



Implementation and challenges of sustainable tourism programs in Bali

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of tourism in Bali has led to extensive development of accommodations, infrastructure, and facilities, positioning the island as a major tourist destination. However, this growth has brought significant challenges, including environmental degradation, cultural commodification, and social inequalities. The overexploitation of natural resources, unsustainable waste management, and deforestation have raised concerns about the island's long-term ecological health. Additionally, the commercialization of cultural traditions and rising land prices have disrupted local communities and eroded the authenticity of Balinese heritage. In response, Indonesia has launched the "Decarbonization Roadmap for the Tourism Sector" to transition towards a more sustainable tourism model. This roadmap, supported by traditional values like Tri Hita Karana, emphasizes balancing economic growth with environmental preservation and cultural respect. Sustainable tourism practices such as community-based tourism and ecotourism are emerging as potential solutions, focusing on local participation and environmental conservation. Despite these efforts, significant challenges remain, including the uneven distribution of tourism benefits, income inequality, and the heavy reliance on tourism for Bali's economy. Addressing these issues will require integrated and thoughtful approaches that prioritize sustainability and inclusive development.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, challenges, Bali.

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BACKGROUND

As a result of the growing number of tourist visits, various tourism-related facilities began to be established, including restaurants, art shops, art markets, entertainment centres, and recreational areas. These facilities quickly expanded in tourist residential areas and near major tourist attractions. Consequently, tourists now have many options to enjoy their vacations in Bali. Over time, tourism accommodations rapidly increased, particularly in central tourist hubs such as Badung, Denpasar, and Gianyar. In Badung, the Kuta Beach area, Jimbaran, and Ungasan became key tourist residential zones, while Sanur and downtown areas developed in Denpasar. In Gianyar, areas like Ubud, Kedewatan, Payangan, and Tegalalang have become focal points for tourist accommodations.

To manage this rapid development, the Bali Regional Government designated 15 zones across Bali as tourism residential areas, with supporting facilities such as restaurants and shopping centres. Bali has more than 130,000 hotel rooms, ranging

from budget guesthouses and homestays to five-star hotels. The accommodations vary widely in style, including traditional houses, standard hotels, villas, and bungalows, offering a broad range of price options. This diversity adds value to Bali, providing tourists extensive choices to meet their needs. However, there are growing concerns among observers that Bali's destinations and attractions are reaching a saturation point. Some even believe that Bali has been overexploited, leading to fears that it could be abandoned by tourists and become a "destination of yesterday."^{1,2}

As an answer to various challenges in the tourism sector, On October 10, 2023, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf), in partnership with the UNDP through the Climate Promise Project, endorsed the "Decarbonization Roadmap for the Tourism Sector" at the AIS Forum 2023 in Bali. This roadmap outlines strategic steps for reducing emissions and transitioning to a low-emission, environmentally friendly tourism sector,

aiming for net-zero emissions. It reflects Indonesia's commitment to sustainable tourism and climate resilience, as emphasized by Minister Sandiaga Uno. Sustainable tourism has emerged as an approach in the tourism sector, aiming to balance economic gains with positive environmental and community impacts.

The roadmap's primary objectives include reducing energy consumption, enhancing energy efficiency, and minimizing waste in tourism operations. Initial actions involve setting emission reduction targets and developing a reporting system to monitor progress towards zero emissions. The plan also includes surveys and mitigation action plans for ITDC Nusa Dua Bali hotels, with similar initiatives planned for other key tourism destinations. Kemenparekraf, alongside the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment (Kemenkomarves) and the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM), will implement these actions and expand them to additional priority tourism destinations. This initiative is part of

Indonesia's broader climate commitments and aims to integrate domestic actions with the country's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).³ According to the explanation above, this writing will discuss regarding sustainable tourism roadmap in Indonesia and challenges possibility that might occur in the future

Benefits for Society and Nature

Defined by the UN World Tourism Organization, sustainable tourism considers the current and future economic, social, and environmental effects, striving to mitigate the negative impacts on the environment and local communities. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council outlines four critical pillars of this approach.⁴

Firstly, Sustainable Management is essential for implementing effective policies and oversight in tourism operations to ensure they align with sustainability goals. For instance, tourism site managers must enforce policies that support local products and monitor procurement processes. Secondly, the Socioeconomic Impact focuses on how tourism benefits local communities by creating jobs and enhancing local services. An example is a hotel partnering with local farmers to source ingredients, supporting the local economy and ensuring fair economic distribution.

