



JURNAL KOMUNIKASI

P-ISSN: 1907-848X, E-ISSN: 2548-7647

Homepage: <https://journal.uui.ac.id/jurnal-komunikasi>

Local journalists' response to foreign tourist misconduct in post-pandemic Bali

Lestari Nurhajati, Xenia Angelica Wijayanto & Yosephine Avi Ayu Rembulan

To cite this article:

Nurhajati, L., Wijayanto, X. A., & Rembulan, Y. A. A. (2025). Local journalists' response to foreign tourist misconduct in post-pandemic Bali. Jurnal Komunikasi, 19(3), 587–602.
<https://doi.org/10.20885/komunikasi.vol19.iss3.art10>



© 2025 The Author(s). Published by the Department of Communications, Universitas Islam Indonesia, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.



Published online: October 31, 2025



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.20885/komunikasi.vol19.iss3.art10>



CrossMark

[View Crossmark data](#)



Local journalists' response to foreign tourist misconduct in post-pandemic Bali

Lestari Nurhajati¹, Xenia Angelica Wijayanto^{2*} & Yosephine Avi Ayu Rembulan³

¹ Doctoral Study Program, Faculty of Communication, LSPR Institute of Communication and Business, Jakarta, Indonesia

² E-Learning Program, Faculty of Communication, LSPR Institute of Communication and Business, Jakarta, Indonesia

³ Department of Economics and Development, Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences, Czech University of Life Science Prague, Prague, Czechia

* Corresponding author

Article Info

Article History

Submit:

June 3, 2025

Accepted:

October 18, 2025

Published:

October 31, 2025

Keywords:

*Foreign tourists,
local journalists,
media and culture,
structuration*

Kata kunci:

*Jurnalis lokal,
media dan
budaya,
strukturasi,
turis asing*

Abstract: The emergence of Bali as a world tourist destination has been accompanied by a series of problems involving misconduct by foreign tourists. This paper examines how local journalists cope with these issues whilst managing professional ethics, political, and economic pressures. The qualitative approach enabled data collection through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with four print journalists and one television journalist. The results indicate that tourist violations are not novel but have become apparent due to the amplification of social media and the following news reporting. The primary roles of journalists include acting as watchdogs, exposing ineffective law enforcement, educating people about norms and visa policies, and addressing community concerns. However, these functions are limited by output requirements, financial reliance, and sensitivities surrounding the safeguarding of Bali's tourism image. Such tension illustrates that ethical journalism can be difficult in a society that relies on tourism.

Abstrak: Kebangkitan Bali sebagai destinasi wisata global diikuti dengan berbagai persoalan terkait pelanggaran wisatawan mancanegara. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana jurnalis lokal menyoroti masalah tersebut dengan menyeimbangkan etika profesional di tengah tekanan politik dan ekonomi. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan melalui Focus Group Discussion (FGD) dengan empat jurnalis media cetak dan satu jurnalis televisi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pelanggaran wisatawan bukanlah hal baru, namun semakin terlihat karena amplifikasi media sosial dan liputan media cetak maupun daring. Jurnalis menjalankan peran penting sebagai watchdog yang menyoroti lemahnya penegakan hukum, sebagai pendidik yang memberi informasi mengenai norma dan kebijakan visa, serta sebagai mediator yang menyampaikan keluhan masyarakat. Namun, fungsi tersebut dibatasi tuntutan produksi, ketergantungan finansial, dan sensitivitas terkait citra pariwisata Bali. Ketegangan ini menyoroti tantangan jurnalisme etis di masyarakat yang bergantung pada pariwisata.

INTRODUCTION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Bali's tourism saw a significant decline in both local and foreign tourist arrivals. Consequently, the Government relaxed several regulations to attract foreign tourists, even offering a red-carpet welcome. While increased foreign tourism brings economic benefits, it also poses risks, particularly when tourists engage in disruptive behaviors. On March 10, 2020, a foreign tourist at Ngurah Rai International Airport damaged a check-in machine due to frustration over missing a flight, causing the machine to malfunction and disrupting several flight schedules, prompting an immediate police response and the tourist's arrest (Tribun Bali, 2020). Another incident occurred on February 5, 2021, when a foreign tourist violently attacked a resident who was sunbathing at Kuta Beach and was subsequently arrested by authorities (Coconuts Bali, 2021). These cases illustrate the challenges faced by popular tourist destinations like Bali in maintaining public order and community comfort amid increasing tourism, especially in areas affected by overtourism (Suyadnya et al., 2025).

This phenomenon of disruptive tourist behavior often stems from a lack of cultural sensitivity and from differing perceptions of acceptable behavior based on tourists' home-country norms (Norio, 2021). Therefore, stricter regulations and better tourist education about local ethics and legal standards in the destinations they visit are needed. Several studies also suggest implementing sustainable tourism policies that include educational programs for tourists, increased security patrols, and cooperation with tourism industry players to reduce the negative impacts of foreign tourists' behavior (Seraphin et al., 2020). Bali's local journalists play a vital role in

providing fair and truthful reports on the presence of international tourists and their effects on local people. When their reporting is fair and well-researched, the public will gain a clearer understanding of the circumstances and take significant action. In addition, journalists have the responsibility to educate the public about the importance of protecting local environments and cultures, as well as to provide information on policies or rules that tourists must comply with to minimise the negative impact of their presence (Robbins & Wheatley, 2021).

