

HERITAGE TOURISM IN BALI: A STUDY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE BESAKIH TEMPLE AREA

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Abstract

Heritage tourism is a strategic sector in Bali's regional development; however, its management in sacred areas such as Pura Besakih presents complex governance challenges. The urgency of this study lies in the dual function of Pura Besakih as a religious center and a cultural tourism destination, which requires public policies that are sensitive to cultural and spiritual values. This study aims to analyze the governance of heritage tourism at Pura Besakih from a public administration perspective, focusing on the role of government, institutional coordination, and community participation. The research draws on theories of public policy, public governance, and sacred public space. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews, field observation, and document analysis. The findings indicate that heritage tourism management at Pura Besakih remains largely administrative, with fragmented institutional coordination and limited community involvement in decision-making processes. These results highlight the need for a more collaborative and sustainable governance model to preserve the sacredness and long-term sustainability of the site.

Keywords: Heritage Tourism, Public Governance, Pura Besakih.

A. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is understood as a strategic development sector that not only contributes to regional economic growth but also shapes social, cultural, and local governance dynamics (UNWTO, 2018). In the context of culture-based destinations, tourism management demands a balance between economic orientation and efforts to preserve social values and local identity (Richards, 2018). Several studies have shown that without clear governance, cultural tourism is vulnerable to excessive commodification, which can lead to the erosion of cultural meaning and conflicts of interest between actors (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2017). From a public administration perspective, this situation reflects the challenges of policy coordination, fragmentation of authority, and weak accountability mechanisms in managing the tourism sector (Osborne, 2021). Therefore, tourism can no longer be understood solely as an economic activity, but rather as an arena for public policy fraught with power relations and interests (Pierre & Peters, 2020).

Heritage tourism is developing as a form of tourism that prioritizes cultural heritage, history, and symbolic value as the primary attractions of destinations (Timothy & Boyd, 2015). This tourism model inherently involves multiple actors, from the government, local communities, traditional authorities, and tourists, each with distinct interests and perceptions (Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2016). Previous research has shown that failure to manage

the relationships between these actors in heritage tourism often triggers tensions between preservation and economic exploitation (Hall & Smith, 2021). Within a public administration framework, this situation demands a collaborative governance approach capable of balancing the interests of the state and the community (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Thus, the success of heritage tourism is largely determined by institutional capacity, policy design, and the quality of public services provided (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2016).

In the Balinese context, the complexity of heritage tourism is clearly reflected in the management of the Besakih Temple area, which serves a dual function as a center for religious activities and a cultural tourism destination. This position makes Besakih Temple a public space that reconciles spiritual interests, the tourism economy, and local government policies. The management practices of this area involve various actors, including the government, traditional villages, area managers, and local communities, with relationships that are not always harmonious. This situation raises governance issues, ranging from the division of authority, decision-making mechanisms, to the quality of public services for worshippers and tourists. Therefore, the management of Besakih Temple is relevant for in-depth study from a Public Administration perspective, particularly within the framework of heritage tourism governance.

Several previous studies have examined cultural tourism management in Bali, with mixed findings. Research by Suardana and Nugroho (2019) indicates that heritage destination management in Bali still faces an imbalance in coordination between the local government and traditional villages, leading to conflicts over authority. Meanwhile, a study by Putra et al. (2021) confirms that local community involvement in cultural tourism management contributes positively to destination sustainability, but is often symbolic and not yet institutionalized. Conversely, research by Astawa and Ardika (2022) found that the dominance of economic orientation in the management of sacred destinations has the potential to shift the sacred meaning of the area if not balanced with adaptive regulations and governance mechanisms.

These studies share similarities with this study in viewing cultural tourism as a multi-actor arena of interaction, fraught with interests between the state, indigenous communities, and economic actors. However, the difference lies in the focus of the analysis, where previous studies tended to emphasize the sectoral aspects of tourism or cultural preservation. This article specifically positions the management of Besakih Temple within the framework of public administration governance, examining how public policies, institutional structures, and patterns of collaboration between actors are implemented within the context of a sacred destination. Thus, this study examines not only "what" is managed, but also "how" the management process occurs administratively and institutionally.

