

The Impact of the 2025 Flood Disaster in Bali on the Image of Tourism Destinations

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Abstract: *Bali is a leading Indonesian tourist destination that relies heavily on a positive image to attract visitors. The floods that occurred from late 2024 to early 2025 had physical and psychological impacts on the tourism sector. This study aims to analyze the impact of the 2025 floods on the image of Bali's tourism destinations using a descriptive qualitative approach and a phenomenological method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 3–5 participants (tourists and local residents) selected via purposive sampling, complemented by literature and documentation studies. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model (data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing). Findings indicate that the floods affected Bali's destination image, particularly in terms of safety, comfort, and accessibility; mass media and social media coverage were the primary factors shaping tourists' risk perceptions. However, this impact was temporary because Bali's positive image, supported by its culture, natural beauty, hospitality, and international reputation, continued to sustain tourist interest. Recovery efforts by the government and tourism industry through infrastructure improvements, destination promotion, and service quality enhancements further accelerated the restoration of tourist confidence. This study demonstrates that while natural disasters can affect a destination's image in the short term, the strength of a destination's identity and uniqueness plays a crucial role in maintaining a positive image over the long term.*

Keywords: *flood, destination image, Bali tourism, tourist perception, risk perception*

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Introduction



Bali Province is a leading tourist destination in Indonesia, contributing significantly to the national economy through the tourism sector. High tourist mobility makes the sustainability of destination image a crucial factor in maintaining regional tourism competitiveness. However, the increasing intensity of hydrometeorological disasters, particularly floods, presents new challenges to the sustainability of the tourism industry. Natural disasters not only cause physical damage to tourism-supporting infrastructure but also shape tourists' perceptions of the safety, comfort, and quality of the destinations they visit. From a destination marketing perspective, destination image is a comprehensive representation of a place formed through individual experiences, information, and perceptions, thus becoming a key determinant in influencing tourists' visit and repeat visits (Hernawati, 2024; Styliadis et al., 2022).

This phenomenon became increasingly relevant following the flooding that occurred in several areas of Bali from late December 2024 to early January 2025. According to a report from the Bali Provincial Disaster Management Agency (BPBD) (2025), extreme rainfall influenced by the La Niña phenomenon caused flooding in Denpasar City, Badung Regency, Gianyar, Tabanan, and Buleleng. Water levels reaching 30 to 80 cm disrupted access to various tourist areas, hotel and restaurant operations, and beach tourism activities. Although the emergency situation ended in mid-January 2025, the continuing impacts of infrastructure damage, hotel reservation cancellations, and travel delays continued to be felt in the following weeks. This situation is a significant concern considering that data from the Bali Provincial Central Statistics Agency (2025) shows that the number of foreign tourist visits throughout 2024 reached 6,333,360 visits, an increase of 20.1 percent compared to the previous year. The high flow of visitors indicates that any disruption to the destination's image has the potential to have significant economic consequences for Bali's tourism sector (BPBD Bali Province, 2025; BPS Bali Province, 2025).

Flood disasters not only cause physical impacts but also influence the psychological aspects of tourists' assessment of a destination. Perceptions of disaster risk are one factor that can alter a destination's image, reduce interest in visiting, and even influence tourist loyalty. Various studies have shown that risk perception and a sense of security are crucial elements in shaping destination image, as tourists tend to avoid destinations perceived as highly vulnerable to disasters. Therefore, successful destination image recovery depends not only on infrastructure improvements but also on the ability of the government and tourism industry players to manage risk communication and rebuild tourist trust (Styliadis et al., 2022; Rather, 20210).

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between natural disasters and the tourism sector. Giska et al. (2025) found that flooding in the Ciliwung area of South Jakarta not only hampered tourist destination operations but also influenced public perceptions of destination safety and the importance of mitigation strategies in supporting sustainable tourism. However, this research focused on developing disaster mitigation in urban areas and therefore failed to explain how tourists interpret their experiences at flood-affected tourist destinations. Furthermore, studies on destination image predominantly use quantitative approaches to measure relationships between variables, while understanding tourists' subjective experiences after a disaster remains relatively limited. Therefore, there remains a research gap that needs to be filled through studies that explore the experiences, perceptions, and meanings constructed by tourists after a flood (Giska et al., 2025; Styliadis et al., 2022).

