

## SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM IN BALI: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF DESTINATIONS

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### Abstract

Heritage tourism constitutes a fundamental pillar of Bali's tourism development, contributing not only to regional economic growth but also to the preservation of cultural values and historical assets. Nevertheless, the rapid expansion of mass tourism has generated significant challenges related to cultural authenticity, sustainability, and local community involvement. This study aims to examine the implementation of heritage tourism in Bali and to analyze its impacts on cultural preservation and local community welfare. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed using a case study design across selected heritage destinations in Bali. The study involved 20 informants comprising destination managers, traditional community leaders, tourism practitioners, and tourists. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal that heritage tourism in Bali has contributed positively to the conservation of cultural heritage through site revitalization and the reinforcement of local identity. However, its implementation remains constrained by excessive commercialization and limited community participation in decision-making processes. The study concludes that sustainable heritage tourism management in Bali requires strong collaboration among government authorities, traditional communities, and tourism stakeholders. The implications of this research highlight the necessity of formulating culture-based tourism policies that prioritize heritage conservation and the empowerment of local communities to ensure long-term sustainability.

**Keywords:** Bali, Cultural Tourism, Cultural Preservation, Heritage Tourism, Sustainable Tourism

### A. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has long been a strategic sector in national and regional development because of its contribution to job creation, increased regional revenue, and community economic growth. In many developing-country contexts, this sector has even become one of the main drivers of economic diversification. However, excessive dependence on tourism can also create structural vulnerability, especially when global crises occur or when patterns of tourist mobility change. Therefore, tourism management can no longer be oriented solely toward expansion, but must instead be directed toward strengthening the quality and long-term resilience of the sector (UNWTO, 2022).

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Over time, the conventional tourism model, which is oriented toward the quantity of tourist arrivals, has been shown to generate various problems, such as environmental degradation, the marginalization of local communities, and the commodification of culture. The phenomenon of overtourism in various destinations around the world demonstrates that increasing tourist numbers without proper management can actually reduce the quality of the destination itself. In addition, pressure on natural and social resources often leads to conflicts of interest between industry actors and local communities. This condition underscores the need for a paradigm shift toward a more sustainable tourism model (Goodwin, 2023).

As a response to these problems, the sustainable tourism paradigm has emerged by emphasizing a balance between economic interests, environmental preservation, and socio-cultural sustainability. This approach not only positions the environment as an object of protection, but also integrates the social dimension as part of the tourism development system. Thus, sustainability is not measured solely from an economic perspective, but also from the extent to which tourism is able to preserve cultural identity and improve the quality of life of local communities (UNEP & UNWTO, 2021).

From the perspective of public administration, sustainable tourism is not understood merely as an economic activity, but also as a public policy issue that involves the role of the state in the planning, regulation, implementation, and evaluation of tourism development. Government has a strategic responsibility to ensure that tourism management operates in line with the public interest, including the protection of cultural heritage and the improvement of local community welfare. This requires adaptive, transparent, and participatory governance in which various actors are collaboratively involved in the decision-making process (Hall, 2023).

Bali is one of the world's international tourism destinations that possesses a highly diverse cultural heritage, ranging from historical sites and traditional architecture to customary social systems and religious rituals. This cultural heritage functions not only as a form of local identity, but also as the main attraction shaping Bali's image as a global cultural tourism destination. In this context, culture is positioned not merely as a tourism object, but as a living value system that continues to evolve within society (Timothy, 2022).

The concept of heritage tourism has subsequently developed as a form of tourism that focuses on the utilization of cultural and historical assets as tourism resources. This approach emphasizes the importance of preserving the authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage values so that their utilization does not sacrifice their original meaning. In this way, heritage tourism becomes one of the strategic instruments for integrating economic objectives with sustainable cultural preservation.

Nevertheless, the high intensity of tourism in Bali poses serious challenges to the sustainability of cultural heritage. Commercialization pressures often lead to a shift in cultural values, turning them into mere economic commodities. In addition, changes in the function of cultural spaces, such as land conversion and the transformation of customary areas into tourism zones, also affect the sustainability of local social systems. In some cases, the participation of indigenous communities in decision-making processes has also declined, creating a gap between economic interests and cultural preservation (Cole & Browne, 2021).

