

The Governance of Cruise Tourism in Bali: A Tourism Justice Analysis of Environmental Costs and Local Economic Benefits

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Abstract

Cruise tourism has expanded as part of Bali's international tourism economy, generating visitor spending and opportunities for local businesses while potentially imposing environmental and infrastructural costs on coastal destinations. The economic contribution of cruise passengers, however, may not correspond to the environmental burdens associated with port activity, waste generation, emissions, and pressure on coastal infrastructure. This article examines cruise tourism governance in Bali through a tourism justice framework. Using normative juridical and policy analysis, the study evaluates port governance, environmental regulation, tourism policy, local economic participation, and destination management. The article argues that cruise tourism should be assessed according to both its economic benefits and its environmental and social externalities. Local communities should receive a fair share of economic benefits while tourism authorities ensure that environmental costs are appropriately internalized by cruise operators and other beneficiaries. The study proposes a cruise tourism justice framework incorporating environmental fees, transparent impact monitoring, local procurement, community benefit mechanisms, and destination carrying-capacity considerations. Such measures could reduce the risk of tourism revenue being privatized while environmental costs are transferred to local communities and public authorities. The article concludes that Bali's cruise tourism policy should integrate economic, environmental, and distributive considerations within a coherent destination governance framework.

[Pariwisata kapal pesiar telah berkembang sebagai bagian dari ekonomi pariwisata internasional Bali, menghasilkan pengeluaran pengunjung dan peluang bagi bisnis lokal, sekaligus berpotensi menimbulkan biaya lingkungan dan infrastruktur pada destinasi pesisir. Namun, kontribusi ekonomi dari penumpang kapal pesiar mungkin tidak sebanding dengan beban lingkungan yang terkait dengan aktivitas pelabuhan, produksi limbah, emisi, dan tekanan pada infrastruktur pesisir. Artikel ini mengkaji tata kelola pariwisata kapal pesiar di Bali melalui kerangka keadilan pariwisata. Dengan menggunakan analisis yuridis normatif dan kebijakan, studi ini mengevaluasi

tata kelola pelabuhan, regulasi lingkungan, kebijakan pariwisata, partisipasi ekonomi lokal, dan manajemen destinasi. Artikel ini berpendapat bahwa pariwisata kapal pesiar harus dinilai berdasarkan manfaat ekonominya dan eksternalitas lingkungan dan sosialnya. Masyarakat lokal harus menerima bagian yang adil dari manfaat ekonomi, sementara otoritas pariwisata memastikan bahwa biaya lingkungan diinternalisasi secara tepat oleh operator kapal pesiar dan penerima manfaat lainnya. Studi ini mengusulkan kerangka keadilan pariwisata kapal pesiar yang menggabungkan biaya lingkungan, pemantauan dampak yang transparan, pengadaan lokal, mekanisme manfaat masyarakat, dan pertimbangan daya tampung destinasi. Langkah-langkah tersebut dapat mengurangi risiko privatisasi pendapatan pariwisata sementara biaya lingkungan dialihkan kepada masyarakat lokal dan otoritas publik. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa kebijakan pariwisata kapal pesiar Bali harus mengintegrasikan pertimbangan ekonomi, lingkungan, dan distribusi dalam kerangka tata kelola destinasi yang koheren.]

Keywords: Cruise tourism, Bali, environmental justice, local economy, tourism governance

Introduction

Cruise tourism occupies a distinctive position within the contemporary tourism economy because the principal tourism enterprise, the cruise ship, is simultaneously a means of transport, accommodation, entertainment facility, and commercial platform. This structure allows cruise companies to concentrate substantial economic activity within vertically integrated systems while destinations receive short-duration visitors and must provide infrastructure, environmental services, mobility systems, and public facilities. Consequently, the economic presence of cruise tourism cannot automatically be equated with proportional local development. Earlier research already demonstrated that the relationship between cruise tourism and host communities is highly contingent upon taxation, regulation, local procurement, and community participation (Johnson 2002; Klein 2011). More recent scholarship similarly shows that the sustainability of cruise destinations depends on how economic, environmental, and social effects are governed collectively rather than evaluated through visitor growth alone (Kulkov et al. 2023; Papathanassis 2023).