A local journalist's task is not easy. Journalists frequently face resource limitations and challenges in accessing in-depth information, which are further compounded by pressures from tourism stakeholders aiming to protect economic interests (Ratnaningtyas & Adiyanto, 2025). For example, the Bali Immigration Department openly discouraged the dissemination of adverse tourist incidents to protect Bali's tourism reputation (Kompas, 2023), raising critical concerns regarding press freedom and information transparency (García et al., 2022). Social media has a significant impact on information dissemination in the current digital era, so local journalists must exercise extra caution when using these platforms. They must respect moral principles and adhere to the ideals of responsible journalism. Social media sharing of news can raise ethical concerns if users are not vigilant, particularly regarding objectivity and veracity. Because of this, journalists in Bali are not only required to report impartially and independently, but they can also help shape better tourism management policies.

As cases of tourist misconduct rise, collaborative efforts among local communities, journalists, and tourism

stakeholders are essential. Journalists, local communities, and tourism stakeholders need to work together to create a safer and more comfortable environment. Proposed solutions that can be implemented include tightening visa restrictions for problematic tourists, such as those with criminal histories or those who violate the rules, and stricter enforcement of existing laws to ensure both the profitability of tourism and community safety. Thus, the tourism sector can still provide significant economic benefits without sacrificing the safety and comfort of the local community.

The media is frequently called upon to act as a watchdog of government policies, reflecting its normative role in ensuring public accountability (Palmer et al., 2020). However, upholding this role is not without challenges. Media organizations must also operate as commercial enterprises, often influenced by multiple interests, including government funding, political regulation, and internal corporate agendas. This dual nature can undermine journalistic independence, leading to biased reporting or self-censorship (Napoli, 2023; Palmer et al., 2020; Ritonga, 2021). These pressures become more complex when considering the interconnectedness of media, culture, and society. As Nur (2021) highlights, media institutions do not operate in isolation; they both shape and are shaped by the cultural and societal context in which they exist. Understanding this dynamic is essential to assessing how media organizations respond to issues involving foreign tourists and the preservation of local values.

The career of a journalist offers an interesting example of the theory of structuration, as their agency is conditioned by ideology. However, their

daily work is influenced by and recreates the structures of the media institution, market forces, and technological and legal environments. Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration assumes a duality of structure, meaning that social structures—including the resources and rules—are both the consequences and the means of human agency (Giddens, 1984, as cited in Amallah et al.; Rusdi, 2025). The work of a journalist is one of a continuous compromise in such duality; the person is an informed actor whose principles of serving the community, being truthful and diverse drive their activity, but they are forced to act within strong systems that restrict and define their work, and they often repeat the very systems they might want to transform (Bayu & Triastuti, 2020; Mathisen, 2023; Rusdi, 2025).

The framework created by Giddens can be applied notably to the media, which can be understood as an institution with its rules and resources, recursively ordered (Giddens, 1984, as cited in Bayu, D.J., & Triastuti, 2020). The rules of journalism are represented in professional norms and values, including objectivity, verification, and an ethical obligation to the common good (Ferrucci & Eldridge, 2022; Mathisen, 2023). The resources are both allocative (e.g., financial capital, technology) and authoritative (e.g., credibility, expertise, editorial autonomy) (Giddens, 1984, as cited in Amallah et al., 2025; Rusdi, 2025). As agents, journalists rely on these rules and resources in their projects, and in their daily practices, they create the institution anew (Giddens, 1976, as cited in Ferrucci & Eldridge, 2022; Wiley, 2023). Their behavior is informed by a deep knowledge of the social conditions of their work, which Giddens terms practical and discursive awareness

(Giddens, 1986, as cited in Angeliqa & Andriani, 2024; Bayu & Triastuti, 2020).

One such expression of this agency is journalistic idealism. Ideals such as being a democratic watchdog, offering a plurality of ideas, and questioning power drive journalists' actions and attempts to break structural constraints (Mathisen, 2023; Wiley, 2023). As an example, data reporters who practice web scraping, a legally gray practice, defend their actions by citing the traditional values of acting in the best interest of the people, and the right of the people to know, thus affirming their status as agents of a limiting legal framework (Wiley, 2023). In the same way, the Indonesian newspaper *Tempo* reveals its noncompliance with political and economic influence by basing its decisions on group editorial discussions, thereby strengthening its main ideological principle of independence (Amallah et al., 2025). In a different case, the online newspaper *Suara.com* deliberately operates a team of pure journalists focused on reporting significant news without being bound to traffic or revenue goals, a deliberate act of agency to uphold the organisation's public service agenda amid market pressures (Rusdi, 2025). Such moves demonstrate that journalists are not merely passive agents but active participants who apply their professional ideals to move and make sense of their surrounding world.

