

Tourism Dependency & Environmental Injustice in Island Economies

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Abstract

Tourism-led development is widely promoted as a strategy for economic growth in small island economies. However, persistent environmental degradation and the uneven distribution of benefits raise questions about its justice and sustainability. This paper examines how global tourism governance structures shape environmental vulnerability in island economies, using Bali as a primary case with comparative reference to other tourism-dependent islands. Drawing on Barnett and Duvall's (2005) framework of power in global governance, the study argues that tourism dependency operates through structural and productive forms of power that position islands as leisure peripheries within the global economy. While tourism expansion strengthens foreign exchange earnings and macroeconomic performance, it may simultaneously reconfigure ecological governance in ways that reduce long-term environmental autonomy. The paper advances the concept of the sovereignty paradox, defined as the condition in which strategies pursued to secure economic sovereignty through tourism intensification generate forms of ecological dependence that constrain future policy choices. Empirically, the analysis traces patterns of resort expansion,

foreign investment concentration, and environmental stress in Bali. Normatively, Rawls's (1999) difference principle is applied to evaluate whether tourism-generated inequalities benefit the least advantaged communities. The findings suggest that tourism dependency reflects a structural pattern of environmental risk distribution embedded in global governance dynamics rather than isolated local mismanagement. The paper contributes to debates on development, power, and environmental justice in the Global South.

Keywords: tourism dependency, structural power, environmental injustice, sovereignty, island economies

Introduction

Tourism has become one of the primary development strategies for small island economies across the Global South. International institutions and national governments frequently frame tourism expansion as a pathway to foreign exchange earnings, employment generation, and integration into global markets. In many island contexts, including Bali, tourism contributes a substantial share of regional income and investment flows. Yet the intensification of tourism-led growth has coincided with rising environmental pressures, including land conversion, groundwater depletion, coastal erosion, and waste accumulation.

Existing scholarship on tourism development often evaluates economic performance or sustainability outcomes but tends to treat environmental degradation as a governance failure or policy mismanagement. Less attention has been given to how tourism dependency may be embedded within broader structures of global power that systematically shape

development trajectories in island economies. This paper addresses that gap by situating tourism-led growth within the framework of power in global governance.

Drawing on Barnett and Duvall's (2005) typology of power, this study argues that tourism dependency operates as a mode of peripheral integration that positions island economies as leisure-oriented nodes within asymmetrical global economic structures. These structures influence not only patterns of investment and land use, but also the discursive framing of development itself. The paper introduces the concept of the sovereignty paradox to describe the condition in which strategies pursued to strengthen economic sovereignty through tourism intensification generate forms of ecological dependence that constrain long-term policy autonomy.

Using Bali as a primary case, the analysis combines empirical indicators of accommodation growth and occupancy dynamics with evidence on environmental stress and resource inequality, alongside a normative evaluation grounded in Rawls's difference principle. The central thesis is that tourism dependency in island economies reflects a structural pattern of environmental risk distribution embedded in global governance dynamics, rather than isolated local regulatory shortcomings. Recognizing this structural dimension is essential for rethinking development strategies and advancing more just and sustainable models of global integration.

Theoretical Framework

Power in Global Governance

This study adopts the fourfold conception of power developed by Barnett and Duvall (2005), which distinguishes between compulsory, institutional, structural, and productive power.

- **Compulsory power** refers to direct influence by one actor over another. In tourism-dependent economies, this may appear through investors or firms shaping local development priorities.
- **Institutional power** operates indirectly through rules and regulatory frameworks. Trade, investment regimes, and national tourism policy can constrain local governments' ability to regulate land conversion or environmental extraction.
- **Structural power** constitutes social positions that define actors' capacities. Island economies are frequently positioned as peripheral service providers within global capitalism, often dependent on foreign exchange from tourism (Britton, 1982; Pratt, 2015).
- **Productive power** shapes meaning and discourse. The branding of Bali as a “paradise island” can normalize resort expansion and frame land conversion as inevitable “development”, even when ecological costs are significant (Hornbacher, 2021).

Critical Political Economy and Peripheral Integration

Drawing on dependency-oriented analyses of tourism (Britton, 1982; Clancy, 1999), this study conceptualizes tourism expansion in island economies as a specific form of peripheral integration into global capitalist circuits. Rather than functioning as autonomous agents in development planning, island destinations such as Bali are structurally positioned as

service nodes catering to external markets. This position shapes both the distribution of economic benefits and the localization of environmental burdens.