Thirdly, Cultural Impact emphasizes preserving and respecting local cultural heritage and traditions. Tourism managers can promote local culture by integrating regional food, art, and customs into their offerings. Lastly, Environmental Impact involves protecting natural resources and reducing environmental damage. Examples include using eco-friendly amenities and efforts to conserve water and energy while minimizing waste and pollution. Together, these pillars ensure that tourism contributes positively to the environment and local communities while delivering a satisfying experience for visitors.

Sustainable tourism is prominent for a variety of reasons. It plays a significant role in Environmental Protection. Tourism activities like visiting beaches or hiking often result in environmental damage, such as scattered trash, and severe issues, such as deforestation, water pollution,



Figure 1.⁵ Sustainable tourism is prominent for a variety of reasons. It plays a significant role in Environmental Protection.

and habitat destruction. By adhering to sustainable tourism practices, we can safeguard natural beauty, resources, and biodiversity for future generations.

Cultural and Local Wisdom Preservation is another vital aspect. Tourism that honours and respects local traditions helps preserve a region's cultural identity and values. Revenue from entrance fees or cultural performances can support the management of cultural sites and local artists, helping to maintain heritage and prevent cultural homogenization. Further, Economic Opportunities are enhanced through sustainable tourism. Involving local communities in tourism-related businesses, such as homestays or traditional souvenir production, improves living standards, creates jobs, and reduces poverty. When local communities are excluded from the tourism economy, the benefits are concentrated among a few individuals rather than fostering broader economic growth.

Lastly, Long-Term Sustainability ensures that tourist destinations remain attractive and enjoyable over time. Unsustainable tourism practices can lead to deteriorating conditions at popular sites, causing them to lose their appeal. Proper management is essential to maintain the quality and attractiveness of tourist spots, ensuring they continue to benefit future generations.^{6,7,8}

Tourism Marketing Solutions

The ideal conditions for tourism development, as outlined in the Tourism Law, are as follows: a. to boost economic growth, b. to enhance public welfare, c. to eradicate poverty, d. to address unemployment, e. to preserve nature, the environment, and resources, f. to advance culture, g. to elevate the national image, h. to foster patriotism, i. to strengthen national identity and unity, and to promote international friendship (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 10 of 2009, 2009). The new tourism paradigm should also focus on environmental preservation and sustainable poverty alleviation.⁹

In Indonesia, many tourist destinations need help finding practical, sustainable tourism models, resulting in ecosystem damage, pollution, natural disasters, community opposition, and lost economic opportunities. Sociologists play an essential role in enhancing conservation efforts by evaluating and analysing risks, advocating for social change, and ensuring that conservation initiatives are well-targeted and effective. Their involvement is essential for preparing better conservation strategies and supporting sustainable development that benefits the environment and local communities.¹⁰

Sustainable tourism involves integrating principles of environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic



Figure 2.¹⁷ The overall disruption to natural landscapes affects not only wildlife but also Bali's cultural and spiritual identity.

viability, known as the triple bottom line (people, planet, profit). Introduced by John Elkington in 1994, this approach emphasizes balancing economic growth with environmental protection and social equity. The goal is to promote a green economy that reduces ecological risks and improves community welfare through efficient resource use and low carbon emissions. Sociologists support and critique tourism practices to ensure they align with global sustainable tourism paradigms.^{11,12}

Community-based tourism and ecotourism are emerging as viable models for sustainable tourism, emphasizing local community involvement and environmental conservation. Community-based tourism allows locals to participate in managing tourism destinations actively, ensuring fair economic access and political empowerment.¹³ Key elements for success include natural and cultural resource management, community organization, and ongoing learning. Ecotourism focuses on low-impact, educational experiences that promote environmental conservation and respect for local cultures, contrasting with traditional tourism practices that often lead to environmental degradation and marginalization of local communities.¹⁴

