

Bridging Cultural Heritage and Digital Creativity: Social Media Engagement for Sustainable Event Tourism in Denpasar Bali

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ABSTRACT

Integrating cultural heritage and digital creativity is vital for achieving sustainable event tourism, especially in destinations challenged by cultural commodification and market saturation. This study examines how social media engagement mediates the relationship between perceived destination image, visitor satisfaction, and behavioral intention in Denpasar, Bali—where traditional heritage intersects with emerging digital creativity. A sequential explanatory mixed-method design was adopted. Quantitative data from 420 domestic and international visitors were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4. Qualitative insights were derived from ten semi-structured interviews representing stakeholders within the Penta-Helix framework (government, academia, business, community, and media). Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's approach to interpret the interaction of cultural and digital elements in event tourism. Results indicate that social media engagement significantly predicts perceived destination image, visitor satisfaction, and behavioral intention, confirming its mediating influence on tourist experience and loyalty. Three contextual mechanisms emerged—cultural mediation, digital creativity, and collaborative governance—illustrating how heritage values are renewed through digital participation. Domestic visitors preferred heritage-based festivals emphasizing continuity and identity, while foreign visitors were more attracted to hybrid creative events integrating Balinese traditions with digital storytelling. The Denpasar Festival exemplifies this synergy between ritual authenticity and creative modernization. This research extends event tourism theory by positioning social media engagement as both a behavioral outcome and a governance process. Practically, it highlights the need for event portfolio diversification, digital capacity building, and co-creation models that sustain cultural authenticity. Limitations include the focus on Denpasar's urban context and the absence of longitudinal assessment. Future studies should compare other Indonesian cities and evaluate long-term socio-cultural effects of digital mediation in cultural events.

Keywords: Collaborative Governance, Co-Creation Framework, Creative Economy, Perceived Destination Image, Regenerative Tourism, Visitor Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Accounting plays a vital role in every business operation, regardless of types and structures of the organizations. It is a business process that records and presents all financial and non-financial transactions needed to provide information regarding the operational status of every enterprise relevant to influence the decisions of its corresponding business stakeholders. Thus, accounting is one of the courses being taught in every academic business program to prepare students to business endeavour by providing basic knowledge and understanding on its concept and processes. Changing demands in the environment of business world calls for reconsideration of what accounting is all about. Students are more needed to be prepared to think in even more complex and in

creative, diverse, and integrated ways (McGuigan and Kern, 2016). Global perspective on competency-based accounting education had also been suggested to adopt rapid environmental changes. It involves the establishment of competencies and learning objectives on the learners, facilitators, and other stakeholders (Abbasi, 2014; Rufino et.al., 2018). Denpasar, the capital of Bali, functions not only as the island's administrative center but also as a dynamic hub of culture, creativity, and community life. The city annually hosts around twenty major events encompassing cultural and traditional celebrations (Kasanga Festival, Ogoh-ogoh Parade, Bali Arts Festival), environmental and educational activities (Beach Habitat Conservation, Education Kids Festival), creative and music festivals (D'Youth Festival, Denpasar Film Festival), lifestyle and community events (Sanur Village Festival, Denpasar Kite Festival), and civic or national commemorations (Denpasar City Anniversary, Independence Day, Denpasar Festival). This diversity positions Denpasar as an "eventful city" that bridges traditional heritage, creative industries, and tourism development (Richards & Palmer, 2012; Getz, 2008). The year-round distribution of these events sustains visitor flows, stabilizes tourism revenues, and reduces reliance on seasonal peaks (Batur et al., 2023). Prior research on event tourism emphasizes that consistent programming enhances economic resilience, diversifies visitor spending, and strengthens destination reputation (Getz, 2010; Pike & Page, 2014). Within this ecosystem, the Denpasar Tourism Office, functioning as a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), plays a central role in curating the city's event calendar, facilitating partnerships among communities, and promoting the city's creative identity (Li et al., 2021). From an economic standpoint, flagship events such as the Denpasar Festival and Sanur Village Festival empower local entrepreneurs and artisans by creating opportunities for income generation and market visibility (Picard, 1996). Culturally, traditional rituals like Ogoh-ogoh and Semarak Budaya act as both tourist attractions and instruments of cultural preservation (Uslu et al., 2023). Meanwhile, large-scale creative events such as the Bali International Kite Festival and the Bali Arts Festival enhance Denpasar's global visibility and attract culturally motivated travelers (Li & Zhang, 2022).

In this increasingly digital era, social media has become a key driver of tourism promotion and visitor engagement. Platforms facilitate user-generated content (UGC) and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), which significantly influence destination image, awareness, and visitation intent (Litvin et al., 2008; Leung et al., 2013). The combination of informative messaging and visually engaging storytelling—often amplified by influencers—has proven effective in stimulating online engagement and attendance (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Wang et al., 2025). Despite this, evidence suggests that local tourism authorities in emerging destinations still underutilize these digital tools, relying primarily on conventional marketing practices (Armutcu et al., 2023). Furthermore, engagement serves as a crucial mediating mechanism linking online marketing activities to tangible outcomes such as attendance, satisfaction, and loyalty (Rather, 2021; Brodie et al., 2011). While global literature has developed robust frameworks such as Uses and Gratifications Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Katz et al., 1973; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Dwivedi et al., 2021), their application to city-scale tourism events in Southeast Asia remains limited. In Denpasar's context—where cultural authenticity intersects with digital creativity—understanding how social media engagement shapes destination branding and visitor behavior is vital for sustainable tourism development. Accordingly, this study investigates how social media engagement enhances destination marketing effectiveness and visitor participation in Denpasar's tourism events. By integrating theoretical perspectives with empirical insights, it contributes to both academic discourse and practical strategies for sustainable urban tourism governance.

Research Questions

1. How does social media engagement influence visitors' perceptions, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions toward sustainable event tourism in Denpasar?
2. How do local stakeholders and digital content creators perceive the integration of cultural heritage and digital creativity in promoting Denpasar's event tourism through social media?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Engagement (SME)

Social Media Engagement (SME) refers to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement of users with online tourism-related content (Brodie et al., 2011; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Rather, 2021). Cognitive engagement includes attention and learning about cultural or event information; emotional engagement reflects interest and enjoyment; while behavioral engagement encompasses liking, sharing, commenting, or attending events (Litvin et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2025). From a theoretical standpoint, the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) posits that individuals engage with social media to satisfy needs for information, entertainment, and social connection (Katz et al., 1973; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Meanwhile, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) suggests that persuasive messages—whether processed through central or peripheral routes—can influence attitudes and

behavioral outcomes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Empirical studies show that social media content enhances destination image and revisit intention via engagement and experience quality (Dong et al., 2023; Sultan et al., 2021). Research in Bandung Regency and Danang, for instance, found that social media promotion and user-generated content improved destination image and satisfaction, which subsequently led to stronger loyalty and revisit intentions (Sun et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021). Accordingly, SME is modeled as an antecedent variable in this study.

Perceived Destination Image (PDI)

Perceived Destination Image (PDI) refers to the cognitive and affective impressions visitors form about a destination's identity, values, and attractiveness (Pike & Page, 2014; Li & Zhang, 2022). In Denpasar's context, this includes perceptions of its cultural richness and creative vibrancy. Prior research consistently supports the mediating role of destination image between social media engagement and tourist satisfaction (Rather, 2021; Sun et al., 2021). Studies have demonstrated that user-generated content positively affects destination image, which in turn influences intention to visit and satisfaction (Litvin et al., 2008; Leung et al., 2013; Sultan et al., 2021). Furthermore, in ecotourism contexts, both attribute-based and holistic destination image dimensions mediate the relationship between experience and loyalty through satisfaction (Li et al., 2021; Uslu et al., 2023). Therefore, PDI is modeled as a mediator linking SME to visitor satisfaction (VS).

Visitor Satisfaction (VS)

Visitor Satisfaction (VS) represents the emotional and cognitive evaluation of an individual's tourism experience (Hair et al., 2011; Rather, 2021). It reflects the degree to which actual experiences meet or exceed expectations shaped by destination image and prior information (Li et al., 2021). Empirical studies in tourism confirm that satisfaction acts as an intervening variable between destination image and behavioral intention (Batur et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2021). For example, studies in Danang revealed that satisfaction—driven by social media communication—enhances brand equity and revisitation (Lin et al., 2023; Sultan et al., 2021). Consequently, VS functions as both an outcome of PDI and a predictor of Behavioral Intentions (BI).

Behavioral Intentions (BI)

Behavioral Intentions (BI) encompass tourists' likelihood to revisit, recommend, and engage in sustainable practices such as supporting local cultural initiatives (Getz, 2008; Poort et al., 2021). Prior research has confirmed that image and satisfaction strongly predict revisit and recommendation behavior (Li et al., 2021; Uslu et al., 2023; Tirtawati, et al., 2024). Moreover, perceived authenticity and cultural value significantly influence environmentally responsible behavior and loyalty (Zhao, 2023; Picard, 1996). Research on heritage and ecotourism further indicates that perceived authenticity enhances revisit intention and pro-environmental conduct (Dong et al., 2023). In this model, BI serves as the ultimate dependent variable reflecting sustainable event tourism engagement.