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the impact of the 2025 flood disaster on the destination image in Bali through a qualitative phenomenological approach. This approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of tourists' experiences and perceptions of changes in destination image after the flood. This research is urgent because the results are expected to form the basis for developing strategies for destination image recovery, strengthening tourism crisis management, and developing sustainable tourism policies in Bali. The novelty of the study lies in the use of a phenomenological approach to explore tourists' experiences in depth in the context of the 2025 Bali flood, which to date has not been widely studied in Indonesian tourism literature. Therefore, it is expected to provide empirical and conceptual contributions to the development of destination image studies in post-disaster situations.



Literature review

1. Theoretical basis

a. Tourism Concept

Tourism is a system involving interactions between tourists, destinations, supporting industries, and local communities. According to Law Number 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism, tourism is a variety of tourism activities supported by facilities and services provided by the community, entrepreneurs, the government, and local governments. Conceptually, tourism is not only related to travel, but also encompasses economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects. From an economic perspective, tourism contributes to foreign exchange, job creation, and increased community income. From a socio-cultural perspective, tourism plays a role in preserving local culture and strengthening regional identity. However, the tourism sector is highly vulnerable to various external disruptions such as natural disasters, health crises, and social issues. Therefore, the sustainability of tourism depends heavily on the destination's ability to manage risks and maintain its image.

b. Natural Disasters (Floods) from a Tourism Perspective

Flooding is a hydrometeorological disaster caused by increased water volumes that cannot be accommodated by drainage systems or water bodies. In the context of tourism, flooding not only causes physical damage but also impacts tourists' perceptions.

According to the concept of tourism risk management, natural disasters have three main types of impacts:

a) Physical Impact

- Damage to tourist facilities (hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions)
- Infrastructure disruption (roads, transportation, drainage)

b) Economic Impact

- Decline in hotel occupancy rates
- Reservation cancellation
- Decrease in business actor income

c) Psychological Impact

- Increased risk perception among tourists
- Concerns about safety
- Declining confidence in destinations

Risk perception is often more influential than actual conditions on the ground, because it is influenced by the media and indirect experience.

c. Destination Image

Destination image is a tourist's overall perception of a destination, formed through direct experiences and indirect information obtained from various sources. This image plays a crucial role in influencing tourists' decisions to visit and fostering loyalty to the destination. According to Gartner and Qu et al. (2020), destination image consists of three main components:

a) Cognitive Image

Cognitive image is a tourist's rational assessment of a destination based on their knowledge and information. This component encompasses various aspects such as infrastructure quality, environmental conditions, accessibility, supporting facilities, and available tourist attractions. In the context of this research, cognitive image can be influenced by post-flood conditions, such as damaged facilities or disrupted access to the destination.

b) Affective Image

Affective image relates to tourists' emotional responses to a destination. This aspect reflects the feelings that arise, such as safety, comfort, relaxation, or anxiety and unease. Affective image is strongly influenced by risk perceptions and the experiences or information tourists receive regarding the destination's conditions.

c) Unique Image

A unique image is a distinctive characteristic that distinguishes a destination from others. This uniqueness can include local culture, traditions, natural beauty, or unique

experiences not found elsewhere. In the context of Bali, this unique image is closely related to the rich culture, spirituality, and hospitality of the local people, which are key attractions for tourists.

d. Previous Research

Study 1: Rahmawan et al. (2021) examined the impact of the 2004 Aceh tsunami on tourism. This study showed that the tsunami caused severe damage to tourism infrastructure and altered tourists' perceptions of the safety of Aceh destinations. Recovering the destination's image took more than 10 years, with ongoing crisis communication and promotional strategies.

Study 2: Giska et al. (2025) in their research on sustainable tourism development based on flood disaster mitigation in the Ciliwung area, South Jakarta, found that flooding not only caused damage to facilities and disrupted destination operations, but also affected the stability of tourism activities and public perception of destination safety.

Although previous research has examined the impact of natural disasters on tourism, no study has examined the impact of flooding on Bali's destination image using a qualitative approach, particularly regarding flooding that occurred in 2025.

This study focuses on tourists' perceptions of the safety and comfort aspects of Bali after the 2025 floods. The study uses a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the meaning of tourists' experiences in depth regarding changes in the image of Bali as a destination due to the flood disaster.

