

CONTRIBUTION OF DARK TOURISM IN PRESERVING COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND STRENGTHENING LOCAL TOURISM AT THE BAJRA SANDHI MONUMENT, BALI

Anak Agung Ayu Ratih Kesumadewi^{1*}, Putu Surya Laksana Rahjasa², I Gede Ngurah Primanda S Rahadiarta³

¹Tourism Study Program, Tourism Faculty, Universitas Udayana, Indonesia, ^{2,3}Tour and Travel Business Study Program, Department of Tourism, Politeknik Pariwisata Bali, Badung, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: November, 2024

Accepted: December, 2024

Published: December, 2024

Keywords:

Tourism Village, Video Promotion, Tourist Interest

E-ISSN: 3064-044X

DOI: 10.52352/jtrue.v1i2.1650

*Corresponding author:
agungratih@unud.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of the Bajra Sandhi Monument as a dark tourism destination, highlighting its contribution to collective memory and cultural tourism in Bali. The monument serves as a site of historical education, presenting narratives of Bali's struggle against colonialism through dioramas and reflective spaces. It strengthens collective memory by fostering awareness of historical events and cultural identity among visitors and locals. Additionally, the monument enhances Bali's cultural tourism by offering a meaningful alternative to its natural attractions, integrating historical and cultural narratives. Despite its benefits, the monument faces challenges such as the risks of commercialization, which could diminish its historical significance. To address this, sustainable management practices are recommended, alongside adopting digital storytelling technologies to enrich the visitor experience. Involving local communities in its preservation ensures stronger cultural ownership, while future research can explore its influence on international perceptions of Bali's history. The Bajra Sandhi Monument exemplifies the potential of dark tourism to balance cultural preservation and tourism development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dark tourism, also referred to as thanatourism, is a unique form of tourism that invites travelers to engage with places historically marked by death, tragedy, or deeply poignant events. It goes beyond mere sightseeing; it offers a window into the profound, often unsettling chapters of human history, providing tourists with an opportunity to reflect on narratives of pain, resilience, and survival. This phenomenon has garnered significant global interest because of its unique allure—the fascination that individuals have with understanding and experiencing the darker sides of history. Dark tourism brings together a blend of curiosity and respect, prompting visitors to delve into the emotional complexities of sites where tragic events unfolded.

In Indonesia, dark tourism is experiencing growing interest, largely because the country possesses a wealth of historical sites woven with tragic narratives—ranging from political upheavals and natural calamities to stories of colonial resistance and the struggle for independence. One such region that harbors immense potential for dark tourism is the island of Bali, a place predominantly known for its stunning landscapes, rich cultural traditions, and vibrant arts. While Bali is globally celebrated as a paradise of scenic beauty and culture, there exists another layer of history—one marked by human struggle and resilience—that remains lesser-known yet highly significant in understanding the island's identity. Within this realm of historical exploration lies the city of Denpasar, the bustling capital of Bali, which offers not only natural and cultural wonders but also compelling historical sites that hold powerful stories of the past.

Among these historical sites is the Bajra Sandhi Monument, an imposing structure standing in the heart of Renon, Denpasar. Built to honor the valiant struggles of the Balinese people against colonial forces, the monument serves as a reminder of their unyielding spirit and deep commitment to preserving cultural

identity. The name “Bajra Sandhi” itself carries symbolic meaning, derived from the word “bajra,” which refers to the bell used by Hindu priests during religious rituals, and “sandhi,” which denotes sacrifice. In this way, the monument embodies the spirit of sacrifice made by generations of Balinese people in their quest for freedom. Officially inaugurated in 2003, the monument stands surrounded by lush green gardens that provide an inviting recreational area for locals and tourists alike. Within its walls, the monument houses 33 dioramas depicting significant periods in Balinese history—from prehistoric times to the resistance against Dutch colonial rule—each of which tells vivid tales of the people’s heroic journey. The dioramas invite visitors to witness not just the beauty of Balinese culture but also the challenges faced by its people, presenting an emotionally immersive historical narrative.

While initially conceived as a symbol of historical preservation and education, the Bajra Sandhi Monument has emerged as a noteworthy site for dark tourism in recent years. Visitors to the monument are drawn not only by the architectural grandeur and serene surroundings but also by the poignant stories of struggle and hardship embedded within its dioramas. Here, tourists can gain a deeper understanding of Bali’s lesser-known historical episodes, enriching their perception of the island beyond its scenic beaches and cultural festivities. The Bajra Sandhi Monument, thus, transcends its role as a recreational destination, serving as a conduit for exploring Bali’s dark history and for preserving collective memory—a memory shared not only by the Balinese people but also by those who wish to understand the essence of their sacrifices and struggles.

