

Developing Bali Tourism Through Puri: A Special Interest Tourism Destination

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This to explores the transformation of Balinese castles (Puri) into special interest tourist attractions, focusing on their cultural significance and tourism potential post-pandemic.

Methods: A qualitative research approach was employed, selecting nine castles across nine regencies/cities in Bali to ensure geographical representation, diverse castle characteristics, and accessibility. Data collection methods included architectural observations, in-depth interviews with castle managers, and document studies comprising historical documents, photos, videos, and literature.

Results and discussion: Balinese castles are revered cultural and historical symbols known for their exquisite architecture, grand entrances, and lush gardens, playing pivotal roles in governance and hosting traditional arts. Some castles have diversified into special interest attractions, offering activities like pre-wedding photography and cultural experiences. However, challenges such as digital marketing limitations and inadequate historical information impact visitor experiences, highlighting the need for comprehensive digital platforms.

Implications of the research: The study underscores the importance of preserving and promoting Balinese castles as cultural and tourist attractions. These castles enrich Bali's cultural heritage and offer unique and sustainable tourism experiences. Enhancing amenities and accessibility further enhances the tourist experience and supports sustainable tourism development.

Originality/value: Contribution to understanding the potential of Balinese castles in post-pandemic tourism trends, emphasizing the importance of cultural preservation, sustainable tourism practices, and digital enhancement for tourist attractions. Balancing tradition and modernity is essential for Bali's tourism landscape, with castles playing a vital role in maintaining cultural integrity and fostering sustainable development.

Keywords: Human Resource Management practices, Employee Loyalty, Psychological Ownership, Job Satisfaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the aggressive development of the tourism sector not only had positive impacts but also had negative consequences on the local economy and culture in tourism destinations (Archer et al., 2012; Kruczek, 2019). Tourism development often leads to environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and the loss of local wisdom (et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2017). Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic represents a crucial moment for revitalizing Indonesia's tourism sector. The role and synergy among various stakeholders in reconstructing the tourism sector are paramount. Additionally, it is essential to diversify tourism products following post-pandemic trends.

According to Teguh (2020), sustainable and responsive tourism products with authentic added value will emerge as a mega-trend in the post-pandemic era. This aligns with research by Thalia (2011), as cited in Semara et al. (2018), which highlights a shift in tourist interests towards developing sustainable tourism through special interest tourism.

The importance of sustainable tourism policies, which seek to mitigate both the positive and negative consequences of tourism, has become increasingly apparent after the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis has underscored the necessity for further research on how crises affect tourism policies. According to Schönherr et al. (2023), policymakers are recognizing three key aspects: (1) the significance of advancing

sustainable tourism amid crises, (2) the formulation of agendas such as sustainable tourism strategies, and (3) the implementation of policies that encompass environmental, economic, socio-cultural, and community-oriented measures.

Special interest tourism significantly emphasizes the appreciation and preservation of nature, the environment, and culture (environmentally and culturally sensitive). This includes traditional arts, history, archaeology, natural aspects such as the richness of flora and fauna, national parks, forests, rivers, lakes, and beaches. This concept aligns with the World Tourism Organization (2017), prioritizing sustainable tourism development by balancing economic, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects. Fandeli (2002), as cited in Widhiarini et al. (2019), identified various tourist motivations within special interest tourism, including the search for uniqueness (Novelty Seeking), the pursuit of quality experiences (Quality Seeking), appreciation of objects (Rewarding), knowledge enrichment (Enriching), engagement in adventure (Adventuring), and the pursuit of learning (Learning). Special interest tourism aims to provide tourists with enriching experiences and learning opportunities through in-depth and fulfilling tourism activities.

Puri (castle) is one of the main attractions of Bali as a tourist destination in Indonesia. Puri was the center of government for Balinese kingdoms in the past, rich in historical heritage, traditional Balinese architecture, and a thick social life with cultural values (Budihardjo, 2013). For example, castle construction has been ongoing from the 14th century until the early 20th century (Budihardjo, 2017). Puri also reflects Balinese ritual and cultural requirements, and the architecture of the Puri is often a striking feature.

