ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN TOURIST BEHAVIOR IN TRAVELING IN THE DIGITAL ERA ON THE ISLAND OF BALI

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the changing behavior of tourists in traveling to Bali in the digital era. The rapid development of information and communication technology has significantly influenced how tourists search for information, make decisions, and experience their travels. Bali, as a world-class tourism destination, provides a compelling case study to explore how digitalization shapes travel trends and tourist preferences. This study employed a qualitative descriptive method, collecting data through in-depth interviews with domestic and international tourists, field observations, and literature review. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns of behavioral changes among tourists visiting Bali. The findings reveal that social media has become the primary source of inspiration for tourists when choosing destinations, while online reviews play a crucial role in building trust in tourism attractions. Moreover, Online Travel Agents (OTAs) have transformed travel planning by offering easy access to information, price comparisons, and complete travel packages. In terms of travel preferences, tourists are drawn to three major attractions in Bali: wellness & healing tourism, nature-based tourism, and cultural tourism. These categories reflect the growing demand for authentic experiences, sustainability, and a balance between leisure, recovery, and cultural engagement. The study concludes that Bali has successfully adapted to digital opportunities to strengthen its tourism appeal. Recommendations highlight the importance of adopting digital-based promotion strategies, developing sustainable tourism products, and empowering local communities to preserve Bali's cultural identity while staying relevant to global tourist behavior trends.

Key words: *Tourist Behavior, Gigital Era, Tourism.*

1. Introduction

The Bali is the main icon of Indonesian tourism and has long been recognized worldwide. The island offers natural beauty such as beaches, mountains, rice terraces, and tropical forests, combined with cultural richness and local wisdom expressed through religious ceremonies, traditional dances, and architecture. These elements make Bali not only a destination for nature tourism but also a center for cultural, spiritual, and lifestyle tourism. According to the annual report of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Bali consistently contributes more than

30% of Indonesia's total international tourist arrivals. This highlights Bali's crucial role as the locomotive of national tourism. However, global dynamics, technological development, and changing tourism trends have influenced travel behavior. In the past, tourists relied heavily on brochures, conventional travel agencies, or direct recommendations. Today, in the digital era, tourists actively search for information through the internet and social media. This shift has created both challenges and opportunities for Bali's tourism industry [1].

The digital era is marked by rapid advancements in information and communication technology. The presence of the internet, social media, mobile applications, and artificial intelligence has shaped new patterns in nearly every sector, including tourism. In the context of travel, digitalization affects the entire tourist journey—from information searching, trip planning, and booking, to experiences at the destination and sharing post-visit stories. Tourists are now more independent in managing their trips. Booking applications such as Traveloka, Tiket.com, Booking.com, and Airbnb allow travelers to plan without fully depending on traditional agencies. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube also play a major role in shaping destination images. A viral short video of Pandawa Beach or Ubud, for instance, can significantly increase tourist interest. Thus, the digital era has fostered new behavior patterns based on digital information, visualization, and online reviews [2].

Several aspects reflect this behavioral change. First, tourists tend to seek "Instagrammable" destinations with high visual appeal. This aligns with the millennial travel phenomenon, where tourists not only visit places but also document and share experiences online. Second, tourists have become more selective and critical by comparing prices, facilities, and reviews on digital platforms. Third, tourists prioritize flexibility and efficiency, leading them to prefer app-based services. Bali, as a popular destination, is strongly influenced by these shifts. For example, young travelers, both domestic and international, often use Instagram to choose tourist attractions in Bali. Areas such as Canggu, Uluwatu, and Penglipuran Village have become widely known through digital content. In short, tourist behavior is increasingly shaped by fast-moving digital trends [3].

Despite many opportunities, the digital era also brings challenges. First, intense competition arises among destinations, as tourists can easily compare Bali with Phuket, the Maldives, or Hawaii. Second, over-tourism emerges when destinations suddenly go viral on social media, causing overcrowding, waste, and environmental degradation. Another concern is cultural sustainability. Digital travelers often seek visual content without fully appreciating the deeper

cultural values of Bali. If not properly managed, this may undermine the authenticity of Balinese culture. Therefore, integrating digital technology with environmental and cultural preservation is essential.