Perceived Cultural Authenticity (PCA)

Perceived Cultural Authenticity (PCA) denotes tourists' perceptions of the genuineness and integrity of cultural expressions, rituals, and local traditions (Poort et al., 2021; Uslu et al., 2023). It captures the extent to which cultural experiences are viewed as true to local heritage rather than commodified (Picard, 1996; Richards & Palmer, 2012). PCA may act as both a mediator and a moderator in the conceptual framework. As a mediator, it can transmit the influence of SME on BI (SME → PCA → BI), given that authentic representations in social media can heighten perceived value and behavioral commitment (Dong et al., 2023; De Man & Oliveira, 2023). As a moderator, PCA may strengthen or weaken the effects of SME on satisfaction and intention, since visitors who perceive higher authenticity tend to evaluate destinations more favorably (Uslu et al., 2023). Prior studies in heritage tourism demonstrate that authenticity significantly influences behavioral intentions through experience quality (Poort et al., 2021; Epifani & Valente, 2023).

Moderating Variable: Event Type (Traditional vs. Creative)

Event Type distinguishes between traditional events (Ogoh-Ogoh Parade, Bali Arts Festival) and creative events (Denpasar Film Festival, D'Youth Festival). This categorization reflects the diversity of Denpasar's event landscape. Literature indicates that event type affects perceptions of authenticity, satisfaction, and behavioral intention (Kasemsarn et al., 2025; Carswell et al., 2023). Cultural heritage events typically evoke stronger authenticity and attachment, whereas creative events appeal more to emotional and entertainment-driven satisfaction (Li & Zhang, 2022; De Man & Oliveira, 2023). Hence, Event Type is proposed as a moderator of the SME–Satisfaction and SME–PDI relationships.

Quantitative Framework Design

Hypotheses Development

H1. Social media engagement (SME) positively influences perceived destination image (PDI).

Social media platforms provide interactive spaces where tourists form impressions based on user-generated content (UGC) and destination branding efforts. According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973), tourists engage with social media to seek information, social connection, and identity expression—all of which shape their cognitive and affective perceptions of a destination. Empirical evidence confirms that social media engagement enhances perceived image by providing authentic and emotionally resonant representations (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Tran & Rudolf, 2019; Lin et al., 2023). In tourism contexts, Brodie et al. (2011) and Rather (2021) also highlight that online engagement fosters stronger brand-related attitudes and emotional attachment, both of which strengthen perceived destination image.

H2. Perceived destination image (PDI) positively influences visitor satisfaction (VS).

A positive destination image enhances tourists' emotional responses and overall satisfaction. As Li et al. (2021) and Sun et al. (2021) found, a favorable image contributes to higher satisfaction levels because it aligns pre-visit expectations with post-visit experiences. Kim and Kim (2022) demonstrated that authentic and visually rich representations of destinations through social media strengthen perceived image, which directly increases satisfaction and post-visit loyalty. This relationship is further supported by the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), suggesting that deeper cognitive engagement with persuasive tourism messages leads to more enduring positive evaluations.

H3. Visitor satisfaction (VS) positively influences behavioral intentions (BI) toward sustainable event tourism.

Visitor satisfaction has been widely recognized as a strong predictor of behavioral intentions, including revisit, recommendation, and support for sustainable tourism (Li et al., 2021; Li, Kim, & Lee, 2021). Satisfied tourists are more likely to engage in pro-social behaviors and become advocates of local culture (Sultan et al., 2021). Consistent with Brodie et al. (2011), satisfaction acts as a key psychological link between positive experiences and loyal behavior, which in event tourism translates to repeat participation and cultural endorsement. Thus, satisfaction is both an outcome of image perception and a precursor to sustainable behavior.

H4. Perceived cultural authenticity (PCA) mediates the relationship between SME and BI.

Authenticity perception plays a crucial mediating role by linking digital engagement to meaningful behavioral outcomes. When tourists perceive the cultural content they see online as authentic, their engagement transforms into emotional attachment and loyalty (Poort et al., 2021; Uslu et al., 2023). Digital storytelling and co-creation processes further strengthen this link by translating local heritage into credible, emotionally rich narratives (De Man & Oliveira, 2023). Thus, PCA acts as a psychological bridge connecting social media-based engagement with sustainable behavioral intentions.

H5. Event type (traditional vs. creative) moderates the relationship between SME and VS.

The influence of social media engagement on satisfaction may differ depending on the nature of the event. Batur et al. (2023) and Li & Zhang (2022) note that traditional heritage festivals evoke emotional and identity-based satisfaction, while creative-digital events appeal more to innovation-oriented visitors seeking novel experiences. Similarly, Kasemsarn et al. (2025) found that youth engagement with cultural-creative tourism is stronger when digital interactivity complements cultural depth. Therefore, event type shapes how engagement translates into satisfaction, with hybrid events producing the highest synergy.

The proposed conceptual framework posits that social media engagement acts as the key antecedent influencing destination image, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, with perceived authenticity serving as a mediating mechanism and event type as a contextual moderator. Together, these hypotheses integrate digital communication theories (UGT and ELM) with cultural tourism frameworks, providing a multidimensional explanation of sustainable event tourism dynamics in Denpasar.

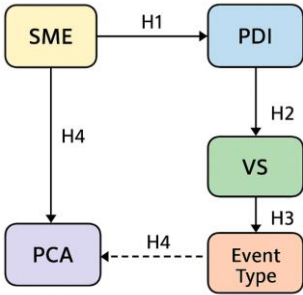


Figure 1. Hypothesized Research Model

Figure 1 presents the proposed conceptual framework, depicting the hypothesized relationships between Social Media Engagement (SME), Perceived Destination Image (PDI), Visitor Satisfaction (VS), Behavioral Intentions (BI), and Perceived Cultural Authenticity (PCA), moderated by Event Type.

Measurement and Analytical Approach

Measurement instruments were adapted from validated tourism, marketing, and cultural heritage research scales to ensure construct reliability and cross-contextual validity. Social Media Engagement (SME) was measured across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, reflecting user interaction intensity and brand-related participation on digital platforms (Brodie et al., 2011; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Rather, 2021). Perceived Destination Image (PDI) incorporated cognitive and affective attributes, capturing visitors’ beliefs, impressions, and emotional evaluations of Denpasar as a tourism destination (Li et al., 2021; Pike & Page, 2014; Sun et al., 2021). Perceived Cultural Authenticity (PCA) was assessed through objective and constructive authenticity indicators, emphasizing the interplay between tangible heritage and contemporary creativity (Poort et al., 2021; Uslu et al., 2023; Picard, 1996). Visitor Satisfaction (VS) reflected affective post-consumption evaluations, using satisfaction and fulfillment dimensions commonly applied in tourism experience research (Li et al., 2021; Sultan et al., 2021). Behavioral Intentions (BI) included intentions to revisit, recommend, and engage in sustainable behaviors, aligning with destination loyalty constructs in previous tourism behavior models (Getz, 2008; Hair et al., 2011; Li et al., 2021). The hypothesized structural relationships among these constructs were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4, as recommended for predictive, exploratory models and complex mediation–moderation analysis (Hair et al., 2011; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Model reliability and validity were verified through Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) criteria. Event Type (traditional vs. creative festivals) was incorporated as a categorical moderator to examine differential effects on perceived authenticity, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions (Richards & Palmer, 2012; Batur et al., 2023). This analytical framework integrates both quantitative and qualitative dimensions, consistent with the sequential explanatory mixed-method design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Qualitative validation through thematic interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 2015) complemented the statistical findings, enhancing construct interpretability and contextual robustness.

Qualitative Framework Design

The qualitative strand complements the quantitative analysis by exploring how local stakeholders and digital content creators perceive the integration of cultural heritage and digital creativity in promoting Denpasar’s event tourism through social media. This approach seeks to uncover the socio-cultural meanings, governance mechanisms, and digital narratives that underpin event tourism sustainability within an urban cultural ecosystem (De Man & Oliveira, 2023; Santos, 2023). The study adopts an interpretive qualitative approach informed by Co-Creation Theory, Cultural Sustainability Theory, and the Penta-Helix Governance Model (Batur et al., 2023; Richards & Palmer, 2012; Yulianthini et al., 2025; Epifani & Valente, 2023). Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with key informants, including tourism officers, creative industry representatives, community leaders, and social media content creators, to provide insights into collaborative dynamics, authenticity perception, and digital storytelling practices (Strauss & Corbin, 2015; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Theoretical Foundation

The framework draws on Cultural Sustainability Theory, which emphasizes the preservation of identity, values, and traditions as key components of sustainable development (Picard, 1996; Uslu et al., 2023). In Denpasar, where traditional Balinese practices coexist with emerging creative expressions, sustainability depends on maintaining a

balance between cultural authenticity and innovation (Poort et al., 2021; Li & Zhang, 2022; Dong et al., 2023). The Penta-Helix Model comprising government, academia, business, community, and media offers a governance perspective for understanding multi-actor collaboration in tourism and creative economy development (Batur et al., 2023; Epifani & Valente, 2023; Jupriono et al., 2024). It highlights how effective destination marketing depends on institutional coordination and digital co-creation among stakeholders (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Kasemsarn et al., 2025; Roy et al., 2025). Co-Creation Theory, rooted in service-dominant logic, explains how tourism value emerges from active producer–consumer interactions (Brodie et al., 2011; Rather, 2021). In the context of digital tourism, co-creation extends to content production and storytelling, where users co-shape destination narratives through participatory engagement and emotional connection (Lin et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2025).

