



## Tourism and globalisation: vectors of cultural homogenisation? (the case study of Bali)

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# *Tourism and globalisation: vectors of cultural homogenisation?*

## *(the case study of bali)*

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**Abstract**— The island of Bali is an excellent place for us to observe tourist behavior and question the diversity of activities. In this context, it also allows us to question the accusation of ‘standardization’ generated by tourism exacerbated in the context of globalization. Does this cause relationships with time, or space, but also with the Other, simplified to the point of undermining the diversity of local cultures, as certain authors have claimed? But are we on the contrary seeing, as other researchers have tended to suggest, singularities in activities, based on indisputable sociological profiles, but also on the geographical origin of holidaymakers, both domestic and international? To answer this question, we will focus our analysis on the main tourism companies operating in Bali, namely those from Indonesia, Australia, China, but also France, the second largest European source of visitors, and the United States which is the biggest on the American continent. Our methodology, based on a hypothetical-deductive approach, will cross-reference quantitative and qualitative methods. We will study, over and above the statistical study of domestic and international tourist movements, the more specific activities of the tourists according to their nationalities, via a study of the offers provided by the main tour operators, a method which on the one hand allows us avoid being shackled by too broad a definition of ‘tourism’, as imposed by the WTO, and on the other hand the imposition of national territorial frameworks. Then, we will compare these results with a field study conducted at a local level at two tourist landmarks with shared uses, namely Kuta Beach, Padang-Padang beach, and Tanjung Benoa.

**Keywords**—international tourism; domestic tourism; practices; territorialisation; Bali.

### I. INTRODUCTION

With more than 4 million international and over than 7 million domestic tourists in 2015 (Bali Tourism Statistic, 2016), plus Balinese day-trippers, the island of Bali is becoming a tourist Mecca on a global scale [1]. Therefore it constitutes an excellent place for us to observe tourist behavior and question the diversity of activities. In this context, it also allows us to question the accusation of ‘standardization’ generated by tourism [2], exacerbated in the context of globalization. Does this cause relationships with time, or

space, but also with the Other, simplified to the point of undermining the diversity of local cultures, as certain authors have claimed [3; 4]? But are we on the contrary seeing, as other researchers have tended to suggest, singularities in activities, based on indisputable sociological profiles [5; 6, 7, 8], but also on the geographical origin of holidaymakers, both domestic and international [9]?

To answer this question, we will focus our analysis on the main tourism companies operating in Bali, namely those from Indonesia, Australia, China, but also France, the second largest European source of visitors, and the United States which is the biggest on the American continent. Our methodology, based on a hypothetical-deductive approach, will cross-reference quantitative and qualitative methods. We will study, over and above the statistical study of domestic and international tourist movements, the more specific activities of the tourists according to their nationalities, via a study of the offers provided by the main tour operators, a method which on the one hand allows us avoid being shackled by too broad a definition of ‘tourism’, as imposed by the WTO, and on the other hand the imposition of national territorial frameworks [10]. Then, we will compare these results with a field study conducted at a local level about beaches of the South that seem universally attractive, namely Kuta Beach, the Padang-Padang beach and Tanjung Benoa.

Our approach will combine an analysis of the message conveyed by tourism guides (namely (Petit Futé, Guides Voir Hachette, Insight Guides, Lonely Planet, Bali-Travel-Life; Tourism Catalogue of Bali, Informasi Pariwisata Nusantara), quality interview with 4 balinese touristic guides led between February and April 2016, observations conducted between July 2011 and March 2016, but also firstly certain data from a quantitative survey of 185 Indonesian tourists to Bali in 2012 and 2013 [11], and secondly qualitative interviews conducted in 2012 and 2014 with 10 Chinese, 38 Australian, 15 French and 5 American tourists, with the assistance of Ayu Arun Suwi Arianty, Komang Ratih Tunjungsari from Pariwisata Bali International, the Balinese tourism institute.