Based on these conditions, this study seeks to examine the implementation of sustainable heritage tourism in Bali from a public administration perspective, with an emphasis on the role of policy, actors, and the governance of heritage destinations. This approach is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the interaction between government, communities, and industry actors shapes the sustainable management of tourism. In addition, the study is expected to contribute to the formulation of policy strategies that are more inclusive, adaptive, and oriented toward long-term sustainability.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Sustainable Tourism**

Sustainable tourism is a concept that developed from the paradigm of sustainable development, which emphasizes a balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and social justice. In the context of public policy, sustainable tourism is understood as a form of state intervention to ensure that tourism activities provide long-term benefits for the public interest.

According to UNWTO (2018), sustainable tourism is the management of tourism resources in a way that fulfills economic, social, and aesthetic needs while maintaining cultural integrity, ecological processes, and life-support systems. This definition emphasizes that sustainability is not only oriented toward the environment, but also includes social and cultural dimensions.

Damanik and Weber (2006) view sustainable tourism as a consciously planned development process aimed at minimizing negative impacts and maximizing economic benefits for local communities. From this perspective, sustainability requires policy planning, institutional coordination, and consistent government supervision.

Meanwhile, Pitana and Diarta explain that sustainable tourism requires integration among government actors, the private sector, and the community within a tourism governance system. Sustainability can only be achieved when the government plays an active role as regulator and facilitator.

According to Yoeti, sustainable tourism must ensure the sustainability of tourist attractions, both natural and cultural, while preserving local values and the social norms of the local community. Based on these perspectives, it can be concluded that the main requirements of sustainable tourism include:

1. Environmental and cultural resource protection
2. Long-term economic benefits
3. Social justice and community empowerment
4. Effective governance and public policy

### **Heritage Tourism**

Heritage tourism is a form of tourism that focuses on the use of historical and cultural heritage as the main attraction. In public administration, heritage tourism is viewed as a strategic policy for managing cultural assets as public goods. According to Timothy and Boyd (2003), heritage tourism is a tourism activity specifically directed toward experiencing sites, traditions, and cultural symbols of the past that hold historical meaning for a community. This definition emphasizes the aspects of cultural experience and interpretation.

Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000) define heritage tourism as the use of the past for present purposes, particularly through the conservation and interpretation of cultural heritage in a tourism context. However, they also emphasize the potential conflict between economic interests and the preservation of cultural values.

According to Garrod and Fyall (2000), heritage tourism must be managed carefully because cultural heritage is non-renewable. Unsustainable management can result in the degradation of cultural value and the loss of authenticity. In the Indonesian context, Yoeti (2016) states that cultural tourism should function as a means of cultural education, not merely as an economic commodity. Therefore, the government has a moral and administrative obligation to protect cultural heritage from excessive exploitation. The main requirements of heritage tourism include:

1. Preservation of historical value and authenticity
2. Protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage
3. Involvement of the cultural-owning community
4. Government regulation and supervision

### **Cultural Preservation**

Cultural preservation is a systematic effort to maintain the continuity of cultural values in the face of social change and the pressures of globalization. In the context of public policy, cultural preservation is a responsibility of the state as mandated in various laws and regulations. According to Koentjaraningrat (2002), cultural preservation is not only related to physical objects, but also includes value systems, norms, and patterns of community behavior. Therefore, cultural preservation must be holistic.

Soekanto (2014) emphasizes that culture is the result of dynamic social interaction. Cultural preservation must be able to maintain a balance between preserving old values and adapting to change. According to Sedyawati (2006), cultural preservation must be carried out through the protection, development, and utilization of culture in a sustainable manner. This approach positions culture as a strategic resource for development.

Meanwhile, Wall and Nuryanti (1996) explain that in the context of tourism, cultural preservation must be linked to destination management and community participation in order to avoid excessive commodification. The main requirements of cultural preservation include:

1. Legal and institutional protection
2. Sustainability of cultural values and meanings
3. Policy support and public budget allocation
4. Public awareness and participation

### **Local Community Participation**

Local community participation is a fundamental principle in modern public administration, especially in sustainable development policy. Participation is viewed as a mechanism to enhance policy legitimacy and implementation effectiveness. According to Arnstein (1969), community participation reflects the distribution of power in public decision-making. A high level of participation indicates community control over policy.