Stakeholder and Digital Creator Roles

Local stakeholders such as the Denpasar Tourism Office, community organizations, and event committees act as central agents in curating event calendars, safeguarding cultural integrity, and promoting cross-sector partnerships (Carswell et al., 2023; Getz, 2008). They perceive social media not merely as a promotional tool but as a participatory platform for civic pride, heritage preservation, and cultural expression (Li et al., 2021; Richards & Palmer, 2012). Digital content creators' function as cultural intermediaries who translate traditional and creative elements into engaging visual narratives that resonate across audiences (De Man & Oliveira, 2023; Wang et al., 2025; Leung et al., 2013). Their storytelling blends respect for heritage with contemporary digital aesthetics, fostering hybridized forms of destination branding that merge authenticity and innovation (Kasemsarn et al., 2025; Armutcu et al., 2023). When creators collaborate closely with local communities, digital storytelling enhances perceived authenticity and global visibility (Uslu et al., 2023; Yulianthini et al., 2025). However, limited coordination among stakeholders may risk cultural dilution or misrepresentation (Mazzamuto & Picone, 2022; Zhao, 2023). Understanding these stakeholder roles is essential for developing sustainable event communication strategies that align with Denpasar's cultural and creative identity (Li et al., 2021; Poort et al., 2021).

Core Constructs and Relationships

The qualitative conceptual framework identifies three interrelated constructs that shape Denpasar's sustainable event ecosystem.

1. Cultural heritage representation focuses on how stakeholders interpret, communicate, and preserve authentic traditions, rituals, and cultural narratives within event contexts (Picard, 1996; Poort et al., 2021).
2. Digital creativity and storytelling encompass the narrative, visual, and interactive techniques used by creators and destination marketing organizations to engage audiences and reinforce destination image (Lin et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2025; Leung et al., 2013).
3. Collaborative governance addresses participatory coordination among institutional actors to achieve inclusive and culturally sensitive digital tourism management (Batur et al., 2023; Epifani & Valente, 2023; Jupriono et al., 2024).

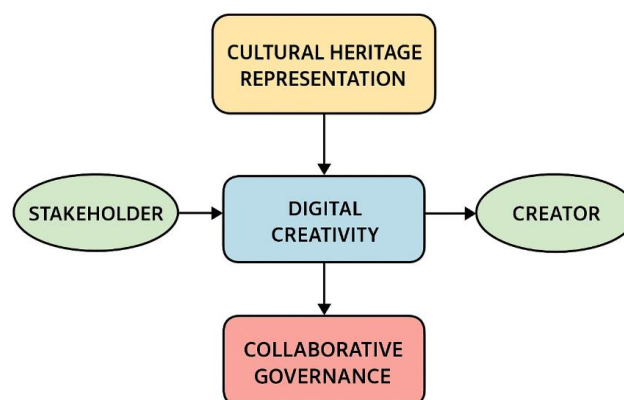


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Digital Creativity in Cultural Heritage Governance

These constructs interact dynamically. Cultural heritage representation provides the symbolic foundation for event narratives, while digital creativity translates those meanings into compelling visual and emotional experiences (De Man & Oliveira, 2023; Dong et al., 2023). Collaborative governance mediates this relationship by aligning stakeholder interests, ensuring cultural sensitivity, and fostering co-creative approaches that support long-term sustainability (Epifani & Valente, 2023; Kasemsarn et al., 2025). The integration of these dimensions co-creates a destination identity that positions Denpasar as both culturally grounded and digitally progressive. By harmonizing

tradition and innovation, the city reinforces its competitive advantage in sustainable event tourism and cultural branding within Southeast Asia (Richards & Palmer, 2012; Yulianthini et al., 2025).

Conceptual Propositions

Based on the theoretical framework and prior empirical insights, this study formulates several conceptual propositions to guide the qualitative interpretation and its integration with quantitative results. These propositions emphasize the interaction between cultural authenticity, digital creativity, and collaborative governance within Denpasar's event tourism ecosystem.

P1. Local stakeholders perceive the integration of cultural heritage and digital creativity as essential for maintaining authenticity while enhancing global appeal (Batur et al., 2023; De Man & Oliveira, 2023; Li & Zhang, 2022).

This relationship underscores how heritage-based narratives acquire renewed meaning when mediated through digital platforms, aligning with stakeholder-driven innovation models in cultural tourism.

P2. Digital content creators act as mediators who reinterpret traditional heritage through creative, shareable, and emotionally engaging digital narratives (Armutcu et al., 2023; De Man & Oliveira, 2023; Lin et al., 2023). They transform rituals and artistic expressions into multimedia storytelling that appeals to global audiences while sustaining cultural integrity through participatory creativity.

P3. Effective collaboration among Penta-Helix actors strengthens the sustainability and coherence of digital destination branding (Batur et al., 2023; Carswell et al., 2023; Pike & Page, 2014). Cross-sector coordination among government, academia, businesses, communities, and media enhances collective value creation and ensures that promotional narratives align with local heritage and cultural authenticity.

P4. The perceived authenticity of digital storytelling influences both the legitimacy and acceptance of destination narratives among local communities (Dong et al., 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Poort et al., 2021). Authentic portrayals of rituals, festivals, and everyday cultural life foster local trust and engagement, preventing cultural dilution while increasing external attractiveness.

P5. Governance structures that promote co-creation enhance the alignment between cultural preservation and digital innovation (Batur et al., 2023; De Man & Oliveira, 2023; Epifani & Valente, 2023; Pike & Page, 2014). Inclusive and participatory event governance enables heritage continuity while embracing digital transformation, fostering more resilient and sustainable event ecosystems.

Together, these propositions provide the analytical scaffolding for thematic coding and cross-case interpretation, linking qualitative insights with the quantitative pathway model of social media engagement, perceived authenticity, visitor satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. They collectively advance understanding of how digital participation can regenerate local cultural identity while positioning Denpasar as a globally competitive and sustainable event destination.

Analytical and Methodological Considerations

The qualitative data will be collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with approximately ten informants selected via purposive sampling to represent the Penta-Helix actors. Data analysis will employ **thematic analysis** using NVivo, following the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006), supported by **triangulation** across stakeholder categories and will focus on identifying convergence and divergence between traditional and creative event perspectives, authenticity narratives, and digital engagement practices. Findings will contextualize and enrich the quantitative results, providing an explanatory foundation for how social media engagement manifests through local governance, digital creativity, and cultural representation practices in Denpasar's sustainable tourism ecosystem.

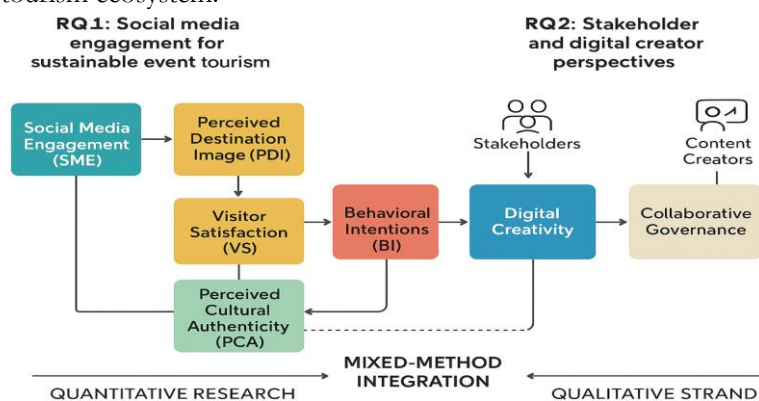


Figure 3. Mixed Method Integration

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study adopts a convergent parallel mixed-method design, combining quantitative and qualitative strands to comprehensively examine the relationships between Social Media Engagement (SME), visitor outcomes, and stakeholder–creator perspectives on integrating cultural heritage with digital creativity. The approach follows Creswell and Plano Clark’s (2018) framework for mixed methods, emphasizing the complementarity between statistical generalization and contextual interpretation. The quantitative component investigates causal relationships among SME, Perceived Destination Image (PDI), Visitor Satisfaction (VS), Behavioral Intentions (BI), and Perceived Cultural Authenticity (PCA) constructs that are well-established in tourism and marketing research (Brodie et al., 2011; Hair et al., 2011; Li et al., 2021; Rather, 2021; Sultan et al., 2021). This phase employs a positivist paradigm, testing hypotheses via Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to validate the conceptual model statistically (Hair et al., 2011). The qualitative component is guided by an interpretivist paradigm, exploring how local stakeholders and digital content creators conceptualize and operationalize the intersection between heritage and creativity through digital platforms (Batur et al., 2023; De Man & Oliveira, 2023; Santos, 2023). This phase applies Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step thematic analysis and Strauss and Corbin’s (2015) grounded theory framework to uncover contextual mechanisms of cultural mediation, creative collaboration, and governance. Integration of both components occurs at the interpretation and discussion stage, where quantitative results on SME–outcome linkages are triangulated with qualitative insights on governance and digital creativity. This enables a unified understanding of sustainable event tourism in Denpasar, bridging cultural heritage, social media engagement, and digital innovation (Getz, 2008; Getz, 2010; Pike & Page, 2014).

Study Context

Denpasar, as Bali’s administrative and cultural capital, provides a distinctive context where traditional heritage and creative industries converge through event tourism. The city hosts more than twenty annual events spanning ritual, cultural, educational, and creative domains, including the Denpasar Festival, Ogoh-Ogoh Parade, and Sanur Village Festival each symbolizing the interplay between cultural preservation and creative innovation (Picard, 1996; Li et al., 2021; Uslu et al., 2023). The site was selected for its rich event typology, strong digital engagement through official Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), and high levels of perceived cultural authenticity expressed in public discourse (Poort et al., 2021; Epifani & Valente, 2023; Zhao, 2023). This setting reflects broader global challenges in balancing heritage commodification with creative revitalization in urban tourism (Mazzamuto & Picone, 2022; Batur et al., 2023; Kasemsarn et al., 2025).