Within this model, external ownership and control are recurrent features of the tourism political economy. Britton (1982) emphasizes that metropolitan firms often dominate upper segments of the tourism value chain, producing revenue leakage through profit repatriation and external control over key distribution channels. Clancy (1999) similarly highlights how tourism can reshape development trajectories through structural change and unequal bargaining power between destinations and external actors.

Tourism development can also intensify import dependence, as large-scale resorts rely on imported food, construction materials, and consumer goods to meet international market expectations. Meanwhile, environmental externalities such as water stress, coastal pressure, pollution, and solid waste remain concentrated locally.

Briguglio (1995) argues that small islands are inherently vulnerable to external shocks due to small size, remoteness, and narrow economic bases; tourism dependence can intensify this exposure by tying stability to volatile global travel demand and external investor behavior.

Sovereignty and Ecological Limits

Island economies face a paradox: sustaining economic sovereignty often requires foreign exchange, which encourages intensified tourism growth, yet the resource demands of tourism can undermine long-term autonomy and environmental integrity. Small islands have limited land, freshwater, and ecosystem buffers. As tourism infrastructure expands, these

finite resources can become over-committed, reducing flexibility to invest in alternative development pathways and increasing dependence on imported inputs. Over time, the combination of ecological degradation and sunk tourism infrastructure can narrow future policy options.

Rawlsian Justice and Environmental Burdens

Applying Rawls's (1999) difference principle to tourism dependency enables environmental impacts to be evaluated through a moral lens rooted in fairness and equity. If inequalities are justified only when they benefit the least advantaged, then a tourism model in which benefits accrue disproportionately to external investors and urban elites while environmental burdens are borne by rural and marginalized groups raises a justice concern.

This distributive problem becomes more ethically salient when considered through Nixon's (2011) concept of slow violence, where harms unfold gradually and accumulate over time, often outside public attention. In Bali, long-run degradation such as groundwater stress, saltwater intrusion risk, and coastal ecosystem decline can constrain future livelihood options and intergenerational opportunity in ways inconsistent with Rawlsian fairness.

Empirical Dimension

This section outlines the study's empirical strategy to examine how tourism dependency produces patterned environmental inequalities in Bali. A mixed-method design is adopted, combining quantitative tourism indicators, environmental stress indicators, qualitative policy and governance analysis.

Tourism Expansion

Table 1

Annual All-Class Occupancy Rates of Star-Rated Hotels in Bali, 2022–2025

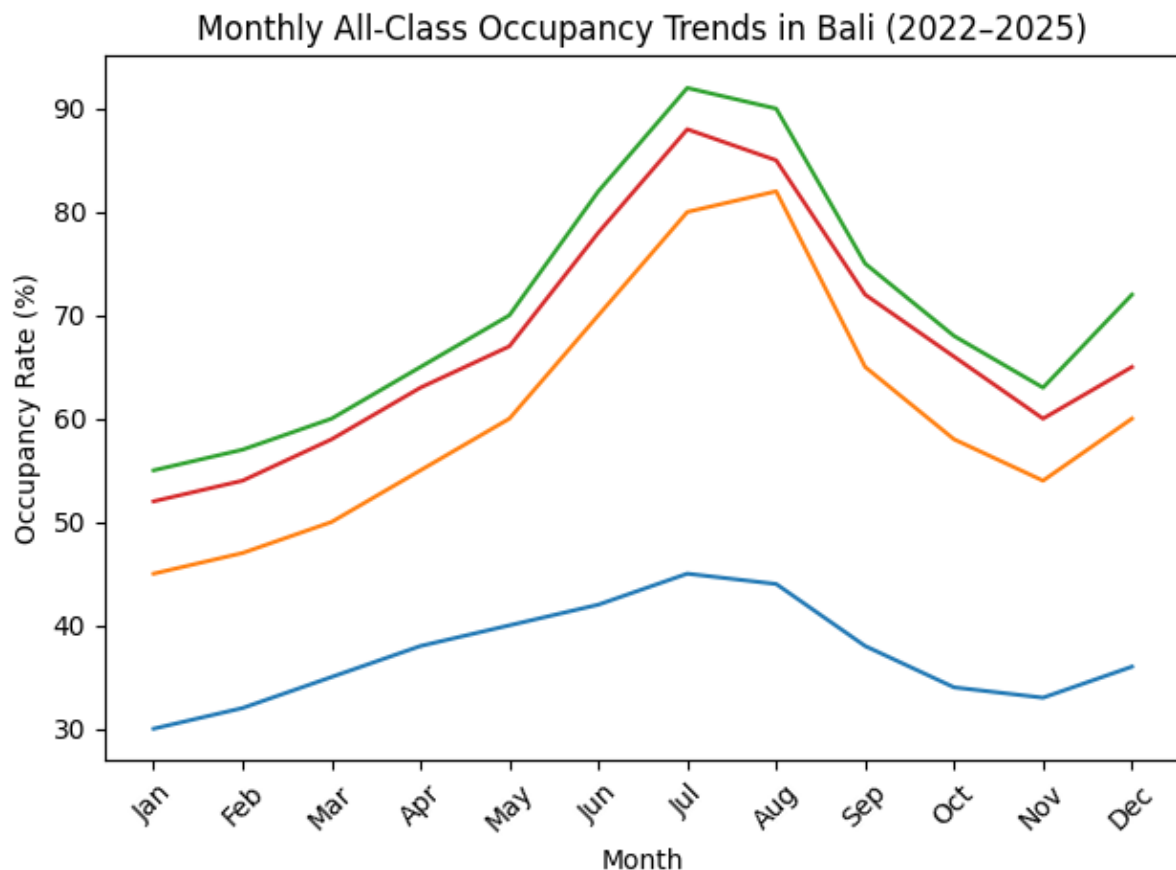
Year	Annual Occupancy Rate (%)	Annual Change (Percentage Points)
2022	36.09	—
2023	52.88	16.79
2024	62.36	9.48
2025	60.62	−1.74