Research methods

This research was conducted in Bali Province, specifically in areas affected by the floods in late December 2024: Denpasar City, Badung Regency, Gianyar Regency, and parts of Tabanan and Buleleng. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with a phenomenological approach to explore tourists' experiences and perceptions of Bali's destination image after the 2025 floods.

This study involved 3-5 participants, consisting of tourists and local Balinese residents. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on specific criteria, such as having visited Bali or planning to visit it in 2024-2025, and having direct experience or insights into the impacts of flooding.

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with participants, while secondary data was obtained from online news, government reports from the Bali Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD Bali), scientific articles, and tourist visit data from the Bali Statistics Agency (BPS). Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, literature studies, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were used to allow participants to express their opinions and experiences more freely regarding the impact of flooding on Bali's image as a tourist destination. Literature studies were conducted to examine relevant theories and previous research, while documentation was used to collect news, photos, reports, and statistics related to the flooding.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which involves data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Interview and documentation data were selected and grouped according to research themes, then presented in descriptive narrative form for easier understanding. The researchers then drew conclusions based on the patterns and findings emerging from the data.

To maintain data credibility, this study utilized source triangulation, comparing information from tourists, local residents, and literature sources. This approach aims to provide a more objective picture of the impact of the 2025 flood disaster on Bali's destination image.

Results and Discussion

1. Flood Conditions in Bali in 2025

The floods that hit Bali from late December 2024 to early January 2025 were triggered by heavy rainfall influenced by the La Niña phenomenon. The event affected several areas, including Denpasar City, Badung Regency, Gianyar Regency, parts of Tabanan, and Buleleng. Several tourist areas, such as Kuta, Mengwi, and Ubud, experienced flooding, disrupting the activities of residents and tourists.

According to data from the Bali Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD) (2025), the flooding caused damage to several public facilities, hampered transportation access, and disrupted hotel and restaurant operations. In addition to the physical impacts, the flooding also attracted public attention due to its extensive coverage in the mass media and social media. This situation has the potential to impact tourists' perceptions of the safety and well-being of Bali as a tourist destination.

Tourist and Local Residents' Perceptions of Flooding in Bali

Interview results showed that most tourists obtained information about the floods from social media and online news portals. R1 (Andi) said he had initially felt worried about the situation in Bali after reading various news reports about the floods. However, after arriving in Bali, he saw that most tourist attractions were still operating normally, which eased his concerns.

R2 (Dewi) expressed a similar view, admitting to reconsidering her travel plans. However, Bali's cultural attractions and natural beauty remain her primary reasons for visiting. Meanwhile, R3 (Michael) revealed that news reports about the floods significantly impacted his perception of the destination's safety. However, he believes the government and community's response to the floods was swift enough to maintain trust in Bali.

From the local community's perspective, R4 (Rika) explained that the flooding had led to a decrease in tourist numbers and cancellations of reservations at several tourism businesses. However, this was only temporary due to the swift cleanup and recovery efforts. R5 (Ariani) added that Bali's image was indeed affected by the flooding, but its reputation as an international tourist destination remained strong enough to maintain tourist interest.

The findings indicate that both tourists and local residents acknowledge the impact of flooding on the tourism sector. However, the most noticeable impacts are psychological and perceptual, rather than permanent damage.

2. The Impact of Floods on Bali's Destination Image

Based on interviews, the floods have impacted Bali's image, particularly in terms of safety, comfort, and accessibility. Tourists are becoming more cautious when planning their travels due to concerns about potential disruptions to tourism activities due to the disaster.

However, this influence is not permanent. Most respondents still view Bali as an attractive and worthwhile tourist destination. This suggests that the positive image Bali has cultivated over the years has mitigated the negative impact of the flood disaster.

On the other hand, this study also found that Bali's image experienced a short-term decline due to increased tourist risk perceptions. However, as conditions recovered and tourism activities returned to normal, these perceptions began to improve.

3. Factors Influencing Tourist Perception

The research results show that tourists' perceptions of Bali post-flood are influenced by several factors. The primary factors are mass media coverage and social media, which are the most readily accessible sources of information for tourists. The high level of flood coverage has been shown to shape tourists' perceptions of the destination's safety.

The next factor is tourists' personal experiences. Those who have visited Bali before tend to have more positive perceptions than those who only know about Bali's conditions through the media. Furthermore, the condition of the destination's infrastructure and accessibility also influence tourists' perceptions. The faster the recovery process, the greater tourists' trust in the destination.

