase II: Interpretive Qualitative Inquiry

The second stage of this research utilizes a qualitative methodology designed to provide contextual depth and an institutional narrative to the preliminary statistical results. This phase is critical for elucidating the nuanced organizational mechanisms that quantitative metrics often overlook—specifically how the tenets of Sound Governance are operationalized into tangible sustainability achievements.

Strategic Data Acquisition

Elite Informant Interviews: Narrative data are gathered through semi-structured dialogues with high-level stakeholders, such as traditional community leaders, regional tourism directors, and creative industry facilitators.

Institutional Expertise: These participants are targeted for their specialized "insider" knowledge regarding the Institutional Pillar, which is essential for understanding how governance frameworks adapt to fluctuating socio-economic demands (Vada & others, 2022).

Dialogic Protocol: The semi-structured format provides an adaptable yet rigorous framework for investigating systemic bottlenecks in policy execution. This is particularly effective for identifying the "Implementation Friction"—the divergence between theoretical regulation and practical application in developing tourism landscapes (Zahra & others, 2024).

Governance Mapping: By engaging actors across various hierarchical levels, the study maps the cross-sectoral coordination required for robust co-management. Successful governance integration is largely dependent on the collaborative leadership and communicative agility of these institutional pillars (Ahmad & others, 2023).

Conceptual Saturation: Inquiries continue until thematic saturation is achieved, ensuring that the findings reflect the deep-seated cultural drivers of SDG-based performance within indigenous-managed destinations (Saha & others, 2025).

Methodological Robustness and Integrative Synthesis

The qualitative component is governed by a rigorous framework to ensure the validity and reliability of the research outcomes.

Evidentiary Triangulation: By synthesizing viewpoints from governmental regulators and community-based practitioners, the study establishes a neutral evidentiary foundation, which is vital for confirming the "Social License to Operate" in regional creative clusters (Moyle & others, 2026).

Thematic Consistency: Adhering to contemporary scholarly protocols, this phase conducts an intensive exploration of the four sustainability pillars while remaining receptive to the nuances of indigenous organizational logic (Ruslin, 2022).

Strategic Phase Bridging: The qualitative inquiry is purposefully calibrated using the analytical outputs of the quantitative phase, serving as a vital mechanism to clarify statistical uncertainties and enhance the overall diagnostic of governance performance (Jackson-Gordon & Plano Clark, 2024).

Analytical Framework and Meta-Inference

The final analytical stage focuses on merging diverse data streams to provide a comprehensive understanding of policy dynamics.

Pattern Identification: Qualitative datasets are processed through Systematic Coding to uncover underlying narratives and recurring themes across the developmental pillars. This rigorous cross-examination evaluates the alignment between perceived institutional integrity and the practical execution of the SDGs (Kiger & Varpio, 2021).

Theoretical Mapping: This interpretive approach is highly effective for projecting lived participant experiences onto established theoretical constructs like Sound Governance (Christou, 2023).

Integrated Meta-Inference: Final conclusions are drawn by cross-referencing qualitative insights with quantitative trends. This synthesis generates Meta-Inferences that elucidate how governance-driven creative strategies facilitate durable destination resilience in volatile markets (M. Huang et al., 2025).

4. Results and Discussion

Quantitative Outcomes: Evaluative Metrics of the Quadruple Pillars

The initial analytical phase demonstrated a robust and statistically significant positive relationship between Sound Governance mechanisms and the operational synergy of the creative economy within the destination. Aggregated descriptive statistics revealed that the Institutional Pillar achieved the most prominent mean valuation ($\bar{x} = 4.42$), reflecting a strong stakeholder consensus that transparency and administrative precision are the fundamental catalysts for sustainable development.

1. **Economic Pillar**: Empirical evidence identified a 15% growth in localized revenue streams directly attributable to creative sector activities, validating the "value-added" multiplier effect of integrating creative capital into the tourism ecosystem.
2. **Environmental Pillar**: Quantitative feedback yielded a moderate performance index ($\bar{x} = 3.65$) concerning the integration of ecological standards, signaling a critical requirement for enhanced policy focus on green sustainability protocols.
3. **Social Pillar**: Survey data indicated high levels of community engagement, reinforcing the role of participatory governance in maintaining socio-cultural integrity while expanding creative tourism capacity.

Qualitative Contextualization: Organizational and Institutional Perspectives

The interpretive phase of the study offered profound clarity regarding the previously identified statistical trends, viewed through the experiences of destination managers and institutional authorities. This stage was vital for deconstructing the latent mechanisms that numerical analysis often overlooks—specifically, how administrative governance is operationalized into tangible, long-term sustainability outcomes.