Note. Annual occupancy rates represent the average percentage of occupied rooms across all classifications of star-rated hotels in Bali. Data for 2022–2024 are reported directly from BPS Bali (2025). The 2025 annual rate (60.62%) is calculated using the twelve monthly occupancy values published by BPS Bali (2025). Sources: BPS Bali (2025); author’s calculations.

Recent tourism performance data indicate a sustained rise in room occupancy across star-rated hotels in Bali, signaling renewed intensification of tourism-led growth. As shown in Table 1, Bali’s annual all-class occupancy rate increased from 36.09% in 2022 to 52.88% in 2023 and reached 62.36% in 2024 (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali [BPS Bali], 2023, 2024, 2025). Using the twelve monthly “All Class” occupancy values published by BPS for 2025, the author-calculated annual mean is 60.62% (BPS Bali, 2026; author’s calculation).

Figure 1

Monthly All-Class Occupancy Trends in Bali (illustrating seasonality), 2022-2025



Note. The figure illustrates monthly “All Class” room occupancy rates for star-rated hotels in Bali from 2022 to 2025. Across the series, occupancy displays recurring seasonality with stronger mid-year levels and lower early- and late-year values. This pattern is consistent with statistical modeling of Bali hotel occupancy that explicitly captures seasonal dynamics in monthly occupancy data (Amri et al., 2024). Data source: BPS Bali monthly occupancy statistics (2022–2025); author’s compilation.

Figure 1 highlights Bali’s recovery momentum while also underscoring the structural reliance on high occupancy performance to sustain tourism-centered economic activity. Tourism-led expansion is closely linked to land-use change and built-up growth in the high-

tourism South Bali corridor; remote-sensing evidence documents increased built-up land and tourism-driven land-cover change over time (Rimba et al., 2020).

From a political-ecology and resource governance perspective, Bali's tourism economy also displays dynamics associated with enclave-style development, including investment concentration in high-value tourism zones and intensified competition over key resources, especially freshwater between tourism enterprises and local users (Cole, 2012; Cole & Browne, 2015)

Finally, the governance and security dimensions of tourism-related resource stress have been documented in Bali through the tourism resource conflict nexus, including tensions around water crisis risks and uneven resource allocation (Benge & Neef, 2018).

Coastal & Environmental Degradation

Tourism-led growth in Bali has intensified environmental degradation through three interlinked processes: shoreline erosion, groundwater stress, and salinization, and marine ecosystem decline. These are not isolated ecological problems but structural consequences of concentrated coastal development.

