

## INDUSTRY-BASED LEARNING AS A PEDAGOGICAL BRIDGE: EFL LECTURERS' VIEWS ON ESP FOR SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY

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### Abstract

*This study explores English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers' perception of the relevance of Industry-Based Learning (IBL) in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) within the sustainable hospitality context. The background of this inquiry lies in the need to ensure that English instruction in tourism polytechnics not only delivers theoretical knowledge but also equips students with practical communicative competence required in professional hospitality settings. Employing a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six informants, including five EFL lecturers from Makassar and Lombok Tourism Polytechnics and one hospitality industry representative. Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring themes and patterns across the data.*

*Findings reveal that EFL lecturers consistently perceive IBL as a highly relevant and effective pedagogical model for ESP. They emphasized that IBL bridges the gap between classroom-based instruction and authentic workplace communication, providing students with opportunities to internalize language use through real tasks such as interacting with international guests, writing reservation emails, and producing promotional content. Lecturers also highlighted that IBL enhances students' motivation, confidence, and professional attitudes, which are essential for employability in the global hospitality industry. Importantly, the integration of sustainability-oriented tasks—such as explaining eco-friendly hotel policies—further strengthens the contextual relevance of ESP instruction by aligning linguistic learning with industry transformation.*

*This research concludes that IBL holds significant relevance for ESP in sustainable hospitality, not only for improving linguistic competence but also for nurturing professional readiness and sustainability awareness. The findings contribute to theoretical discussions on experiential learning and task-based pedagogy, while offering practical insights for curriculum design in hospitality education.*

**Keywords:** english for specific purposes, industry-based learning, sustainable hospitality, efl lecturers

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Within the context of globalization, the hospitality industry has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors, fueled by the rapid expansion of international tourism, the intensity of intercultural encounters, and the rising demand for sustainable practices. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2023) reported that international tourist arrivals surpassed pre-pandemic levels in many regions, underlining the continued significance of hospitality as a driver of economic and cultural exchange. In such a context, communicative competence in English is not a peripheral skill but a central requirement for hospitality professionals. English proficiency—particularly within the framework of English for Specific Purposes (ESP)—serves as a medium of interaction with international clients, a tool for negotiation with business partners, and a means of articulating

sustainability-related practices and policies (Hyland & Jiang, 2021; Zahedpisheh et al., 2017). This demand is further reinforced by the global shift toward environmentally responsible tourism, where hospitality organizations are expected not only to implement green practices but also to communicate them effectively to an increasingly eco-conscious clientele.

For vocational higher education institutions, particularly tourism polytechnics, this dual demand for linguistic competence and sustainability awareness presents significant challenges. While curricula are designed to equip students with both technical expertise and communication skills, the reality of instruction often falls short. ESP courses in many Indonesian polytechnics, for example, remain dominated by grammar-based teaching and receptive skill development, with insufficient emphasis on productive competencies such as speaking and writing—skills that are crucial for authentic workplace communication (Khalida & Refnaldi, 2020). This imbalance creates a gap between what students learn in the classroom and what they need in professional hospitality environments. The urgency of bridging this gap calls for pedagogical innovations that align classroom instruction with real-world communicative demands.

One model that has gained increasing attention is Industry-Based Learning (IBL), an approach that places students in authentic professional contexts where language acquisition occurs through participation in real tasks and workplace practices. Unlike traditional classroom activities, IBL situates learning within meaningful and goal-oriented interactions, such as welcoming international guests, managing reservations, writing promotional content, or explaining eco-friendly hotel policies. Studies by Belwal and Badi (2020) and Ruhanen et al., (2020) emphasize that IBL not only strengthens students' linguistic competence but also cultivates employability skills, motivation, and professional identity. Within the hospitality sector, this is particularly significant as the industry demands graduates who are adaptable, service-oriented, and capable of operating in sustainability-driven environments.