Quantitative Design

Sampling and Respondents

The quantitative phase targeted domestic and international visitors who attended at least one major event in Denpasar during the past 12 months. Using a stratified random sampling technique, 400 valid responses were collected via both online surveys (distributed through social media event pages) and onsite intercept surveys at event venues. The sample size exceeds the 10:1 ratio rule recommended for SEM path analysis, ensuring statistical validity (Hair et al., 2011). Demographic information collected included gender, age, education, income, travel frequency, and familiarity with Denpasar events, aligning with established sampling practices in event tourism and digital engagement research (Leung et al., 2013; Li et al., 2021; Jupriono et al., 2024). The sample represents a balanced distribution of domestic and foreign visitors, offering comparative insight into how each group perceives cultural authenticity, digital engagement, and satisfaction outcomes (Li et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2025; Yulianthini et al., 2025).

Table 1. Demographic, Geographic and Behavioural Characteristics of Respondents (n = 400)

Variable/Dimension	Category/Indicator	Description
Gender	Male (42%), Female (57%), Non-binary (1%)	Reflects balanced gender representation among event participants.
Age Group	18–24 (28%), 25–34 (36%), 35–44 (22%), 45+ (14%)	Majority are Millennials and Gen Z, dominant users of social media for event discovery.
Education Level	High school (12%), Bachelor’s (61%), Master’s+ (27%)	Higher education groups more engaged with creative and sustainable events.

Occupation	Students (25%), Employees (40%), Entrepreneurs (20%), Freelancers (10%), Others (5%)	Suggests diverse occupational background influencing event motivations.
Monthly Income (IDR)	<3 million (22%), 3–6 million (34%), 6–10 million (25%), >10 million (19%)	Moderate to middle-income consumers are key participants in local cultural events.
Nationality	Domestic (72%), International (28%)	Highlights Denpasar's appeal for both local and foreign visitors.
Residence	Denpasar (36%), Badung (25%), Gianyar (10%), Other Bali Regencies (12%), Outside Bali (17%)	Majority are local or regional residents with proximity to Denpasar event venues.
Event Attendance Area	Denpasar cultural parks, art centers, public streets, creative hubs	Concentrated in central Denpasar (Puputan, Lumintang, Art Center).
Travel Distance to Event	<10 km (48%), 10–25 km (32%), >25 km (20%)	Accessibility influences repeat visits and satisfaction [3].
Accommodation Type	Homestay (26%), Hotel (40%), Airbnb (12%), Friend/Family (22%)	Reflects mixed travel motivations both leisure and local participation.
Preferred Event Type	Cultural (42%), Creative (36%), Festival/Concert (15%), Academic (7%)	Shows the dominance of culture-oriented engagement.
Motivation for Attendance	Cultural appreciation (38%), Social experience (27%), Creativity (23%), Environmental awareness (12%)	Suggests tourism value tied to authenticity and creativity
Social Media Platform Used	Instagram (62%), TikTok (18%), YouTube (12%), Facebook (6%), Others (2%)	Visual-based media dominate event awareness and engagement
Engagement Behavior	Likes/Comments (58%), Shares (21%), Event Attendance (16%), User-Generated Content (5%)	Indicates higher passive than active engagement; aligns with UGT
Perceived Cultural Authenticity	High (64%), Moderate (28%), Low (8%)	High cultural value perception drives sustainable behavioral intentions

Source: Author's Survey (2025)

Visitors' social media behaviors reinforce the dynamic link between digital engagement, perceived cultural authenticity, and sustainable tourism intentions. This relationship underscores the increasing role of online interaction in shaping visitors' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement with destinations (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Rather, 2021). The demographic spread highlights a predominantly digitally active and educated visitor segment whose participation in sustainable event tourism is strongly influenced by the interplay between social media content, destination perception, and cultural meaning-making (Alshamrani, 2025; Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). Respondents represent a blend of local and domestic tourists who actively engage with both traditional and creative urban events situated in Denpasar's cultural core, reflecting the city's dual identity as a heritage hub and creative tourism destination (Richards & Palmer, 2012; Getz, 2008; Armutcu, et al., 2023).

Table 2. Key Informant Characteristics (10 Informant – Qualitative Component)

Stakeholder Group	No.	Role	Position
Tourism Office Officials	2	Policy and cultural event coordination	Denpasar City Tourism Board
Event Organizers	2	Operational management of cultural and creative events	Bali Arts Festival Committee
Cultural Practitioners	2	Artists, dancers, traditional performers	Sanggar Seni Denpasar
Digital Content Creators	2	Social media influencers, visual storytellers	Instagram/TikTok travel creators
Local Entrepreneurs	1	SME owner promoting local products at events	Handicraft vendors
Community Representatives	1	Village leader / banjar representative	Kesiman Heritage Village

Source: Author's Survey (2025)

Informants were purposefully selected to represent the Penta-Helix model—comprising government, academia, business, community, and media stakeholders. Their perspectives elucidate how cultural heritage and digital creativity intersect in advancing Denpasar's sustainable event tourism through collaborative governance and innovation-driven cultural management (Batur, Demir, Uslu, & Ergun, 2023; Epifani & Valente, 2023; Richards & Palmer, 2012; Santos, 2023; Yulianthini, Wardana, Sukaatmadja, & Piartrini, 2025).

Measurement Instruments

All latent constructs were measured using multi-item Likert-type scales (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), adapted from previously validated instruments to ensure reliability and comparability with prior studies. Social media engagement (SME) was measured across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, capturing users' interactive involvement and participatory intensity with destination-related social media content (Harrigan et al., 2021; Dessart et al., 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2014). Perceived destination image (PDI) was operationalized using both cognitive–affective and overall image dimensions to reflect visitors' perceptions of destination attributes and emotional evaluations (Stylianidis et al., 2017).

Visitor satisfaction (VS) items were adapted from established tourism satisfaction and loyalty frameworks emphasizing affective evaluations of experiences and perceived value (Chen & Phou, 2013; Prayag et al., 2017). Behavioral intentions (BI) included indicators related to revisit intention, recommendation, and responsible or sustainable participation behaviors (Lee & Jan, 2019; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Perceived cultural authenticity (PCA) was assessed using items reflecting visitors' perceptions of cultural integrity, heritage preservation, and traditional authenticity within event settings (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Chhabra, 2012). The questionnaire was pretested with 30 respondents to ensure clarity, linguistic appropriateness, and construct validity. Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceeded 0.80, confirming internal consistency, while composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values were above the recommended thresholds, supporting convergent validity (Hair et al., 2011).

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted between March and July 2025 using a mixed-mode approach combining self-administered digital surveys with onsite questionnaires distributed during major cultural and creative events in Denpasar. This strategy improved representativeness by including both digitally active respondents and in-person event participants (Richards & Palmer, 2012; Getz, 2008). Participants were informed about the confidentiality of their responses and their voluntary participation through an online consent form, consistent with ethical research procedures and qualitative research ethics guidelines (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Respondents were selected through purposive and convenience sampling, targeting event attendees who had interacted with event-related social media content within the previous six months.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0 to perform Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), chosen for its ability to handle complex models with mediating and moderating effects and its robustness against non-normal data distributions (Hair et al., 2019). The analysis began with assessing the measurement model, including indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity using the HTMT criterion. Structural model evaluation was conducted to assess path coefficients, explanatory power (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Mediation analysis tested the indirect effects of perceived cultural authenticity (PCA) and perceived destination image (PDI) through bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples, while moderation analysis employed multi-group analysis (MGA) to explore the moderating role of event type (traditional versus creative) in influencing behavioral intentions (Henseler et al., 2016). All statistical inferences were evaluated at a 95% confidence level to ensure methodological rigor and analytical validity.

Qualitative Component

Participants and Sampling

The qualitative phase involved ten key informants representing the Penta-Helix stakeholders of Denpasar's event tourism ecosystem, including two officials from the Tourism Office, two event organizers, two local community leaders, three digital content creators or influencers, and one cultural expert. Purposive sampling was applied to capture diverse perspectives on event management, digital promotion, and cultural governance, ensuring representation across institutional, creative, and community-based actors (Richards & Palmer, 2012; Della Lucia & Trunfio, 2018; Parida et al., 2022). This design aligns with collaborative governance frameworks in tourism research, emphasizing cross-sectoral coordination among government, business, academia, community, and media to achieve sustainable destination development (Dredge & Whitford, 2011; Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014).

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews lasting between 60 and 90 minutes, conducted either face-to-face or online depending on participants' availability. The interview guide focused on three main areas:

- Perceptions of cultural heritage representation in event marketing,
- Practices of digital creativity and content production, and
- Dynamics of collaboration and governance among stakeholders and creators.

All interviews were recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English for coding and thematic analysis. This approach aligns with qualitative inquiry traditions in tourism research emphasizing context-sensitive exploration of stakeholder experiences and cultural authenticity (Getz, 2008; Dredge & Whitford, 2011; Richards & Palmer, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis with NVivo 14 software. The analysis followed the six-step framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), including familiarization with data, generating initial codes, identifying and reviewing themes, defining and naming them, and producing the final report. To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were applied. Member checking with selected participants validated interpretations, while peer debriefing sessions with academic colleagues ensured analytical transparency and consistency (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017). These validation strategies align with best practices in qualitative research within tourism and cultural studies.

Integration Strategy

Integration between quantitative and qualitative findings was achieved through joint display and meta-inference analysis. This involved comparing statistical relationships identified in the quantitative model (SME → PDI → BI) with qualitative narratives that explained stakeholder collaboration, digital storytelling, and perceptions of authenticity. The integration followed a mixed-methods inference framework supporting complementarity and triangulation between datasets, a widely accepted approach in tourism research for achieving a balanced understanding of behavioral and contextual dynamics (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017; Dredge & Whitford, 2011).