However, the castle's existence today is not limited to just a residence or center of government. Several castles in 9 districts/cities in Bali have been converted into special interest tourist attractions, such as Puri Satria in Denpasar, Puri Gede Kaba-Kaba in Tabanan, Puri Saren Ubud in Gianyar, and Puri Lanang in Badung Regency. The magnificent architecture with Balinese carvings is often used as a backdrop for pre-wedding photos. The Puri is also a place for various traditional arts activities, such as dancing, *mejajahitan* (the work is cutting leaves followed by sewing with thread), *megambel* (the activity of beating Balinese gamelan as an accompaniment to dance or religious rituals), yoga, and other tourist activities (Agus et al., 2022; Payuyasa & Adi Surya, 2020).

This research aims to delve into the multifaceted transformation of Balinese castles (known as Puris) into unique special interest tourist attractions. The research objectives encompass various dimensions of this transformation, starting with exploring the historical and cultural significance of these castles within the Balinese heritage. This research sheds light on the intricate process through which these castles have evolved into vibrant tourist destinations, offering various activities that cater to special interest tourists. Alongside this, this research will identify and dissect the challenges posed by the digital age in effectively marketing these cultural treasures while also addressing the shortage of historical information available to tourists. Furthermore, this research will examine the impact of special interest tourism on preserving Balinese culture and the surrounding environment. Ultimately, this research provides valuable insights and recommendations for the sustainable development and promotion of Balinese castles as culturally rich and environmentally conscious tourist destinations, thus ensuring their continued relevance in the global tourism landscape.

However, there are challenges regarding digital marketing and a lack of clear historical information about these castles, which can impact tourists' experiences. Therefore, there is a need for a digital platform that provides complete information about the castle, its history, and the various tourist activities available there.

2. METHOD

The research method employed in this study was a qualitative approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) involving selecting nine castles dispersed across nine regencies/cities in Bali as the research subjects. The sample selection was purposive, considering geographical representativeness, diverse castle characteristics, and adequate accessibility. Data collection involved various techniques, including architectural and potential castle observations, in-depth interviews with castle managers, and document studies encompassing historical documents, photos, videos, and relevant literature related to the castles.

Data validity and reliability were ensured through pre-testing interview instrument validity, conducting observations by trained observers, adhering to research ethics, and obtaining local authorities' permission. The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, wherein data were categorized and analyzed thematically. This research also included variable control measures to minimize the influence of uncontrolled external variables. The research timeline encompassed data collection phases during specific periods in the nine regencies/cities in Bali, followed by data analysis stages. The

final research report was compiled after completing the data analysis. This research method was grounded in relevant references, providing a strong theoretical basis for the chosen research approach.