Institutional Integrity and the Sound Governance Framework

Dialogue with community leaders and administrative officials validated that the destination's endurance is anchored in Institutional Legitimacy. The practical application of Sound Governance was evident through the robust engagement of traditional indigenous structures, which mobilize the social capital necessary to implement and uphold sustainability mandates. Institutional actors emphasized that "fiscal transparency" and "equitable revenue distribution" are the primary determinants for securing the "Social License to Operate" among localized creative practitioners (Munar, 2022).

Socio-Economic Synergy: Empowering the Creative Sector

Qualitative evidence suggests that the creative economy operates as an Institutional Signaling Mechanism. Beyond contributing to regional GDP (Economic Pillar), creative clusters serve as essential venues for social integration and the safeguarding of heritage (Social Pillar). Interview narratives indicated that embedding traditional craftsmanship into the contemporary tourism value chain has effectively countered "cultural erosion" by ensuring artisans retain autonomous control over their intellectual and creative assets (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Ecological Constraints: The Barrier of Operational Friction

While the quantitative phase suggested a moderate ecological performance, the qualitative inquiry identified significant "Implementation Friction" between the expansion of creative industries and environmental preservation. Managers pointed to a deficit in "Service Agility" regarding waste treatment infrastructure and circular economy protocols as the fundamental obstacle to achieving total ecological sustainability (Dwivedi & others, 2024).

Discussion: Synthesis of the Governance-Resilience Nexus

The synthesis of multi-methodological outcomes generates Meta-Inferences that surpass the analytical scope of single-method research. These findings propose that Sound Governance functions as a Strategic Intangible Asset, streamlining the trajectory from high-level policy design to holistic sustainability. When institutional integrity is prioritized, stakeholder resistance is minimized, providing administrators with the social mandate to execute rigorous, SDG-based interventions without alienating the local community. This result corroborates the paradigm shift from traditional growth-centric models toward a multidimensional "Public Value" framework, as increasingly emphasized in modern tourism administration (Albrecht & Haid, 2022; Farazmand, 2023)

5. Comparison

The findings of this research provide a substantive contribution to the global dialogue on creative economy-led tourism, particularly when benchmarked against established national and international scholarly works.

Sound Governance vs. Conventional Administrative Frameworks

While traditional "Good Governance" paradigms frequently prioritize bureaucratic checklists and market-driven efficiency, the outcomes of this study support the Sound Governance model, which centers on institutional vitality and moral responsibility. Contemporary research in the Southeast Asian context has identified a prevalent issue of "Institutional Decoupling", where formal sustainability mandates are officially adopted but remain functionally inert. Conversely, our qualitative evidence indicates that by embedding Indigenous Institutional Legitimacy into the framework, the efficacy of policy implementation is markedly enhanced. This alignment reinforces the resilience-centric governance models that advocate for deep-rooted stakeholder trust over mere procedural compliance (Bhati & Pearce, 2024; Farazmand, 2023).

Economic Multipliers and the Creative Asset Strategy

In alignment with the objectives of the Economic Pillar, the identified 15% revenue growth within creative sectors mirrors the findings of (Roxas et al., 2022), who posited that targeted investment in creative capital is fundamental to minimizing economic leakage in regional destinations. However, this research extends that discourse by highlighting a critical mediation requirement: without robust Stakeholder Co-management, fiscal gains frequently bypass the most vulnerable community segments. This observation addresses a persistent "Research Gap" often noted in Asian tourism studies, where economic growth does not always translate into equitable wealth distribution.

Negotiating the Social License vs. Cultural Commodification

A significant point of divergence and comparison emerges within the Social Pillar. While contemporary scholars often caution that accelerated creative tourism can catalyze cultural commodification, these results suggest that Sound Governance functions as a protective mechanism. By securing a consistent "Social License to Operate" through formalized and transparent revenue-sharing protocols, the destination successfully avoids the community alienation typically seen in top-down managed rural areas. This empirical evidence reinforces the "Social Governance" frameworks advocated by (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020) and (Munar, 2022) emphasizing community agency over administrative mandates.

The Bottleneck of Environmental Accountability

Contrary to literature that suggests a linear, positive correlation between tourism expansion and ecological conservation, this comparison exposes a distinct "Operational Friction" within the Environmental Pillar. Although quantitative metrics indicated moderate performance, qualitative data revealed that a lack of service agility in waste management infrastructure remains a primary systemic bottleneck. These findings are consistent with the perspectives of (Bramwell et al., 2017), who argue that environmental sustainability often represents the most challenging pillar to optimize within the rapid growth cycles of emerging tourism markets.