Sustainable Tourism Implementation in Bali

The current tourism promotion efforts in Bali appear fragmented and lack integration. Bali's tourism should be managed under a "One Island Management" concept to ensure more balanced tourism development across different regions. Additionally, Bali's tourism industry is experiencing a severe downturn due to the eruption of Mount Agung. To restore normalcy, promotion is the most realistic approach. Accordingly, tourism practices in Bali cannot be separated from the Tri Hita Karana philosophy, as this principle sustains the island's natural environment, thereby ensuring the continuity of tourism. The preservation of the environment and culture is inherently linked to the preservation of agriculture and natural resources. Therefore, the key is to strike a balance between agricultural and tourism development.

In Bali, the humanistic spirit is reflected in the Tri Hita Karana concept, which emphasizes maintaining harmony between humans, the environment, and God. Tourists can appreciate this spiritual value not only through rituals but also through interactions with local residents, positioning tourists as complete human beings. In line with the core functions of the Tourism Office and to achieve

integrated, effective, efficient, measurable, and high-quality tourism marketing, sustainable promotional activities supported by adequate funding and clear SOP planning are necessary.

For instance, in Nusa Dua, ITDC (Indonesia Tourism Development Corporation), a state-owned enterprise, remains committed to implementing the Tri Hita Karana philosophy in managing the Nusa Dua area. According to General Manager I Gusti Ngurah Ardita, Tri Hita Karana has guided the planning, development, management, and maintenance of Nusa Dua since its inception. Hotels within The Nusa Dua must adhere to the master plan and block plan set by ITDC, ensuring that architectural designs blend modern and traditional Balinese styles while maintaining building height regulations.¹⁵

Regarding *parahyangan*, part of Tri Hita Karana, ITDC has preserved nine local temples within the Nusa Dua area. One of these temples is uniquely situated in the center of the Grand Hyatt Hotel, where local communities continue to perform rituals and ceremonies. Tourism in Bali can coexist harmoniously with the Balinese way of life rooted in Tri Hita Karana. This philosophy preserves the natural environment and fosters a harmonious relationship between local communities, tourists, and the divine.

Sustainable tourism represents a comprehensive approach to enhancing quality of life by balancing the provision, development, use, and conservation of natural and cultural resources for the long term. It means developing tourism in a way that meets tourists' needs while ensuring that the environment remains preserved and benefits are realized both now and in the future.¹⁶

Several activities can be undertaken to address the issues in tourism marketing and promotion. First, promotions can be done both directly and indirectly. Direct promotions include participating in national and international events, roadshows, and sales missions. Indirect promotions involve using print and electronic media and distributing brochures. Second, host the ITOP Forum. Third, organizing the Forum Kerjasama Mitra Praja Utama (MPU).

Challenges Possibility in the Future

The rapid growth of Bali's tourism industry has placed enormous strain on the island's natural resources. As hotels, resorts, and other infrastructure expand, the demand for water and energy has soared, leading to severe environmental consequences. One of the most pressing issues is the overuse of natural resources. Bali's tourism industry consumes water at an unsustainable rate, contributing to a growing scarcity crisis. Research shows that the average tourist uses up to five times more water than a resident, creating a significant imbalance. This overconsumption is especially pronounced in luxury resorts and golf courses, which require vast water for upkeep. The impact is felt across the island as communities struggle to access sufficient freshwater supplies.¹⁵

Waste management and pollution are also critical concerns. Bali produces thousands of tons of waste daily, yet only about half of it is effectively managed. This inadequacy results in plastic waste accumulating in rivers, beaches, and the ocean, damaging marine ecosystems and tarnishing Bali's natural beauty. Beyond management, there is a need for more robust education and awareness among locals and tourists to reduce plastic consumption and improve waste practices.

Additionally, expanding tourism-related infrastructure has led to deforestation and habitat loss. Forests are being cleared to make way for new hotels, villas, and tourist facilities, threatening the island's biodiversity. This loss extends to culturally significant areas, as sacred forests and spiritual sites face encroachment from development. The overall disruption to natural landscapes affects not only wildlife but also Bali's cultural and spiritual identity.