Pretty (1995) classifies community participation from passive participation to interactive participation, in which the community is actively involved in planning and

management. According to Conyers (1991), community participation in development increases a sense of ownership and social responsibility for development outcomes.

In the context of tourism, Pitana and Diarta (2009) emphasize that local community participation is the key to sustainability because the community is both the owner and the guardian of cultural heritage. The main requirements of community participation include:

1. Access to information
2. Involvement in decision-making
3. Fair distribution of benefits
4. Strengthening local institutional capacity

### **C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of heritage destination management in Bali. A qualitative approach was chosen because it is capable of capturing social phenomena in a contextual, interpretative, and holistic manner, particularly in understanding the interaction between cultural preservation and tourism activities. The case study design allows researchers to explore intensively the practices, policies, and experiences of actors involved in managing heritage destinations in real-life settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research location was focused on several heritage destinations in Bali that represent different characteristics of cultural heritage and varying levels of tourism intensity. The selection of these locations was conducted purposively by considering variations in context, including tourist visitation levels, forms of cultural preservation, and the involvement of local communities. Thus, this study does not merely describe a single specific case, but also provides a comparative picture across destinations with different characteristics in dealing with tourism pressures and cultural conservation efforts.

The study involved 20 informants consisting of regional government officials, heritage destination managers, indigenous community leaders, and local tourism actors. Informants were selected through purposive sampling by considering their involvement, experience, and knowledge of the issues under study. This diverse composition of informants made it possible to obtain a comprehensive perspective on heritage destination management, viewed from the angles of policy, field practice, and the socio-cultural values underlying it.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, field observations, and document studies. In-depth interviews were used to explore informants' experiences, perceptions, and views in detail. Field observations were conducted to directly examine the physical condition of the destinations, tourist interactions, and the management practices taking place. Meanwhile, document study was used to analyze various policy documents, reports, and regulations related to tourism and cultural preservation. This combination of techniques enabled the researcher to obtain rich and layered data (Yin, 2018).

Data were analyzed thematically through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The researcher identified patterns, themes, and relationships among categories emerging from the field data, and then interpreted them within a relevant conceptual framework. To ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, this study employed source and method triangulation by comparing data obtained from interviews,

observations, and documentation, thereby producing findings that are consistent and trustworthy (Miles et al., 2014).

With this methodological approach, the study is expected to generate findings that are not only descriptive but also analytical in explaining the relationship between tourism and cultural preservation in heritage destinations in Bali. In addition, the results are expected to provide practical contributions for stakeholders in formulating more adaptive, sustainable, and locally grounded policies, while also contributing theoretically to the development of cultural tourism studies and heritage management

## **D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Implementation Sustainable Heritage Tourism**

The implementation of sustainable heritage tourism in Bali demonstrates a systematic effort by local governments to integrate sustainability principles into tourism policies and cultural preservation. These policies are reflected in regional development planning documents, cultural heritage preservation regulations, and programs for developing culture-based tourism destinations. From a public administration perspective, this implementation represents the government's role as a regulator and coordinator of public interests.

The findings indicate that the management of heritage destinations in Bali has adopted sustainability principles through restrictions on tourism activities at certain sites, zoning regulations for cultural areas, and the provision of public infrastructure that supports preservation. However, the implementation of these policies remains partial and has not been fully integrated across different levels of government and institutions. Fragmentation of authority among tourism agencies, cultural institutions, and customary village administrations often leads to overlapping policies and weak coordination. In the context of public administration, this condition shows that the success of sustainable heritage tourism is determined not only by the substance of policies but also by institutional capacity, cross-sector coordination, and consistency of implementation at the local level. Therefore, strengthening governance becomes a key factor in ensuring the sustainability of heritage destination management.

### **Impact on Cultural Preservation**

Sustainable heritage tourism has a positive impact on the preservation of Balinese culture, both in physical and non-physical forms. Physical preservation is reflected in the revitalization of historical sites, maintenance of traditional buildings, and conservation of cultural areas. Meanwhile, non-physical preservation is manifested through the continuity of religious rituals, traditional arts, and local value systems that continue to be practiced in community life.