## II. BALI: FROM A WORLD DESTINATION...

Tourism in Bali was born abroad. It began in the 1920s under the dual influence of Western artists [12], but also Dutch central government, working to redefine the image of Bali as a paradise [13], trying to bring it in from the margins where it had previously been and include it in the empire [14]. Its development however only dates from the 1970s. This explosion of international tourism has generated increasing interest amongst Indonesian policy makers, and particularly President Suharto of the New Order [15], who saw a vehicle for economic development. He supports a policy of modernization for the country, through international exposure, which requires an attractive shop-window [12].

Bali has established itself in this role with extensive tourism development policies, with the opening in 1969 of the Denpasar International Airport (Ngurah Rai) able to accept large jet aircraft [16], as well as the creation of offices managed by the Central Company for Overseas Tourist Facilities (a French company), with the support of the United Nations and the World Bank. This modernization of the island's facilities has resulted in an exponential increase in international tourist arrivals, which rose from 6,000 in 1968 to 54,000 in 1973.

The liberalization of air-space control, which freed Bali from Jakarta's influences, has helped to reinforce this trend. Visitor numbers increased from 243,000 visitors in 1986 to more than 4 million in 2015 (Bali Government Tourism Office, 2016). Those tourists mainly came from the west in the twentieth century. At the dawn of the 21st century a new situation has emerged, with companies in emerging countries gaining access to tourism [17; 1; 18]. This is illustrated in Bali by the arrival of Asia-Pacific area companies (certainly encouraged by the presence of Australia) which challenge the hegemony of the European-American region [14].

In 2015, this area (linking Asia-Pacific and ASEAN nations) provided more than 2.76 million tourists, of which 71% were foreign tourists to Bali, with 966,869 Australians, but also 688,469 Chinese, 228,185 Japanese, 190,381 Malaysians, 152,866 South Koreans and 146,660 Singaporeans representing the largest contribution. The Europeans have however not disappeared. They have even rebounded in recent years, making up 19.8% of international tourists (845,949) in 2015. With 167,628 tourists the UK tops the European ranking lists (and is fifth overall) followed by France with 131,451 visitors, Germany (120,348), the Netherlands (81,678) and Italy (33,266) (Bali Government Tourism Office, 2016 - <http://www.disparda.baliprov.go.id/en/Statistics2>). The United States are back in eighth place (133,763), while Canadians are 16th (44,884) – Fig. 1. Russia has joined the table of the top 20 nations in international tourism and is in 15th place (51,805). To a lesser extent there are tourists from other areas, including Central and Southern America (34,996), the Middle East (30,644) and Africa (21,378).

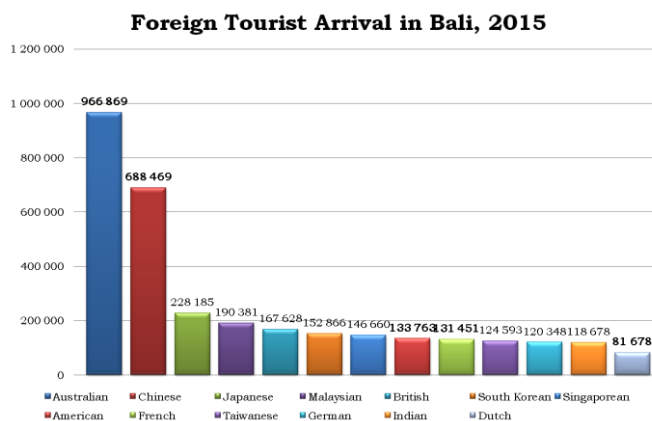


Fig. 1. The principal contributors of international tourists to Bali in 2015. (Bali Government Tourism Office - <http://www.disparda.baliprov.go.id/en/Statistics2>).

Bali is a therefore a global tourist Mecca, today shared with the almost 7.15 million Indonesian tourists who became the biggest individual group in 2015<sup>1</sup>. Like the European and North American nations which saw domestic tourism take off in the nineteenth century, the emerging powers (China, Brazil, India, Indonesia) are today characterized by an appropriation of tourism by the middle classes who have become the largest source of tourists in their respective countries [8; 9; 19; 20].