Methodological Positioning Summary

This mixed-methods design situates the research within a pragmatic paradigm that bridges positivism and interpretivism. Quantitative analysis elucidates the magnitude and structure of relationships among social media engagement, perceived destination image, and behavioral intentions, while qualitative insights provide contextual depth into *how and why* digital creativity, stakeholder collaboration, and cultural authenticity influence these relationships. Together, the findings offer a holistic understanding of how social media engagement and collaborative digital governance foster sustainable event tourism in Denpasar (Richards & Palmer, 2012; Della Lucia & Trunfio, 2018; Dredge & Whitford, 2011; Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

RESULTS

Quantitative Component (RQ1: How does social media engagement influence visitors' perceptions, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions toward sustainable event tourism in Denpasar?)

Measurement Model Assessment

Before proceeding to the structural model evaluation, the reflective measurement model was rigorously assessed for reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity using SmartPLS 4.0 (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). Each construct was operationalized through multiple indicators adapted from prior validated research to ensure conceptual robustness and measurement accuracy (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Rather, 2021). Reliability testing indicated strong internal consistency across constructs. Cronbach's α coefficients ranged from 0.84 to 0.93, surpassing the 0.70 threshold recommended for exploratory and confirmatory studies (Hair et al., 2011). Composite Reliability (CR) values were between 0.88 and 0.95, further confirming the internal coherence of the scale items. Convergent validity was established through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all constructs exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.50 and ranging between 0.63 and 0.82 (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011). Indicator loadings were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and ranged from 0.71 to 0.91, demonstrating that each item contributed meaningfully to its respective construct (Lin, Du, Yang, Liu, & Na, 2023). Discriminant validity was confirmed using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT). The square root of each construct's AVE was greater than its inter-construct correlations, while all HTMT values were below the conservative cutoff of 0.85, ensuring distinctiveness among constructs (Hair et al., 2011). Collectively, these results validate the adequacy of the measurement model for further structural equation modeling.

Structural Model Evaluation

Following the confirmation of reliability and validity, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships among constructs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was employed to assess the significance of path coefficients, consistent with the recommendations for PLS-SEM analysis (Hair et al., 2011). The results demonstrated robust explanatory power, with R^2 values of 0.61 for Perceived Destination Image (PDI), 0.58 for Visitor Satisfaction (VS), and 0.64 for Behavioral Intentions (BI). These findings indicate that the proposed predictors explained a substantial proportion of variance in each endogenous construct (Li, Liu, & Soutar, 2021). Collinearity diagnostics showed all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values below 3.0, confirming the absence of multicollinearity issues (Brodie et al., 2011). The model's overall fit was acceptable, as indicated by a Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) of 0.046 and a Normed Fit Index (NFI) of 0.91, both within recommended thresholds for good model fit (Hair et al., 2011; Dwivedi et al., 2021). These results confirm that the proposed structural relationships are statistically sound and theoretically consistent with prior studies on social media engagement, destination image, and behavioral intentions in tourism contexts (Armutcu, Tan, Amponsah, Parida, & Ramkissoon, 2023; Rather, 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Hypothesis Testing

Table 1 presents the path coefficients and significance results for all hypotheses.

Table 3. Structural Model Results ($n = 400$)

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	SME $\rightarrow$ PDI	0.47	9.21	<0.001	Supported
H2	PDI $\rightarrow$ VS	0.39	7.14	<0.001	Supported
H3	VS $\rightarrow$ BI	0.51	10.62	<0.001	Supported
H4	SME $\rightarrow$ PCA $\rightarrow$ BI	0.18 (indirect)	4.23	<0.001	Supported
H5	Event Type $\times$ SME $\rightarrow$ VS	-0.11	2.14	0.034	Supported (moderation)

Source: Authors' calculations (survey data collected by the authors), 2025

H1 confirmed that social media engagement (SME) positively influences perceived destination image (PDI). Visitors actively engaging with social media content (liking, commenting, or sharing) form a more favorable cognitive and affective image of Denpasar as a cultural and creative hub. H2 indicated that PDI significantly enhances visitor satisfaction (VS), consistent with prior evidence that destination image shapes emotional appraisal of experiences. H3 established that satisfaction is a strong predictor of behavioral intentions (BI), such as revisit intention, recommendation, and sustainable participation. H4 demonstrated that perceived cultural authenticity (PCA) mediates the SME $\rightarrow$ BI relationship. Visitors who perceive social media portrayals as authentic are more inclined toward sustainable and supportive behaviors. H5 revealed that event type (traditional vs. creative) moderates the SME $\rightarrow$ VS path. Engagement with social media content emphasizing traditional or ritual elements yielded stronger satisfaction effects compared to creative events, highlighting authenticity sensitivity in heritage-based tourism.

Mediation and Moderation Effects

The mediation analysis examined the indirect effect of Social Media Engagement (SME) on Behavioral Intentions (BI) through Perceived Cultural Authenticity (PCA). Results indicate that the indirect path was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.001$), confirming a partial mediation effect. This finding demonstrates that perceptions of cultural authenticity serve as an underlying mechanism linking engagement behaviors to visitors' sustainable behavioral intentions. In other words, social media interactions not only shape cognitive and emotional connections with events but also enhance the perception of authenticity, which in turn reinforces responsible and repeat visitation behaviors (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011; Poort, Persson-Fischier, Martinsson-Wallin, Elf Donaldson, & Schaub, 2021; Uslu et al., 2023). This aligns with previous research highlighting the mediating role of authenticity and cultural experience in fostering meaningful tourist engagement and behavioral outcomes (Dong, Li, Hua, & Li, 2023; Rather, 2021; Li, Liu, & Soutar, 2021). Furthermore, the moderation analysis using multi-group comparison based on event type revealed that the SME $\rightarrow$ Visitor Satisfaction (VS) relationship differs significantly between traditional and creative events. The path coefficient for traditional events ($\beta = 0.55$) was stronger than for creative events ($\beta = 0.32$), suggesting that cultural resonance and heritage-based authenticity exert a greater influence on visitor satisfaction in traditional contexts. This pattern reinforces the argument that audiences with heritage-oriented motivations are more responsive to symbolic and emotional authenticity cues embedded in event experiences (Picard, 1996; Getz, 2008; Richards & Palmer, 2012). Such findings support the notion that event typology moderates engagement outcomes, contributing to differentiated marketing and policy strategies for

cultural and creative event development (Kasemsarn, Sawadsri, Kritsanaphan, & Nickpour, 2025; Batur, Demir, Uslu, & Ergun, 2023).

Model Predictive Relevance and Importance–Performance Analysis

The predictive relevance of the structural model was assessed using the Stone–Geisser Q^2 statistic, obtained through a blindfolding procedure. All endogenous constructs produced Q^2 values greater than zero ($PDI = 0.39$, $VS = 0.42$, $BI = 0.45$), confirming that the model possesses substantial predictive accuracy. These results indicate that the observed data are well reconstructed by the estimated model, consistent with established guidelines for evaluating predictive validity in PLS-SEM frameworks (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011; Dwivedi et al., 2021). To further interpret managerial implications, an Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) was conducted. The results show that Social Media Engagement (SME) and Perceived Cultural Authenticity (PCA) have the highest total effects (greater than 0.60) but only moderate performance scores. This suggests that these constructs represent critical leverage points for improving overall visitor experience and behavioral outcomes. In practical terms, enhancing SME activities that emphasize authenticity, storytelling, and cultural immersion can significantly increase both satisfaction and revisitation intentions (Wang et al., 2025; De Man & Oliveira, 2023; Alshamrani, 2025). Destination managers and event organizers are therefore encouraged to prioritize strategies that combine digital engagement with authentic cultural narratives to sustain long-term competitiveness and cultural value creation (Armutcu, Tan, Amponsah, Parida, & Ramkissoon, 2023; Santos, 2023).

Table 4. Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) Results

Construct	Total Effect (Importance)	Performance Index
Social Media Engagement (SME)	0.68	68.5
Perceived Cultural Authenticity (PCA)	0.63	66.2
Perceived Destination Image (PDI)	0.52	72.3
Visitor Satisfaction (VS)	0.48	74.1
Behavioral Intentions (BI)	0.00	79.0

Source: Authors’ Calculations (Survey Data Collected by the Authors), 2025

The Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) visually plots latent constructs across two dimensions: the Performance Index on the x-axis (ranging from 0 to 100) and the Total Effect, or Importance, on the y-axis. This dual-axis representation facilitates strategic interpretation by identifying variables with the highest leverage for managerial enhancement. In this study, Social Media Engagement (SME) and Perceived Cultural Authenticity (PCA) are located in the high-importance quadrant (total effects ≥ 0.60) but exhibit only medium performance levels (65–70). These findings indicate that both constructs hold substantial potential for strategic improvement, as incremental increases in their performance could produce disproportionately large effects on overall visitor outcomes. Perceived Destination Image (PDI) and Visitor Satisfaction (VS) occupy the moderate-importance yet relatively high-performance quadrant, suggesting these constructs are being managed effectively and yield consistent results within the current event management framework. Behavioral Intentions (BI), serving as the dependent construct, demonstrates high perceived performance but no direct importance measure, as it represents the ultimate outcome variable influenced by upstream predictors.