Analyzing tourist behavioral changes is crucial to understanding these new travel patterns. With proper analysis, tourism stakeholders in Bali can formulate more effective strategies for promotion, services, and destination management. Such analysis also supports policymakers and local communities in developing sustainable tourism policies. Moreover, it enables innovation through digital tools—for example, big data applications to predict visitor trends or virtual reality to provide pre-visit experiences. Given the tourism sector's significant contribution to Bali's economy, understanding tourist behavior is indispensable, especially as digitalization brings profound changes that affect competitiveness and sustainability. This analysis helps stakeholders identify new decision-making patterns. Previously, tourists relied on conventional agencies or personal recommendations. Now, most rely on the internet, social media, and travel apps to search for information, compare prices, and book services. International visitors to Bali frequently consult online reviews on TripAdvisor or Google Reviews before choosing hotels, restaurants, or attractions. By understanding these trends, businesses can adapt marketing strategies and improve services accordingly [4].

Tourist behavior is also linked to digital lifestyle trends. Millennials and Gen Z, for instance, often select "Instagrammable" spots in Bali—such as Canggu, Uluwatu, or Penglipuran Village— leading to rising popularity and sudden surges in visitation. Analyzing such patterns allows destination managers to anticipate visitor flows, regulate capacity, and protect the environment in the face of social media-driven tourism [5]. At the same time, modern tourists also seek authentic and meaningful experiences, ranging from cultural and spiritual activities to sustainable tourism. Understanding these motivations enables stakeholders to design products like yoga retreats, traditional culinary tours, or community-based homestays, which both attract tourists and preserve local values.

Tourist behavior analysis is also essential for government policy. Data on preferences, motivations, and satisfaction can guide regulations and tourism development strategies. For example, if findings show tourists are increasingly concerned about the environment, policies can promote green tourism and reduce plastic waste at destinations. Ultimately, understanding

behavioral shifts in Bali is an urgent need amid global competition. Competing with destinations like Phuket, the Maldives, and Hawaii requires Bali to develop targeted promotion strategies, enhance visitor experiences, and maintain cultural and environmental sustainability. Therefore, analyzing tourist behavior is not only academically relevant but also strategically vital for ensuring Bali's long-term position as a world-class destination.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to understand the phenomenon of changing tourist behavior in Bali in the digital era. A qualitative method was chosen because the aim is to explore meanings, experiences, and perceptions in depth rather than measure them numerically [6].. Research was conducted at several destinations in Bali that gained popularity through digital promotion, including Canggu (lifestyle and digital nomad hub), Ubud (cultural, spiritual, and wellness tourism), Seminyak (beach and entertainment center), and Penglipuran Village (community-based cultural tourism). These sites were purposively selected as they represent variations in tourist behavior shaped by digital media. Research subjects included both domestic and international tourists actively using travel applications and social media, as well as tourism stakeholders such as guides, homestay owners, destination managers, and restaurant entrepreneurs. Informants were selected through purposive sampling with the principle of data saturation [7]. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews explored patterns of digital media use, motivations, destination preferences, and post-visit sharing behavior. Observations were made by directly recording tourist activities at destinations, such as taking photos for Instagram, searching for information via apps, or making online bookings. Secondary data were also collected from BPS Bali, the Ministry of Tourism, and relevant academic sources. Data analysis applied interactive model, which includes three stages: data reduction, data display in thematic narratives, and conclusion drawing. This process allowed the researcher to identify patterns, tendencies, and implications of behavioral changes among digital-era tourists in Bali [8].

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Tourist Trends in the Digital Era in Choosing Tourist Attractions

The digital era is synonymous with the use of information technology in various activities, including tourism. It's well known that the digital era has had a significant impact on travel

behavior, particularly regarding visits to tourist attractions in Bali. The following describes digital-era tourist trends in selecting tourist attractions when visiting Bali.

1. **Social Media as a Primary Source of Inspiration**

The findings of this research on tourist behavior in Bali indicate that social media has become the primary source of inspiration in determining travel destinations. Tourists, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, tend to seek information through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube before embarking on a trip. The majority of respondents stated that visual content in the form of photos and short videos strongly influences their perceptions of the beauty and uniqueness of destinations. Field observations revealed that tourists are not only looking for basic information but also for authentic experiences shared by other users (user-generated content). For example, the popularity of Penglipuran Village and Seminyak Beach increased significantly after going viral on Instagram, where tourists were motivated to "verify" the beauty they had seen online.

This phenomenon aligns with the concept of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), which argues that recommendations from fellow users are more trusted than formal promotions [9].Furthermore, the study found that tourists use social media not only as initial inspiration but also as a guide during their trips. For instance, travelers frequently use TikTok to discover Bali's "hidden gems" or local culinary recommendations. After their visits, tourists often share their experiences again, thereby creating a continuous cycle of promotion that strengthens Bali's image as a destination. Thus, the findings confirm that social media plays a dual role: as a source of inspiration, a decision-making aid, and an indirect promotional tool for destinations. The practical implication is that tourism stakeholders in Bali must optimize digital marketing strategies based on creative content to remain relevant to the evolving behavior of tourists in the digital era.