Bali provides an important setting for examining this problem because the island combines a highly developed tourism economy with ecological constraints and dense competition over coastal and urban space. The development of the Bali Maritime Tourism Hub at Benoa demonstrates the Indonesian government's intention to expand maritime tourism and strengthen Bali's position within international cruise networks. In 2023, Benoa reportedly accommodated 48 cruise calls involving more than 77,000 passengers, while subsequent infrastructure development has been designed to accommodate larger vessels and support home-

port functions. These developments may produce multiplier effects, but their distribution cannot be assumed. Research on Bali has repeatedly shown that tourism expansion can generate uneven access to water, environmental resources, and economic opportunities (Cole 2012; Cole 2014; Cole 2021). The central question is therefore not whether cruise tourism creates economic value, but who captures that value, who bears its costs, and what institutional arrangements determine the distribution.

Previous studies provide strong evidence that cruise tourism produces heterogeneous effects across destinations. MacNeill and Wozniak found that cruise development may generate limited improvements for host communities where taxation, regulation, community development, and local participation are weak (2018). A meta-analysis by Chen et al. similarly found that cruise passengers, crew, and cruise lines have measurable positive effects on port economies, but that the magnitude of these effects varies considerably across markets and destination conditions (2019). Environmental studies, meanwhile, document emissions, waste, congestion, and ecological pressures associated with cruise activity (Johnson 2002; Carić 2011; Lloret et al. 2021). These findings indicate that economic benefits and environmental costs should not be treated as separate analytical categories. A destination may record increased tourism revenue while simultaneously experiencing environmental degradation and public expenditure that are not reflected in conventional tourism performance indicators.

The literature nevertheless reveals a gap concerning the application of tourism justice to cruise governance in Bali. Existing cruise studies have extensively examined economic impact, resident attitudes, carrying capacity, environmental pollution, and sustainability, while Bali scholarship has explored tourism-induced resource inequality, community participation, and socio-environmental conflict. Yet these strands have rarely been integrated into a single analytical framework that asks how cruise-related benefits and burdens should be distributed within Bali's destination governance system. This article addresses that gap by treating cruise tourism as a question of distributive, procedural, and environmental justice. It argues that the appropriate policy objective is not simply sustainable cruise growth, but a governance arrangement capable of ensuring that economic benefits are locally embedded and environmental costs are appropriately internalized.

Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks

The concept of tourism justice provides the principal theoretical foundation of this study. Justice in tourism extends beyond the conventional objective of sustainable development by asking whether tourism benefits and burdens are distributed fairly, whether affected communities have meaningful influence over decisions, and whether historically marginalized interests are recognized. Jamal and Camargo conceptualize the "just destination" around fairness, equity, participation, and the social and cultural well-being of disadvantaged communities (2014). Their approach is particularly relevant to cruise tourism because port

destinations are not merely economic platforms; they are lived spaces in which residents experience the consequences of tourism infrastructure and visitor flows. A justice perspective therefore requires attention to distribution, procedure, recognition, and restoration rather than relying exclusively on aggregate economic indicators.

Environmental justice provides a second theoretical dimension. Figueroa and colleagues' broader environmental justice literature emphasizes that environmental burdens can become socially differentiated, particularly when communities with limited political and economic power are exposed to pollution or resource restrictions. In tourism research, Holden (2009) argues that environmental justice and environmental equity should be integrated into sustainable tourism because tourism can redistribute environmental benefits and burdens unevenly. This perspective is especially important for cruise tourism because pollution and congestion are spatially concentrated around ports, while the commercial benefits of cruise operations may extend across transnational corporate networks. Thus, the relevant question is not merely whether cruise operations comply with environmental standards, but whether the distribution of environmental risk corresponds reasonably with the distribution of economic benefits.

The third framework is distributive political economy. Tourism expenditures do not automatically remain within destination economies. Cruise companies frequently operate through integrated supply chains, international ownership structures, and pre-arranged excursion and purchasing systems. Chen et al.'s meta-analysis demonstrates that cruise tourism can generate direct economic effects, but also indicates that the strength of these effects varies according to passenger expenditure, cruise-line characteristics, and destination conditions (2019). Similarly, MacNeill and Wozniak found that large cruise projects can fail to generate meaningful community benefits when local development initiatives and regulatory mechanisms are inadequate (2018). This suggests that the concept of "economic contribution" must be differentiated from "local economic retention." A port may receive more passengers and yet capture relatively little value if procurement, employment, taxation, and business linkages remain externally controlled.