Nevertheless, this agency is constantly under significant structural pressures that compromise journalistic principles. Market-oriented logic, especially economic structures, dictates that speed, clicks, and revenue are prioritised over depth and accuracy (Bayu, & Triastuti, 2020; Ferrucci & Eldridge, 2022). The example of data journalism website *Katadata.co.id* demonstrates how journalists become caught in a system that requires a large number of news items to be

created within a very short time, which directly results in factual inaccuracies and fallacies that contradicts the very premise of accuracy that the outlet was supposed to work with (Bayu & Triastuti, 2020). Similarly, the *Suara.com* business model requires that pure journalism be subsidised by journalists who can generate high-traffic, algorithm-friendly content or work directly with clients, which shows how market logic redefines journalistic labour and pushes idealism to the fringes (Rusdi, 2025). In addition to the forces of the market, organisational routines, including the constant use of official and elite sources, systematically marginalise marginalised voices and undermine the ideal of diversity, thus replicating the forces of power in society (Mathisen, 2023).

This agency-structure conflict leads to a duplicity of structure, in which, as journalists go about their daily tasks, they create the very structures that limit them. Knowing that the necessity to be fast results in inaccuracies (a type of practical consciousness), yet encouraged by the requirement to meet quotas, the journalists at *Katadata.co.id* still create news within a short time, contributing to the fast nature of online media (Bayu & Triastuti, 2020). This shows that even agents who are aware of a system's weaknesses may be complicit in its reproduction through their everyday practices. In a similar vein, the socialisation of platforms such as Twitter into the routine of news has frequently led journalists to reinstitutionalise old gatekeeping functions rather than harnessing the platform's potential to transform how audiences interact with news (Ferrucci & Eldridge, 2022). Nevertheless, the agency may be transformative as well. The emergence of engaged and pioneer journalism is an intentional attempt by actors to transform journalistic practice internally (Ferrucci &

Eldridge, 2022). In Tempo, the employee-ownership model is a structural innovation designed to safeguard journalistic agency and independence against external influences (Amallah et al., 2025). These instances indicate that, powerful as they are, structures are not unchangeable; the current practices of agents may, in the long run, lead to their change.

The structuration theory of Giddens offers a highly complex approach to the study of the relations among a journalist's occupation, their professional idealism, and the surrounding world. It transcends a mere account of ideals versus reality to display a recursive, dynamic process. Journalists are not victims of fate; they are educated actors whose idealism makes them take the initiative, oppose, and be creative. They are, however, also deeply entangled with powerful forms, economic, organisational, and social structures that they tend to reproduce in the course of their daily processes, even at the cost of their own values. The profession of a journalist can therefore be seen as an ongoing act of the duality of structure: it is a conflict in the realization of their ideals within a system in which their own actions contribute to its reproduction and, sometimes, to its change. This is especially relevant in Bali, where viral incidents involving foreign tourists often drive mainstream media coverage. The convergence of social media virality and journalistic agendas exemplifies how public sentiment and digital engagement are shaping the media's role in agenda-setting.

In addition to a theoretical perspective, modern studies indicate that relations among media, culture, and society are a system of mutual shaping, not a model of one-way transmission, and that digitalization further strengthens the

interdependence of these processes through (deep) mediatization (Hepp, 2020). In platformed cultures, viewers are not just passive viewers on a spectrum between passive consumers and highly active co-creators; instead, participatory cultures are more structured around influencers and creator practices (Jones et al., 2025; Wendland, 2024). Simultaneously, the audience's abilities are non-uniform. The conditions of receiving, reinterpreting, and re-circulating messages are shaped by platform literacy (a subsection of digital media literacy), which is particularly important in the case of younger and vulnerable users (Livingstone et al., 2025). In Indonesia, more recent research also identifies a heterogeneous nature of digital literacy (Altamira & Movementi, 2023; Putri et al., 2022; Kurnia & Astuti, 2017; Lasibey et al., 2023; Limilia et al., 2022; Restaty & Wuryanta, 2022), which influences the engagement and recirculation of content in daily areas (e.g., news, tourism) to support the importance of viewing audiences as diverse, stratified, and situation-specific instead of empowered or disempowered groups.