Nevertheless, the existing literature on IBL in hospitality education has predominantly focused on technical or managerial training outcomes rather than on language development (Ilyas, 2017). Similarly, sustainability integration has been addressed largely at the level of curriculum design, with emphasis on embedding environmental literacy into hospitality management courses (Legrand et al., 2011). Research on ESP in tourism contexts, meanwhile, has concentrated on preparing learners for general communication with international guests without sufficiently addressing how sustainability can be woven into ESP pedagogy (Zahedpisheh et al., 2017). The intersection of these three domains—IBL, ESP, and sustainability—remains underexplored. This absence is particularly pronounced in studies examining the perspectives of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers, who serve as critical mediators between curriculum goals and classroom realities. As Li, (2022) notes, lecturers' professional beliefs and pedagogical decisions strongly influence the extent to which innovative approaches such as IBL can be effectively implemented.

In Indonesia, this research gap is even more significant. Tourism polytechnics in regions such as Makassar and Lombok, which are major hubs for cultural and ecological tourism, face growing pressure to produce graduates with internationally competitive communication skills. Government initiatives and donor-supported programs, such as those facilitated by Swisscontact, have emphasized the importance of linking vocational education to industry needs, yet questions remain about how lecturers perceive and operationalize these expectations in their classrooms. Lecturers' perspectives are crucial not only because they design and deliver ESP instruction but also because they interpret and mediate broader policy directives into practical teaching strategies (Brundiers et al., 2010; Qiu et al., 2023; Zarei & Baharestani, 2014). Their perceptions of IBL's relevance therefore provide insight into both the opportunities and challenges of aligning ESP instruction with sustainable hospitality demands.

Addressing this gap, the present article explores EFL lecturers' perceptions of the relevance of IBL in teaching ESP for sustainable hospitality. The focus on lecturers is deliberate, as their pedagogical orientations shape the extent to which IBL can function as a bridge between theory and practice, foster the development of productive language skills, and integrate sustainability into language learning tasks (Machmud & Saputri, 2024; Saputri et al., 2023). By examining lecturers'

views, this study contributes to understanding how ESP pedagogy can be transformed to better prepare graduates for the linguistic and sustainability-oriented professional competencies required in the global hospitality industry.

Theoretically, this research extends experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984; Learning & Model, 2010) into the domain of sustainable hospitality education by demonstrating how IBL facilitates learning through authentic professional tasks that combine linguistic development with sustainability awareness. It also enriches the literature on ESP by highlighting the role of contextualized, task-based pedagogy in vocational education settings (Pathway & Ouarniki, n.d.; Ratnah & Saputri, 2023). Practically, the findings provide valuable insights for lecturers, curriculum designers, and policymakers. They underscore the need to design ESP programs that are pedagogically robust, contextually relevant, and aligned with global sustainability transformations (Masuram & Sripada, 2020). In doing so, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to enhance the quality and relevance of vocational higher education, ensuring that graduates are not only linguistically competent but also professionally and environmentally literate.

Ultimately, this article argues that Industry-Based Learning represents a critical pedagogical bridge in ESP for sustainable hospitality, offering a pathway for aligning classroom instruction with industry realities. By foregrounding lecturers' perceptions, it provides both empirical evidence and practical recommendations for how vocational education can better respond to the dual imperatives of globalization and sustainability.

## 2. RESEARCH & METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive orientation, as it aimed to capture the in-depth perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers regarding the relevance of Industry-Based Learning (IBL) in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) for sustainable hospitality. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for the exploration of participants' lived experiences, professional judgments, and pedagogical beliefs, which cannot be fully represented through numerical data alone (Özer, 2018). The methodological framework was grounded in experiential learning theory, which emphasizes the value of authentic, context-driven experiences in shaping knowledge and practice. By adopting this approach, the research ensured that the voices of lecturers were central in understanding how IBL functions as a pedagogical bridge between classroom-based ESP instruction and the sustainability-oriented demands of the hospitality industry.