In Indonesia, domestic tourism has come about as a result of a combination of processes. It has been promoted by the central government since the 1950s, following the War of Independence (1945-1949) with dual objectives: nationalist - strengthening the sense of belonging to a nation, through ownership of a common past which is represented by Bali as the custodian of the Kingdom of Majapahit - and economic [1]. In this context, and since 1990, domestic tourism representing 686,000 arrivals in Bali has exceeded international tourism, which amounted to 490,000 visitors. In addition, they are believed to be less volatile than international tourists, the flow of whom temporarily collapsed in 2002 and 2005 following the Bali bombings [1]. Thus, since the dawn of the 21st century, domestic tourism has imposed its hegemony on the small island thanks to exponential growth: numbers reached 2,038,186 in 2004; 4,646,343 in 2010 and 7,147,100 in 2015 (Bali Government Tourism Office, 2016), coming essentially (77.5% according to the Bali Government Tourism Office) from Java.

Bali is therefore a globally-important destination where international tourists from five continents converge - favoring nevertheless those from Asia-Pacific, Europe and North America - with domestic tourists representing over 65% of the total. At the global level, the island is well 'shared' by these holidaymakers from varied backgrounds. Does this first observation lead us to conclude that there has been a globalization of tourism, echoing a homogenization of interests and activities? Or can we in fact identify differentiated tourist uses and territoriality patterns, depending on their geo-cultural origin? To find out, we will now analyze

<sup>1</sup> Bali Tourism Statistic, 2016, <http://www.disparda.baliprov.go.id/en/Statistics2>.

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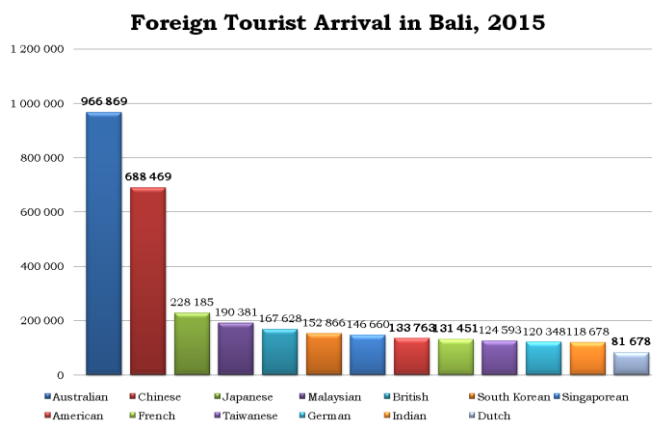


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the holiday-makers' activities according to their nationality and through several frames of reference, looking first at the offer provided by the tour operators from the different nationalities studied (Indonesians, Australians, Chinese, French and Americans).

### III. ... TO A TERRITORIALIZED ISLAND, ACCORDING TO THE ORIGIN OF THE TOURISTS

We offer an analysis of the offers available in tour operators' catalogues which immediately allow us to adopt a better-defined approach to tourism [10]. We selected tour operators because of their market position and not by the number of tourists who travel to Asia with them. They are: three French tour operators: Club Méditerranée; Asia; Kuoni France; three Chinese tour operators: CITS, CIT, GZL; one American tour operator: Goway; one Australian tour operator: Intrepid; four Indonesian tour operators: Pacto; Wap Tour Indonesia; Adventure Indonesia; Bali Contour. We looked particularly at the number of services offered per TO, which is why we have only one American and one Australian TO. They each independently offer approximately the same number of tours or stays on Bali as the 3 French TOs, 3 Chinese TOs or the 4 Indonesian TOs. The results we obtained are mapped (Fig. 2).