This study investigates the normative role of local journalists, specifically their responsibility for shaping public discourse and policy responses to foreign tourist misbehavior in post-pandemic Bali. It examines how journalists negotiate their professional obligations amid pressures from the Government, the tourism industry, and the local community. This research employs an integrated approach by simultaneously examining the interplay among media, culture, and society in Bali's tourism landscape. It explores journalists' professional tensions between reporting objectively on tourist misconduct and managing pressures from

local authorities and tourism stakeholders to maintain Bali's positive tourism image. The study makes a novel empirical contribution by focusing on the normative and ethical roles of local journalists as public advocates, especially in politically and economically sensitive tourism contexts. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasize the media's function in promoting tourism (Camilleri, 2018; He, 2023; Ulfa et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2025) or managing crises (Matiza & Slabbert, 2024; Park et al., 2019; Zhai & Luo, 2023), this research highlights the professional tensions journalists face between objective reporting and protecting tourism-driven economic interests.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach, using Focus Group Discussion (FGD), to explore the normative roles and professional challenges faced by local journalists in Bali in their reporting or newswriting about foreign tourists who cause disruptions or engage in misconduct. Journalists examined ethical dilemmas, professional constraints, and the complexities of their roles amid Bali's tourism disruptions. This approach facilitated open discussions among informants possessing extensive knowledge of the subject and its broader context (Kostere, S., & Kostere, 2021; Patton, 2015). The primary research question guiding this study is: How do local journalists in Bali perceive and navigate their normative roles amidst pressures from tourism stakeholders, local authorities, and community expectations when reporting on foreign tourists' disruptive behaviors?

Five informants were deliberately chosen for their significant experience and active participation in local journalism, each affiliated with a prominent media outlet in

Bali. This involves journalists from Bali Post, Tribun Bali, Nusa Bali, Bisnis Bali, and Berita Satu. The selection was designed to cover several media formats (print, web, and television), offering a comprehensive perspective on journalistic methods and issues across diverse platforms. Bali Post, Tribun Bali, Nusa Bali, and Bisnis Bali are predominantly print media with a robust online presence, whilst Berita Satu is a national television network and an active online portal. This varied group of informants was selected to represent a broad range of viewpoints and to provide profound insights into the everyday experiences of local journalism, including their engagements with editorial meetings, media executives, proprietors, and the general populace.

The FGD was held in a single session at a neutral location in Denpasar, Bali. The main researcher led the discussion using a semi-structured guide that included journalists' views on tourist misconduct, media pressures, ethical issues, institutional limitations, and public response. The session was audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006, as cited in Byrne, 2022) six-phase approach: data familiarization, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition and naming, and report writing. Coding was performed manually by two researchers to ensure intercoder reliability. Emerging themes were discussed iteratively to maintain interpretive validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the FGD, some participants requested that their full names and media affiliations not be disclosed. Therefore, to protect these sources, the researcher will use the codes A, B, C, D, and E for the five journalists' names. However, the media

they represent will still be mentioned. To provide a more precise explanation of the results and the analytical interpretation of this research, this section will be divided into subsections that highlight the critical insights gained from the FGD process.

Persistent Nature and Changing Dynamics of Tourist Misconduct

For journalists, the presence of foreign tourists who caused trouble had been a long-standing issue, even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings from local journalists revealed that disruptive behavior by foreign tourists is not a new issue in Bali; instead, it has persisted for a long time, even predating the COVID-19 pandemic. Journalist B from Nusa Bali emphasized, "The problem of the trouble of tourists has been around for a long time, even before Covid; there was robbery (done by foreign tourists). Then, many foreigners also skimmed. Post-COVID, in my opinion, the unlawful incidents have become smaller; for example, some people are naked, not wearing helmets. Now, the police have actually been finding a lot of such cases." This historical perspective indicates a deep-rooted issue, suggesting that tourist misconduct is not merely episodic but a consistent challenge within Bali's tourism management framework.

Senior Journalist E from Bali Post further highlighted the enduring nature of these disturbances, noting, "The trouble carried out by tourists in Bali, foreign tourists and expats, is not new in the last 5 years. These negative records date back to around 2015, long before the COVID-19 pandemic. When Canggu and Seminyak boomed into famous tourist areas, foreigners increasingly caused disturbances. Initially, Seminyak was a place for expatriates, then it shifted to Canggu and Pererenan." This shift

underscores a spatial dimension to tourist misconduct, reflecting how disturbances evolve alongside changing tourist trends and destinations.

In addition to the long-standing troubles faced by foreign tourists in Bali, these journalists are also concerned about violations of land-use regulations for local community work. The concerns were echoed by Journalist C from Bisnis Bali, who highlighted specific cases of tourists from Ukraine and Russia exploiting regulatory loopholes, particularly in the rental market. Journalist A added, "Foreign tourists have begun to take over the work of the local community, selling rentals and visas back to their home countries." This quote illustrates how local journalists perceive threats to local socioeconomic roles, which are intricately linked to cultural identity and economic sustenance in Bali.

Viral Posts on Social Media as the News Reference

Social media is the new force in agenda-setting nowadays. The influential role of social media as a powerful agenda-setting force is also shaping media narratives in Bali, just as it is worldwide. The increasing visibility and media coverage of foreign tourist misconduct are primarily attributable to incidents that go viral on social media. The findings show that the pattern of viral posts on social media, as an issue originator, is then amplified across several media in Bali. It is undeniable that some journalists in Bali get reporting assignments because of issues that go viral on social media. Journalist D from the Bali Tribune illustrated this clearly: "If you look at what is going viral on social media from the request of the office itself or the policy of the office, that is our reference. Almost every day, we have viral

incidents. With minimal confirmation, we already report the additional material sourced from social media." Journalist A from Berita Satu similarly reflected on how viral social media content often dictates media priorities, noting, *"Now, many strange cases, like tourists not wearing helmets, become significant stories simply because of their virality. Even if there is limited news value, we pursue these stories due to the reader interest driven by platforms like AdSense."* However, this reliance on virality presents a critical ethical dilemma for journalists.