The participants of the study consisted of six key informants selected through purposive sampling, comprising five EFL lecturers from Makassar and Lombok Tourism Polytechnics and one representative from the hospitality industry. The inclusion criteria required lecturers to have at least two years of teaching experience in ESP courses and to have been actively involved in IBL-related programs. This ensured that the data were drawn from individuals with substantial expertise and direct engagement in both classroom instruction and industry collaboration. Exclusion criteria applied to lecturers who had no prior involvement in IBL activities, as their perspectives would not provide the experiential insight necessary for addressing the research questions. The purposive strategy was adopted to maximize the richness and relevance of the data rather than to achieve statistical generalization.

Data collection was conducted using semi-structured interviews as the primary method, supported by classroom observations and document analysis. The interview protocol allowed for flexibility in probing emerging themes while ensuring coverage of predetermined topics, such as the perceived relevance of IBL, its pedagogical benefits, and its role in developing students' sustainability-related communicative skills. Each interview was audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and subjected to thematic coding analysis. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach, the analysis proceeded through familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Triangulation was applied by integrating insights from interviews, observations, and documentation to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Reflexive practices, such as memo

writing and peer debriefing, further strengthened the validity of interpretations and ensured that the analysis remained faithful to the participants' perspectives.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis generated four major categories that capture EFL lecturers' perceptions of the relevance of Industry-Based Learning (IBL) in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) for sustainable hospitality: (1) the role of IBL as a bridge between theory and practice, (2) integration of sustainability values in ESP instruction, (3) development of students' productive language competencies, and (4) collaboration with industry partners. Each of these themes is elaborated below, supported by summary tables.

#### 3.1 IBL as a Bridge between Theory and Practice

Lecturers consistently emphasized that IBL provides the missing link between classroom-based ESP instruction and professional hospitality practice. While classroom lessons introduced vocabulary, grammar, and situational dialogues, IBL enabled students to apply this knowledge in authentic communicative tasks. These tasks included handling guest inquiries, explaining hotel facilities, managing reservations, and responding to complaints—all in English. Such exposure not only advanced students' fluency but also helped them internalize English as a professional necessity.

One lecturer noted: *"Students internalize language more naturally when they use English directly with international guests, compared to when they only practice dialogues in class."* This shift from simulated classroom practice to authentic workplace communication transformed students' perception of English from a school subject to a vital tool for employability. The resulting increase in motivation and professional confidence echoes experiential learning principles, particularly (Kolb, 1984; Learning & Model, 2010) emphasis on learning through concrete experience and active experimentation.

This pedagogical transformation also had motivational implications. Several lecturers noted that students displayed greater enthusiasm when they could clearly see the relevance of English to their future careers. One lecturer remarked: *"IBL motivates students because they see the practical importance of English. They no longer ask, 'Why do we need this?' Instead, they say, 'I need more practice because guests expect me to respond quickly and clearly.'"* Such reflections indicate that IBL not only improved linguistic performance but also nurtured professional confidence and identity formation, as students began to perceive themselves as future hospitality professionals operating in an international environment.

**Table 1.** Perceptions of IBL as a Bridge between Theory and Practice

| Sub-Theme                       | Key Insights                                                                  | Sample Evidence                                                                      |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Connection of theory & practice | IBL contextualizes classroom learning in real hospitality situations.         | "Students internalize language when directly interacting with international guests." |
| Authentic communication         | Tasks such as check-in procedures and complaint handling improve fluency.     | "IBL enables them to adjust their register depending on context."                    |
| Motivation & confidence         | Students view English as a workplace necessity, not just an academic subject. | "IBL motivates students because they see the practical importance of English."       |

These findings echo experiential learning theory, particularly (Kolb, 1984; Learning & Model, 2010) model, which emphasizes learning through concrete experience, reflective observation, and active experimentation. By situating students in authentic contexts where communication has real consequences, IBL facilitated the cyclical process of practice, reflection, and improvement. Students



did not merely rehearse pre-written dialogues but learned to respond spontaneously, negotiate meaning, and apply feedback from actual communicative encounters.