2. **Review Online**

Research on tourist behavior in Bali shows that online reviews have now become a major trend influencing tourists' decisions in selecting attractions. Modern tourists no longer rely solely on brochures, travel agents, or official promotions; instead, they place greater trust in user-generated reviews available on platforms such as Google Review, TripAdvisor, Traveloka, and social media. Interviews with both international and domestic tourists revealed that travelers tend to read online reviews before deciding to visit a destination. If the ratings are

low or contain negative comments, visits are often canceled. This finding is consistent with the theory of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), which suggests that recommendations from fellow users are considered more credible than formal marketing promotions [10]. Field observations also indicated that destinations with positive reviews tend to experience an increase in visits. For instance, Ubud and Canggu have received significant exposure through TripAdvisor reviews and travel blogs, which has contributed to the rise in tourist arrivals, particularly in the post-pandemic period. Online reviews have a significant influence on domestic tourists' decisions to visit Bali [11]. Thus, online reviews serve a dual function: as an information source, a validation tool, and a decision-making reinforcement. The practical implication of these findings is that destination managers in Bali must pay close attention to service quality, since every tourist experience is likely to be reviewed online and has a direct impact on the destination's image.

3. Online Travel Agent

Research findings on tourist behavior in Bali indicate that the use of Online Travel Agents (OTAs) such as Traveloka, Tiket.com, Agoda, Booking.com, and Airbnb has become increasingly popular as the primary platform for tourists in selecting attractions. OTAs not only provide ticketing and accommodation services but also offer comprehensive information on destinations, user reviews, and recommendations for tourist activities. Interviews with Australian tourists revealed that they find OTAs more practical because these platforms allow them to compare prices, read reviews, and view destination photos directly, helping them assess whether a place is worth visiting. Meanwhile, international tourists reported using Booking.com and Agoda due to their more extensive global features, including local tour packages.

OTAs play a crucial role in influencing travel decisions, particularly among millennial travelers. In addition, OTAs often provide attractive promotions and discounts, encouraging tourists to explore new destinations in Bali [12]. Many tourists also utilize OTAs as digital travel guides, thanks to features such as personalized itineraries and recommendations based on user preferences. Therefore, this study concludes that OTAs have emerged as a major trend among tourists in the digital era. Their role extends beyond booking services to becoming both a source of inspiration and a validation tool for destination choices. The practical implication is

that tourism stakeholders in Bali need to strengthen their engagement with OTAs to ensure that their attractions are more accessible and appealing to the global market.

3.2 Types of Tourist Attractions in Traveling to Bali in the Digital Era

The attractiveness of Bali as a tourist destination lies in its natural beauty, including beaches, terraced rice fields, and mountains, combined with its distinctive Hindu culture, ceremonial traditions, performing arts, culinary richness, and hospitality. This unique combination positions Bali as a leading destination for both domestic and international tourists. Research findings indicate that tourist behavior in selecting types of attractions can be described as follows:

1. **Wellness & Healing Tourism**

Wellness and Healing Tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments of travel, reflecting the increasing global demand for holistic health and spiritual well-being. Bali is no longer recognized solely for its beaches and unique culture but has also positioned itself as a destination for tranquility, holistic healing, and spiritual experiences. Interviews with international tourists, particularly from Europe and Australia, revealed that many visit Bali specifically to participate in yoga retreats, meditation sessions, traditional spa treatments, and health detox programs. For instance, a German tourist expressed choosing Bali because of the abundance of yoga centers in Ubud, where the serene natural environment greatly supports the healing process, especially in the post-pandemic period.

This trend is further evidenced by the rapid growth of wellness centers in Ubud, Canggu, and Uluwatu, which offer retreat packages combining yoga practices, Balinese traditional therapies, and healthy dietary programs. Bali also promotes its unique form of spiritual healing, such as the traditional purification ritual melukat at Tirta Empul Temple, which attracts both domestic and international visitors seeking spiritual renewal. Wellness tourism in Bali has experienced significant growth, as modern travelers increasingly seek experiences that are not only recreational but also enhance physical, mental, and spiritual well-being [13]. Moreover, according to the Global Wellness Institute [14],Southeast Asia, including Bali, has become one of the world's fastest-growing hubs for health and wellness tourism. Wellness tourism has become a key attraction that supports the diversification of Bali's tourism industry. The practical implication is that tourism stakeholders must strengthen Bali's

branding as a world-class wellness destination by adopting international service standards while preserving local wisdom and cultural authenticity.