Senior Journalist E from Bali Post argued that not everything that goes viral is worthy of headline space. Journalists need to assess if such situations are truly newsworthy. He used the example of how visitor complaints about little irritations, like roosters crowing, could garner excessive media attention. *"We need to be more discerning in distinguishing genuine issues from controversies that are just intended to go viral,"* one journalist said.

Journalist D from Tribun Bali emphasised that the virality of social media now significantly influences the selection of news articles, frequently overshadowing more substantive reporting. A senior journalist from Bali Post underscored the necessity of a more discerning approach, reminding us that journalists must sift through disruptions and focus on what really matters.

In practice, journalists on the front lines of news production frequently have little say over which stories are prioritised. They are usually forced to follow editorial decisions driven by the need to attract web traffic and increase advertising revenue, even if the stories they are assigned appear superficial or lack real value. This issue highlights a significant tension in agenda-setting theory: the conflict between journalism's traditional role of informing and educating the public and the growing

drive to pursue digital virality for economic gain. As a result, the merging agenda issue raises ethical concerns, as it encourages journalists to prioritise clickbait over news that genuinely serves the public interest.

Weak Law Enforcement and Journalistic Challenges

Various violations and disturbances caused by foreign tourists appear to be frequently neglected by local authorities, despite numerous media reports. E, a senior journalist from the Bali Post, expressed frustration, saying, *"Our law enforcement is not firm. They (foreign tourists) cause trouble because we lack decisiveness, and they exploit this gap."* The Bali immigration authorities even stated that they hope journalists will not overexpose the situation. Journalist A from Berita Satu added complexity to this issue, describing the confusion among law enforcement agencies, such as immigration and police, over jurisdictional responsibilities. Although cross-sectoral task forces involving immigration, police, local customary villages, and public servants have been established, decisive actions with deterrent effects remain limited due to fears of negatively affecting tourism numbers.

A firm stance on action from the government apparatus seems hopeful. However, journalists in the field and the media often receive complaints and reports from the public about violations committed by foreign tourists. Meanwhile, journalists themselves find it difficult to convey the community's interests to the Government. Journalist B from Nusa Bali shared difficulties obtaining official responses, highlighting cases in which immigration authorities downplayed or ignored significant issues. Similarly, Journalist D from Bali Tribune highlighted systemic delays and bureaucratic hurdles in obtaining responses from local

institutions, leading to reliance on national-level confirmations that often circle back without resolution.

"Regarding the role of the Bali Tribune, we often cover viral incidents involving tourists. However, when we seek confirmation or statements from authorities such as Immigration, the Tourism Office, or the police, their responses tend to be slow and difficult to obtain. This poses a significant challenge for us. When I am unable to get confirmation or responses from local authorities here in Bali, I have to reach out to central government officials in Jakarta, like the Ministry of Tourism, the Director General of Immigration, or even the Minister of Law and Human Rights. Unfortunately, this usually leads nowhere, as they redirect me back to the local authorities in Bali."

Furthermore, Senior Journalist E expressed their frustration with the Government, stating, "*A slow response is certain.*" Suspicion regarding potential internal complicity, noting that immigration authorities, tasked as gatekeepers, display unusual slowness in responding to clear violations. Journalist B pointed out that governmental inaction indirectly drives the community to publicize incidents on social media out of desperation. It seems that local journalists in Bali face obstacles to openly communicating with government bodies and immigration authorities regarding violations by foreign tourists. The failure to maximize community-generated reports and the lack of transparency from government institutions diminish public trust. The public becomes increasingly irritated and views the Government as having poor governance due to

governmental bias and closed communication (Karadimitriou et al., 2022; Napoli, 2023).

Media Hierarchy and Criticism of the Government

Internal media structures and organisational constraints frequently impose substantial limitations on Bali journalists. Senior journalist E from the Bali Post noted this tension, noting,

"When we criticise the Government, particularly the local Government, there are boundaries. If we report too harshly, we risk getting reprimanded because we are expected to cooperate with the authorities. Our journalistic values frequently clash with actual reality, particularly since COVID-19, when government incentives increased significantly."

Journalist D from Tribun Bali also discussed the internal difficulties of fulfilling production goals, stating, "*The target is six news items per day.*" If our KPI (key performance indicator) falls below that level, it affects our performance reviews and cash incentives. Journalists at Bisnis Bali and Nusa Bali expressed similar expectations, with daily targets of 3 to 4 news items, highlighting the widespread organisational pressure to prioritise quantity over substance. Despite these organisational and hierarchical pressures, journalists reported a strong commitment to raising community problems and upholding their position as public-interest spokesmen. This demonstrates the challenging balancing act they must continuously perform—meeting institutional demands while also fulfilling their normative duty to hold authority

accountable and to fight for the communities they represent.