The results also converge with Ruhanen et al., (2020), who demonstrated that work-integrated learning enhances employability by connecting classroom theory with workplace practice. Likewise, Khalida & Refnaldi, (2020) found that experiential methods in ESP instruction foster stronger speaking and writing skills by situating language use in authentic tasks. However, this study extends these insights by highlighting the sustainability-driven hospitality context, in which communication often involves not only service delivery but also articulating eco-friendly practices and policies. This adds a new dimension to the role of English as a professional language—not only of service and negotiation but also of environmental advocacy within the tourism and hospitality sector.

Taken together, the findings reinforce that IBL is more than a supplementary activity; it is a pedagogical bridge that enables students to integrate linguistic knowledge, professional practice, and global sustainability discourse. This makes IBL a critical component for aligning ESP instruction with the evolving demands of sustainable hospitality in Indonesia and beyond.

### 3.2. Integration of Sustainability in ESP Instruction

Another prominent theme emerging from the data was the incorporation of sustainability as an integral part of ESP instruction. Lecturers viewed sustainability not as an optional add-on but as a core element that aligned with global industry trends and the evolving expectations of international tourists. In practice, lecturers embedded sustainability issues into ESP materials, classroom discussions, and industry-based tasks.

One lecturer from Lombok Polytechnic explained: *“We design tasks where students create hotel brochures highlighting eco-friendly initiatives, like energy-saving campaigns or waste segregation systems. This helps them use English for authentic purposes while also raising awareness of environmental responsibility.”* In similar activities, students wrote promotional texts emphasizing water conservation policies or role-played situations in which they explained hotel sustainability practices to international guests. By weaving sustainability into everyday tasks, lecturers helped students acquire the specialized vocabulary and discourse strategies required for communicating environmental initiatives in English.

Students generally responded with enthusiasm, describing sustainability-related content as both meaningful and relevant. Several lecturers observed that students learned faster when materials were connected to real-world concerns: *“They were more motivated because they realized these are the issues guests actually ask about.”* At the same time, challenges emerged. Technical terms such as *carbon footprint*, *renewable energy sources*, and *biodegradable waste* proved difficult for many students, leading lecturers to highlight the need for scaffolding strategies and supplementary vocabulary support.

**Table 2.** Integration of Sustainability into ESP Tasks

| Sub-Theme                     | Key Insights                                                                             | Sample Evidence                                                                   |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Curriculum integration        | Sustainability embedded into reading, listening, and project-based tasks.                | “I use articles and videos about green hotels and waste management.”              |
| Practical task design         | Authentic assignments on eco-friendly promotion and guest communication.                 | “Students designed brochures and practiced explaining eco-friendly policies.”     |
| Student motivation & response | Positive engagement, faster vocabulary acquisition, but challenges with technical terms. | “They were more motivated but struggled with specific sustainability vocabulary.” |

These findings resonate with Legrand et al., (2011), who argue that embedding sustainability into hospitality curricula is essential for preparing graduates to meet global industry expectations. They also align with Wahyuni et al., (2023) who observed that eco-literacy tasks enhance motivation but present lexical challenges for learners. This study contributes by illustrating how sustainability

integration operates specifically within ESP instruction through IBL, showing that English becomes a tool for articulating green practices rather than merely a medium of communication.

In this sense, IBL not only bridges classroom and workplace communication but also links linguistic development with global citizenship education. By positioning sustainability as a communicative priority, lecturers enable students to see themselves not only as hospitality workers but also as advocates for responsible tourism. This dual role expands the relevance of ESP instruction, strengthening both employability and ethical awareness in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### 3.3. Development of Students' Productive Language Competencies

Lecturers A third recurring theme was the significant impact of IBL on students' productive language skills, particularly speaking and writing. Lecturers consistently reported that students became more confident and fluent in spoken English when they were placed in real workplace settings. Unlike classroom simulations, which often allow for preparation and memorization, IBL required students to respond spontaneously to guest inquiries, requests, and complaints.

One lecturer observed: *"When explaining hotel facilities to foreign guests, students were initially hesitant, but after several interactions they became much more fluent and less afraid of making mistakes."* Such experiences pushed students to use communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing or clarifying meaning, to maintain conversations. Over time, students showed increased ability to shift registers, adapt politeness strategies, and manage intercultural nuances—key skills for hospitality professionals.