From a sociocultural perspective, one challenge is the commodification of culture. As traditional ceremonies, dances, and rituals are adapted for tourists, there is a risk of losing their deeper spiritual meanings. This shift can lead to superficial representations of Balinese traditions, raising concerns about the long-term preservation of cultural heritage. The emphasis on performance over authenticity undermines the cultural depth that has long defined Balinese

society.

Rising land prices and gentrification are also significant issues. The rapid expansion of tourism has driven up property values, often forcing local communities out of their ancestral lands. This displacement and uneven economic gains leave many Balinese needing help to afford housing in increasingly tourist-dominated areas. Large corporations and foreign investors often capture the lion's share of profits, while smaller local businesses see limited benefits.

Additionally, the influx of foreign tourists and the spread of Western lifestyles influence social norms and traditional values. Younger generations are increasingly drawn to jobs in the tourism sector, leading to a decline in interest in traditional occupations like farming and craft-making. This cultural shift risks preserving Balinese values, such as *Tri Hita Karana*, which emphasizes harmony between humans, nature, and the spiritual realm. Tourism is a vital pillar of Bali's economy, but its dominance also challenges its long-term sustainability.

One of the critical issues is the heavy reliance on tourism, which accounts for nearly 80% of Bali's GDP. This dependence makes the island extremely vulnerable to external disruptions. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, exposed the fragility of Bali's economy, leading to a sharp decline in tourist arrivals and highlighting the urgent need for economic diversification.

Income inequality is another concern. The concentration of tourism in popular areas like Kuta, Seminyak, and Ubud has led to uneven development across the island. Rural and remote regions often miss out on the economic benefits of tourism, deepening income disparities and limiting opportunities for broader, inclusive growth.

Overtourism and economic leakage further exacerbate these issues. Overcrowding in tourist hotspots reduces the quality of life for residents and diminishes the visitor experience. Moreover, a significant portion of tourism revenue leaves the local economy due to economic leakage, with profits often flowing to international businesses rather than benefiting local communities.

Estimates suggest that up to 40% of Bali's tourism earnings are lost this way, underscoring the need for more localized economic models that better support the island's residents.^{18,19}

In summary, while tourism has brought substantial economic gains to Bali, it has also created complex environmental, cultural, and economic challenges. Addressing these issues will require a more thoughtful approach to development that prioritizes sustainability, respects local traditions, and ensures that the benefits of tourism are shared more equitably across the island. A key challenge in sustainable development is incorporating local elements, particularly the active participation of local communities, which is crucial for successfully implementing tourism initiatives. Local participation includes stakeholder involvement, local ownership, sustainable resource use, addressing community goals, monitoring and evaluation, accountability, training, and promotion.

Community involvement is vital for village tourism development, starting with identifying issues, assessing potential, and understanding community needs. Decision-making about solutions follows this assessment. Participation is essential to development, fostering local capabilities, and collective growth. It has become a central concept in development, with many countries emphasizing the need for participation in all development. Local communities are the primary actors in sustainable tourism development, benefiting from the tourism industry while managing both positive and negative impacts on their natural, cultural, and historical resources. Community participation can catalyze economic development and social change, influencing planning and policy to serve local interests better.²⁰

CONCLUSION

The rapid growth of Bali's tourism sector has led to extensive development of accommodations and infrastructure, putting immense pressure on the island's natural resources. This includes unsustainable water usage, significant waste generation, and deforestation, all contributing to environmental degradation.

On the other hand, Mass tourism has caused cultural commodification, rising land prices, and social inequality in Bali. Local traditions risk losing their authenticity as they are adapted for tourist entertainment. Additionally, tourism-driven gentrification has displaced local communities, while economic benefits often flow to large corporations, leaving local businesses and residents with limited gains.

Bali is adopting sustainable tourism strategies focused on environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, and community involvement to address these challenges. The introduction of the Decarbonization Roadmap and the integration of traditional values like Tri Hita Karana aim to promote long-term tourism sustainability, balancing economic growth with preserving Bali's natural and cultural heritage.

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