

TRANSFORMATION OF URBAN TOURISM IN BALI THROUGH THE TRI HITA KARANA PHILOSOPHY AS A MODEL OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The transformation of urban tourism in Bali has intensified following the significant increase in tourist arrivals in the post-COVID-19 period. The rapid growth of urban tourism in Denpasar and Badung contributes substantially to the regional economy, yet it also generates considerable pressure on environmental carrying capacity, urban infrastructure, and the socio-cultural dynamics of local communities. This study aims to examine the transformation of urban tourism in Bali through the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana as a model for sustainable tourism development. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, using in-depth interviews, field observations, and policy documentation analysis as primary data collection techniques. The findings reveal that the integration of Tri Hita Karana values into urban tourism governance remains partial. The palemahan dimension is reflected in environmental policies such as restrictions on single-use plastics, although it has not been holistically embedded in urban planning frameworks. The pawongan dimension highlights limited community participation in strategic decision-making processes, while the parahyangan dimension is mainly accommodated through the preservation of cultural rituals without formal integration into spatial and urban development policies. This study emphasizes the urgency of strengthening Tri Hita Karana-based governance to ensure that Bali's urban tourism develops not only as a globally competitive destination but also as a culturally harmonious and environmentally sustainable model in the long term.

Keywords: Urban Tourism, Tri Hita Karana, Sustainable Development, Tourism Governance, Bali

A. INTRODUCTION

Urban tourism in Bali has experienced rapid growth over the past two decades, driven by increasing tourist flows, growth in the service sector, and the expansion of urban areas such as Denpasar, Badung, and their surrounding areas as centers of economic activity and tourist destinations. Urban tourism is not simply understood as the activity of visiting urban areas, but also reflects the transformation of urban space influenced by tourism demand, infrastructure development, and socio-cultural changes within local communities. This development has complex implications, as urban tourism often places pressure on spatial planning, environmental carrying capacity, the quality of public spaces, and the sustainability of Balinese cultural identity, the destination's primary attraction. Therefore, urban tourism development in Bali requires a more holistic approach oriented toward sustainability, not solely focused on economic growth and investment.

Legally, tourism development in Indonesia is firmly grounded in Law Number 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism, which emphasizes that tourism operations must uphold the

principles of benefit, sustainability, community empowerment, and cultural and environmental preservation. This regulation emphasizes that tourism should not develop at the expense of local resources, but rather should be a development instrument capable of improving community welfare in a just and equitable manner. Furthermore, strengthening ecological aspects in tourism development is also in line with Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management, which emphasizes the importance of controlling the impact of development on the environment's carrying capacity and carrying capacity. In the context of Bali as an international destination, urban tourism needs to be positioned as part of responsible development, given the high risk of environmental degradation caused by the density of tourism activity in urban areas.

Bali has a unique tourism development paradigm based on local philosophical and spiritual cultural values, namely Tri Hita Karana, which emphasizes the harmonious relationship between humans and God (parahyangan), humans with each other (pawongan), and humans with nature (palemahan). This philosophy is not merely a normative concept, but has become the foundation for regional tourism development, as affirmed in Bali Provincial Regulation Number 2 of 2012 concerning Balinese Cultural Tourism, which states that Balinese tourism is organized based on Balinese culture, inspired by Hinduism and the Tri Hita Karana philosophy. In the context of urban tourism, the Tri Hita Karana values have strategic relevance because they can serve as an ethical framework for managing urban tourism development, maintaining a balance between destination modernization, environmental sustainability, and local social cohesion. Thus, Tri Hita Karana has the potential to become a model for urban tourism transformation rooted in local values while remaining compatible with global demands for sustainable development.

