

## **Examining Advocacy Journalism on Overtourism in Bali: Bibliometrics and Content Analysis of Balebengong.id in 2024**

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### **Abstract**

As a popular global tourist destination, Bali faces overtourism, affecting the environment, society, and economy. This study examines how BaleBengong, a citizen journalism-based alternative media, addresses overtourism through advocacy journalism. The research aims to explore BaleBengong's role in raising the issue of overtourism and to analyze the application of advocacy journalism in articles published by BaleBengong in 2024. Using a qualitative method with content analysis and literature review, the findings reveal that Balebengong practices advocacy journalism by reframing overtourism not merely as excessive visitor numbers but as a structural issue rooted in investor-driven development and policy failures. It amplifies marginalised local voices, critiques spatial domination, and proposes culturally grounded alternatives. The role of Balebengong is not only as a critical watchdog but also as an agent of counter-hegemony and policy advocacy, offering valuable insights into the role of citizen journalism in shaping sustainable tourism futures.

*Keywords: Overtourism; Bali; Advocacy Journalism; Alternative Media*

## 1. Introduction

Bali, one of the world's most popular tourist destinations, contributes significantly to Indonesia's economy through its tourism sector. However, the rapid increase in tourist numbers has resulted in overtourism, a phenomenon that exceeds the capacity of the destination and causes environmental damage, social disruption, and a decline in the quality of the tourist experience (Clark and Nyaupane, 2020; Goodwin, 2017; Krisnadi and Maharani, 2021; Santos-Rojo et al., 2023; World Tourism Organization (UNWTO); Centre of Expertise Leisure, 2018). Overtourism not only affects Bali's ecological systems but also disrupts local communities and erodes cultural heritage, which makes addressing this issue crucial for maintaining the island's sustainability in the long term.

Given the profound consequences of overtourism on Bali's environment, infrastructure, social and cultural, finding solutions through policy change and public awareness is essential. Mass media plays a central role in shaping public opinion on social issues, such as overtourism, by framing narratives that influence both public perception and policy. However, mainstream media often overlooks the negative impacts of overtourism and focuses more on its economic benefits, underrepresenting the voices of local communities that bear the brunt of the adverse effects. This gap in media coverage underlines the importance of alternative media platforms like Balebengong.id, which use advocacy journalism to amplify local voices and challenge dominant tourism narratives.

Existing literature on overtourism in Bali has largely focused on its environmental, socio-cultural, and economic impacts. The shift from cultural tourism to mass tourism has been a primary driver of overtourism in Bali. Economic motives have fueled this transition, as mass tourism is perceived as more profitable due to its ability to attract large numbers of tourists in a relatively short period (Hobart, 2011; Krisnadi & Maharani, 2021). Studies by researchers such as Chong (2020), Bagus et al. (2024), and Salam et al. (2024) have explored how this rise in mass tourism has resulted in large-scale land-use conversions, resource depletion, and the erosion of Balinese culture. These changes have left lasting impacts on Bali's traditional practices and ways of life. In addition to environmental degradation, overtourism has given rise to socio-economic disparities. Local communities have struggled to cope with escalating living costs and the unequal distribution of tourism profits, which are often funneled to foreign investors and large corporations, leaving local workers in low-wage, low-skill jobs (Gunadi, 2019; Wiratmini, 2021). Infrastructure has been put under increasing pressure, with waste management and water resources being particularly strained by the demands of the growing

tourism industry (Chong, 2020; Wardana, 2024). Notably, large hotels consume around 65% of Bali's total water supply, exacerbating the water crisis and leaving local communities to compete for increasingly scarce resources (Bagus et al., 2024; Chong, 2020).

This economic shift has also led to significant social disparities. Property prices and land values in popular tourist areas such as Seminyak, Canggu, and Ubud have soared, making it increasingly difficult for locals to afford housing (Gunadi, 2019). Furthermore, the once community-centric philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana*, which emphasizes harmony between people, nature, and the divine, is being overshadowed by individualism, materialism, and consumerism (Wardana, 2024). While much of the literature has focused on these environmental and socio-economic consequences, some studies have also addressed the more specific impacts of overtourism on particular groups. For example, Krisnadi and Maharani (2021) examined the particular challenges faced by Balinese women, while Akbar et al. (2024) explored the broader responses of the Balinese community to overtourism. Meanwhile, Oka and Subadra (2024) proposed strategies for achieving sustainable tourism in the face of the pressures caused by overtourism.