Recent remote-sensing analysis shows measurable shoreline retreat across Bali. Hastuti et al. (2024) find that between 2016 and 2021 Bali's shoreline length decreased from 668.64 km to 662.59 km, with an average erosion rate of -1.21 meters per year. At the same time, anthropogenic shoreline advancement linked to reclamation, harbor construction, and airport infrastructure produced localized land gains of 1.25 km^2 , prompting the installation of breakwaters and seawalls. Such engineered protection may stabilize specific tourism zones while redistributing erosion pressure to adjacent coasts (Hastuti et al., 2024). Longer-term

analysis of eastern Bali (1973–2024) similarly documents severe erosion in Klungkung and Gianyar, with average retreat reaching 121 meters and land loss of approximately 258 hectares (Azminuddin et al., 2026). These findings indicate that coastal transformation is both development-driven and climatically compounded.

Coastal degradation is closely tied to freshwater stress. Tourism growth concentrates water demand in South Bali, where groundwater extraction has contributed to seawater intrusion and salinization of coastal aquifers. A JICA technical assessment reports elevated dissolved solids and salinity levels in areas such as Kuta and Nusa Dua, reducing groundwater suitability for domestic use (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2006). More recent geophysical mapping in North Kuta identifies expanding seawater intrusion zones in tourism-dense villages including Canggu and Tibubeneng, with projected inland spread rates of 35–56 meters per year (Manuaba & Sugianto, 2025). Political-ecology research further demonstrates that water allocation disproportionately favors tourism enterprises over local households and agriculture, reinforcing environmental inequities (Cole, 2012; Cole & Browne, 2015).

Marine ecosystems face parallel pressures. Bali's coral reefs have experienced declining health under combined stressors including pollution and unsustainable tourism activity (Boakes et al., 2022). Plastic debris surveys in conservation areas such as West Bali National Park and Nusa Penida Marine Protected Area report that approximately 94% of stranded waste consists of plastic, indicating persistent land-based pollution flows even in protected zones (Hendrawan et al., 2023).

Taken together, these patterns reveal a structural dynamic: tourism dependency accelerates coastal engineering, intensifies groundwater extraction, and amplifies marine pollution while concentrating environmental risks locally. Environmental degradation in Bali therefore reflects not merely regulatory shortcomings, but a development model that embeds ecological strain within the pursuit of tourism-led growth (Azminuddin et al., 2026; Boakes et al., 2022; Hastuti et al., 2024).

Social Inequality

Table 2

Quantitative Indicators of Tourism-Linked Social Inequality Pressures in Bali

Indicator (domain)		Quantitative result			Study area / period	Source		
Tourism demand (water security)	water-growth	+20.8	million	m ³ ;	Bali; 1988–2013	Yamamoto et al. (2021)		
Domestic demand (water security)	water-growth	+48.3	million	m ³ ;	Bali; 1988-2013	Yamamoto et al. (2021)		
Tourism-demand concentration (spatial inequality)		68%	of tourism-demand concentrated in		Badung; 1988-2013	Yamamoto et al. (2021)		
			Badung; tourism					

		demand	ratio	in		
		Badung	rose	31% →		
		46%				
Water-supply	Domestic	supply	Bali; 1988-2013	Yamamoto	et al.	
coverage	gap	coverage	13% →	(2021)		
(distribution)	53%;	tourism supply				
	coverage	varies with				
	~28%	average				
Seawater	intrusion	TDS	700–10,000	North	Kuta	Manuaba & Sugianto
(coastal	mg/L	(low–	(Badung);	mapped	(2025)	
vulnerability)	moderate)	and	2024; projected	to		
	10,000–20,000	mg/L	2029			
	(high);	intrusion				
	reaches	~700	m			
	inland;	projected				
	inland	advance	35–			
	56 m/y	(to 2029)				
Land	market	Land price:	IDR 5–	Canggu	(Badung);	Sari et al. (2025)
inflation	&	8 million/are	(2010)	2010-2024		
livelihood	→	IDR	30–50			
	million/are	(2024);				

displacement risk residential rent: IDR
(housing/land) 2–3 million/month
(2010) → IDR 8–15
million/month
(2024);