The transformation of urban tourism in Bali is also inseparable from the national and global development agenda through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework, which is implemented through Presidential Regulation No. 59 of 2017 concerning the Implementation of the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Tourism, as a strategic sector, must contribute to inclusive development, reduced inequality, environmental conservation, and the strengthening of sustainable cities and settlements. In the Balinese context, urban tourism needs to be directed to support the principles of green development, efficient resource management, and the protection of urban cultural heritage, which is vulnerable to commodification due to the pressures of the mass tourism industry. Tri Hita Karana-based urban tourism can be a crucial instrument in integrating economic, social, cultural, and environmental goals within a framework for sustainable urban destination development.

The development of urban tourism in Bali also presents serious challenges, particularly related to increased tourism waste generation, traffic congestion, land conversion, and the decline of the urban environment. Urban tourist areas often become centers of waste accumulation, pressure on sanitation systems, and conflicts between tourist needs and the living space of local communities. The Bali Provincial Government has responded to this issue through environmental policies, such as Bali Governor Regulation No. 97 of 2018 concerning the Limitation of Single-Use Plastic Waste, which is a strategic step in promoting green tourism and reducing the ecological impact of destinations. However, urban tourism issues are not solely related to technical waste management policies, but also to comprehensive urban tourism governance, including how the harmonious values of Tri Hita Karana are internalized in city planning, tourist behavior, and community participation.

In practice, the implementation of Tri Hita Karana-based urban tourism still faces a gap between the concept and the reality of development. Many urban destination development policies in Bali are still dominated by economic and investment orientations, while the

pawongan and palemahan dimensions have not been fully integrated into urban governance and tourism policies. The development of modern tourism facilities often contradicts the principles of spatial balance and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, the transformation of urban tourism also presents social challenges in the form of changes in local community structures, increased commercialization of culture, and the reduction of sacred spaces that are an important part of Bali's identity. This situation demonstrates the need for an approach to urban tourism development that prioritizes not only economic aspects but also simultaneously strengthens cultural, social, and ecological dimensions.

Academic studies on Balinese tourism have generally focused on cultural tourism, tourist villages, and the economic impact of mass tourism, while research specifically examining urban tourism within the framework of sustainable development transformation remains relatively limited. Studies on Tri Hita Karana have also been positioned more as a normative cultural value in tourism, and have not been widely developed as a model for managing urban tourism transformation that is operational in the context of a modern city. The research gap is evident in the lack of analysis that comprehensively integrates spiritual (parahyangan), social (pawongan), and ecological (palemahan) dimensions in urban tourism development. Therefore, research on Urban Tourism Transformation in Bali through the Tri Hita Karana Philosophy as a Sustainable Development Model is crucial in offering conceptual and practical contributions to strengthening the paradigm of harmonious, competitive urban tourism development rooted in local Balinese values.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tri Hita Karana as a Framework for Local Value-Based Tourism Development

Tri Hita Karana (THK) is understood as a Balinese development philosophy that emphasizes the harmony of three relationships: humans with God (parahyangan), humans with fellow humans (pawongan), and humans with nature (palemahan) as the ethical basis for development (Bali Provincial Regulation No. 2 of 2012). THK is not only normative, but can be operationalized as a destination governance principle to maintain a balance between tourism growth, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability (Putra, 2015). In the context of urban tourism, THK functions as a "compass" to assess whether the modernization of city destinations remains consistent with Bali's cultural-spiritual identity and its ecological carrying capacity (Putra, 2015). The integration of THK also requires the translation of values into concrete policies/strategies, for example, the protection of sacred spaces, strengthening community participation, and controlling environmental impacts such as waste (Bali Provincial Regulation No. 2 of 2012). Thus, THK can be positioned as a local model of sustainable development that is compatible with the demands of global destinations, while also serving as a basis for evaluating urban tourism transformation in Denpasar–Badung (Putra, 2015). Indicators:

- Parahyangan: protection of sacred spaces/rites; adherence to customary norms; integration of spiritual values into spatial planning
- Pawongan: community participation in decision-making; distribution of benefits; mitigation of social conflict; inclusion of local groups
- Palemahan: waste control (especially single-use plastics); urban environmental quality; coastal/water conservation; resource efficiency
- Interdimensional balance: whether or not trade-offs are managed (not ignored) between the economy, culture, and environment