This comparative analysis allows us to identify a double trend. The first is the distribution of tourist landmarks with an emblematic value for the island, such as the large white sandy beaches in the south, developed for tourism since 1970 to welcome western tourists (Kuta, Nusa Dua, Benoa, Sanur, Jimbaran, Seminyak), but also the cultural landmarks. Among them are some of the most famous temples, which have become symbolic because of their religious status and their specific geographical situation – perched on top of a cliff (Tanah Lot, Uluwatu); on the edge of a mountain lake (Bedugul/Bratan) – as well as the town of Ubud. Promoted as the Balinese artistic capital to attract numerous painters, sculptors and goldsmiths, it is a shopping Mecca for handicrafts and traditional products. The popularity of the village was also increased by the American film *Eat, Pray and Love*, the main character in which was played by Julia Roberts (2006), which was set there.

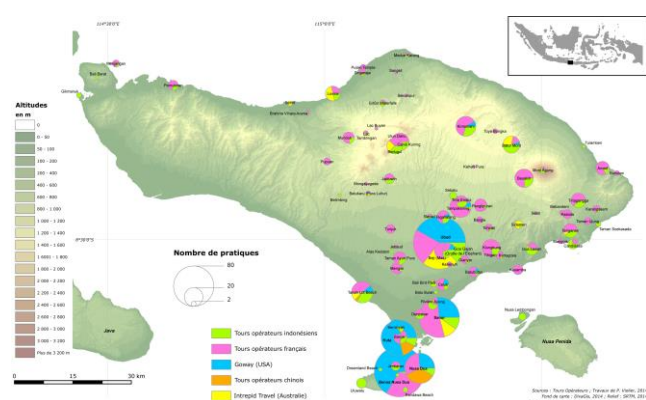


Fig. 2. Comparative map of the sites offered by international tour operators according to their nationality (2014)

However, over and above these landmarks which 'shape' Bali in a common collective imagination, the division of the

island is more nuanced. Tourist numbers differ greatly depending on nationality, from the more focused models to the more diffuse. As such, the offers from Chinese tour operators focus primarily on those landmarks in the south of the island (west-coast beaches, very famous temples) and in the center (Ubud). Of course, this does not prevent Chinese tourists from occasionally visiting other sites, including the beach at Lovina in the north, in the context of half-day tours<sup>2</sup>, but the majority of TO offers concern beaches and fashionable sites (Kuta, Tanah Lot), water sports (Benoa), and places popular for shopping (Kuta and Ubud). The US offer also tends to concentrate on the south and center (Ubud), but equally includes excursions to the temples in the north-eastern mountains. The Australian offer is characterized by an inverted pattern, ignoring the beaches traditionally popular with Australians in the south (Kuta, Nusa Dua) to instead offer the somewhat quieter beach at Sanur (by tradition popular with Europeans) and cultural sites such as the must-see Ubud, but also the temples in the north and east.

The TO, therefore, offers a good range of options to its customers, by recreating a sense of the unknown to justify its presence in an island which is extremely popular with Australians. The Indonesian and French offers present highly diverse models (63 Indonesian and 70 French offers), but which are fairly similar. Although they include the fashionable southern beaches, they are only one stop on an organized tour designed to allow for the discovery of natural and cultural sites scattered across the island. Despite this diffusion, the French and Indonesian TOs largely overlook the west. This situation stems from its relative distance from the political, historical and cultural centers of the island which makes it less interesting. While some environmental factors attract visitors (diving sites on the northwest coast, the Barat Bali national park), the difficult accessibility – several hours of travel on poor-quality mountain roads, often congested by heavy goods traffic – preclude their inclusion in the packages offered by agencies. Although Bali is a major destination, its tourism development is far from homogeneous. It certainly favors the south rather than the north, but also greatly favors the east over the west.

The differentiation between national practices is therefore a combination of factors – geographical (the distance from the home country and the length of stay ranging from 4 days on average for Chinese TOs and up to 15 days for French TOs); historical (relatively recent access to tourism); economic (the price of tourism infrastructure and services); and socio-cultural (relationships with leisure-sports activities, with body-image, with heliotropism, with culture, with heritage but also with a notion of comfort) which create differentiated tourism. This second level of analysis upsets therefore the hypothesis of a universal tourism in Bali, and tends to show instead the existence of a plurality of tourism models. But this diversity is also reflected in the small scale of the place. Even within the globally popular tourism sites in Bali we are seeing emerging differences in the activities and events available, leading to differentiated regional layouts. We'll focus our analyze of the

<sup>2</sup> The big attraction of Lovina is to catch a 5am boat and watch the dolphins along the coast at sunrise.

practices of the beaches of the South that seems universally attractive.