The final theoretical component is collaborative and destination governance. Sustainable cruise tourism cannot be governed effectively by port authorities or tourism agencies acting independently because cruise activity simultaneously involves maritime transport, environmental management, tourism promotion, local government, businesses, residents, and coastal ecosystems. Dangi and Petrick argue that tourism governance should explicitly incorporate justice, ethics, equity, and community well-being rather than treating participation as a secondary component of sustainability (2021). The recent cruise literature similarly emphasizes collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and destination-level governance as necessary conditions for sustainability (Kulkov et al. 2023; Papathanassis 2023). For Bali, this implies that cruise governance should connect port management with

provincial tourism policy, environmental regulation, local economic development, and community participation.

Methods

This research employs normative juridical and qualitative policy analysis. The normative juridical component examines the legal and institutional framework governing tourism, ports, environmental protection, maritime transportation, local government authority, and community interests in Indonesia. Relevant legal instruments include Law No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism, Law No. 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management, Law No. 17 of 2008 on Shipping, Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, and Law No. 1 of 2022 on Financial Relations between the Central Government and Regional Governments. The analysis also considers implementing regulations concerning risk-based business licensing, environmental approval, spatial planning, and maritime tourism governance. These instruments are interpreted not in isolation but according to their implications for accountability, environmental protection, and local economic participation.

The empirical-policy component consists of a structured review of peer-reviewed literature on cruise tourism, destination governance, environmental impacts, local economic benefits, resident perceptions, carrying capacity, and tourism justice published no later than 2025. Bali-specific studies are used to contextualize the analysis of environmental inequality, tourism governance, community participation, and resource competition. Official policy and institutional information concerning the development of Benoa is used only to establish the policy context and not as a substitute for independent causal evidence. This methodological combination allows the research to identify normative gaps between formal regulatory objectives and the governance mechanisms required to produce equitable tourism outcomes.

The analytical framework evaluates cruise tourism through four interconnected dimensions: economic distribution, environmental cost allocation, procedural participation, and institutional accountability. Economic distribution concerns local employment, procurement, business linkages, taxation, and community benefit mechanisms. Environmental cost allocation concerns emissions, waste, congestion, coastal pressure, and public expenditure associated with cruise activity. Procedural participation concerns the ability of residents and affected stakeholders to access information and influence decisions. Institutional accountability concerns monitoring, enforcement, transparency, grievance mechanisms, and the capacity of public authorities to require corrective action. The framework avoids assuming that cruise tourism is inherently harmful or beneficial; instead, it evaluates the institutional conditions under which particular outcomes become more or less likely.

Results and Discussion

1. Cruise Tourism as an Economic Opportunity, but Not an Automatic Local Benefit

The economic rationale for cruise tourism in Bali is significant because cruise arrivals can create demand for transportation, food services, retail, excursions, cultural attractions, port services, and other tourism-related activities. The government's development of Benoa as a maritime tourism hub reflects an expectation that cruise activity will generate wider multiplier effects beyond the port itself. Yet the assumption that passenger volume automatically translates into local prosperity is analytically weak. Chen et al. demonstrate that direct economic impacts are positively associated with passenger numbers and expenditures, but their meta-analysis also reveals significant variation between destination markets (2019). MacNeill and Wozniak provide an even more cautionary finding: cruise development produced limited community improvement where taxation, regulation, and community-development initiatives were weak (2018). The relevant policy indicator for Bali should therefore be local economic retention rather than gross cruise expenditure.

Local retention depends on the structure of the destination supply chain. If cruise passengers purchase excursions, transportation, food, souvenirs, and services from locally owned enterprises, a greater proportion of expenditure can circulate within the regional economy. Conversely, if excursion packages, transportation, catering, and retail activities are controlled by external operators, much of the apparent tourism revenue may leave the destination. This issue is consistent with broader research showing that cruise tourism can produce positive port-level economic effects without necessarily creating proportional benefits for host communities (Chen et al. 2019; Casado-Díaz et al. 2021). Bali therefore requires a policy distinction between tourism growth and economic inclusion. Increasing cruise calls should be accompanied by measurable indicators of local procurement, local employment, community enterprises, and small-business participation.