Tourism Governance for Urban Tourism

Tourism governance refers to how actors (government, businesses, communities, and other institutions) regulate, coordinate, and direct tourism through policies, regulations, and

decision-making mechanisms (Hall, 2011). From this perspective, tourism issues are viewed as cross-sectoral issues that require the arrangement of power relations, institutional coordination, and consistent policy implementation (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). In the context of urban tourism, governance becomes increasingly complex as pressures on spatial planning, infrastructure, public services, and the city environment emerge alongside demands for destination competitiveness (Hall, 2011). Governance also emphasizes that the quality of tourism development outcomes is largely determined by the quality of the process—for example, policy transparency, public participation, and the ability of institutions to manage conflicts of interest (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). Therefore, this theory is relevant to understanding why the integration of THK in urban tourism can be "partial," especially when actor coordination, institutional capacity, and policy design are not holistic (Hall, 2011).

Indicators:

- Actor structure & roles (who does what; clarity of cross-agency mandates)
- Policy coordination & integration (tourism, environment, spatial planning, culture)
- Decision-making mechanisms (forums, SOPs, deliberations, technical regulations)
- Institutional capacity (human resources, budget, data, monitoring and evaluation)
- Accountability & enforcement (policy compliance, sanctions, supervision)
- Participation & legitimacy (involvement of traditional villages/communities/business actors)

Sustainable Tourism Development

Sustainable tourism development emphasizes tourism management that meets the needs of the present without compromising the capabilities of future generations, by balancing economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions (Weaver, 2006). This framework assesses tourism success not only by increasing visits and revenues, but also by assessing environmental quality, social equity, and the preservation of cultural assets as long-term assets for the destination (Butler, 1999). In practice, sustainable tourism requires adaptive strategies to manage impacts such as waste generation, infrastructure pressure, and the commodification of culture that often intensifies in urban destinations (Sharpley, 2020). This approach also aligns with the global SDGs agenda, which encourages cities and destinations to integrate economic growth, environmental protection, and social inclusion into planning (UNWTO, 2022). Thus, sustainable development theory provides a lens for evaluating whether the transformation of urban tourism in Denpasar–Badung is moving toward a competitive and harmonious destination, or whether it is actually increasing ecological and social burdens (Sharpley, 2020). Indicators:

- Economic: contribution to the local economy; job quality; sustainability of tourism businesses
- Socio-cultural: protection of cultural identity; minimization of conflict; social acceptance; distribution of benefits
- Environmental: waste/plastic reduction; environmental carrying capacity; water/public space quality; energy-water efficiency
- Policy & performance: targets-indicators; monitoring-evaluation; continuous improvement (adaptive management)
- SDG alignment: program linkages with sustainable city goals, responsible consumption-production, and climate action

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of in-depth understanding of the transformation of urban tourism in Bali through the application of the Tri Hita Karana philosophy as a model for sustainable tourism development. A qualitative

approach was chosen because this research focuses on analyzing the meaning, values, and dynamics of urban tourism governance, which cannot be measured solely through quantitative indicators but rather require a contextual understanding of the social, cultural, and environmental realities developing in Bali's urban areas. Therefore, this research seeks to comprehensively describe how the Tri Hita Karana concept is internalized in policies, destination development practices, and the behavior of tourism actors within the urban tourism context.

The research location focuses on urban tourism areas in Bali, specifically Denpasar and Badung, as centers of rapidly growing urban tourism activity. This location selection was based on the consideration that these areas represent a meeting point between tourism modernization, urbanization pressures, and the preservation of local Balinese culture. Denpasar, as the provincial capital, represents culture-based urban tourism, while Badung is the center of a high-intensity tourism industry. Both regions exhibit dynamics relevant to analyzing urban tourism transformation and the challenges of sustainable development.