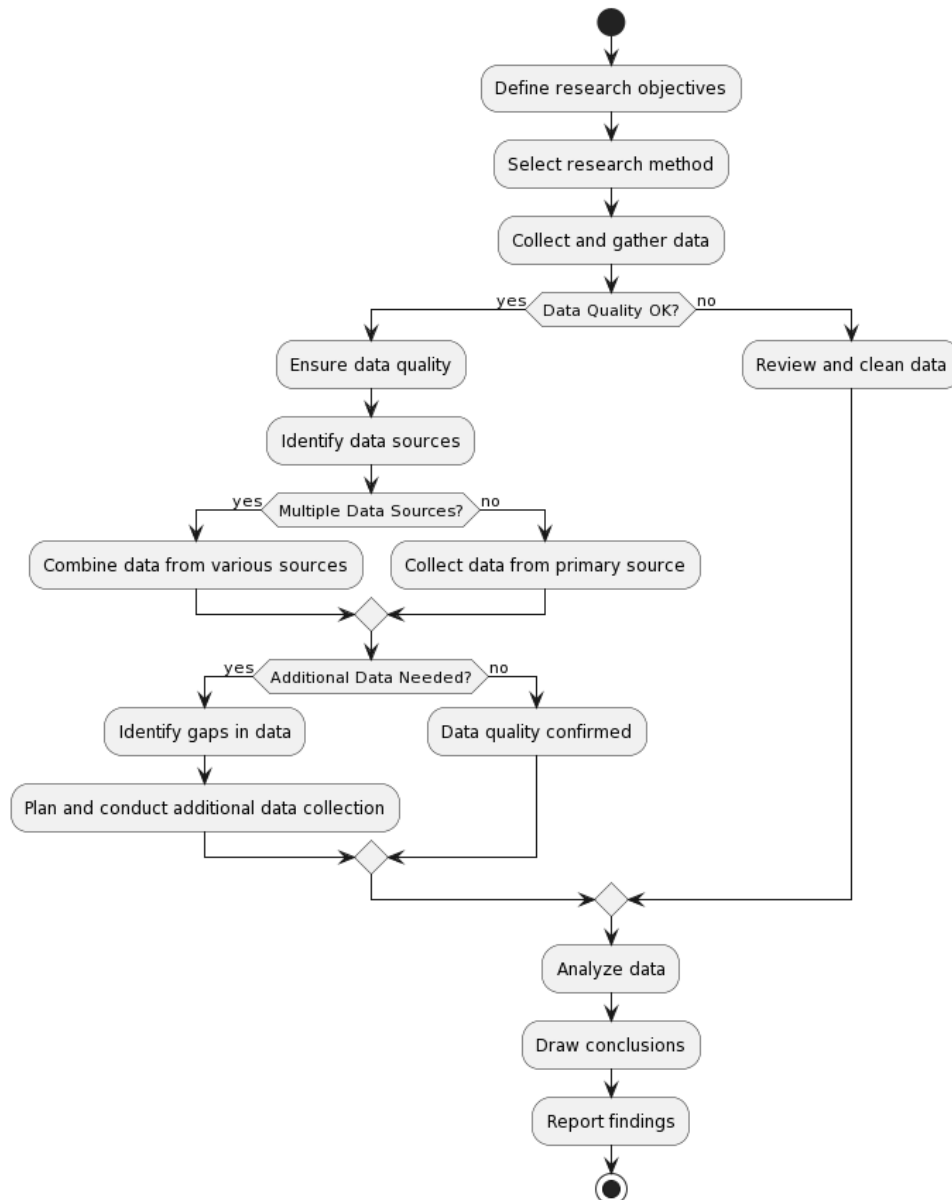


Figure 1. Proposed Model

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 General Description of Castles in Bali

Puri, a term commonly used in Indonesia, refers to castles, small kingdoms, or the traditional residences of nobility found in various regions of Indonesia, including Bali. In Bali, castles are pivotal in the local community's cultural, historical, and social aspects. They symbolize the noble history, art, architecture, and culture of not only Bali but also Indonesia at large. Bali's castles are renowned for their distinctive and exquisite architecture (Bharuna & Suartika, 2017).

Balinese architecture seeks harmony between The Creator, the human, and the environment, as stated in the local religious concept of Tri Hita Karana (Pitana, 2010). The existence of Balinese architecture in the traditional "puri" and "umah" has significantly developed in the zone of pawongan and palemahan without ignoring the ergonomic factor. Similarly, the traditional "puri" and "umah" used an ornament that was not carved (Indriani et al., 2020).

They feature grand entrance gates, main structures with multi-tiered roofs adorned with intricate wood carvings, and meticulously landscaped gardens embellished with flowers and traditional statues (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).



Figure 2. The gate in front of the castle stands sturdy and majestic, adorned with intricate Balinese carvings and statues.

Source: Researcher documentation (2023)

The castles are known for their impressive entrance gates. These gates are grand and sturdy, making a strong and majestic statement. They are often adorned with intricate Balinese carvings and statues, showcasing their rich artistic heritage.

The main structures of these castles feature multi-tiered roofs. These roofs are functional and serve as architectural elements of great aesthetic value. They are often adorned with intricate wood carvings, adding to the visual appeal of the castles.



Figure 1. The gardens in Puri are meticulously landscaped.