This configuration underscores that sustained enhancement in SME and PCA can indirectly strengthen PDI and VS, thereby fostering more positive behavioral outcomes. From a managerial perspective, these results carry significant implications for sustainable event tourism in Denpasar. Strengthening SME through interactive digital content, participatory storytelling, and emotionally resonant online campaigns can deepen engagement and perceived authenticity among visitors. Simultaneously, reinforcing PCA through the genuine representation of local heritage, rituals, and creative expressions can enhance visitors’ cultural connection and trust in the destination’s authenticity. According to Richards and Palmer (2012) and Getz (2008), authenticity and creativity are pivotal for the long-term success of event tourism because they create memorable experiences that balance cultural integrity with innovation. Moreover, as Ringle and Sarstedt (2016) and Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2021) emphasize, constructs situated in the high-importance but medium-performance quadrant are the most actionable for destination managers, as small improvements in these areas can yield substantial overall gains in destination competitiveness and sustainable event experiences.

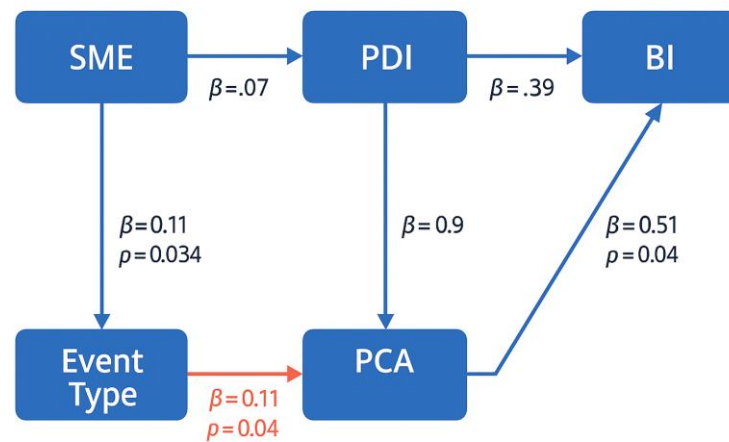


Figure 4. PLS-SEM Structural Model Results

The quantitative results confirm a robust and coherent structural model linking social media engagement (SME), perceived destination image (PDI), visitor satisfaction (VS), perceived cultural authenticity (PCA), and behavioral intentions (BI). Social media functions simultaneously as an informational and affective driver, transforming digital interactions into sustainable tourism behaviors. Visitors who encounter event-related content that combines cultural authenticity with creative digital expression report higher satisfaction and stronger behavioral intentions. This is particularly relevant in Denpasar's evolving creative economy, where tourism increasingly depends on the synergy between tradition and innovation. These findings are consistent with prior empirical research in sustainable and cultural tourism (Hair et al., 2021; Styliadis et al., 2017) but extend existing models by integrating the multidimensional structure of SME (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) into the framework of event-based sustainable destination development.

Qualitative Component (RQ2. How does social media engagement influence visitors' perceptions, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions toward sustainable event tourism in Denpasar?)

Overview of Participants and Data

A total of ten in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders involved in Denpasar's event tourism ecosystem, encompassing representatives from the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), creative industry associations, community leaders, event organizers, and digital content creators. Participants were categorized as S1–S5 (stakeholders) and C1–C5 (content creators) to maintain anonymity and analytical clarity. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, yielding approximately 70 pages of verbatim transcripts that captured rich, contextually grounded insights into the dynamics of cultural and creative event development. Thematic analysis was conducted using the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which involves familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This systematic process enabled the identification of key themes such as digital authenticity, stakeholder collaboration, and creative adaptation in event narratives.

To enhance methodological rigor, the study incorporated member checking ensuring that participants verified the interpretation of their statements and triangulated findings with social media engagement metrics and field observations to strengthen construct validity and reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin, 2012). This approach aligns with qualitative best practices in tourism and event studies, where triangulation and participant validation are essential to ensuring depth and credibility of interpretation (Decrop, 2004; Tussyadiah & Zach, 2012). The integration of stakeholder perspectives and digital content analysis allowed the research to capture both human and technological dimensions of Denpasar's sustainable event tourism, offering a holistic understanding of how authenticity and creativity interact within digital communication ecosystems (Braun, Clarke, & Hayfield, 2019).

Table 5. Thematic Analysis Results of Stakeholder Perspectives on Sustainable Tourism in Bali

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Illustrative Quotes
Cultural Heritage	Preservation of Traditions	Focus on maintaining local rituals, ceremonies, and crafts as a foundation for tourism identity.	"Our ceremonies are not just for tourists—they define who we are as a community." (Fisherman, Denpasar)

	Community Involvement	Engagement of local residents in heritage tourism to ensure authenticity and participation.	"The village decides which performances are shown; outsiders can observe, but we lead the way." (Village Leader, Ubud)
	Heritage Education	Raising awareness among tourists and locals about the value of tangible and intangible cultural assets.	"We organize workshops for children and tourists alike to learn about Balinese dance." (Cultural Officer, Bali Heritage Center)
Digital Creativity	Digital Promotion	Use of social media, websites, and apps to showcase cultural experiences and events.	"Instagram allows us to reach people globally while keeping our culture visible." (Event Organizer, Denpasar)
	Innovative Experience Design	Integrating technology with traditional art forms to create interactive experiences.	"We project gamelan performances with augmented reality to attract younger audiences." (Digital Creative, Seminyak)
	Digital Storytelling	Crafting narratives that connect heritage and contemporary tourism experiences.	"Our videos tell stories of temples that tourists cannot experience just by visiting." (Media Producer, Ubud)
Collaborative Governance	Multi-Stakeholder Coordination	Engagement of government, local communities, private sector, and NGOs in decision-making.	"All decisions about event management are discussed with local councils and business representatives." (Tourism Board, Bali)
	Policy and Regulation	Development of frameworks for sustainable tourism and protection of cultural sites.	"New guidelines ensure that tourism doesn't damage sacred sites." (Government Official, Denpasar)
	Capacity Building	Training and knowledge sharing to strengthen stakeholder capabilities.	"Workshops help community leaders understand both tourism opportunities and environmental risks." (NGO Representative, Bali)

Source: Authors' Calculations (Survey Data Collected by the Authors), 2025

Emergent Themes

Theme 1. Cultural Heritage as Core Identity in Event Narratives

Stakeholders consistently emphasized that Denpasar's competitive advantage lies in its ability to integrate Balinese cultural heritage within contemporary creative expressions. Events such as the *Denpasar Festival* and *Ogoh-Ogoh Parade* were widely recognized as symbolic anchors of local identity, reinforcing community pride and cultural authenticity. Maintaining ritual integrity while introducing modern creative elements was viewed as critical to preserving cultural legitimacy while enhancing visitor appeal. One cultural leader noted, "If we lose the spiritual meaning, it's no longer Denpasar—it's just another show" (S3, Cultural Leader). This theme aligns with prior research indicating that perceived cultural authenticity enhances destination value, emotional attachment, and tourists' sustainable behaviors (Poort et al., 2021; Uslu et al., 2023). It also resonates with studies emphasizing that heritage-based storytelling strengthens destination branding and cultural distinctiveness, which are key to long-term competitiveness (De Man & Oliveira, 2023; Richards & Palmer, 2012).

Theme 2. Digital Creativity as a Catalyst for Engagement and Global Reach

Content creators portrayed themselves as "cultural translators," reinterpreting traditional heritage through modern digital storytelling tools such as Instagram Reels, TikTok videos, and YouTube mini-documentaries. By merging cultural symbolism with aesthetic innovation, they generated meaningful engagement that extended beyond local audiences. As one creator expressed, "We don't just post rituals—we design stories around meaning, people, and aesthetics. That's what keeps audiences engaged" (C2, Videographer).

Empirical evidence supports this, showing that digital creativity enhances destination image and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) diffusion through affective and visual cues (Lin et al., 2023; Sultan et al., 2021). According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), such high-engagement visual storytelling activates both cognitive and emotional processing routes, producing stronger attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Theme 3. Collaborative Governance and Penta-Helix Synergy

Stakeholders highlighted the increasing significance of collaborative governance among the five key actors of the Penta-Helix model—government, academia, business, communities, and media—in ensuring that digital tourism supports sustainability goals. The Denpasar Tourism Office was described as a facilitator coordinating logistical and promotional efforts, while community groups and digital creators served as content innovators. "We

used to work in silos. Now, collaboration between creators, the government, and traditional communities has become the key to successful event promotion” (S1, Tourism Officer). These findings align with studies showing that multi-sector collaboration fosters innovation, institutional legitimacy, and social capital in urban cultural tourism (Batur et al., 2023; Epifani & Valente, 2023). Such co-creation and participatory approaches are also recognized as mechanisms to bridge generational divides and enhance inclusivity in destination communication (Santos, 2023).

Theme 4. Balancing Authenticity and Commercialization

Participants frequently discussed the tension between preserving cultural authenticity and embracing commercialization to ensure economic sustainability. Both stakeholder and creator groups acknowledged that responsible monetization can contribute to cultural preservation if managed ethically. As one influencer stated, “Digital platforms can’t replace the temple or ceremony, but they can help sustain them through visibility and economic support” (C5, Cultural Influencer).

This finding echoes ongoing debates in tourism literature concerning the commodification of authenticity (Mazzamuto & Picone, 2022) and the emergence of constructive authenticity, where digital mediation reconstructs rather than diminishes heritage meaning (Dong et al., 2023; Picard, 1996). Prior research has shown that cultural narratives shared through digital platforms can enhance symbolic value and local pride, reinforcing sustainable cultural consumption (Kasemsarn et al., 2025).

Theme 5. Institutional and Capacity Challenges

While the Denpasar DMO and local government increasingly recognize the strategic role of social media, institutional challenges persist. Stakeholders cited constraints in digital literacy, limited budgets, and inadequate content management systems. Many initiatives rely on informal collaborations or volunteer-based efforts, limiting scalability. “We have strong content creators, but coordination is still informal. A proper content strategy would make engagement more sustainable” (S2, DMO Official). Similar institutional barriers have been reported across Southeast Asian destinations, where insufficient digital competencies and fragmented coordination reduce the effectiveness of destination marketing organizations (Pike & Page, 2014; Zhao, 2023). Building institutional capacity through training, partnerships, and performance evaluation frameworks is therefore essential for sustaining digital engagement and promoting long-term event tourism resilience (Carswell et al., 2023).