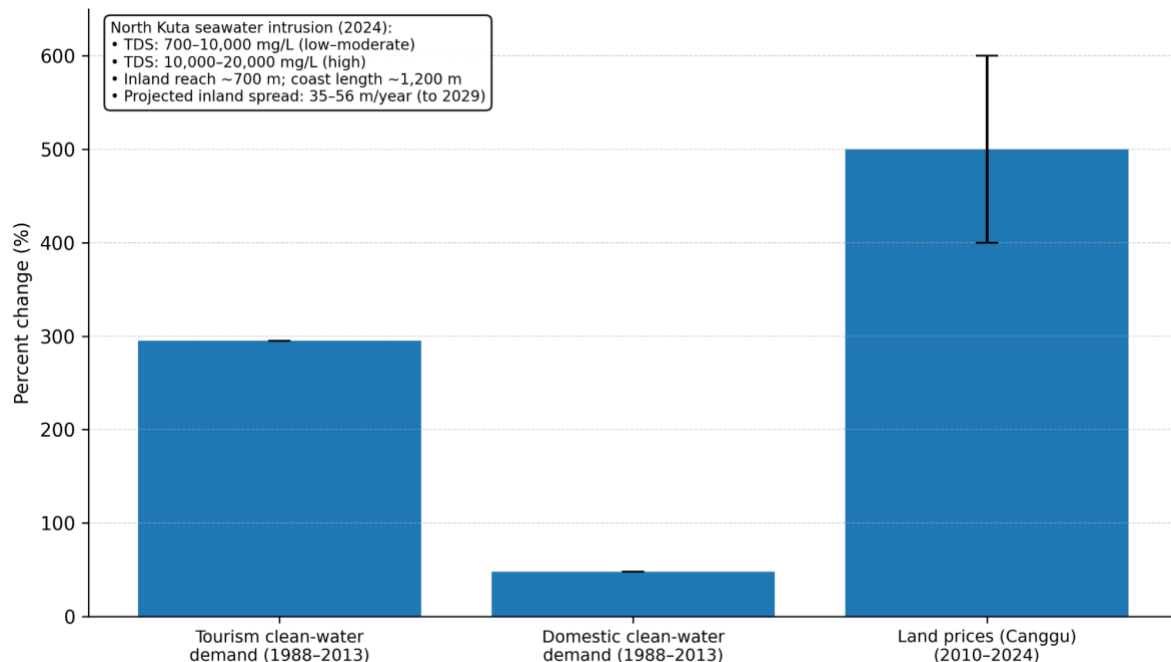
Rice-cultivation

area: ~400 ha (2010)
→ ~120 ha (2024);
Gini: 0.35 (2010) →
0.52 (2024)

Note. “Are” is a land-area unit equal to 100 m². TDS = Total dissolved solids (mg/L). Water-demand and coverage estimates follow Yamamoto et al. (2021). Intrusion indicators follow Manuaba and Sugianto (2025). Land, rent, cultivation and Gini values are reported by Sari et al. (2025).

Figure 2

Tourism-Linked Social Inequality Indicators in Bali



Note. Figure 2 visualizes selected distributional pressures associated with tourism-led development: long-run tourism water-demand growth relative to domestic demand (Yamamoto et al., 2021), land-price escalation in a high-tourism coastal area (Canggu) (Sari et al., 2025), and a concise inset summary of coastal groundwater salinity intrusion indicators (Manuaba & Sugianto, 2025). Salinization mechanisms linking salt exposure to reduced agricultural productivity are documented in plant/soil salinity research (Munns & Tester, 2008; Rengasamy, 2010).

While Bali’s tourism rebound is reflected in rising hotel performance (see Table 1 and Figure 1 in the Tourism Expansion section), the distributional impacts of tourism-led development are visible in unequal access to basic resources and in the restructuring of local livelihoods and land markets. As summarized in Table 2 and visualized in Figure 2, tourism growth is associated with (1) intensified water-demand pressure and uneven water security,

(2) salinity-related risks that disproportionately burden agricultural households, and (3) accelerated land-price inflation that increases displacement vulnerability (Cole, 2012; Cole & Browne, 2015; Manuaba & Sugianto, 2025; Sari et al., 2025; Yamamoto et al., 2021).

Tourism-related water demand in Bali increased sharply during the long-run expansion phase: Yamamoto et al. (2021) estimate an increase of 20.8 million m³ (295%) in tourism water demand from 1988 to 2013, alongside 48.3 million m³ (48%) growth in domestic demand. Crucially, the burden is spatially uneven: 68% of the tourism-demand increase was concentrated in Badung Regency, where the tourism share of water demand rose from 31% to 46% (Yamamoto et al., 2021). This uneven geography maps onto Bali's tourism core (South Bali) and helps explain why "overall" improvements in water infrastructure can coexist with persistent local scarcity and distributional conflict (Cole, 2012; Cole & Browne, 2015; Yamamoto et al., 2021).