Dark tourism in Bali often brings to mind sites associated with natural disasters—such as the catastrophic eruptions of Mount Agung or the devastating tsunamis that have struck its coastal areas. The Bajra Sandhi Monument, however, offers a distinct perspective within this spectrum of dark tourism. Its focus lies not on natural disasters but on historical tragedies and human resilience, providing an essential balance to the broader narrative of Bali’s past. Tourists who visit the monument are given an opportunity to understand the complex, and sometimes somber, historical experiences that have shaped the island’s identity—experiences that are often overshadowed by the allure of sun-soaked beaches and tranquil temples. According to Isaac (2022), dark tourism provides a pathway for visitors to engage with death and history on a personal level, provoking emotional responses that foster a deeper reflection on the past. This process of emotional engagement not only enriches historical awareness but also encourages visitors to reassess their own values and their connection to the stories of resilience embodied by such sites.

The Bajra Sandhi Monument stands as a compelling example of how dark tourism can play an important role in preserving the collective memory of a community. As highlighted by Biran, Poria, and Oren (2011), many tourists are motivated by a desire to deepen their understanding of historical events, and their visits to dark tourism sites often serve as a bridge to the collective identity of the community. Through its historical displays, the Bajra Sandhi Monument strengthens this collective memory, offering both the local community and tourists a profound connection to the island’s past. It fulfills an essential role in keeping the memories of struggle and perseverance alive, fostering a sense of pride and respect for those who came before. It also provides a platform for cultural and historical education, allowing younger generations and international visitors to connect with Bali’s unique story in a meaningful way.

In an era where modern tourism increasingly gravitates toward experiential and meaningful travel, dark tourism presents a valuable opportunity for in-depth cultural engagement. The post-pandemic tourism landscape has seen a notable shift—tourists are not just seeking entertainment but also experiences that foster reflection, empathy, and learning. A study conducted by Radzevičius (2021) emphasizes that dark tourism sites do more than provide historical insights; they facilitate an emotional journey, enabling visitors to engage with the past in a way that is deeply personal and transformative. By offering this dimension of meaningful engagement, dark tourism destinations like the Bajra Sandhi Monument cater to those seeking more than just picturesque landscapes—they seek narratives that challenge, educate, and inspire. This trend also aligns with Bali’s strategy of diversifying its tourism offerings, reducing reliance on its well-known natural and cultural attractions, and tapping into the growing interest in more profound and reflective tourism experiences.

As the popularity of the Bajra Sandhi Monument grows, it raises important questions regarding the role of such dark tourism sites in educating the public and strengthening collective memory. Can these sites effectively convey the gravity of historical events while also preserving and celebrating local cultural values? The challenge lies in ensuring that visits to the monument go beyond superficial sightseeing—they must facilitate a genuine understanding of the historical significance behind the struggles depicted within its walls. This article aims to explore how the Bajra Sandhi Monument, as a dark tourism destination, contributes to preserving collective memory and fostering historical awareness among visitors.

Through a qualitative approach and comprehensive literature review, this research will analyze the monument’s role in maintaining the collective memory of the Balinese struggle, and its broader impact on cultural identity and history education for both tourists and the local community. It is hoped that this

article will shed light on the potential and challenges of dark tourism as a means of historical preservation in Indonesia—specifically in Bali—and offer valuable insights into how such tourism practices can contribute to the sustainability and diversification of the tourism industry in the region.

2. METHODS

This research will use a qualitative descriptive method that focuses on analyzing primary data obtained from interviews and direct observations in the field and secondary data obtained through various literary sources, such as journal articles, books, reports, and case studies related to dark tourism and historical preservation. This qualitative data will be analyzed to describe the role of the Bajra Sandhi Monument in the context of dark tourism and its impact on collective memory and local tourism. This approach aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how dark tourism destinations can contribute to the preservation of history and culture, as well as the implications for the identity of the Balinese people in the modern tourism era.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

This research will employ a qualitative descriptive method, which focuses on providing a rich, in-depth understanding of the subject matter by analyzing both primary and secondary data. The primary data will be gathered through a series of interviews and direct observations conducted in the field, allowing researchers to gain firsthand insights from individuals with direct experiences and knowledge of the Bajra Sandhi Monument. Interviews will include key stakeholders such as local authorities, historians, tourists, and members of the community, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives is captured. Direct observations will be carried out at the monument itself, allowing for a contextual understanding of how the site functions as a dark tourism destination and how it impacts visitors.