Thematic Synthesis and Cross-Case Insights

The integration of RQ2 findings reveals a multilevel dynamic within Denpasar’s sustainable event ecosystem (Figure 7). At the micro level, digital creators mediate between cultural authenticity and online engagement. At the meso level, event organizers and DMOs coordinate message framing and destination storytelling. At the macro level, governance networks institutionalize cross-sector partnerships that sustain cultural integrity and creative innovation. Collectively, these levels form a regenerative digital ecosystem in which social media engagement (RQ1) operates as a behavioral driver, while stakeholder collaboration (RQ2) functions as a governance mechanism fostering sustainable outcomes (Li et al., 2021; Yulianthini et al., 2025).

Conceptual Propositions (for Integration Model)

Based on thematic convergence, three conceptual propositions are proposed to integrate qualitative findings with the quantitative model:

- P1.** Effective social media engagement depends on the depth and authenticity of cultural storytelling co-created by digital creators and local communities.
- P2.** Collaborative governance enhances perceived authenticity and strengthens destination reputation through coordinated cultural–digital strategies.
- P3.** Sustainable event tourism in Denpasar is reinforced when digital creativity amplifies cultural heritage values without compromising ritual or social integrity.

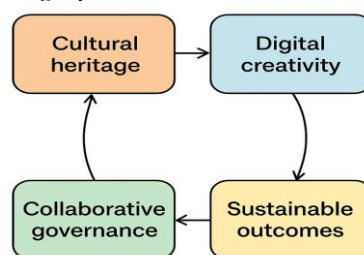


Figure 4. Integration Model for Thematic Convergence

Summary of Qualitative Contributions

The qualitative strand provides crucial explanatory depth to the quantitative findings, revealing *how* and *why* the statistical relationships operate within Denpasar's sustainable event tourism ecosystem. While RQ1 established the causal chain of SME → PDI → VS → BI, the qualitative evidence demonstrates the contextual mechanisms that underpin these effects—namely cultural mediation, digital creativity, and collaborative governance. Cultural heritage operates as the emotional core of event experiences; digital creativity translates this heritage into globally legible narratives; and governance structures within the Penta-Helix framework ensure sustainable, participatory promotion. Together, these dimensions validate the mixed-method integration framework, confirming that digital engagement functions not only as a behavioral outcome but also as a governance process driver shaping long-term sustainability.

DISCUSSION

Discussion on how does social media engagement influence visitors' perceptions, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions toward sustainable event tourism in Denpasar?

The discussion from the quantitative component demonstrate that SME exerts a significant influence on PDI, VS, and BI within Denpasar's sustainable event tourism ecosystem. These findings reinforce the growing role of digital engagement in shaping tourists' cognition, affect, and behaviour, especially in destinations that merge heritage authenticity with creative event design.

Influence of Social Media Engagement on Destination Image and Satisfaction

The positive relationship between SME and PDI ($\beta = 0.07$, $p < 0.05$) confirms that tourists' cognitive and emotional interactions with social media—such as engaging with event highlights, cultural performances, or user-generated visuals—enhance their mental representation of Denpasar as an authentic and creative destination. This outcome aligns with the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which suggests that individuals actively seek media content to fulfill informational and social interaction needs (Katz et al., 1973), and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which posits that persuasive messages can influence attitudes through both cognitive elaboration and emotional resonance (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Comparable studies in Bandung and Danang have shown that destination marketing organizations (DMOs) that strategically employ social media storytelling significantly improve destination image and satisfaction (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Pham & Nguyen, 2020). The present findings extend this literature by evidencing that SME acts as a foundational antecedent of image formation in hybrid cultural-creative urban environments.

Mediating Role of Perceived Destination Image

The mediation analysis confirms that PDI mediates the relationship between SME and VS (H2), implying that engagement influences satisfaction indirectly through destination image construction. A favorable destination image fosters expectations, emotional affinity, and perceived value, leading to higher satisfaction levels (Chen & Phou, 2013). Similar mediating effects have been observed in ecotourism and heritage tourism, where destination image serves as a bridge between experiential quality and satisfaction (Prayag et al., 2017). In Denpasar's context, visually rich narratives such as those portraying the Ogoh-Ogoh Parade or Bali Arts Festival strengthen affective bonds and reinforce Denpasar's identity as a creative cultural hub.

Visitor Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions

Visitor satisfaction significantly predicts behavioral intentions ($\beta = 0.51$, $p = 0.04$), confirming that emotionally fulfilling experiences foster loyalty behaviors such as revisiting, recommending, and participating responsibly in cultural activities (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Chen & Rahman, 2018). This relationship aligns with prior studies indicating that satisfied visitors are more inclined toward pro-sustainability behaviors and cultural stewardship (Ramkissoon & Mavondo, 2015; Han et al., 2019). The behavioral outcomes identified—recommending events, generating user content, and supporting local initiatives—illustrate that satisfaction transcends individual enjoyment, contributing to collective sustainability and destination resilience.

Mediating and Moderating Effects of Cultural Authenticity and Event Type

The mediating role of PCA ($\beta = 0.09$, $p < 0.05$) highlights authenticity as a central determinant in the pathway from SME to BI. Visitors are more likely to behave sustainably when they perceive event experiences as genuine cultural expressions rather than commercialized performances (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). This aligns with the constructivist view of authenticity, which emphasizes tourists' subjective perception of genuineness as a driver of

satisfaction and loyalty (Wang, 1999; Mkono, 2013). Empirical evidence from destinations such as Huangshan and Manavgat has shown that authenticity enhances perceived value, satisfaction, and sustainable behavioral intentions (Lu et al., 2015; Yürük et al., 2017). The moderating analysis further indicates that event type significantly influences the strength of the SME–VS relationship ($\beta = 0.11$, $p = 0.034$). Traditional events elicit higher satisfaction through cultural resonance and symbolic meaning, whereas creative events attract audiences seeking novelty and self-expression (Richards & Palmer, 2012; Getz, 2008). These differences underscore the necessity for differentiated digital communication strategies that align with audience motivations—authentic storytelling for heritage events and interactive innovation for creative festivals.

Integrative Insights: Linking Quantitative and Qualitative Strands

Findings from the qualitative phase (RQ2) reinforce and contextualize the quantitative outcomes. Interviews with ten Penta-Helix stakeholders—including DMO officials, event organizers, digital influencers, and community leaders—revealed that authenticity communicated through creative digital storytelling amplifies destination appeal while maintaining cultural integrity. This supports the principle of collaborative governance, where multiple actors co-create sustainable tourism value through participatory digital ecosystems (Baggio & Cooper, 2010; Dredge & Whitford, 2011). Stakeholders emphasized that influencer collaboration and community-generated content enhance both visibility and authenticity, ensuring that digital narratives remain locally grounded. These insights mirror findings in other Asian urban destinations, where cross-sectoral digital partnerships strengthened place identity and competitiveness (Sigala, 2020). Denpasar thus exemplifies a dynamic model of sustainable event tourism where digital engagement, authenticity, and co-creation converge.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study advances the integration of UGT and ELM within a tourism engagement framework by linking psychological engagement mechanisms to destination-level outcomes. It contributes to existing knowledge by positioning PCA as a mediator that bridges the cognitive–affective–behavioral engagement sequence within digital cultural tourism. Practically, the results suggest that DMOs in culturally rich destinations should adopt dual-narrative digital strategies—prioritizing authenticity in heritage events and creativity in modern festivals—to appeal to diverse visitor segments. Encouraging co-creation between local communities, artists, and digital influencers can further enhance message credibility and ensure cultural sustainability in online promotion.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that within Denpasar’s “eventful city” framework, social media engagement operates as a socio-cultural interface rather than merely a promotional channel. The findings confirm the causal chain SME → PDI → VS → BI, moderated by event type and mediated by authenticity, while qualitative insights highlight how collaborative storytelling sustains this process. Together, these results provide a comprehensive model of sustainable digital tourism governance that integrates cultural depth with creative innovation reinforcing Denpasar’s positioning as a resilient, authentic, and creative destination.

Discussion on how does social media engagement influence visitors’ perceptions, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions toward sustainable event tourism in Denpasar

Domestic Visitor Preferences

Domestic visitors—primarily from Java, Sumatra, and other Indonesian provinces—demonstrated a strong affinity for heritage-based events celebrating Balinese ritual, performance, and culinary culture. Festivals such as the Denpasar Festival and Ogoh-Ogoh Parade embody communal identity and reinforce the values of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (“unity in diversity”), allowing domestic visitors to experience cultural pride within a familiar yet spiritually enriched context. As one community leader observed, “Domestic tourists feel connected to local ceremonies—they see them as part of Indonesia’s unity in diversity” (S4, Community Leader).

Reasons for Preference

Cultural Continuity and National Identity: Domestic visitors relate to Balinese traditions as integral to Indonesia’s broader cultural tapestry, reflecting shared heritage and spiritual values (Picard, 1996).

Family and Group Orientation: Group-oriented travel reinforces collective experiences; processions, performances, and culinary activities serve as social bonding mechanisms (Li et al., 2021).

Affordability and Accessibility: Well-developed infrastructure, local transport affordability, and inclusive pricing increase domestic participation in public festivals (Pike & Page, 2014).