Writing skills also improved. Students engaged in workplace genres such as drafting reservation emails, preparing short reports, and writing promotional content. A lecturer from Makassar Polytechnic highlighted: *"The reservation emails they wrote became clearer, more concise, and more professional after feedback from hotel supervisors."* This shows that IBL provided a form of formative assessment, with immediate workplace feedback complementing lecturers' evaluations.

**Table 3.** Development of Productive Language Competencies

| Sub-Theme              | Key Insights                                                            | Sample Evidence                                                                   |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Speaking skills        | Confidence and fluency increased through real interactions with guests. | "They became more confident after explaining hotel facilities to foreign guests." |
| Writing skills         | Practical writing tasks improved clarity and relevance.                 | "Students produced reservation emails and reports aligned with industry needs."   |
| Evaluation of progress | Observation and reflective journals revealed significant improvement.   | "Even in two weeks, students showed growth in fluency and vocabulary use."        |

These findings converge with Khalida & Refnaldi, (2020), who demonstrated that task-based ESP instruction improves both speaking and writing skills, particularly when linked to professional contexts. They also extend the discussion by emphasizing the role of sustainability-related writing tasks (e.g., eco-brochures, policy explanations) as vehicles for linguistic development.

The implication is that ESP curricula should embed authentic workplace genres into both teaching and assessment practices (Hasrul et al., 2021; Huang & Huang, 2023). Instead of limiting evaluation to grammar and comprehension tests, lecturers can adopt reflective journals, portfolio assessment, and workplace feedback as valid indicators of progress. This aligns with experiential learning frameworks and ensures that students are evaluated on competencies that directly reflect industry demands.

### 3.4. Collaboration with Industry Partners

The final theme underscores the importance of collaboration with industry partners for the success of IBL. Lecturers repeatedly emphasized that partnerships with hotels, resorts, and tourism organizations provided the authentic contexts in which students could practice and observe professional communication (Model & World, 2020). Such partnerships created opportunities for students to internalize the linguistic and cultural norms of international hospitality service.

One lecturer explained: *“Even in short programs, students could observe how front-desk staff interact with guests, and this helped them understand the professional register of hospitality English.”* However, lecturers also noted that short placements, while valuable, often limited the depth of immersion. Longer placements, such as summer programs, allowed students to develop deeper cultural awareness and more refined communicative competence.

Sustainability-oriented partnerships were particularly valued. Collaborative projects with hotels that implemented eco-friendly practices enabled students to engage in sustainability communication, such as preparing brochures on green policies or conducting guided tours with an environmental focus. Yet, lecturers highlighted a key limitation: the scarcity of industry partners with robust sustainability credentials. This limited students’ opportunities to experience sustainability discourse in practice.

**Table 4.** Collaboration with Industry Partners

| Sub-Theme                      | Key Insights                                                                | Sample Evidence                                                                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Authentic professional context | Industry partnerships expose students to real communication practices.      | “Even in short programs, students observed and practiced guest interactions.”   |
| Extended immersion             | Longer placements provide deeper mastery of language and workplace culture. | “Summer programs allowed students to learn professional registers in depth.”    |
| Sustainability integration     | Collaborative projects embed eco-friendly practices in ESP tasks.           | “Tasks included creating brochures on green policies and sustainability talks.” |

These findings are consistent with Ilyas, (2017), who emphasized that strong industry collaboration is a cornerstone of vocational education, and Ruhanen et al., (2020) who noted that work-integrated learning is most effective when supported by industry partnerships. However, this study highlights a new challenge: the lack of sustainable industry partners, which limits the integration of eco-literacy into ESP practice.