The data sources in this research consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants directly involved in urban tourism management. These informants included local government officials (Tourism Office, Environmental Office), city tourism destination managers, tourism industry players, traditional and cultural figures, and local communities impacted by urban tourism development. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, selecting informants based on their capacity, experience, and relevance to the research focus. In addition to interviews, primary data were also obtained through field observations to observe the condition of urban tourism destinations, environmental management practices, and the integration of Tri Hita Karana values into tourism activities.

Secondary data was obtained through a documentary study covering regulations, policy reports, and tourism and environmental development planning documents in Bali. The main regulations analyzed included Law Number 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism, Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management, Bali Provincial Regulation Number 2 of 2012 concerning Balinese Cultural Tourism, and Bali Governor Regulation Number 97 of 2018 concerning the Limitation of Single-Use Plastic Waste Generation. Furthermore, documents related to the implementation of the SDGs were analyzed, including Presidential Regulation Number 59 of 2017 concerning the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This secondary data was used to strengthen the analysis of the alignment between the Tri Hita Karana concept, urban tourism policy, and the sustainable development agenda.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification. Data reduction was carried out by selecting important information relevant to the research focus, specifically related to the Tri Hita Karana dimensions (parahyangan, pawongan, palemahan) in urban tourism transformation. Data were presented in the form of thematic narratives, matrices, and policy interpretations to illustrate the relationship between local values, urban tourism governance, and sustainable development principles. The final stage, drawing conclusions, was carried out gradually by verifying the findings through source and method triangulation to ensure strong research validity.

The validity of the data in this study was ensured through triangulation techniques, both source and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from the government, local communities, and tourism industry players. Method triangulation was carried out by combining interviews, observations, and analysis of policy documents. Furthermore, this study employed member checking by confirming the

interpretations with specific informants to ensure the data aligned with the reality on the ground.

With this method, the research is expected to provide academic and practical contributions to understanding the transformation of urban tourism in Bali through the Tri Hita Karana philosophy as a model for sustainable development. The research results are expected to provide policy recommendations for local governments and tourism stakeholders in developing harmonious, competitive urban tourism rooted in local Balinese cultural values.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Tourist Visit Trends in Bali (2024–2025)

Statistical data analysis shows that tourist arrivals to Bali Province are experiencing a strong recovery trend and significant growth post-COVID-19 pandemic. In 2024, international tourist arrivals reached 6,333,360, an increase of approximately 20.1% compared to 2023 and surpassing the pre-pandemic 2019 figure of 6.27 million. This increase reflects Bali's success in reestablishing its strategic position as a leading Indonesian tourism destination globally. The strong return of visitors also confirms that the tourism sector remains a key driver of the regional economy and a dominant factor in shaping Bali's social dynamics and urban space.

This growth trend continues into 2025, remaining strong despite fluctuating between months. Cumulative data through the end of December 2025 shows that the number of foreign tourist visits reached more than 7.05 million, an increase of approximately 11.3% compared to 2024. This growth is also reflected in monthly figures, such as 697,107 visits in July 2025, an increase of approximately 9.29% compared to the previous month. Meanwhile, the period from August to October 2025 showed variations in the number of visits but remained within a high range. This condition illustrates that international tourist mobility to Bali is dynamic yet stable on a large scale, thus strengthening Bali's character as a highly competitive global destination.

This consistent visitation growth indicates that Balinese tourism, including the development of urban tourism in Denpasar, Badung, and the surrounding urban areas, remains a major magnet for international tourists. Increasing tourist volumes are an important indicator in understanding the challenges and opportunities for sustainable urban tourism development. High visitor numbers not only create economic benefits but also increase pressure on urban infrastructure capacity, environmental management, and the socio-cultural support capacity of local communities. Thus, the dynamics of tourist growth emphasize the urgency of strengthening urban tourism governance that is oriented towards the principles of sustainability so that tourism development does not sacrifice the quality of urban space and the environmental balance of Bali.