2. Nature-Based Tourism

Nature-based tourism has emerged as one of the most preferred forms of travel among visitors to Bali. The island's natural uniqueness—ranging from white-sand beaches, terraced rice fields, mountains, waterfalls, to volcanic lakes—provides a strong differentiation compared to other tourist destinations in Indonesia. Interviews with domestic tourists revealed that visits to popular beaches such as Kuta, Pandawa, and Sanur remain the primary choices. However, a majority of international tourists expressed greater interest in more tranquil and pristine natural destinations, including the Tegalalang Rice Terrace, Mount Batur, and various waterfalls in Gianyar and Bangli. A French tourist emphasized being deeply impressed by Bali's natural atmosphere, describing the sunrise hiking experience at Mount Batur as unforgettable.

Field research further indicated that nature-based activities such as trekking, diving, snorkeling, and eco-tourism are among the most popular choices for both domestic and international travelers. Bali's natural attractions significantly contributed to the increase in tourist visits, particularly in the post-COVID-19 era, when travelers showed a preference for outdoor and nature-oriented activities [15]. Additionally highlighted that Bali's nature-based tourism not only offers breathtaking landscapes but also emphasizes sustainability and environmental education, aligning with the global trend toward sustainable tourism development [16]. The study confirms that Bali's natural attractions serve as a major pull factor for both domestic and international tourists. The practical implication suggests that stakeholders in Bali's tourism industry should strengthen conservation-based management, promote eco-friendly practices, and integrate environmental education into tourism activities to ensure long-term sustainability and maintain Bali's competitive edge in the global tourism market.

3. Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is one of the main reasons both domestic and international tourists choose Bali as their preferred destination. The island's unique culture—characterized by a blend of art, Hinduism, and local traditions—offers a distinct appeal compared to other destinations in

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Indonesia. Interviews with international tourists, particularly from Europe, revealed strong interest in religious ceremonies, temple architecture, and traditional performances such as the Kecak Dance in Uluwatu and the Barong Dance in Batubulan. A Dutch tourist stated that visiting Bali was not only about beaches, but also about experiencing temple ceremonies and witnessing traditional dances, which fostered a deeper connection with the local community. Meanwhile, domestic tourists often visit cultural attractions such as Besakih Temple, Ubud as a hub for painting and sculpture, and museums that preserve Bali's historical heritage. Field research also identified that cultural festivals like the Bali Arts Festival (Pesta Kesenian Bali) and rituals such as Ngaben (traditional cremation ceremonies) attract significant attention, as they provide tourists with authentic cultural experiences.

These findings align with Pitana [17] who emphasized that Bali's tourism development is fundamentally rooted in culture, meaning that nearly all attractions are intertwined with customary values and traditions. Similarly, Arjana [18] argued that cultural tourism in Bali goes beyond entertainment; it also provides educational value by introducing visitors to the Tri Hita Karana philosophy, which underlines harmony among humans, nature, and God. This study demonstrates that Bali's cultural richness remains a primary driver of its tourism industry. The practical implication suggests that policymakers and tourism stakeholders should continue to preserve and promote Bali's cultural heritage while integrating sustainable cultural practices to ensure that tourism growth does not erode the island's identity.

4. Conclusion

The study on Tourist Behavior Changes in Traveling to Bali in the Digital Era reveals a significant transformation in tourism consumption patterns. Tourists increasingly rely on digital media as their primary means of obtaining information, planning itineraries, and sharing travel experiences. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have emerged as the main sources of travel inspiration, particularly through engaging visual content. In addition, online reviews serve as a trusted validation tool for destination choices, while Online Travel Agents (OTAs) enhance this trend by offering practical access to bookings, accommodations, and curated travel packages. The research further identifies three major forms of tourism demand in Bali: Wellness & Healing Tourism, which has expanded rapidly post-pandemic as tourists seek tranquility, holistic health, and recovery. Nature-Based Tourism, which remains central to Bali's appeal with its beaches, rice terraces, volcanoes,

waterfalls, and eco-tourism activities. Cultural Tourism, which distinguishes Bali globally through its religious ceremonies, art forms, festivals, and traditional heritage. Collectively, these findings underscore that digital media has reshaped tourist behavior, positioning Bali as a destination that thrives on a synergy of inspiration, validation, and accessibility in the digital age. While this study provides valuable insights, further research is necessary to deepen understanding of evolving tourist behaviors. Future studies could: Examine comparative analyses between Bali and other global destinations to evaluate the universality of digital tourism trends. Investigate the long-term impact of digital engagement (e.g., social media influence, online reviews, OTA usage) on destination loyalty.

5. Acknowledgement

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