Based on these differences, the originality of this research lies in its attempt to integrate the concept of heritage tourism with the perspective of governance and public services in sacred areas. This research is important because the management of Besakih Temple concerns not only the success of the tourism sector but also the legitimacy of public policy, fairness of services, and the protection of the religious values of indigenous communities. The absence of a clear and collaborative governance framework has the potential to trigger social conflict, decline in the quality of public services, and degrade the sacred meaning of the area. Therefore, this study has both academic and practical urgency in formulating a heritage tourism management model that is more sensitive to cultural values and the principles of good governance.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the governance of cultural heritage tourism at Besakih Temple from a Public Administration perspective. Specifically, this research seeks to examine the roles and interactions of government actors, traditional

villages, and local communities in managing the area. Furthermore, this research aims to identify policy and institutional challenges arising from Besakih Temple's dual function as a religious space and a tourist destination. The research findings are expected to provide conceptual contributions to the development of public administration studies in the cultural tourism sector. At the same time, these findings are expected to serve as a practical reference for formulating sustainable and equitable heritage tourism management policies.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Policy in Heritage Tourism

Public policy is understood as a series of government decisions and actions designed to respond to public problems and achieve specific collective goals (Dye, 2017). In the tourism sector, public policy plays a role in directing destination management so that it is oriented not only towards economic growth but also towards social and cultural sustainability (Howlett, Ramesh, & Perl, 2020). Heritage tourism is specifically positioned as a policy instrument that integrates cultural heritage preservation with improving the welfare of local communities (Timothy & Boyd, 2015). In this context, the government acts as the primary actor in public administration, having the authority to plan, regulate, and oversee the management of heritage areas. Thus, heritage tourism can be understood as a concrete manifestation of public policy that demands a balance between preservation interests and tourism utilization. Indicators:

- Clarity of cultural tourism management policy objectives
- Regulatory framework and regulations for heritage area management
- Government role in planning and oversight
- Consistency of policy implementation at the local level
- Policy impact on communities and cultural areas

Public Governance

Public governance is an approach that emphasizes the shift in the role of government from a single actor to a facilitator in collaborative networks involving various stakeholders (Osborne, 2021). This concept views the management of public affairs as the result of interactions between government, the private sector, and civil society within an interdependent framework (Pierre & Peters, 2020). In the context of cultural tourism, public governance becomes relevant due to the complexity of actors and interests involved in managing heritage destinations. Good governance requires clear mechanisms of coordination, accountability, and participation to ensure that economic objectives do not compromise cultural and social values. Therefore, public governance provides an analytical framework for understanding how collaboration between actors influences the quality of cultural tourism management. Indicators

- • Multi-actor involvement in area management
- • Coordination mechanisms between institutions and stakeholders
- • Level of participation of local communities and traditional villages
- • Transparency and accountability in decision-making
- • Patterns of government and non-government collaboration

Sacred Public Space in Public Administration

Sacred public spaces are shared spaces with high religious and symbolic value, so their use is regulated by social norms, customs, and the collective beliefs of the community (Low & Smith, 2006). From a public administration perspective, the management of sacred public spaces cannot be equated with ordinary public spaces because they contain a spiritual dimension that must be protected by state policy (Kong, 2010). When sacred spaces are developed as tourist destinations, administrative challenges arise in maintaining a balance

between public access and protecting the sanctity of the space. The government is required to formulate policies that are sensitive to religious values while ensuring order and public services. Thus, the theory of sacred public spaces helps explain the complexity of managing Besakih Temple as a religious site that also functions as a heritage tourism destination. Indicators:

- Protection of religious values and customs
- Regulation of tourist activities in sacred areas
- Policy sensitivity to religious practices
- Management of tourist and congregation access
- Balance of religious and tourism functions

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Type and Approach

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, as the focus of the research is not to quantitatively measure variable relationships, but rather to deeply understand the processes, actor dynamics, and practices of heritage tourism governance in a specific location. A qualitative approach is relevant when research seeks to interpret meanings, policies, and complex social interactions within a natural context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study design was chosen because it allows researchers to comprehensively explore governance phenomena within clear spatial and temporal boundaries, namely the Besakih Temple area. Case studies are also appropriate when the research object has unique characteristics and multiple actors, such as a sacred public space that doubles as a tourist destination. Therefore, this method is relevant for explaining how public policy and governance are implemented in the context of heritage tourism.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation studies. In-depth interviews were used to more reflectively explore the views, experiences, and perceptions of key actors regarding the policies and practices of Besakih Temple management (Creswell, 2014). Field observations were conducted to directly understand the dynamics of interactions between tourists, worshippers, managers, and government officials in sacred public spaces. Documentation studies included analysis of policies, local regulations, area management documents, and official reports related to tourism and cultural preservation. This combination of techniques enabled data triangulation to increase the depth and validity of the research findings (Yin, 2018).