The distributive question also concerns public revenue and public expenditure. Cruise infrastructure requires investment in port facilities, road connectivity, sanitation, waste management, security, emergency services, and environmental monitoring. These costs may be borne partly by public authorities even where commercial benefits accrue to private operators. Dwyer, Forsyth, and Spurr caution that tourism impact analysis should not rely on simplistic expenditure multipliers because tourism growth produces economy-wide effects that vary according to institutional and structural conditions (2003, 2004). In Bali, therefore, a rigorous evaluation should calculate not only gross visitor spending but also public costs attributable to cruise activity. The appropriate policy question is whether the net fiscal and economic balance remains positive for the communities and institutions that host the activity.

2. Environmental Costs and the Problem of Externalization

Cruise tourism creates environmental pressures that cannot be treated as incidental consequences of economic development. Research has identified air emissions, wastewater, solid waste, noise, marine pollution, and ecosystem disturbance as recurring concerns associated with cruise operations (Johnson 2002; Carić 2011; Lloret et al. 2021). Studies of cruise ports have demonstrated measurable relationships between ship activity and air-quality deterioration, particularly in densely populated port environments (Ruiz-Guerra et al. 2019). Ship emissions may therefore impose health and environmental costs on populations living near ports even though those residents are not necessarily the primary beneficiaries of cruise expenditure. This creates a classic environmental-justice problem: economic benefits may be geographically and institutionally dispersed while environmental burdens are concentrated in specific coastal communities.

Waste management presents a similar governance challenge. Sanches et al. demonstrate that cruise ship-generated waste is a complex issue involving generation, treatment, disposal, port infrastructure, and regulatory coordination (2020). Later research continues to identify weaknesses in cruise waste-management systems, including administrative and operational difficulties in handling ship-generated waste (Sanches et al. 2024). For Bali, this issue becomes particularly significant because the island already faces substantial waste-management pressures associated with intensive tourism. The governance objective should therefore be to ensure that cruise operators do not externalize waste-management costs onto municipal systems. Environmental fees, differentiated port charges, mandatory waste reporting, and independent environmental audits could make the environmental costs of cruise activity more visible and more directly attributable to the operators generating them.

The principle of internalizing environmental externalities should also apply to emissions. Studies of Dubrovnik and Kotor show that cruise ship traffic can produce substantial air-pollution externalities and argue for the incorporation of these costs into governance and pricing mechanisms (Miola et al. 2011; Carić 2011; Radončić et al. 2018). The same logic is relevant to Bali even though the ecological and urban context differs. Port authorities should not evaluate cruise attractiveness solely through ship size, passenger capacity, and frequency of calls. Environmental performance should become part of port access and destination-management criteria. Vessels with superior emissions and waste-management performance could receive preferential treatment, while high-impact operations should face proportionate environmental charges. Such measures would transform environmental regulation from a reactive compliance function into an economic governance instrument.

3. Carrying Capacity, Congestion, and the Quality of Life of Residents

The environmental justice implications of cruise tourism extend beyond pollution. Cruise ships can introduce large numbers of visitors into destination

spaces within short periods, creating temporary pressure on transportation systems, public spaces, heritage sites, and coastal infrastructure. Stefanidaki and Lekakou conceptualize cruise carrying capacity as a multidimensional issue encompassing economic, social, environmental, and infrastructural pressures (2014). This is important because conventional tourism indicators often measure annual arrivals, while the impacts of cruise tourism can be concentrated within several hours when large vessels disembark simultaneously. Ros Chaos et al. demonstrate that passenger disembarkation can create significant mobility pressures in port areas, requiring coordinated transport systems and infrastructure planning (2018).

Resident perceptions further complicate the economic-growth narrative. Brida et al. found that residents in Mediterranean cruise destinations could recognize positive economic and social effects while simultaneously perceiving significant environmental disadvantages (2014). Jordan et al. similarly found that residents may evaluate cruise tourism differently from tourism in general, with cruise tourism receiving relatively weak positive assessments across several quality-of-life dimensions (2021). These findings demonstrate that local acceptance cannot be inferred from aggregate tourism revenue. Residents evaluate tourism according to lived experiences, including traffic, crowding, environmental quality, access to public spaces, and perceived fairness. Bali's cruise policy should therefore incorporate resident well-being as a destination performance indicator.