The Bali Journalists and Giddens' Theory of Structuration

The core of Anthony Giddens's Theory of Structuration lies in the duality of structure, in which social structures — comprising rules (professional norms) and resources (allocative and authoritative) — are both the medium and the product of human agency. In Bali, local journalists are informed actors whose actions are motivated by journalistic ideals, such as objectivity, verification, and even a moral duty to the common good. These normative orientations position them as watchdogs that question lapses in law enforcement and as social activists that bring to the fore the social effects of international tourism. However, their professional autonomy is constrained by structural factors that, in most cases, limit their ability to achieve these ideals to some extent. This is why journalists often end up reproducing the systems that they might be interested in questioning, which makes agency paradoxical within the constrained media framework.

The predominance of market-related logics is one of the most important limitations of journalism practice in Bali. Allocative resources in the digital media economy are supplied according to speed, clicks, and advertising income rather than depth and accuracy. Journalists are usually pressured to achieve certain output levels daily; they are tasked with three or six articles a day, which, in itself, cannot uphold the journalistic ethic of telling the truth. Virality has become a new agenda-setting behavior in this environment: journalists are increasingly chasing stories that are trending on social media, even when they lack inherent news value. This reliance on virality highlights how business interests redefine the nature of journalistic

work, prioritizing professional values over work that attracts and retains viewers to watch TV content and advertisements and generate revenue (McCombs et al., 2014). The outcome has been a media system in which economic factors too often prevail over normative journalism roles.

Along with economic strains, journalists are also bound by the limitations imposed by the authoritative resources, especially bureaucratic and political institutions. Journalists are usually unable to access credible, real-time information from government agencies such as the immigration, tourism, and police departments. Not only do these agencies respond slowly, but they also discourage media coverage of adverse incidents in tourism to protect Bali's image. These practices raise concerns about freedom of the press and the openness of information, especially when government officials strive to hide negative stories. Moreover, journalists are aware of the pitfalls of being too critical of local authorities, as it can lead to institutional sanctions, such as organizational punishment or ill will towards the institution. This dynamic emphasizes the role of political organizations, alongside market logics, in restricting journalistic independence and weakening the media's watchdog functions (Nezayi, 2025; Ritonga, 2021).

The agency/structure tensions are resolved through daily newsroom practices that tend to reproduce rather than change the existing systems. Journalists are practical about the contradictions of their work: they are aware that the need to work quickly leads to inaccuracies and that not everything that goes viral warrants news coverage. However, under output targets and editorial pressures related to web traffic, they are again and again involved in the rapid production of content, prioritizing official or viral sources over

deeper community stories. These ostensibly practical choices become part of the unintentional reinforcement of the same structural constraints that restrict journalistic freedom. In this regard, the everyday routine of Balinese journalists demonstrates Giddens' duality of structure in action, as they constantly confront the paradox between their professional conceptions and the structural systems they uphold.

Despite these limitations, Balinese journalists still play important normative roles. They expose the frailties of those responsible for enforcing the law as watchdogs, instruct the community on local norms, legal standards, and ethical tourist conduct as educators, and mediate between the interests of tourism and the demands of people. It has been reported that certain foreigners visiting the country, mainly Russians and Ukrainians, use the loopholes in the regulations to work as illegal surf instructors, photographers, or land brokers. The ethical responsibility of journalists, in this case, is to act as normative watchdogs, safeguarding the interests of the local and enhancing responsible tourism behaviors (Perreault, 2025; Thäsler, 2025).

Journalists can influence public discourse not only by covering events but also by making some issues more prominent than others. Issues that have existed in the community are brought to social media, and their presence finally prompts the Government to listen (McCombs et al., 2014). This speaks to the media's dual role as both a mirror of social tensions and a shaper of them through editorial decisions. By doing so, the Balinese journalists will play a central role in mediating between tourism stakeholders, government institutions, and the population.

Weak law enforcement continues to highlight more systemic governance challenges in Bali. As journalists often note, immigration and police officials are more concerned with the image of the tourism industry than with press freedom, and the press's ability to act as a watchdog is limited (Palmer et al., 2020; Ritonga, 2021). This dynamic creates a vicious cycle: when law enforcement is negligent, media criticism spreads and fuels public frustration, exposing further governance failures. This encourages tourists who expect lenient enforcement to continue breaking the law. Finally, the cycle undermines the credibility of the regulatory framework and the sustainability of tourism governance. To end this cycle, the Government needs greater responsiveness and transparency, as well as a media environment where journalists are free to exercise their professional ideals without being overly constrained by the structure.