Urban Tourism Pressures on the Environment and Local Communities

Urban tourism in Bali, particularly in the Denpasar and Badung areas, is placing increasingly significant pressure on the environment, social aspects, and urban infrastructure. The high intensity of tourist visits not only contributes significantly to the economy but also directly impacts urban spatial capacity, increasing the need for water resources, increasing the volume of tourism waste, and degrading the quality of the urban environment. Concentrated tourism activities in urban centers place additional burdens on transportation, sanitation, and public service systems, increasing the risk of ecological degradation if not balanced with adequate planning. This situation demonstrates that the rapid and dominant development of urban tourism in Bali, while the integration of local values into city development policies has not been fully and comprehensively internalized.

The fluctuating dynamics of tourist visits on a monthly basis reinforces that urban tourism in Bali is not solely influenced by seasonal patterns but also by changing global and regional conditions that directly impact urban pressures. A surge in visits during certain periods can trigger a sharp increase in the demand for public services and environmental management, while temporary declines still pose structural challenges in urban destination governance. This variation demands adaptive policies that can respond to changes in tourist mobility without compromising the sustainability of local communities' living spaces. Urban tourism in the Balinese context is thus a multidimensional phenomenon closely related to spatial planning, environmental carrying capacity, and socio-cultural stability in urban areas.

The urban tourism governance perspective views these pressures as indicators of the need to strengthen urban tourism governance based on sustainable development principles that explicitly incorporate social and ecological dimensions. The quality of urban space, such as the availability of public facilities, effective waste management, and the impact on local communities, requires systematic management through cross-sector coordination and community participation. Sustainable urban tourism transformation is not simply focused on increasing tourist numbers; it must prioritize a balance between economic growth, environmental preservation, and the community's quality of life. With this approach, Bali's urban tourism can develop as a destination that is not only globally competitive but also harmonious and sustainable in the long term.

Integration of Tri Hita Karana Values in Urban Tourism Practices

Research findings indicate that the integration of Tri Hita Karana values, encompassing the dimensions of *parahyangan*, *pawongan*, and *palemahan*, remains partial in urban tourism management policies and practices in Bali. The *palemahan* dimension, which emphasizes the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, is reflected in various environmental policies implemented by the Bali Provincial Government, one of which is Bali Governor Regulation Number 97 of 2018 concerning the Limitation of Single-Use Plastic Waste Generation. This policy emphasizes that controlling the ecological impacts of tourism is becoming a priority within the sustainable tourism destination agenda. However, the implementation of this policy still tends to be sectoral and has not been fully integrated holistically into urban tourism governance at the city level. Consequently, efforts to maintain environmental sustainability have not yet become a primary framework for urban tourism development planning.

The *pawongan* dimension, which emphasizes harmonious relationships between people, presents an equally significant challenge. Local community involvement in the planning process and strategic decision-making related to urban tourism development remains relatively limited. Although tourism provides economic benefits through job creation, increased community income, and growth in the service sector, community participation in determining the direction of urban space and destination development has not been optimal. This situation indicates that the values of local wisdom that should form the basis of community-based tourism development have not been fully internalized within urban tourism governance mechanisms, thus potentially creating conflicts of interest and unequal distribution of development benefits.

The *Parahyangan* dimension, which encompasses the harmonious relationship between humans and God, and the spiritual values of Balinese culture also demonstrate a lack of systematic integration. These aspects are generally accommodated through the preservation of traditional rituals, the continuation of religious ceremonies, and cultural activities that form part of tourism attractions. However, these spiritual values have not been formally integrated into spatial planning policy frameworks, city development regulations, or comprehensive urban destination management strategies. This situation creates a gap between the Tri Hita

Karana philosophy, the normative foundation of Balinese development, and the reality of urban tourism governance, which remains dominated by economic and modernization-oriented practices. This gap emphasizes the need for an urban tourism transformation model capable of comprehensively internalizing Tri Hita Karana within Bali's sustainable development policies.