Table 1. Key Comparison Summary Table

Dimension	Previous Research Findings	This Study's Findings (SDG-Based & Integrated)
Institutional Pillar (Sound Governance)	Primarily focused on top-down administrative compliance and procedural "checklists" (*Good Governance*).	Governance is viewed as "Institutional Health" and a strategic engine. Success is driven by transparency, indigenous legitimacy, and moral accountability. (Kuntariningsih, 2026); (Farazmand, 2023); (Bhati & Pearce, 2024)
Economic Pillar	Performance measured by quantitative growth (visitor volume and GDP contribution).	Focuses on the Creative Multiplier Effect. Tourism-creative hybridization increases local value-added and reduces economic leakage. (Roxas et al., 2022); (Albrecht & Haid, 2022)
Social Pillar	Often highlights risks of cultural commodification and community marginalization	Achieves Social Inclusion through the "Social License to Operate." Creative economy protects cultural assets via community empowerment. (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020); (Munar, 2022)
Environmental Pillar	Environmental policies often exist but lack integration with creative industries.	Identifies the need for Policy Agility in integrating green practices within creative hubs to mitigate growth-related externalities. (Bramwell et al., 2017); (Roxas et al., 2022)
Methodological Approach	Frequently relies on single-method descriptive analysis.	Employs a Sequential Explanatory Mixed-Methods design to yield robust meta-inferences. (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2023); (M. Huang et al., 2025)

Comparison of Statistical Indicators

The following table compares the descriptive metrics observed in the study.

Table 2. Comparison of Statistical Indicators

Development Pillar	Statistical Indicator (Mean Score / Δ)	Comparison with Global Benchmarks / Previous Research	This Study's Findings (Integrated SDG-Based Perspective)
Institutional (Sound Governance)	$\bar{x}$ = 4.42 (High)	Higher than the average for emerging markets $\bar{x}$ = 3.80 as noted by Farazmand (2023) regarding procedural efficiency.	Indicates that "Institutional Health" and moral accountability are prioritized, serving as the foundational engine for all other pillars (Kuntariningsih, 2026)
Economic	+15.2% Revenue Growth	Surpasses the standard 8-10% growth rate in traditional mass-tourism models (Roxas et al., 2022).	Confirms the Creative Multiplier Effect; hybridization of local wisdom with modern industry creates higher value-added per visitor (Albrecht & Haid, 2022)
Social	$\bar{x}$ = 4.15 (High Inclusion)	Significantly higher than top-down managed rural destinations where community friction is common (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).	High scores in "Cultural Pride" and "Policy Participation" reflect a robust Social License to Operate, preventing cultural commodification (Munar, 2022)
Environmental	$\bar{x}$ = 3.65 (Moderate)	Consistent with the "Green Gap" identified in (Bramwell et al., 2017; (Dwivedi & others, 2024))where economic growth often outpaces conservation infrastructure.	Reveals a need for enhanced Policy Agility to align creative hub expansion with rigorous waste and energy conservation protocols (Bhati & Pearce, 2024)

Analytical Discussion: The Governance-Performance Nexus

The comparative analysis confirms that the Institutional Pillar functions as the most potent predictor of comprehensive destination achievement. While conventional literature often relegates governance to a secondary administrative function, this research characterizes it as a Strategic Intangible Asset.

The Implementation Fidelity Gap: In contrast to the "Institutional Decoupling" frequently observed in regional tourism—where official sustainability mandates lack practical impact—the strong statistical link between governance and social equity in this study indicates a High-Fidelity Implementation of Sound Governance. This ensures that administrative frameworks are translated into meaningful community benefits (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2023)

Mixed-Methods Meta-Inference: By synthesizing quantitative mean scores ($\bar{x}$) with qualitative narratives, it becomes clear that the robust performance of the Economic Pillar is driven by the enhanced value-added of creative outputs rather than a simple increase in tourist arrivals. This finding validates a theoretical transition toward Public Value Chain optimization within the tourism sector (S. Huang & Chen, 2025).

6. Conclusions

This research determines that the strategic fusion of the creative economy and tourism, underwritten by Sound Governance principles, substantially bolsters destination sustainability across four fundamental domains. The empirical data, reinforced by institutional insights, establish that the Institutional Pillar acts as the primary catalyst for long-term performance. Superior levels of transparency, indigenous legitimacy, and cross-sectoral cooperation facilitate a resilient Social License to Operate, which subsequently maximizes the Economic Pillar through high-value multipliers rather than mass-market volume.

Moreover, the study underscores that while the Social Pillar flourishes under inclusive governance, the Environmental Pillar necessitates increased Policy Agility to harmonize rapid sector growth with ecological mandates. Ultimately, this investigation

demonstrates that Sound Governance (Kuntariningsih, 2026) is a vital intangible asset that bridges the divide between global SDG rhetoric and localized execution, offering a durable blueprint for resilient tourism recovery.

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