Sampling Technique (Informant Selection)

The informant selection technique used purposive sampling, considering that not all individuals had information relevant to the research focus. Informants were selected based on their direct involvement and knowledge of heritage tourism management at Besakih Temple, including members of the local government, area managers, traditional villages, community leaders, and tourism stakeholders. Purposive sampling enabled researchers to obtain rich and in-depth data from key actors with a substantive understanding of policy and governance processes (Patton, 2015). This technique also allows for flexible adjustments to the number and categories of informants according to research needs until data saturation is achieved.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, with the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and interpretive conclusion drawing. The analysis process began with coding data from interviews, observations, and documentation to identify key themes related to public policy, governance, and the management of sacred public spaces. These themes were then analyzed in depth to understand the patterns of relationships between actors,

decision-making mechanisms, and challenges in heritage tourism governance. Thematic analysis was chosen because it comprehensively captures the meaning and context of policies in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The results of the analysis were then interpreted within the theoretical framework of public administration and public governance used in this study.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Government's Role in the Management of Besakih Temple

Research findings indicate that the local government has fulfilled its role by formulating area management policies, regulating tourist access, and providing public facilities to support religious and tourism activities. This role formally reflects the state's administrative function in ensuring order, security, and comfort in public spaces. However, the implementation of these policies still emphasizes technical-operational aspects rather than strengthening a comprehensive governance framework. Government involvement tends to be fragmented into sectoral work units, resulting in suboptimal cross-actor coordination. This situation results in existing policies being unable to fully address the complexities of Besakih Temple's dual function as both a sacred area and a tourist destination.

Furthermore, research findings indicate that the government's role remains oriented toward procedural compliance, such as regulating fees, controlling visitor flow, and maintaining the area's physical facilities. This solely administrative approach has implications for weak integration between tourism policies, cultural preservation, and religious-based public services. The government has not fully acted as a governance coordinator capable of bridging the interests of traditional villages, area managers, and the local community within a shared management vision. As a result, strategic decision-making remains reactive and lacks a basis for sustainable collaborative mechanisms. These findings underscore the need for a transformation in the government's role from mere administrator to a more integrative, guiding actor in heritage tourism governance that is sensitive to the sacred character of the area.

These findings align with several previous studies highlighting the limited role of local governments in managing sacred cultural tourism destinations. Research by Suardana and Nugroho (2019) shows that the government's role in managing heritage areas in Bali is still dominated by administrative functions, while systematic cross-actor coordination has not been established. Similar findings were also presented by Putra, Suryawan, and Astuti (2021), who emphasized that cultural tourism policies often operate fragmentarily due to weak integration between local governments and indigenous communities. Furthermore, Astawa and Ardika (2022) found that the absence of a collaborative governance framework has led the government to focus more on technical arrangements, such as access and facilities, rather than strengthening joint decision-making mechanisms. Thus, the findings of this study strengthen the argument that the main challenge in managing Besakih Temple lies not in the absence of a government role, but rather in the suboptimal transformation of that role towards integrative and sustainable heritage tourism governance (Suardana & Nugroho, 2019; Putra et al., 2021; Astawa & Ardika, 2022).

Institutional Coordination

The management of Besakih Temple, which involves the local government, traditional villages, area managers, and local communities, essentially reflects the multi-actor nature of cultural heritage tourism governance. However, research shows that the relationships between these institutions have not been effectively coordinated within a clear institutional framework. The absence of a formal coordination mechanism leads to overlapping authority, particularly in regulating tourist access, managing economic activities, and enforcing area

regulations. Each actor tends to carry out its role based on its own understanding and interests, resulting in suboptimal oversight of tourism activities. This situation indicates the weak role of the management institution as a coordinating node capable of uniting various interests in the management of the Besakih Temple area.

Furthermore, weak institutional coordination also impacts unclear accountability in area management. When violations or conflicts of interest occur, there is no single institution with clear authority to make decisions and take action. This situation encourages sectoral and reactive management practices, rather than based on long-term collaborative planning. Furthermore, the lack of a cross-actor communication forum means that the aspirations of the community and traditional villages are not always accommodated in area management policies. These findings indicate that strengthening institutional coordination is a crucial prerequisite for creating effective, accountable governance at Pura Besakih that aligns with the sacred area's character.

These research findings demonstrate weak institutional coordination in the management of Pura Besakih, which contrasts with the research by Nanda and Fitriani (2022), which concluded that inter-actor coordination in the management of traditional village-based cultural destinations in Bali has been relatively effective through strong local command mechanisms. This discrepancy indicates that the effectiveness of coordination is highly dependent on institutional design and clarity of area management authority. Meanwhile, research by Kinasih, Miladan, and Kusumastuti (2023) confirms that in areas with high levels of actor complexity, formal coordination is often unable to balance the dynamics of existing interests. This contradiction reinforces the research finding that, in the context of Pura Besakih, the presence of multiple actors without a dominant coordination node tends to result in overlapping authority. Therefore, this research positions institutional coordination as a contextual variable that is not always uniform across heritage destinations (Nanda & Fitriani, 2022; Kinasih et al., 2023).