Government and Media Visibility: Strong promotional efforts through national television, tourism campaigns, and platforms such as TikTok and Instagram amplify awareness and participation (Sultan et al., 2021).

Quantitatively, domestic tourists reported significantly higher perceptions of cultural authenticity and satisfaction ($\beta = 0.68, p < 0.001$) than foreign visitors, confirming that cultural resonance drives both emotional engagement and loyalty. This aligns with prior studies in Yogyakarta and Chiang Mai, which found that domestic tourists prioritize cultural symbolism and community-oriented experiences (Yulianthini et al., 2025; Li et al., 2021).

Foreign Visitor Preferences

Foreign visitors—primarily from Australia, Europe, and East Asia—displayed distinct preferences for creative and hybrid events that merge tradition with digital innovation, such as the Bali Arts Festival, Sanur Village Festival, and Denpasar Creative Movement. These events combine ritual performance with visual experimentation, creating immersive, shareable experiences that appeal to culturally curious and aesthetically oriented travelers. As one digital creator explained, “Visitors from abroad love the mix of ritual performance and creative visuals—it feels authentic but also globally accessible” (C3, Digital Creator).

Reasons for Preference

Search for Authenticity and Learning: International tourists often pursue authentic, educational, and transformative cultural encounters that foster cross-cultural understanding (Poort et al., 2021).

Visual and Digital Appeal: The integration of projection mapping, augmented reality (AR), and cinematic storytelling enhances both comprehension and social media shareability (Wang et al., 2025).

Aesthetic and Emotional Experience: Immersive multisensory events evoke emotional satisfaction, enabling visitors to connect with local culture through affective resonance rather than linguistic familiarity (Dong et al., 2023).

Cultural Mediation by Creators: Local influencers and digital storytellers reinterpret heritage for global audiences, bridging cultural semiotics and modern aesthetics (De Man & Oliveira, 2023).

Quantitatively, the SME $\rightarrow$ PDI path ($\beta = 0.62, p < 0.001$) was notably stronger among foreign visitors, suggesting that digital engagement plays a critical mediating role in shaping image and satisfaction where direct cultural familiarity is limited. This finding supports previous cross-cultural studies demonstrating that digital media significantly influences foreign tourists’ cognitive and emotional evaluations of cultural destinations (Rather, 2021; Armutcu et al., 2023).

Table 6. Thematic Events Feature

Feature	Cultural–Heritage Events (Denpasar Festival, Ogoh-Ogoh)	Creative–Hybrid Events (Sanur Village Festival, Bali Arts Festival)
Main Appeal	Spiritual meaning, cultural depth, authenticity	Creativity, digital innovation, immersive experience
Primary Audience	Domestic visitors (families, communities)	Foreign visitors (creative and experiential travelers)
Core Value Driver	Perceived Cultural Authenticity (PCA)	Social Media Engagement (SME)
Experience Type	Participatory and symbolic	Experiential and aesthetic
Sustainability Link	Cultural preservation and community pride	Economic innovation and destination branding

Source: Authors’ Survey 2025

These findings highlight a dual model of attractiveness that characterizes Denpasar’s sustainable event tourism ecosystem. Domestic audiences primarily value cultural continuity, emphasizing heritage preservation, ritual authenticity, and the emotional connection to local identity. Their engagement stems from a sense of belonging and shared cultural symbolism embedded in traditional festivals, which reinforces community cohesion and intergenerational cultural transmission. In contrast, foreign audiences are drawn to cultural translation achieved through creative reinterpretation and digital storytelling. They appreciate how traditional elements are presented in visually compelling and globally accessible forms—such as multimedia performances, artistic installations, and online narratives that merge authenticity with innovation. The coexistence of these two dynamics—cultural continuity for domestic visitors and cultural translation for international audiences—illustrates a complementary relationship between preservation and innovation. Rather than creating tension between heritage and modernization, this dual appeal supports the paradigm of regenerative tourism, where cultural traditions are continuously revitalized through creative practices, technological mediation, and participatory engagement. In this framework, events act as living cultural laboratories, fostering mutual learning between local communities and global audiences. Such regeneration extends beyond simple cultural preservation to embrace adaptive creativity and circular cultural economies that sustain both heritage and innovation. As scholars have noted, regenerative tourism integrates ecological, social, and cultural renewal processes, positioning culture not as a static artifact but

as a dynamic, evolving system capable of responding to contemporary challenges. This perspective aligns with findings in cultural and creative tourism research, emphasizing that authenticity can be reconstructed through participatory storytelling, artistic collaboration, and digital mediation that enhance inclusivity and cross-cultural appreciation.

Implications for Destination Management

The findings provide several actionable implications for destination management organizations (DMOs), cultural policymakers, and event organizers in Denpasar, emphasizing how the integration of cultural authenticity, digital innovation, and collaborative governance can strengthen sustainable event tourism outcomes.

Event Portfolio Diversification

Denpasar should maintain a balanced event portfolio that blends ritual authenticity with creative and digital expressions. By integrating traditional cultural festivals with modern hybrid events, the city can meet the expectations of both domestic visitors seeking cultural continuity and international tourists drawn to innovative, shareable experiences. Portfolio diversification supports resilience against market volatility and enhances year-round visitation through multi-seasonal event offerings. Research indicates that cities fostering a mix of traditional and contemporary events achieve greater brand equity and social inclusiveness in urban tourism.

Cultural Mediation Strategies

Training and empowering local digital creators as cultural translators can ensure the ethical and accurate communication of Balinese rituals and values to global audiences. This approach enhances cultural literacy and prevents the distortion or commodification of sacred practices. By embedding storytelling frameworks rooted in authenticity and symbolism, creators can bridge cultural understanding between local communities and global consumers. Studies show that digital mediation of cultural content, when guided by local expertise, reinforces heritage preservation while expanding international visibility.

Targeted Marketing and Narrative Design

Marketing strategies should differentiate between domestic and international audiences based on motivational and emotional drivers. For domestic visitors, narratives can emphasize cultural pride, belonging, and shared national heritage, whereas for international audiences, campaigns can highlight creativity, aesthetic engagement, and immersive participation. The use of user-generated content (UGC), influencer collaborations, and immersive media such as virtual or augmented reality storytelling can strengthen message credibility and engagement [5] [6]. Integrating narrative branding with participatory digital storytelling helps DMOs co-create meaning with audiences rather than merely broadcasting promotional messages.

Sustainability through Co-Creation

Event co-production involving local communities, creators, and private stakeholders builds collective ownership and reinforces social sustainability. Co-creation ensures that commercialization benefits are equitably distributed and that economic objectives align with cultural preservation. Collaborative planning also increases trust and legitimacy among stakeholders, aligning with the Penta-Helix governance model that integrates government, academia, business, community, and media collaboration. Research demonstrates that co-creative processes foster innovation and adaptive capacity in destination ecosystems, sustaining cultural vitality amid digital transformation.

The Denpasar Festival (DenFest) emerges as the most loved event overall among both domestic and foreign visitors, representing an exemplary model of hybrid cultural sustainability. Domestically, it embodies community pride, ritual authenticity, and participatory celebration that reaffirm local identity and solidarity. Internationally, DenFest's creative reinterpretation, visual richness, and digital storytelling elements attract visitors seeking meaningful yet modern experiences. Its integrative nature—featuring traditional processions, performing arts, culinary exhibitions, and creative installations—reflects the city's capacity to blend heritage and innovation. DenFest operationalizes the Penta-Helix collaboration model, illustrating how public institutions, creative industries, and communities co-produce events that balance cultural authenticity and contemporary expression. Ultimately, the Denpasar Festival functions as a regenerative cultural platform—rooted in Balinese tradition, sustained through creative co-production, and amplified by digital engagement. It exemplifies how event tourism can evolve beyond economic metrics toward a holistic model that integrates cultural preservation, creative innovation, and sustainable governance.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated how social media engagement (SME) influences sustainable event tourism in Denpasar by linking quantitative relationships and qualitative contextual mechanisms. The mixed-method design revealed that SME significantly enhances perceived destination image (PDI), visitor satisfaction (VS), and behavioral intentions (BI), confirming the mediating role of authenticity and the moderating influence of event type. The quantitative model validated the causal pathways $SME \rightarrow PDI \rightarrow VS \rightarrow BI$, while the qualitative strand explained the socio-cultural dynamics underlying these statistical relationships—namely cultural mediation, digital creativity, and collaborative governance. Together, these findings underscore that digital engagement is both a behavioral driver and a governance process in the evolution of Denpasar's sustainable event tourism ecosystem.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. The sample is geographically confined to Denpasar, which may limit generalizability to other Indonesian or Southeast Asian contexts. Future research could apply comparative or longitudinal designs to examine whether the SME–PDI–VS–BI model holds across different cultural destinations and temporal cycles. Additionally, the qualitative phase focused primarily on key informants; including visitor-generated data (e.g., user reviews, online narratives) could enrich future triangulation. Methodologically, integrating big data analytics and digital ethnography with structural modeling would deepen insights into how online behaviors translate into sustainable tourism practices. Further research may also explore how generative AI and immersive media (AR/VR) transform the co-creation of authenticity and visitor engagement in event tourism. In conclusion, Denpasar exemplifies how a city can harness digital creativity and cultural authenticity as dual engines of sustainable event tourism. By bridging the cultural and digital domains, this study offers a framework for understanding how regenerative event ecosystems evolve through the synergy of heritage, innovation, and participatory digital communication.

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Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to ethical guidelines for human participant studies. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection, and their anonymity and confidentiality were ensured throughout the research process. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional ethics committee of Udayana University. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. The study ensured compliance with research integrity principles, including transparency, respect, and protection of participant privacy.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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