However, the study also finds that the increase in tourism activities at heritage destinations has the potential to exert pressure on cultural authenticity. Cultural commercialization in the form of performances tailored to tourist preferences, changes in the function of sacred spaces, and short-term economic orientation are major challenges in maintaining cultural meaning. From a public policy perspective, this condition requires stricter control mechanisms to ensure that the utilization of cultural heritage does not compromise its intrinsic values.

Thus, the impact of sustainable heritage tourism on cultural preservation is dualistic. On one hand, tourism serves as an instrument of preservation through economic support and public attention. On the other hand, without strict management, tourism has the potential to erode the very cultural values it seeks to preserve.

### **The Role of Government and Local Communities**

Local governments play a central role in managing sustainable heritage tourism through regulatory, facilitative, and supervisory functions. Regulation is manifested in the form of local policies and technical guidelines governing cultural heritage preservation and tourism activities. Facilitation is carried out through the provision of infrastructure, conservation funding, and the promotion of heritage destinations. Meanwhile, supervision aims to ensure that tourism actors comply with sustainability principles.

The findings indicate that the role of local government in Bali is evident but not yet optimal. Limitations in human resources, budget, and technical capacity are the main constraints in managing heritage destinations sustainably. In addition, policy approaches that remain top-down reduce the space for local community participation in decision-making. Within the framework of modern public administration, heritage tourism management should prioritize collaborative principles, where the government acts as a facilitator and mediator among actors. Strengthening collaboration between government, customary villages, and the private sector is an urgent necessity to improve policy effectiveness.

### **Local Community Participation and Its Impact on Sustainability**

Local community participation is a crucial element in sustainable heritage tourism. Balinese communities, particularly customary communities, have a strategic role as both owners and guardians of cultural heritage. This study shows that the level of community participation varies across heritage destinations, depending on management models and policy openness. Participation that is symbolic or limited to technical implementation is insufficient to ensure sustainability. In contrast, substantive participation that involves communities in planning and decision-making has been shown to increase a sense of ownership and commitment to cultural preservation.

From a public administration perspective, community participation also enhances policy legitimacy and reduces the potential for social conflict. However, participation challenges remain in the form of unequal access to information, differing interests among community groups, and the dominance of certain economic actors. Therefore, strengthening community capacity and developing inclusive participatory mechanisms are essential prerequisites for the success of sustainable heritage tourism.

### **Governance Challenges and Public Policy Implications**

The main challenges in managing sustainable heritage tourism in Bali include policy fragmentation, weak institutional coordination, limited resources, and pressures from the global tourism market. These challenges indicate that sustainability cannot be achieved solely through a sectoral approach but requires an integrated governance framework. The public policy implication of these findings is the need to reformulate tourism and cultural preservation policies to be more integrated, adaptive, and participatory. Local governments need to strengthen cross-sector coordination mechanisms and develop clear sustainability indicators as evaluation tools.

## E. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that sustainable heritage tourism in Bali has strategic potential as an instrument for cultural preservation and regional development. The implementation of sustainability principles has generated positive impacts on the conservation of cultural heritage and the strengthening of local identity. However, this success still faces various structural and institutional challenges.

From a public administration perspective, the sustainability of heritage tourism is highly dependent on the quality of public policy, the institutional capacity of local governments, and the level of participation of local communities. Government plays an important role as a director, regulator, and facilitator, while local communities serve as the main actors in maintaining the sustainability of cultural values.

This study emphasizes that the sustainable management of heritage tourism requires a collaborative governance approach that involves all stakeholders on an equal basis. Strengthening policy coordination, enhancing institutional capacity, and expanding community participation are strategic steps to ensure the long-term sustainability of Bali's cultural heritage. Conceptually, this study contributes to the development of public administration scholarship by positioning cultural tourism as a complex and multidimensional arena of public policy. Practically, the findings of this study can serve as a basis for local governments in formulating sustainable heritage tourism policies that are more effective, inclusive, and oriented toward the public interest.

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