Source: Researcher documentation (2023)

Meticulously landscaped gardens surround the castles. These gardens are carefully designed and maintained, creating a harmonious blend of nature and culture. They are often embellished with flowers and traditional statues, further enhancing the overall beauty of the castle grounds.

Figure 2 and Figure 3 provide visual evidence of these features, showcasing the intricate carvings on the castle gates and the well-maintained gardens. These features collectively contribute to Balinese castles' unique charm and cultural significance, making them attractive tourist destinations and reflecting Bali's rich heritage.

Bali is famous for its intricate royal system, comprising numerous small kingdoms. Each kingdom is centered around a castle, serving as its traditional seat of governance. Typically led by a king or regent, these castles are their residence and workplace (Howe, 2005).

The castles serve as governance places and are the residences and workplaces of the region's kings or regents. These regents are responsible for overseeing the affairs of their respective kingdoms, making the castles integral to their roles.

Furthermore, these castles frequently host traditional Balinese art and dance performances, such as the Legong and Barong dances (see Figure 4).



Figure 2. Barong dance performance at Puri Kaba-Kaba in Tabanan.
Source: Researcher documentation (2023)

The Legong dance is one of Bali's most famous traditional dances, known for its intricate and delicate movements. It is a classical dance that originated in the royal courts of Bali and is typically performed by young girls who have been rigorously trained in Balinese dance from a very young age. The dance is characterized by precise, graceful hand and finger movements and intricate footwork. The Barong dance is an iconic Balinese performance that tells the story of the eternal battle between good and evil. The central character of the dance is the Barong, a mythical lion-like creature that represents benevolence and protection. The dance is a popular tourist attraction, often performed at temples and cultural events (Davies, 2008; McPhee, 2019; Sugiarta, 2018).

Within each Puri (castle) exists a place of worship known as the Merajan Agung, a significant location for conducting traditional religious ceremonies, including the Piodalan, a ceremony held to honor the castle's patron deity (see Figure 5 and Figure 6).



Figure 3. Merajan is a place to hold Piodalan ceremony activities.
Source: Researcher documentation (2023)



Figure 4. Actively preparing for a religious ceremony (Piodalan) at Puri.
Source: Researcher documentation (2023)

The Merajan Agung, a consecrated space within the Puri where religious rituals and ceremonies are held, stands as a beautifully adorned and spiritually charged area, underscoring its profound significance in Balinese culture. The Piodalan ceremony, a cherished tradition, pays homage to the castle's patron deities, with each Puri typically venerating its unique set of divine entities. During the Piodalan ceremony, many ritual activities unfold, encompassing offerings like flowers, fruits, incense, and other symbolic items, all presented as tokens of profound respect and devotion.

The ceremony is often officiated by Balinese priests or esteemed religious figures, who lead prayers and perform rituals to invoke blessings and safeguard the castle and its inhabitants. Beyond their religious aspects, the Merajan Agung and the Piodalan ceremony epitomize the deep spiritual connection between the Balinese people, their rich culture, and their enduring ancestral traditions. These ceremonies transcend mere religious observances; they are cultural events that strengthen the sense of community and heritage, seamlessly weaving together spirituality and Balinese identity.

As the interest of tourists in Balinese culture continues to grow, several castles have opened their doors to visitors. Tourists can immerse themselves in Balinese history and culture and witness traditional art performances at these accessible castles. Examples include Puri Satria in Denpasar, Puri Kaba-Kaba in Tabanan, and Puri Peliatan in Gianyar, embracing tourism activities within their walls.

Moreover, Puri Lanang, located in Sibang Kaja, has capitalized on its potential as a Balinese pre-wedding photography location, thanks to its unique and splendid architecture (see Figure 7).



Figure 5. Balinese pre-wedding photoshoot at Puri Lanang.
Source: Researcher documentation (2023)

Similarly, Puri Kaba-Kaba in Tabanan has transformed into a special-interest tourist attraction, offering packages like the “tour de puri cooking class,” mejejahitan lessons, and spiritual tourism (see Figure 8).