#### IV. A UNIVERSAL ATTRACTION OF THE BEACHES? THE CASE STUDY OF THE BEACH AT KUTA, TANJUNG BENOA AND PADANG-PADANG

Kuta Beach is a tourist Mecca on the island, and has become a symbolic site. Its success stems, especially among the younger generation, from the combination of quality landscapes (a long beach of fine white sand facing west, fronted by a relatively rough sea suitable for surf lovers but without the need for much technical ability) and the concentration of things to do. In fact the site, located near the airport, has a large number of stores offering local, but mainly international products, in the streets parallel to the beach, as well as a large choice of restaurants, bars and nightclubs. Kuta is therefore a very lively site, both by day and by night, promoted as the epicenter of the festive seaside atmosphere on the island. The site is also popular with Chinese (the second most frequently sold destination among the tour operators surveyed) and Indonesian tourists. Domestic tourist guidebooks demonstrate the popularity of the beach at Kuta in the archipelago, such as the widely distributed magazine *Wisata* which often has photos of it on the front cover. They promote the site as a must-see, preferring however to enhance the attractiveness of the views from the beach and sporting activities, rather than 'party-going', which is too expensive and not entirely culturally appropriate for Indonesian holidaymakers.

Kuta is therefore a world-famous site. But this cohabitation does not necessarily mean there is uniformity in activities and participation. In fact, our field observations combined with our interviews allowed us to conclude that there is a plurality of activities on this beach. Western tourists and especially Australians come to seek, in a characteristic way [21], the association of the 3 Ss (sea, sand and sun), heightened by the opportunities for surfing, but also the nearby shopping and catering facilities. The interest in Kuta for them therefore lies in the festive atmosphere resulting from its high popularity and entertainment options. However, this codification of the beach at Kuta does not quite coincide with the intentions of Chinese and domestic tourists. Interest in the beach is a new phenomenon for these two nationalities [9; 20; 22] and instead comes more from the fact it is a place for participation and socialization, where people come to see and be seen, and which do not lead to the same activities. Bathing is less popular than standing or sitting on the sand, watching not only the sea but also the beachgoers.

This phenomenon was also expressed in our interviews with Chinese tourists. Only two out of ten went to the beach for sunbathing (which suggests the activity is rare but still popular with a minority), while six of them claim to be there to enjoy the sunset and/or participate in sporting activities. Indonesian tourists undertake, meanwhile, somewhat different activities. Even more so than the Chinese, they hate tanning (up to 97% - [11]). For them, Kuta's interest stems from its views (57% of them - [11]), characterized by a wide beach of white sand fronted by the ocean where a lot of young white tourists stretch out, which is the origin of its prestige. So they

adopt the posture of a spectator rather than an actor, staying at the top of the beach in the shade of trees (fig. 3). Instead of swimming or participating in activities, they primarily come to watch the "exotic" foreigners who are exposing their largely naked bodies on the sand, as has been customary in the west since the interwar period [21; 23]. Far from being shocked, these activities amaze and amuse them, as an attraction in itself. Some boys do not hide the fact they come to watch the girls with so few clothes on. This corresponds to certain criteria of beauty in Indonesian society, with the light-colored skin and long noses which characterize westerners in their collective consciousness [11]. Indonesian tourists also venture onto the beach, but discretely, to have their pictures taken there. They are most excited when they manage to get a shot with 'Bulés'<sup>3</sup>, taking the picture home as a sort of trophy, proof that they visited the famous beach in the middle of the white tourists.