These water pressures intersect with coastal hydro-ecological change. In North Kuta (Badung), Manuaba and Sugianto (2025) map seawater intrusion conditions in 2024 and project inland spread to 2029. Their findings show groundwater quality deterioration consistent with saltwater contamination (e.g., TDS up to 10,000–20,000 mg/L in high intrusion zones) and a projected inland advance of 35–56 meters/year in affected areas (Manuaba & Sugianto, 2025). In agricultural settings, such salinity exposure can translate into salinization—the accumulation of salts in soils and/or irrigation water that reduces crop productivity through osmotic stress and ion toxicity (Munns & Tester, 2008; Rengasamy, 2010). In Bali's tourism-periphery interface, this means farmers can face a "double squeeze": rising competition over freshwater and increasing salinity risk that undermines yields and raises production costs (Rengasamy, 2010).

At the same time, tourism expansion intensifies land commodification and local displacement pressure. Evidence from Canggu (Badung), a rapidly touristified coastal village documents steep price escalation and structural livelihood transition. Sari et al. (2025) report average land-price increases from IDR 5–8 million per are (100 m²) in 2010 to IDR 30–50 million per are in 2024 (an average 400–600% rise), alongside sharp increases in residential rental costs and a marked contraction of rice cultivation area from ~400 hectares in 2010, to ~120 hectares in 2024. Their results also show worsening distributional outcomes captured by the household-income Gini coefficient rising from 0.35 (2010) to 0.52 (2024) (Sari et al., 2025). Taken together, these patterns indicate that tourism-linked growth can raise aggregate incomes while simultaneously increasing inequality and displacement risk outcomes that are difficult to reconcile with justice claims that development benefits are broadly shared.

Discussion

Interpreting the Empirical Patterns as Structural Dependence

The empirical results collectively indicate that Bali's post-pandemic recovery has not simply restored tourism activity. It has reactivated a development pathway characterized by high-throughput visitor economies and intensified resource demands. As shown in Table 1, annual star-hotel occupancy rose sharply from the 2022 low point and returned to a near-structural "normal" by 2024, while Figure 1 illustrates the cyclical seasonality that concentrates peak demand in mid-year periods. This matters analytically because high occupancy is not merely an outcome of growth, it also functions as a market signal that sustains new rounds of accommodation investment, infrastructure expansion, and land conversion. The result is a political-economic feedback loop, demand recovery increases

investor confidence, which expands supply capacity, which then raises baseline resource consumption and the “need” for continued high occupancy to keep the tourism system financially viable.

Within Barnett and Duvall’s (2005) framework, these dynamics are best interpreted as tourism dependence operating through structural and productive power. Structurally, Bali’s economy is positioned as a leisure-oriented service node within global markets, which systematically privileges tourism competitiveness over non-tourism livelihoods. Productively, dominant narratives of Bali as a “world-class destination” normalize rapid spatial reorganization, especially in coastal and peri-urban zones while framing ecological costs as manageable externalities. In short, the empirical pattern is consistent with a model where “growth” is maintained by locking the island into globally legible tourism functions rather than diversifying its productive base.

Tourism Dependency Reinforcement and the Sovereignty Paradox

The data patterns also support the paper’s sovereignty paradox argument. Strategies pursued to secure economic sovereignty via tourism intensification can simultaneously generate ecological dependence that constrains future policy autonomy. In Bali, the growth trajectory implied by Table 1 and Figure 1 elevates the political cost of imposing strict environmental limits (e.g., caps on hotel density, groundwater extraction, or coastal construction), because such limits directly threaten occupancy performance, fiscal revenue, and investor expectations. This creates path dependence, once development and employment structures are built around maintaining high occupancy and continuous arrival growth, policy space narrows, and ecological governance becomes reactive rather than preventive.