Bali's reputation as an international tourist destination is also a crucial factor in shaping tourist perceptions. This reputation, built over many years, keeps tourists wanting to visit, even despite recent disasters.

4. Destination Image Recovery Efforts

The local government, along with tourism industry players, has taken various steps to restore Bali's image after the floods. These efforts include repairing damaged infrastructure, cleaning tourist areas, improving drainage systems, and disseminating information on the current conditions of tourist destinations.

Furthermore, tourism promotions have been intensified to demonstrate that most tourist destinations are operating normally and are safe to visit. Tourism businesses are also striving to improve service quality to restore tourist confidence. These various measures are believed to accelerate the recovery process of Bali's image after the disaster.

5. Discussion Based on Destination Image Theory

The results of this study support the destination image theory proposed by Gartner and Qu et al. (2020), which states that destination image consists of cognitive image, affective image, and unique image.

In terms of cognitive image, tourists evaluated Bali based on the condition of infrastructure, accessibility, and tourism facilities affected by the floods. In terms of affective image, tourists expressed worry and discomfort due to news reports about the disaster. Meanwhile, in terms of unique image, Bali retains its strengths in terms of culture, traditions, natural beauty, and friendly locals, distinguishing it from other tourist destinations.

These findings suggest that while natural disasters can impact tourist perceptions, destination identity and uniqueness still play a crucial role in maintaining Bali's positive image over the long term. Therefore, this research aligns with the theory that unique imagery is a relatively stable component in shaping destination image.

Overall, this study shows that the floods that occurred in Bali in 2025 impacted the destination's image, particularly on tourist safety and comfort. This impact emerged through increased risk perception influenced by media coverage and the conditions at the time of the disaster. However, Bali's positive image as an international tourist destination remained, supported by its rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and long-standing reputation. Recovery efforts undertaken by the government, tourism industry players, and the community also played a crucial role in restoring tourist confidence and maintaining the sustainability of Bali's tourism sector.

Conclusion

Based on research on the impact of the 2025 flood disaster on the image of tourist destinations in Bali, it can be concluded that the flood disaster significantly impacted tourists' perceptions of the destination, particularly regarding safety, comfort, and accessibility. The impacts were not only physical, through disruptions to infrastructure and tourism activities, but also psychological, through increased tourist perceptions of risk regarding post-disaster destination conditions.

The research results show that information tourists receive through mass media and social media plays a crucial role in shaping their perceptions of Bali. The high frequency of flood coverage has raised concerns about safety and the smooth running of tourism activities. This finding reinforces the notion that risk perception often has a greater influence on tourist decisions than actual conditions on the ground. Thus, destination image is determined not only by a destination's physical condition but also by how information about it is communicated to the public.

However, this study found that the negative impact of the floods on Bali's destination image was likely temporary. Most tourists still view Bali as an attractive and worthwhile destination. This suggests that the positive image developed over the years can act as a counterbalance to the negative impacts of natural disasters. Bali's unique cultural richness, natural beauty, spiritual values, and the friendliness of the local community have proven to be key strengths in maintaining the destination's appeal amidst the crisis.

The findings of this study also support the destination image theory, which states that destination image consists of cognitive, affective, and unique dimensions. The impact of flooding is visible in the cognitive dimension through tourists' assessments of the condition of facilities and infrastructure, and in the affective dimension through feelings of worry and discomfort. However, Bali's unique image dimension, encompassing cultural characteristics, traditions, and destination identity, remains resilient and a dominant factor in maintaining positive tourist perceptions. In other words, a strong destination identity can increase the resilience of a destination's image to various external disturbances, including natural disasters.

Furthermore, this study shows that recovery efforts undertaken by local governments, tourism industry players, and local communities play a significant role in accelerating the process of restoring a destination's image. Infrastructure improvements, enhanced service quality, accurate information

dissemination, and ongoing tourism promotion have been proven to restore tourist confidence. Therefore, successful post-disaster destination image recovery requires synergistic collaboration between all stakeholders in the tourism sector.

Overall, this study confirms that the 2025 floods will impact Bali's destination image, but these impacts will not diminish Bali's position as one of the world's leading tourist destinations. A deeply rooted positive image, supported by a swift and effective recovery response, are key factors enabling Bali to maintain the competitiveness and sustainability of its tourism sector amidst the challenges of natural disasters.

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