Community Participation in Governance

Local community participation in the governance of Besakih Temple is primarily evident in their involvement in tourism economic activities and daily cultural preservation practices. The community plays a role as business actors, workers, and guardians of traditions that support the social and cultural sustainability of the area. However, research results indicate that this involvement is not directly proportional to community access to policy decision-making processes. Community participation tends to be operational and symbolic, while the space for expressing aspirations in planning and policy-making forums remains limited. This situation reflects a gap between the community's role as policy subjects and their position as objects of policy implementation.

From a public administration perspective, this limited participation indicates that the current governance system has not fully adopted the principle of meaningful public participation. Decision-making is still dominated by government actors and area managers, resulting in an inadequate integration of local knowledge and community interests. This situation has the potential to weaken policy legitimacy and foster latent resistance at the local level. Furthermore, low participation in the policy process also impacts the community's limited sense of ownership of area management policies. Therefore, strengthening public participation mechanisms is an urgent need to create a more inclusive and sustainable governance of Pura Besakih.

The findings of this study align with various previous studies highlighting the limitations of local community participation in cultural tourism governance. Arnstein's (1969) study emphasized that community participation often ceases at the level of tokenism, where communities are formally involved but lack real decision-making power. Similar findings

were made by Tosun (2006), who showed that in many tourism destinations, community participation is more operational than strategic due to the dominance of government actors. Furthermore, Putra and Pitana (2010) found that in Bali, the role of indigenous communities in tourism is often limited to aspects of cultural preservation, while primary policy remains determined by the local government. Thus, these research findings reinforce the argument that strengthening meaningful public participation is a structural challenge in cultural tourism governance (Arnstein, 1969; Tosun, 2006; Putra & Pitana, 2010).

Challenges in Heritage Tourism Governance

The challenges in heritage tourism management at Besakih Temple are primarily reflected in the difficulty of controlling the number of tourists visiting the sacred area. The high intensity of tourist visits, especially during certain periods, puts pressure on the area's physical and social carrying capacity. In practice, the regulation of visitor flow does not fully consider the rhythm of routine religious activities. This disrupts the devotion of worshippers and increases the potential for violations of customary and religious norms. These findings indicate that tourist control is not merely a technical issue, but rather an integral part of governance that requires sensitivity to the cultural and spiritual values of the area.

In addition to visitor control, another emerging challenge is the weak enforcement of regulations and the provision of public services that adapt to the sacred character of Besakih Temple. Established regulations are often not accompanied by consistent monitoring and sanction mechanisms, resulting in low compliance by tourists and businesses. Public services in the area also tend to be oriented toward tourist comfort, while the needs of worshippers and sacred values are not always the primary considerations. This imbalance has the potential to shift management orientation from preservation to tourism exploitation. Without strong, culturally-oriented heritage tourism governance, Besakih Temple risks diminishing its sacred significance as a spiritual center for Balinese Hindus.

The findings of this study, which emphasize weak tourist control and enforcement, contrast with research by Garrod and Fyall (2000), which concluded that heritage tourism management can be effective when carrying capacity and regulations are strictly and consistently implemented. Jimura's (2011) research even showed that at some cultural heritage sites, increasing tourist numbers can be managed without diminishing sacred values through a structured visitor management system. This contradiction indicates that the success of heritage tourism governance is highly dependent on institutional capacity and commitment to policy implementation at the local level. In the context of Besakih Temple, the findings of this study indicate that these prerequisites have not been fully met. Thus, these discrepancies underscore the fact that heritage tourism governance challenges are contextual and cannot be generalized across destinations (Garrod & Fyall, 2000; Jimura, 2011).

E. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that heritage tourism management at Besakih Temple has contributed to cultural preservation and improved the welfare of the local community. However, it has not been fully supported by integrated, collaborative public administration that is sensitive to the area's sacred character. Therefore, the research problem formulation and objectives, which examined the role of government, institutional coordination, and community participation, have been achieved. These findings interpret that the main challenge lies not in the absence of policies, but rather in weak coordination between actors, limited community participation in decision-making, and the dominance of administrative approaches that have not yet transformed toward sustainable governance based on cultural values.

The main contribution of this study lies in strengthening the public administration perspective in heritage tourism studies, by positioning Besakih Temple as a sacred public space that requires a different governance approach than conventional tourist destinations. Based on these findings, this study recommends that the local government strengthen institutional coordination mechanisms across actors, expand substantive local community participation in the policy process, and develop tourist education oriented toward respect for religious and cultural values. For further research, it is recommended to develop comparative studies across sacred heritage destinations or use mixed methods to enrich the analysis. This study's limitation lies in its single-locus focus, necessitating a broader context. In terms of policy, the results of this study imply the need to formulate a heritage tourism governance model that is more adaptive, collaborative, and based on cultural sustainability.

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