To summarize, Giddens's structuration theory offers a complex approach to interpreting the dual nature of the interaction between a journalist's job, their professional idealism, and the surrounding world. It is much more than a description of ideals against reality, but a dynamic, recursive process. In Bali, journalists are not mere victims of circumstances; they are aware agents whose sense of civic responsibility motivates them to take action, oppose, and be creative, especially in their efforts to expose incompetent law enforcement. They, however, are also immersed in strong systems — economic, organizational, or social — that they tend to reproduce in their day-to-day activities and sometimes even sacrifice their own values. The Balinese journalist, then, is a lifelong manifestation of the duality of structure: a deep-seated

fight to realize his or her ideals of work in a system in which his or her own actions, whether it is the need to generate revenue by prioritizing viral content or it is the need to be a cog in a slow bureaucracy, are what crystalize that very system and, in some cases, what changes it. These observations contribute to the broader picture of media performance in semi-authoritarian and tourism-driven settings and have important implications for enhancing sustainable tourism governance and strengthening press freedom.

CONCLUSION

The research results prove that the illegal activities, infractions, and disruptions perpetuated by foreign tourists in Bali are not a new issue, even before the COVID-19 crisis. However, these problems recently became evident as they were widely discussed and later blown out of proportion by social media, which was then reported in print and online media outlets in Bali. As a result, the Balinese community has much to say about the media's agenda when covering tourist misconduct.

Local Bali journalists are critical to distinct problem-solving exercises. The study shows that journalists fulfill several normative responsibilities: they act as watchdogs by exposing failures in law enforcement; they act as educators by sharing information on local norms, regulations, and visa policies; and they act as mediators by relaying public grievances

to the authorities. However, these professional functions are often limited by editorial demands and institutional constraints. The organizational requirement to achieve high output targets, along with reliance on government financial support and advertising income, limits journalists' capacity to conduct investigative reporting. Moreover, the reserved nature of the local media leads them to question their investments in the interest of the people, since adverse news concerning the tourism sector can leave Bali tourism deep in losses. The legacy of poor law enforcement, where the tourism sector's reputation is prioritized over transparency for the people, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that destroys trust in the people and reveals governance inefficiencies.

This paper provides insight into the interplay between moral obligations and the institutionalization of a society reliant on tourism. Journalists have to weigh their professional ethics against financial needs, political pressure, and cultural sensitivity at all times. Although the role of the media as a voice of the community still applies in many news pieces, the research indicates that considerable tensions exist within the agenda-setting process, such as the tension between retaining the old-fashioned role of informing people and the increasing urge to achieve digital virality at the cost of financial profit.

REFERENCES

- Altamira, M. B., & Movementi, S. G. (2023). Fenomena cancel culture di Indonesia: Sebuah tinjauan literatur. *Jurnal Vokasi Indonesia*, 10(1). <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/jviAvaila> bleat:<https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/jvi/vol10/iss1/5>
- Amallah, N. S., Heryanto, G. G., Praptiningsih, N. A., Adeni, A., & Setiawan, B. (2025). Media independence and shareholding structure in Indonesian media, with a focus on Tempo. *Discover Global Society*, 3(102). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s44282-025-00251-z>
- Angeliqa, F., & Andriani, F. (2024). *Duality of networking agency-structures: Female journalists in the arena of sports media*.
- Bayu, D. J., & Triastuti, E. (2020). Using Giddens' structuration theory to examine the contested participation of online mass media journalists in Katadata.co. Id's framing. *SEARCH Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 12(1), 63–77.
- Byrne, D. (2022). A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis. *Quality & Quantity*, 56(3), 13691–1412.
- Camilleri, M. A. (2018). The promotion of responsible tourism management through digital media. *Tourism Planning and Development*, 15(6), 653–671. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2017.1393772>
- Ferrucci, P., & Eldridge, S. A. (2022). *The institutions changing journalism: Barbarians inside the gate*. Routledge.
- García-Orosa, B., Pérez-Seijo, S., & Vizoso, Á. (2022). *Emerging practices in the age of automated digital journalism*. Routledge.
- He, H. (2023). Analysis of cultural and tourism promotion in Chinese small and medium-sized cities on new media platforms. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 179, 03011. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202317903011>
- Hepp, A. (2020). The fragility of curating a pioneer community: Deep mediatization and the spread of the quantified self and maker movements. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 23(6), 932–950.
- Jones, S., Moorlock, E., & Dempsey, E. (2025). Under the influencer: Participatory culture and the rise of the viratoid. *Journal of Business Research*, 199(11554). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115547>
- K. Y.S. Putri, Vera Wijayanti Sutjipto, Wiratri Anindhita, Nada Arina Romli, Yesi Andriani, & Rheva Deianeira, D. (2022). Digital literacy hoax information in the Indonesian tourism area. *Journal of Digital Marketing and Communication*, 2(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.53623/jdmc.v2i1.75>
- Karadimitriou, A., von Krogh, T., Ruggiero, C., Biancalana, C., Bomba, M., & Lo, W. H. (2022). *Investigative journalism and the watchdog role of news media: Between acute challenges and exceptional counterbalances*.