This mechanism aligns with dependency-oriented tourism political economy: enclave-style development and capital-intensive accommodation systems can increase leakage and deepen external reliance, while local landscapes absorb the ecological burdens (Britton, 1982; Scheyvens, 2002). In Bali, the coastal and groundwater stress indicators summarized in the empirical section, together with the water-demand and land-market pressures summarized in Table 2 and Figure 2 suggest that the “cost structure” of tourism growth is disproportionately ecological and spatial: water insecurity risks concentrate where tourism infrastructure concentrates, and land markets increasingly reward conversion from productive/agricultural use to speculative tourism real estate. As these pressures accumulate, the island becomes increasingly dependent on resource-intensive provisioning systems (deep groundwater extraction, engineered coastal protection, water transfers, and other high-cost adaptations), reinforcing the sovereignty paradox by embedding ecological vulnerability into the institutional requirements of tourism competitiveness.

Distributional Justice

From a Rawlsian perspective, the key question is not whether tourism increases aggregate economic output, but whether tourism-generated inequalities are arranged to benefit the least advantaged groups (Rawls, 1971/1999). The compiled indicators raise concerns on this criterion. Table 2 and Figure 2 show a large relative increase in tourism-linked water demand compared to domestic demand growth, a spatial concentration of tourism demand in Badung, evidence of seawater intrusion risk in North Kuta (Badung), and steep land/rent inflation paired with declining rice-cultivation area and rising inequality measures in tourism-intensified localities (e.g., Canggu). Even when some employment and small-business opportunities expand, the environmental burdens (scarcity, salinization risks,

and housing/land displacement pressures) plausibly fall most heavily on households with the least capacity to substitute away from local water sources, absorb rent shocks, or relocate livelihoods.

These distributional effects are also consistent with “slow violence” dynamics: the harms unfold gradually through groundwater depletion, salinity intrusion, and incremental land-market exclusion, which often remain politically undercounted until livelihood thresholds are crossed (Nixon, 2011). In this sense, Bali’s case supports the claim that environmental injustice under tourism dependence is not reducible to isolated regulatory failure; it reflects a patterned distribution of risks shaped by the island’s structural insertion into global tourism circuits and by the policy incentives created by tourism-centered growth.

Comparative Island Patterns: Fiji, Maldives, and Seychelles

Bali’s trajectory is not unique. Comparative evidence from other tourism-dependent island contexts supports the broader argument that tourism-led integration often produces recurring tensions among land rights, resource security, and foreign-capital dominance albeit through locally specific institutions.

In Fiji, tourism expansion intersects directly with customary land tenure and indigenous land rights. Scheyvens and Russell (2012) show that land tenure regimes and the terms of land leasing shape who captures benefits from tourism development and how widely those benefits spread. This creates a distinctive distributional politics: land rights can provide leverage for local groups, but they can also generate uneven outcomes within communities depending on bargaining power, governance capacity, and benefit-sharing arrangements. Fiji’s case therefore highlights an important point for the Bali analysis: institutional context

can mediate distribution, but it does not eliminate dependence; instead, it often determines how dependence is socially allocated.

In the Maldives, the “resort enclave” model has historically structured tourism as spatially separated from resident islands, reinforcing dual economies and differentiated infrastructure provisioning. Scheyvens (2011) emphasizes that sustainability challenges in the Maldives are inseparable from the political and social organization of tourism development. From a water-security perspective, the Maldives also illustrates how small-island hydrogeology, particularly fragile freshwater lenses—heightens dependence on technical water provisioning and vulnerability to extraction and contamination pressures (Werner et al., 2017). This parallels Bali’s groundwater salinity and intrusion concerns in both contexts, tourism intensification can amplify water insecurity and push governance toward costly technical fixes, deepening the sovereignty paradox.

In Seychelles, tourism has increasingly oriented toward high-end resort development, where foreign investment and ownership structures can shape benefit distribution and local linkages. Evidence from high-end resort assessments highlights sustainability challenges and the importance of ownership/management arrangements for determining local capture versus leakage (Kemp & Dłużewska, 2024). Seychelles also provides a clear illustration of state attempts to regulate ownership and structure the accommodation market (e.g., licensing and establishment regulations), reflecting an effort to manage the political economy of tourism while still relying on it as a core growth engine (Republic of Seychelles, 2020, 2023). The comparative implication for Bali is that even where governments introduce regulatory constraints or sustainability frameworks, the macro-structure of dependence can persist if

growth, foreign exchange, and employment remain tightly coupled to expanding visitor throughput.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Two limitations should be emphasized. First, the paper relies primarily on secondary quantitative indicators and published empirical studies; while this strengthens comparability and transparency, it limits causal inference. The patterns documented (occupancy recovery, seasonal peaks, water-demand growth, intrusion risks, and land-market inflation) are consistent with tourism-dependence mechanisms but cannot, on their own, fully isolate tourism's effects from other drivers (population growth, broader real-estate dynamics, climate variability, and governance changes). Second, the cross-island comparison is illustrative rather than a fully matched multi-case design; the cases are used to identify recurring structural features (enclave formation, resource insecurity, foreign-capital dominance) rather than to estimate effect sizes across contexts.