Fig.3: Differentiated activities on the beach at Kuta, distinguishing domestic tourists from western tourists. Photo S. Pickel-Chevalier, 2010

This situation occurs also in Padang-Padang beaches where the international attraction of the beach creates domestic tourism flow. The beach has been initially popularized by foreigners and becomes favorite spot for domestics. Nonetheless, we observe differentiated activities, creating different territorialisation: international tourist is focus on activities such as surfing (it's a international famous surfing spot), sunbathing, reading a book sunbathing, taking pictures on the nature that lead them to be mainly on the sea/sand interface. On the contrary, the domestic tourists come essentially to watch foreigners, take pictures of themselves, if possible with them and make shopping. In this context, they adopt again a "spectator" behavior, more than an "actor" (they don't practice the activities of the site) and stay in the top of the beach, observing the site under the shadow, avoiding to be tainted. If the western attraction motivate their venue, this attraction for the exotism of other culture is not necessary mutual on the beaches. Indeed, during the Indonesian school holiday, when the frequency of domestic tourist is exponentially exceeding (80%) the foreign tourists, the place 'is abandoned' temporarily by foreigners. It is interesting to observe that if in certain site and situation the attraction for the

<sup>3</sup> White people.

international tourists are the Balinese (ceremonies, temple), Indonesian are avoided by international tourists on beaches that they integrates not as “cultural places”, but place for their own leisure (3Ss).

This phenomenon also characterized other beach such as Tanjung Benoa. The local community of fishermen favored the construction of international standards hotels in the 1980', to benefit from the development of Nusa Dua, nearby. They developed water sports activities initially intended for the western tourists. Nonetheless, because of attractive prices and water sports activities which become very popular for the domestic and Asian tourists such as banana boat, donut boat, parasailing, jet-skiing (*Fig.4*), the domestic exceeded the international with the increase of domestic flow in the 1990'. In 2016, according to the interview with the tourist guides and a local agency selling watersport activities (Zooka Dive and Watersport), domestic and Asian tourism represent 80% of the visitors of Tanjung Benoa beach. According to the tour guide Agung: “domestics are mostly coming within group / family and having a budget constrain and come for having fun together” (interview April 2016). We observe that if the western fame attract domestic tourism, the reverse is less true: the domestic fame of the site doesn't create attraction for the Western tourists. 20% of the visitors are nevertheless Western, they usually don't come for the same reasons. According to the tourist guides and local agency they come for underwater activities, such as diving and snorkeling because of the corals. So because of their activities and motivation, they again develop a differentiated territorialisation, not only on the beach but also on the sea: on the top of the water (domestic, Asian)/ underwater (Western)...



Fig.4. The activities practiced by the Asian and domestic tourists create cultural attraction for the western tourists. Photo Sartika, 2016

## V. CONCLUSION

Bali is an excellent place to confront the globalization of tourism as a vehicle for the standardization of activities or perhaps their differentiation, reflecting cultural resistance. It is a true landmark of world tourism. However, beyond this global share at the provincial level, the analysis of the offers from French, Australian, Chinese, American and Indonesian tour operators allows us to detect a first nuance. Although all these tourists come to Bali, it is not to visit exactly the same sites. It is true that some are iconic landmarks. But over and

above these popular sites, these visits to Bali demonstrate patterns of specific attendance, from the highest concentrations (China, the USA), to the greatest dispersions (Indonesia, France). These chosen differences create a regional segregation of the island, the result of a combination of criteria: historical, socio-cultural, geographical but also economic. These are expressed across the island, but are also shared landmarks such as the South beaches such as Kuta, Padang-Padang, or Tanjung Benoa. Although they are globally important sites, they are not universal. The activities, behavior and intentions of the tourists which visit them reveal significant differentiations depending on their nationalities, which cause marked spatial differences, often separating the western and domestic tourists, even sometimes more generally the Asian tourists. If global tourism is partly becoming globalized [19], it does not produce a systematic removal of cultural singularities, as evidenced by the emblematic case of Bali. These in fact remain and allow for the emergence of a range of tourism models, through a syncretism between the activities imported from the west, where tourism first took off, and unique factors combining various levels of influence (geo-cultural areas, nations, regions, places), but also complex attraction/avoiding processes.

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