In addition to primary data, secondary data will be obtained through an extensive review of relevant literary sources, including journal articles, books, official reports, and case studies that relate to dark tourism, historical preservation, and cultural identity. By examining these sources, the research will draw upon existing knowledge to contextualize the findings within broader theoretical frameworks and global discussions on dark tourism. This combination of primary and secondary data will enable a more nuanced analysis of the Bajra Sandhi Monument's role in the context of dark tourism and its influence on collective memory, cultural preservation, and local tourism development.

The qualitative data collected from these various sources will be analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (or themes) within the data. This analytical approach will help to elucidate the role of the Bajra Sandhi Monument as a site of dark tourism, highlighting its contributions to preserving the historical narrative and fostering a sense of collective memory among both local residents and visitors. The research will also explore the broader implications of dark tourism on the cultural identity of the Balinese people, especially in the context of modern tourism, which increasingly values meaningful and reflective experiences.

Overall, this research approach aims to provide a comprehensive and holistic understanding of how dark tourism destinations, such as the Bajra Sandhi Monument, contribute to the preservation of history and culture. It will also delve into the ways in which these sites shape and influence the identity of the Balinese community in an evolving tourism landscape that emphasizes experiential learning and cultural engagement. By employing a qualitative descriptive method, this study seeks to offer an insightful exploration into the intersection of tourism, history, and cultural identity, highlighting the potential of dark tourism to serve not only as an attraction but also as an educational and cultural preservation tool.

The findings highlight three main themes: (1) the monument as a center for historical education, featuring exhibits and narratives that preserve Bali's struggles for independence; (2) its role in fostering community engagement, with local residents actively involved as guides and cultural ambassadors; and (3) its contribution to local tourism, attracting domestic and international visitors. Direct quotes from participants underscore the monument's impact, such as one guide stating, 'This place connects visitors to Bali's identity and history.'

Discussion

The Bajra Sandhi Monument in Bali is far more than just a historical landmark; it stands as a profound symbol that seamlessly blends educational values with an engaging tourist experience. As one of the key examples of dark tourism in Indonesia, this monument serves a vital role in preserving the collective memory of the Balinese people regarding their arduous struggle against colonialism. What makes dark tourism unique is its ability to offer more than mere recreation—it provides visitors with an opportunity

for in-depth reflection on the dark, often complex chapters of history. This duality, where education meets emotional engagement, is precisely what makes dark tourism at sites like the Bajra Sandhi Monument so significant.

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the role of the Bajra Sandhi Monument as a dark tourism destination in preserving the collective memory of the Balinese people. The research focuses on primary data collected through interviews and direct field observations, complemented by secondary data from a wide range of relevant literature, including journal articles, books, reports, and case studies pertaining to dark tourism and cultural preservation. This methodology allows for a comprehensive understanding of how dark tourism contributes to the sustainability of historical and cultural values while influencing local identity in the modern tourism landscape.

Interviews were conducted with multiple stakeholders, including monument management, tourists, and members of the local community. The purpose of these interviews was to explore how different groups perceive the role of the Bajra Sandhi Monument in preserving historical memory and raising awareness about the struggles of the Balinese people. The responses were revealing: the majority of those interviewed saw the Bajra Sandhi Monument not merely as a tourist site but as an enduring symbol of the resilience and tenacity of the Balinese people. Many visitors expressed that their visit was motivated by a desire to learn more about local history, specifically the impact of colonialism and the fight for independence. This illustrates that the monument succeeds in creating an environment where historical education and emotional engagement are intertwined.

Field observations further supported these findings, revealing that the dioramas and exhibitions at the monument are carefully curated to evoke emotional responses from visitors. These displays do not simply present historical facts; they are designed to immerse visitors in the experiences of the past, forging a deep emotional connection to the narratives of struggle and resistance. The atmosphere at the monument, particularly during commemorative events, further strengthens this sense of collective memory among the local community. Such events, where residents actively participate in historical remembrance, demonstrate that the Bajra Sandhi Monument functions not just as a recreational site but as an important educational venue for the younger generation, fostering an appreciation for the sacrifices made by their ancestors.

The secondary data obtained from literature sources on dark tourism and historical preservation also highlight the role of the Bajra Sandhi Monument as a focal point for collective reflection. The monument serves as a unifying space, where the solidarity of the Balinese people is strengthened, and visitors are offered a unique emotional experience. Magano et al. (2023) aptly describe dark tourism as a complex space where tourists engage with narratives of suffering and resilience, contributing to a broader understanding of the collective human experience. At the Bajra Sandhi Monument, this engagement is evident as visitors reflect on Bali's historical struggles within a modern context, creating a deeply introspective experience. Zhang (2021) similarly points out that experiences at dark tourism sites often lead to profound introspection, fostering a deeper connection with shared historical narratives and their relevance to contemporary society. This connection is clearly seen at the Bajra Sandhi Monument, where the stories of resilience depicted in the dioramas resonate deeply with visitors, prompting them to consider the broader implications of history.