The practical implication is that tourism polytechnics should prioritize partnerships with green-certified hotels and organizations committed to sustainable tourism. Such collaborations would not only enhance students’ exposure to authentic communication but also ensure that sustainability principles are embedded in real practice. In doing so, vocational higher education can align more effectively with global industry transformations and the expectations of environmentally conscious travelers.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This paper set out to explore EFL lecturers’ perceptions of the relevance of Industry-Based Learning (IBL) in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) within the sustainable hospitality context. Drawing on qualitative insights from lecturers at tourism polytechnics in Makassar and Lombok, supported by industry perspectives, the study identified four interrelated themes: IBL as a bridge between theory and practice, integration of sustainability in ESP instruction, development of productive language competencies, and collaboration with industry partners. Together, these findings directly address the central research problem of how ESP instruction in vocational higher education

can be aligned with the linguistic, professional, and sustainability demands of the global hospitality industry.

Theoretically, the study extends the application of experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) into the domain of sustainable hospitality education. Previous scholarship has demonstrated the value of experiential methods in enhancing employability and linguistic competence (Ruhanen et al., 2020; Khalida & Refnaldi, 2020), yet this study adds a novel dimension by showing how IBL can simultaneously foster eco-literacy. By embedding sustainability-related communicative tasks into industry-based placements—such as explaining green policies, producing eco-friendly promotional materials, and engaging with sustainability-conscious guests—IBL demonstrates its potential as a pedagogical bridge not only between classroom and workplace but also between language learning and global citizenship education. This positions ESP as a site for integrating professional and environmental discourses, a perspective not widely documented in existing literature.

Pedagogically, the findings suggest several implications for lecturers and curriculum designers. First, IBL should be systematically integrated into ESP programs rather than treated as a supplementary activity. Structured placements allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in authentic contexts, reinforcing the relevance of English as a workplace necessity. Second, ESP curricula should incorporate sustainability themes explicitly, supported by scaffolding strategies to address technical vocabulary challenges. By doing so, students are equipped not only with linguistic skills but also with the eco-literacy demanded by contemporary hospitality organizations. Third, assessment practices should be diversified to capture students' progress in authentic tasks. Reflective journals, workplace feedback, and portfolio-based evaluations provide more accurate indicators of professional communication competence than traditional grammar-based tests.

At the institutional and policy level, the study highlights the importance of strengthening collaboration between tourism polytechnics and industry partners. Authentic partnerships provide the contexts necessary for effective IBL, yet lecturers reported a shortage of sustainable industry partners capable of modeling eco-friendly practices. Policymakers and institutional leaders should therefore prioritize partnerships with green-certified hotels, sustainable resorts, and tourism organizations committed to environmental responsibility. Such partnerships would ensure that sustainability values are embedded in IBL not only theoretically but also in practice, thereby aligning vocational higher education with global industry trends and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Like all research, this study has limitations that open pathways for future inquiry. The qualitative data was drawn from a relatively small sample of lecturers and one industry representative, which limits generalizability. Future studies could expand the participant base to include students, curriculum developers, and a wider range of industry partners across multiple regions. Quantitative or mixed-methods approaches could also measure the impact of IBL on specific linguistic competencies, employability outcomes, or sustainability awareness. Longitudinal studies would be particularly valuable in assessing whether the benefits of IBL—such as improved fluency or eco-literacy—are sustained over time and translate into professional practice after graduation.

Despite these limitations, the study contributes meaningfully to the broader discussion of how vocational higher education can adapt to the dual imperatives of globalization and sustainability. By highlighting lecturers' perceptions, it underscores the central role of educators as mediators between curriculum and industry demands. Their voices reveal both the promise and the challenges of implementing IBL in ESP instruction, offering insights that are crucial for shaping more responsive and future-oriented pedagogies.

In conclusion, Industry-Based Learning represents more than a pedagogical strategy; it is a transformative approach that bridges academic learning with professional practice while embedding sustainability as a communicative priority. For ESP in sustainable hospitality, IBL offers a framework through which students can acquire the linguistic competence, professional readiness, and eco-literacy required to thrive in a globalized and environmentally conscious industry. For policymakers, lecturers, and curriculum designers, the message is clear: to prepare graduates for the future of hospitality, ESP must move beyond the classroom and into the heart of the industry, where language, professionalism, and sustainability intersect.



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