Figure 6. Learning “mejejahitan” and “tour de puri” are educational tourism activities at Puri Kaba-Kaba.
Source: Researcher documentation (2023)

The Puris in Bali represent an essential part of the island’s cultural heritage. They encapsulate the richness of Balinese art, architecture, and traditional life. Preservation efforts are crucial to maintaining the integrity of Balinese culture, even though some castles may have undergone modernization. These Puris uphold traditional values and serve as significant cultural and spiritual centers.

3.2 Aspects (Attractions, Amenities, Accessibility) of Puri as a Tourist Attraction

The development of a tourist destination hinges on three critical aspects, collectively known as the 3A (Attractions, Amenities, Accessibility): attractions that draw tourists, amenities that enhance their experience, and accessibility that ensures ease of travel. These three factors are integral to creating a comfortable and enjoyable tourist experience. For Puris undergoing transformation into a tourist attraction, having these 3A aspects is essential to provide a satisfying and sustainable tourism experience (Wirawan & Mahendra; Kim et al., 2023; Majid & Taghulihi, 2023; Putra et al., 2019). Here is an overview of the attractions, amenities, and accessibility of Bali’s castles.

Amenities

Bali’s castles have meticulously curated a range of amenities to enhance the overall tourist experience, ensuring visitors’ comfort and convenience. Within the castle premises, clean and accessible restroom facilities are available, catering to visitors’ needs during their stay. Select castles offer homestay options for those seeking an immersive experience, providing a unique opportunity to live amidst Bali’s rich cultural heritage. On-site dining establishments serve authentic Balinese cuisine, allowing guests to savor traditional flavors and dishes. Conveniently located ATMs ensure tourists can easily manage their financial needs while exploring the castle attractions.

Additionally, some castles provide versatile meeting rooms for conferences, seminars, and cultural events, fostering engagement among tourists and local communities alike. Visitors traveling by car or motorcycle will find ample parking spaces available near the castles, ensuring a smooth and stress-free arrival. Moreover, certain castles offer ticketing counters, streamlining the entry process for a seamless visitor experience. Knowledgeable local guides enhance the educational aspect of the visit, sharing insights into the castle’s history and culture. These thoughtfully selected amenities reflect the castles’ commitment to delivering professional and visitor-centric tourism services, creating memorable and comfortable stays for all guests.

Accessibility

Regarding accessibility, the strategic placement of most of Bali’s castles within residential centers ensures they are easily reachable by various transportation options. Whether traveling by motorcycle, car, or public transit, tourists can conveniently access and fully enjoy their experiences at these captivating castles. Furthermore, certain castles, like Puri Agung Peliatan and Puri Kaba-Kaba, have taken additional steps to enhance accessibility. They have incorporated pedestrian-friendly paths, further elevating visitors’ convenience and safety while exploring these cultural treasures. This commitment to accessibility reflects the castles’ dedication to providing a seamless and inclusive experience for tourists of all backgrounds and preferences.

8. CONCLUSION

The tourist attractions developed in Puri are deeply rooted in Balinese culture and local wisdom, encompassing various activities such as dancing, *mejejahitan*, painting, *melukat*, and yoga. This richness underscores the strong Balinese cultural concept these Puris uphold, making them unique and attractive tourist destinations.

In terms of amenities, the castles in Bali are well-equipped with essential tourism-supporting facilities. These include restrooms, homestays, local restaurants, ATMs, meeting rooms, and ample parking space. Notably, some castles go the extra mile by providing ticketing counters and local guides, reflecting the professionalism and dedication of these establishments in their development towards tourism.

Accessibility also plays a vital role in enhancing the overall tourist experience. Located in residential centers, most castles in Bali offer excellent accessibility, accommodating various modes of transportation, including two-wheeled, four-wheeled, and public transportation. Moreover, including pedestrian-friendly pathways in some castles, such as Puri Agung Peliatan and Puri Lanang, further contributes to the comfort and safety of visiting tourists.

These findings underline the importance of Bali's castles as cultural and tourist attractions. They enrich the tourism landscape and serve as guardians of Balinese culture, fostering a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity. As Bali continues to draw global attention, preserving and promoting these unique cultural treasures remain paramount for the island's sustainable tourism development and cultural heritage.

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