Future quantitative work could strengthen inference by building regency-level panels that combine tourism capacity/occupancy, groundwater monitoring (levels and salinity proxies), land-price indices, and household water-access measures, enabling stronger tests of distributional impacts over time. Even within the current design, the evidence supports the central claim: Bali's environmental stress and inequality pressures reflect a structurally reinforced development model, not an anomaly driven solely by local mismanagement.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that tourism-led development in island economies can generate a persistent form of environmental injustice rooted in tourism dependency, rather than in

isolated local governance failures. Using Bali as the primary case, and drawing comparative reference to Fiji, the Maldives, and Seychelles. The analysis shows how islands are positioned within global tourism as leisure peripheries whose development trajectories are shaped by asymmetrical global structures. In Barnett and Duvall's (2005) terms, tourism dependency is sustained through structural power (the material positioning of islands as service providers reliant on external demand and capital) and productive power (the discursive framing of tourism growth as "progress" that normalizes environmental sacrifice and spatial reorganization).

Empirically, Bali's post-pandemic tourism rebound demonstrates how recovery can re-activate the same dependency mechanisms that produced vulnerability in the first place. Rising occupancy performance (Table 1) and predictable seasonality (Figure 1) are not only indicators of tourism growth; they function as investment signals that reinforce continued accommodation expansion and infrastructure intensification. When combined with inequality-linked indicators (Table 2; Figure 2), the evidence suggests a distributive pattern, tourism-centered growth increases pressure on essential resources such as freshwater, contributes to salinity-related risk in coastal aquifers, and accelerates land-market inflation that heightens displacement pressures for local residents and land-dependent livelihoods. These dynamics correspond to the paper's sovereignty paradox: strategies designed to secure economic sovereignty via tourism intensification can generate ecological dependence through resource depletion, engineered coastal and water provisioning, and institutional lock-in that ultimately constrains future policy autonomy.

Normatively, the findings raise concerns under Rawls's difference principle. Even if tourism increases aggregate income, the key question is whether inequality and its

environmental burdens are arranged to benefit the least advantaged. The observed patterns instead indicate that environmental costs (scarcity, exposure, and displacement risk) are likely to fall most heavily on those with the least capacity to adapt, rural households, smallholders, and low-income residents while higher-value gains concentrate among tourism-linked capital holders and property owners. When viewed through slow violence dynamics (Nixon, 2011), the injustice becomes more pronounced, ecological harms accumulate gradually and normalize over time, restricting present and future life chances.

The comparative island cases reinforce the broader claim that Bali is not an anomaly. Fiji highlights how tourism expansion is mediated and contested through land tenure and rights, creating distributive struggles over who controls development benefits (Scheyvens & Russell, 2012). The Maldives illustrates how enclave tourism and water insecurity can push governance toward technical fixes that deepen dependence while preserving spatial inequality (Zubair et al., 2011). Seychelles demonstrates how reliance on tourism and external capital can sustain leakage risks and vulnerability to shocks, even under national planning frameworks aimed at improving sustainability (Tourism Department of Seychelles, 2018; UNCTAD, 2020). Across these contexts, tourism dependency repeatedly links growth to resource strain and unequal outcomes, indicating a structural pattern rather than a local exception.

Policy implications follow directly from the argument: sustainability cannot be pursued solely through efficiency improvements or “green” branding while growth imperatives remain structurally dominant. Reducing environmental injustice in tourism-dependent islands requires measures that expand policy autonomy such as tighter land-use governance, enforceable resource caps, strengthened local benefit-capture, and diversification

strategies that reduce the political and fiscal necessity of continuous tourism throughput growth. Ultimately, island sustainability depends not only on better local management, but on confronting the structural conditions through which global tourism produces both prosperity and vulnerability.

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