The management of the Bajra Sandhi Monument faces the challenge of maintaining the site's historical authenticity while simultaneously meeting the demands of modern tourism. This balance is echoed in the research of Jordan and Prayag (2021), who found that residents living near dark tourism sites often grapple with feelings of pride in their history while dealing with the pressures of commercialization. The Bajra Sandhi Monument embodies this challenge, as its management works to preserve the integrity of its historical narrative while ensuring the site remains accessible and engaging for tourists. Martini (2018) emphasizes that dark tourism sites, such as historical battlefields or locations of significant tragedies, play an essential role in fostering a deeper sense of social and national identity among visitors. For tourists, visiting these sites is not just an educational activity but a chance to reflect on history, honor the memories of those who suffered, and develop an appreciation for the importance of peace and social justice. This is particularly relevant in the context of the Bajra Sandhi Monument, which provides a vivid portrayal of Bali's historical struggle, creating an emotionally impactful experience that resonates with visitors.

Light (2017) further highlights the role of dark tourism in building a nation's cultural and national identity. Visiting historical sites associated with tragedy or conflict can help strengthen social cohesion, inspire patriotism, and foster an appreciation for local history. The Bajra Sandhi Monument, much like the Aceh Tsunami Museum, is not just a tourist attraction—it is a place of historical learning and social reflection. Through the exhibitions and dioramas that depict the history of the Balinese people's struggles, the monument helps sustain collective memory, ensuring that future generations remain connected to their historical roots and understand the sacrifices made for their freedom. Stone and Sharpley (2008) also argue that dark tourism offers deep emotional experiences that educate visitors while prompting personal

reflection on social and cultural values. The Bajra Sandhi Monument encapsulates this by using visual and artistic narratives to draw visitors closer to the struggles that have shaped Balinese identity, thus transforming the tourist experience into an opportunity for cultural education and reflection.

Furthermore, Zhang et al. (2018) point out that dark tourism can significantly influence visitors' perceptions and understanding of historical events, particularly in culturally significant locations. The Bajra Sandhi Monument has evolved beyond being a mere tourist attraction; it has become a platform for intercultural dialogue and historical education, helping tourists connect with the deeper context of Balinese culture. This intercultural exchange not only enriches the visitor experience but also enhances the appreciation of Bali's unique cultural heritage.

The Bajra Sandhi Monument exemplifies the dual role of dark tourism in preserving collective memory and driving local tourism. Consistent with Stone's (2018) findings on dark tourism sites, the monument serves as a platform for historical education while also contributing to the local economy. However, comparisons with similar destinations, such as Cambodia's Killing Fields, reveal opportunities to enhance visitor engagement through interactive exhibits and multilingual guides. Addressing these gaps can further solidify its position as a key dark tourism site.

Overall, the Bajra Sandhi Monument plays a multifaceted role in Bali's tourism landscape—it is an educational institution, a place of remembrance, and a symbol of cultural resilience. Its significance as a dark tourism site lies in its ability to preserve the collective memory of the Balinese people, foster historical awareness among younger generations, and provide a space for meaningful reflection for both locals and visitors. As dark tourism continues to gain popularity in the post-pandemic era, destinations like the Bajra Sandhi Monument have the potential to redefine how tourists engage with history, encouraging them to explore the complexities of the past and understand the enduring impact of these historical narratives on contemporary society.

4. CONCLUSION

The Bajra Sandhi Monument plays a pivotal role in strengthening the collective memory of both the Balinese people and visiting tourists by presenting an evocative historical narrative of the local struggles against colonialism. Through vivid visualizations, such as the dioramas depicting the resistance and the hardships faced by the Balinese people, the monument offers an immersive experience that transforms it from a mere tourist attraction into a deeply symbolic space of reverence for the past. It stands as an embodiment of the sacrifices made by the Balinese, serving as a lasting reminder of their resilience and determination. This unique position as a dark tourism destination allows the Bajra Sandhi Monument to connect visitors with the values of struggle, solidarity, and cultural pride, which are intrinsic to Balinese history, thereby reinforcing both local and national identity.