The carrying-capacity approach should consequently be spatial and temporal rather than based exclusively on annual passenger totals. A port may possess sufficient annual capacity while still experiencing severe congestion on particular cruise days. Benoa's development as a cruise hub therefore requires monitoring of peak-day passenger volumes, road congestion, waste generation, water consumption, public-service demand, and environmental indicators. The objective should not necessarily be to impose a fixed numerical ceiling on cruise tourism, because the appropriate threshold depends on infrastructure and environmental conditions. Instead, Bali should establish adaptive carrying-capacity thresholds that trigger management responses when measurable social or environmental limits are approached. This approach is more consistent with the destination-governance literature, which emphasizes adaptive management and interconnected sustainability rather than unlimited growth (Kulkov et al. 2023; Papathanassis 2023).

4. Local Participation and a Justice-Based Governance Model

The final issue concerns who participates in determining the future of cruise tourism in Bali. Procedural justice requires more than consultation after major infrastructure or licensing decisions have already been made. Communities need timely access to information concerning projected cruise traffic, infrastructure expansion, environmental impacts, public expenditure, and anticipated economic benefits. Jamal and Camargo emphasize that justice in tourism requires meaningful recognition of disadvantaged stakeholders, while Dangi and Petrick demonstrate

that governance arrangements must integrate participation, equity, and community well-being into sustainable tourism planning (2014; 2021). For Bali, this means that local communities should not be treated simply as beneficiaries or service providers but as legitimate participants in destination governance.

Participation should also be institutionally differentiated. The “local community” is not a homogeneous actor. Port-adjacent residents, tourism workers, small businesses, fishermen, customary communities, environmental organizations, transport operators, and local governments may experience cruise tourism differently. The governance model should therefore create mechanisms through which these interests can be articulated separately and then negotiated collectively. Research on Bali demonstrates the importance of community participation in tourism products and governance, while also revealing persistent asymmetries in confidence, institutional capacity, and access to decision-making (Ernawati, Sanders, and Dowling 2017). Participation without capacity can become symbolic; therefore, community representatives should receive access to relevant technical information and, where necessary, independent expertise.

A justice-based cruise governance model should ultimately connect economic benefit-sharing with environmental accountability. Cruise operators and port authorities could be required to disclose annual data on passenger numbers, local procurement, employment, waste generation, emissions, environmental fees, and community contributions. A portion of tourism-related revenues or environmental charges could support community infrastructure, coastal conservation, waste management, and small-business development. Such mechanisms would not eliminate all tourism-related externalities, but they would establish a clearer relationship between the economic value generated by cruise tourism and the costs experienced by host communities. This approach is consistent with the emerging literature that calls for cruise destinations to move from narrow economic and technological sustainability toward inclusive governance, local dialogue, and coexistence with destination communities (Kulkov et al. 2023; Papathanassis 2023).

Conclusion

Cruise tourism presents Bali with a genuine economic opportunity, but its legitimacy cannot be determined by passenger numbers, cruise calls, or aggregate tourism expenditure alone. The literature demonstrates that cruise tourism produces a mixed pattern of outcomes: it can generate direct economic activity while simultaneously creating environmental externalities, congestion, infrastructure pressures, and uneven distribution of benefits. Evidence from other cruise destinations shows that positive local economic outcomes depend strongly on taxation, regulation, local procurement, community participation, and destination governance. For Bali, this means that the development of Benoa as a maritime tourism hub should be evaluated through the broader question of local value retention and social welfare rather than infrastructure expansion alone.

A justice-based governance framework should therefore combine distributive, procedural, and environmental principles. Cruise operators should bear a proportionate share of environmental and infrastructure costs, while destination authorities should create mechanisms that increase local procurement, employment, entrepreneurship, and community investment. Environmental monitoring should cover emissions, waste, congestion, and coastal pressures, with adaptive carrying-capacity thresholds guiding cruise operations. At the same time, affected communities should have meaningful access to information and decision-making processes. Bali can accommodate cruise tourism without reproducing an unequal tourism model only if economic benefits are demonstrably embedded in the local economy and environmental costs are transparently measured, internalized, and governed.

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