Implications for Sustainable Development and Urban Tourism Policy

The increasingly intensive development of urban tourism in Bali demands a stronger and more focused sustainable development strategy, with the Tri Hita Karana philosophy serving as the primary foundation for urban tourism policy governance. The growing trend of tourist visits confirms Bali's position as a major global destination with significant economic appeal. However, this growth also brings consequences in the form of increased pressure on urban space, environmental quality, and social cohesion of local communities, particularly in urban areas like Denpasar and Badung. Without an integrated, locally-based approach, urban tourism has the potential to exacerbate ecological problems such as waste generation and environmental degradation, as well as give rise to social pressures in the form of cultural commercialization and unequal distribution of development benefits.

The integration of Tri Hita Karana into urban development planning offers a strategic framework for bridging the economic needs of tourism with the principles of environmental conservation and the interests of local communities. The palemahan dimension emphasizes the protection of urban ecosystems, the pawongan dimension strengthens the participation and well-being of local communities, while the parahyangan dimension preserves Bali's spiritual values and cultural identity as the basis for destination sustainability. This approach allows urban tourism development to be oriented not only toward the quantity of tourist visits but also toward the quality of destinations that harmonize culture, environment, and social life. Thus, the transformation of urban tourism based on Tri Hita Karana is an urgent need to ensure that Balinese tourism develops competitively and sustainably in the long term.

E. CONCLUSION

The transformation of urban tourism in Bali demonstrates strong growth dynamics, along with a significant increase in tourist visits following the COVID-19 pandemic. Data on foreign tourist visits in 2024, which reached more than 6.3 million, and an increase in 2025 to exceed 7 million, confirms that Bali maintains its position as a leading global tourism destination. This increased visitor numbers demonstrate that urban areas such as Denpasar and Badung are increasingly becoming centers of tourism activity and strategic locations for regional economic development. This growth strengthens tourism's contribution to income and employment, but simultaneously increases pressure on the carrying capacity of urban spaces and the quality of the urban environment.

Urban tourism in Bali exhibits significant ecological, social, and infrastructure consequences. High tourist mobility places a significant burden on the transportation system, the capacity of public facilities, the use of water resources, and the ever-increasing management of tourism waste. Urban waste production and pressure on sanitation systems demonstrate that urban tourism development has not been fully balanced by adequate environmental management. Monthly fluctuations in tourist visits illustrate the dynamic nature of urban tourism, influenced not only by seasonal factors but also by global and regional conditions that directly impact the stability of urban spaces. These conditions underscore the need for adaptive policies capable of maintaining destination sustainability without sacrificing the quality of life of local communities.

The integration of the Tri Hita Karana philosophy into urban tourism management has yielded partial results and has not been comprehensively internalized. The palemahan dimension is reflected in environmental policies such as restrictions on single-use plastic waste, but its implementation remains sectoral and has not yet become a holistic framework for urban tourism governance. The pawongan dimension demonstrates limited local community participation in strategic planning and decision-making processes, resulting in the benefits of tourism development not being fully balanced and inclusive. The parahyangan dimension is still primarily accommodated in the form of preserving cultural rituals and traditional activities, while its integration into spatial planning and urban development policies has not yet become a formal, systematic part. The gap between the philosophical values of Tri Hita Karana and the reality of urban tourism implementation highlights the fundamental challenges in realizing harmonious urban tourism.

The need for a Tri Hita Karana-based sustainable development strategy is becoming increasingly urgent in the context of Bali's growing urban tourism landscape. High tourism growth has the potential to exacerbate social and ecological pressures if not managed through a governance model that balances the economic, cultural, environmental, and community well-being dimensions. Tri Hita Karana offers a locally relevant framework to bridge the demands of modern destination development with the principles of harmony and sustainability that are Bali's identity. Tri Hita Karana-based urban tourism transformation requires strengthening integrated policies, increasing community participation, and integrating cultural and spiritual values into urban spatial planning so that Balinese tourism grows not only in terms of visitor numbers but also in terms of long-term, sustainable destination quality.

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