The impact of the Bajra Sandhi Monument on local tourism is also highly positive, as it adds a profound layer of historical and cultural depth to the island of Bali, which is often predominantly celebrated for its natural beauty. By offering visitors an opportunity to delve into the island's rich history, the monument enhances the narrative of Bali as a multifaceted destination—one that offers not only scenic beaches and cultural festivities but also a poignant reflection on its people's enduring spirit. This expanded portrayal contributes to diversifying Bali's tourism appeal, providing meaningful experiences that go beyond the conventional tourism offerings. It fosters a more holistic understanding of the island's identity, where the past is honored alongside the beauty of the present.

Overall, the Bajra Sandhi Monument is much more than a tribute to the historical struggles of the Balinese people; it is a dynamic tool for building emotional and educational connections for all who visit. By creating a reflective space that encourages contemplation and empathy, the monument strengthens collective memory and contributes significantly to cultural preservation. It serves as a testament to the shared history of struggle and perseverance, enriching Bali's cultural narrative within a global context. Through its role as a center for historical remembrance, the monument helps to bridge the gap between generations, ensuring that the stories of the past continue to inspire and educate future generations. This makes the Bajra Sandhi Monument not only a historical site but also a potential center for lifelong learning and appreciation of the values of struggle and resilience.

However, like many historical attractions, the Bajra Sandhi Monument faces challenges that must be addressed to maintain its authenticity and cultural integrity. The risk of over-commercialization looms large, as increasing visitor numbers may lead to a dilution of the monument's historical significance. To mitigate this, it is essential to adopt a sustainable approach to management—one that carefully balances tourism development with the preservation of the monument's core values. Active involvement of local communities in the management and conservation efforts is crucial for maintaining the site's authenticity and ensuring that its cultural narrative remains intact. By engaging local residents,

the monument can foster a sense of ownership and pride, which in turn supports the long-term sustainability of the site.

Furthermore, enriching the historical narrative through the use of digital technologies—such as augmented reality tours, interactive displays, and virtual storytelling—could enhance the visitor experience, making the monument more engaging and accessible, especially to younger audiences. Such innovations would not only help preserve the monument's historical integrity but also make the narratives more vivid and relatable, ensuring that the stories of the Balinese people's struggles remain relevant and meaningful in a rapidly changing world.

This study concludes that the Bajra Sandhi Monument plays a pivotal role in preserving Bali's historical narratives while supporting local tourism. By integrating cultural education and economic development, it demonstrates the potential of dark tourism sites to achieve multiple objectives. Practical recommendations include introducing interactive storytelling techniques and expanding marketing efforts to attract international audiences. Future research could explore visitor perceptions and the long-term impact of these strategies on tourism sustainability.

Future research is also crucial to gain a deeper understanding of how international tourists perceive and appreciate the Bajra Sandhi Monument in the context of global narratives about local struggles. Understanding these perspectives could help in shaping interpretive strategies that resonate with a diverse audience, further elevating the monument's status as an educational and cultural landmark. By doing so, the Bajra Sandhi Monument can continue to serve as a bridge that connects the past with the present, allowing visitors from all over the world to appreciate the profound resilience and cultural richness that define the Balinese identity.

5. ACKNOWLEDGE

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all the interviewees who generously dedicated their time and shared valuable insights, significantly contributing to the success of this research. Your contributions have greatly enriched our understanding of the role of Monumen Bajra Sandhi in the context of dark tourism and the preservation of collective memory. Our thanks are also directed to the management of Monumen Bajra Sandhi for granting access and providing essential support throughout this study, enabling us to conduct direct observations and gather valuable information. Without your contributions, this research would not have been possible.

6. REFERENCES

- Biran, A., Poria, Y., & Oren, G. (2011). Sought experiences at (dark) heritage sites. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(3), 820-841.
- Jordan, E.J., & Prayag, G. (2021). Cognitive appraisals, emotions and coping strategies of residents at local dark tourism sites. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*.
- Kim, S., & Butler, G. (2014). Local community perspectives towards dark tourism development: The case of Snowtown, South Australia. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 13(1), 78-89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2014.918621>
- Light, D. (2017). "Progress in dark tourism and thanatourism research: An uneasy relationship with heritage tourism." *Tourism Management*.
- Martini, A., & Buda, D. M. (2018). Dark tourism and affect: framing places of death and disaster. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 23(6), 679-692. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2018.1518972>
- Radzevičius, M. (2021). "The Post-Pandemic Changes of Dark Tourism Industry". Diakses dari ResearchGate.
- Stone, P., & Sharpley, R. (2008). "Consuming dark tourism: A thanatological perspective." *Annals of Tourism Research*.
- Zhang, Y., et al. (2018). "Cultural influences on dark tourism: A study of Chinese tourists visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial." *Tourism Geographies*.
- Zhang, Y. (2021). Unpacking visitor experiences at dark tourism sites of natural disasters. *Current Issues in Tourism*.