

# Tourism Research: A 20-20 Vision

13

Edited by

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## **A 20-20 vision of tourism research in Bali: towards reflexive tourism studies**

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# 13 A 20-20 vision of tourism research in Bali: towards reflexive tourism studies

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## Introduction

Bali in Indonesia is well known as an international tourist site. Historically, Balinese tourism dates back to the 1920s when it was discovered as ‘the last paradise’ by Western artists and scholars. Hickman Powell’s travel book, originally published in 1930, was subtitled, *An American’s discovery of Bali in the 1920s* (Powell, [1930] 1986). Under such a ‘tourist gaze’ (Urry 1990), Balinese culture was re-created for Western audiences. In the words of the historian Adrian Vickers (1989), Bali was ‘a paradise created’.

After Indonesia’s independence, the first five-year development plan began in 1969 under the Suharto regime. In this plan, tourism was seen as an important source of foreign currency earnings for Indonesia, and Bali was designated as the most important of Indonesia’s international destinations. The Balinese Provincial Government adopted the policy of tourism development with a special emphasis on cultural tourism. Since then, Bali has grown successfully as the most important international tourist destination in Indonesia to the extent that Bali and tourism may be considered inseparable.

This chapter reviews tourism research in the context of the development of tourism in Bali for the past 20 years, especially in terms of cultural tourism from a mainly anthropological point of view. In so doing, the chapter provides a new outlook on tourism research, ‘reflexive tourism studies’, and attempts to rethink tourism research. While focusing only on the single site of the island of Bali, the chapter intends to contribute to the theoretical development in tourism research beyond Bali as well, especially in terms of the relationship between tourism and culture. The examination of changing research on tourism in Bali over a 20-year period will develop a research agenda of tourism studies for the next 20 years as the age of ‘reflexive modernization’ (Beck *et al.*, 2005) .<sup>1</sup>

# Culture in the contexts of tourism: cultural tourism

Direct foreign tourist arrivals in Bali over the past 40 years have increased from 11,278 in 1969 to 1,801,864 in 2008 (Figure 13.1). Growth was particularly rapid in the first half of the 1990s: the number of international visitors increased from 490,729 in 1990 to 1,015,314 in 1995.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, however, the number of visitors has remained stagnant due in part to Indonesia’s political instability after the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998, terrorist bombings, and natural disasters (such as earthquakes and tsunami).



**Figure 13.1:** Foreign tourist arrivals in Bali 1969-2008. Source: Bali Government Tourism Office. The figures indicate the number of direct foreign tourists’ arrivals in Bali.

When tourism development policy was introduced to Bali, there was concern amongst Balinese intellectuals that the island would become a ‘second Waikiki’ (McKean, 1989: 120). Accordingly, the strategy that they used to handle this problem was to invert the idea that ‘Bali exists for the benefit of the tourists’ into a philosophy that ‘tourism exists for the benefit of Bali’, intending thereby to protect the local residents from any threat of ‘cultural pollution’ by foreign visitors. ‘To prevent such a fatal outcome’, Picard (2009: 122) writes, ‘the Balinese authorities devised a policy of “cultural tourism” (*pariwisata budaya*), which was intended to develop tourism without debasing Balinese culture, by using culture to attract tourists while fostering culture through the revenue generated by tourism’.

Picard also has observed that ‘the doctrine of cultural tourism succeeded in merging the promotion of culture with the development of tourism, to the point of entrusting

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