- Kostere, S., & Kostere, K. (2021). *The generic qualitative approach to a dissertation in the social sciences: A step-by-step guide*. Routledge.
- Kurnia, N., & Astuti, S. I. (2017). Peta gerakan literasi digital di Indonesia: Studi tentang pelaku, ragam kegiatan, kelompok sasaran dan mitra yang dilakukan oleh Japelidi. *Informasi*, 47(2), 149. <https://doi.org/10.21831/informasi.v47i2.16079>
- Lasibey, A. A., Flora, V. A. S. M., & Taimenas, E. (2023). Analysis of digital media literacy among tourism stakeholders in the coastal area of Kupang City. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Applied Science and Technology on Social Science 2023 (ICAST-SS 2023), Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, 2023*, 321–325. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-202-6_44
- Limilia, P., Gelgel, R. A., & Rahmiaji, L. R. (2022). Digital literacy among the Z generation in Indonesia. *European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2022.01.02.1>
- Livingstone, S., Jessen, R. S., Stoilova, M., Stănicke, L. I., Graham, R., Staksrud, E., & Jensen, T. (2025). Can platform literacy protect vulnerable young people against the risky affordances of social media platforms? *Information, Communication & Society*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2025.2518254>
- Mathisen, B. R. (2023). Sourcing practice in local media: Diversity and media shadows. *Journalism Practice*, 17(4), 647–663. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1942147>
- Matiza, T., & Slabbert, E. (2024). The destination marketing and media profile – travel motives nexus amid tourism crisis: The mediating effect of the nation brand. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, 7(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTI-05-2022-0174>
- McCombs, M. E., Shaw, D. L., & Weaver, D. H. (2014). New directions in agenda-setting theory and research. *Mass Communication and Society*, 17(6), 781–802.
- Napoli, P. M. (2023). What is media policy? *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 707(1), 29–45.
- Norio, E. (2021). Why are tourist resorts attractive for transnational crime? The case of the Mayan Riviera. *Tourism Critiques: Practice and Theory*, 2(1), 38–73.
- Palmer, R., Toff, B., & Nielsen, R. K. (2020). “The media covers up a lot of things”: Watchdog ideals meet folk theories of journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 21(14), 1973–1989.
- Park, D., Kim, W. G., & Choi, S. (2019). Application of social media analytics in tourism crisis communication. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 22(15), 1810–1824. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2018.1504900>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. Sage Publications.
- Perreault, G. P. (2025). Disruptions in normalization: Reflexive monitoring and the evolution of journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 26(6), 698–714. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2025.2462548>

- Ratnaningtyas, R. P., & Adiyanto, W. (2025). From instability to initiative: Navigating editorial challenges in the formation of independent news portals in Indonesia. *CHANNEL: Jurnal Komunikasi*, 13(1), 49–61.
- Restaty, S. M. N., & Wuryanta, A. E. W. (2022). Digital media literacy and social media competence among millennials for tourism promotion during the COVID pandemic. *Interaksi: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 11(2), 126–142. <https://doi.org/10.14710/interaksi.11.2.126-142>
- Ritonga, R. (2021). Rontoknya independensi pers cetak dan online di Kota Medan. *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi*, 9(1), 26–39.
- Robbins, D., & Wheatley, D. (2021). Complexity, objectivity, and shifting roles: Environmental correspondents march to a changing beat. *Journalism Practice*, 15(9), 1289–1306.
- Rusdi, F. (2025). The duality of structure: Examining Suara.com's adaptive strategies in a volatile media landscape. *Lex Localis-Journal of Local Self-Government*, 23(10), 704–718.
- Seraphin, H., Sheeran, P., & Pilato, M. (2020). *Overtourism and Tourism Education: A Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Futures*. Springer.
- Suyadnya, I. W., Cahyadi, R., Tirtayani, L. A., & Nuryani, A. F. (2025). Overtourism sensitivity and tourism development in Canggu, Bali. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2025.2521364>
- Thäsler-Kordonouri, S. (2025). Journalistic agency and power in the era of artificial intelligence. *Journalism Practice*, 19(10), 2189–2208. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2025.2480238>
- Ulfa, K., Pribadi, U., Herizal, & Suswanta. (2021). Implementation of E-Tourism in Aceh province for future sustainable development through media promotion. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 717(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/717/1/012015>
- Wang, M. Y., Ruan, W. Q., Jenkins, C. L., & Li, R. (2025). Exploring Tuwei promotion in cultural tourism and its social media users' response. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-01-2025-0029>
- Wendland, J. (2024). Building a better participatory culture and enhancing sense of community in podcasts—Systematic literature review. *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*, 1–23.
- Wiley, S. K. (2023). The grey area: How regulations impact autonomy in computational journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 11(6), 889–905. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1893199>
- Zhai, X., & Luo, Q. (2023). Rational or emotional? A study on Chinese tourism boycotts on social media during international crises. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 45(December 2022), 101069. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2022.101069>