While these studies focus on the environmental and social implications of overtourism, there is limited exploration of the role of media, particularly alternative media, in shaping the discourse around overtourism. Media not only serve as a conveyor of information but also as an agent of change that influences public opinion and sets social agendas and policies through the processes of priming and framing in its reporting (Entman, 2007; Pasquinelli and Trunfio, 2020; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007; Schweinsberg et al., 2017). Media can influence how the public understands an issue, shaping their attitudes and emotional responses to the phenomenon (McQuail and Deuze, 2020). Yet mainstream media often fails to address the socio-ecological impacts of overtourism, focusing primarily on its economic advantages (Pasquinelli & Trunfio, 2020). In contrast, alternative media platforms like *Balebengong.id* are increasingly recognized for their role in challenging mainstream narratives by offering space for marginalized voices and advocating for alternative solutions (Atton, 2009). In this context, advocacy journalism emerges as a powerful tool beyond mere reporting, actively advocating for policy changes and social transformation. This form of journalism empowers marginalized communities by advocating for social transformation through critical discourse (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2008).

Although there is a growing body of research on overtourism, few studies have critically examined the role of alternative media in challenging

the dominant narratives surrounding tourism. While much of the existing literature focuses on the environmental and social impacts of overtourism, there is a notable gap in understanding how local media can counter these narratives and empower the communities most affected by tourism pressures. Additionally, previous research has largely overlooked the potential of alternative media to not only raise awareness but also propose practical solutions and amplify the voices of local communities in the context of overtourism in Bali.

This gap is particularly evident in the Balinese context, where the role of alternative media in reshaping public discourse and influencing policy remains underexplored. Most studies have focused on the detrimental effects of overtourism but have failed to consider the media's capacity to act as an agent of change. The novelty of this study lies in its examination of the intersection between alternative media and overtourism in Bali, providing both academic insights and practical implications for media professionals, policymakers, and local communities. The need for further research is clear, especially on how platforms like Balebengong.id can contribute to sustainable tourism solutions, advocate for marginalized communities, and reshape the dominant narrative on tourism in Bali. This study aims to explore the role of Balebengong.id in addressing overtourism in Bali through advocacy journalism. The research will examine how Balebengong.id empowers local communities and provides an alternative narrative to mainstream media on tourism issues.

## **2. Method**

This study is a qualitative research approach grounded in the constructivist paradigm. Constructivism suggests that reality is subjective and dependent on how individuals or groups understand and interpret it (Denzin and Lincoln, 2024). In the context of overtourism in Bali, media narratives are not objective representations of reality but are constructed through framing, word choices, and the portrayal of specific groups and issues. This paradigm is particularly suited for understanding how alternative media, such as Balebengong.id, influences public perceptions of overtourism and critiques inadequate government policies. It provides an opportunity to examine how media constructions, especially in the form of advocacy journalism, can raise awareness and empower marginalized communities affected by tourism pressures.

The research focuses on Balebengong.id, an alternative media platform based in Bali, as the primary subject of the study. Bali, known for its rich cultural heritage and as a global tourist hub, has experienced rapid tourism growth, resulting in overtourism, which exacerbates environmental and

social challenges. The year 2024 is particularly significant as it marks Bali's tourism recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, during which a surge in tourist arrivals put increased pressure on local infrastructure, resources, and communities. The recovery period provided an opportunity to examine how the tourism industry and local communities respond to the renewed pressures of overtourism. Furthermore, 2024 is a crucial year in the local political context, as the upcoming regional elections (Pemilukada) in November 2024 may influence government policies and public discourse on tourism. This period offers a unique opportunity to explore how alternative media like Balebengong.id respond to and frame overtourism in this dynamic context.

The research examines articles published on Balebengong.id's with a particular focus on those from 2024 that discuss overtourism in Bali. Purposive sampling was used to select articles that directly align with the research's focus ensuring relevance and depth in the analysis. A keyword search for "*Bali Overtourism*" was conducted on the Balebengong.id website, which initially yielded ten articles. However, after further filtering, only five articles published in 2024, and were selected for analysis. This small sample size reflects the study's emphasis on highly relevant and recent content regarding overtourism, particularly during Bali's post-pandemic recovery period. Although the small sample size represents a limitation, it allows for a more in-depth exploration of the narratives surrounding overtourism during the post-pandemic recovery period, rather than attempting to generalize findings from a larger set of articles that may not be as directly related to the specific context. The selected articles provide a more specific and focused insight into how alternative media, such as BaleBengong, address overtourism within this dynamic context.

Data collection was conducted using documentation techniques and literature study. The documentation technique was used to collect articles published on Balebengong.id, focusing on the topic of overtourism in Bali. The main data source consists of 5 articles, specifically selected using purposive sampling in the search term "*Bali Overtourism*." The articles were filtered based on their publication date (2024). The primary instrument used in this research was content analysis, which allows for a systematic examination of the articles' content, identifying recurring themes, narratives, and policy critiques. The content was analyzed to determine how overtourism is framed in the media, how local voices are represented, and how solutions are proposed. Additionally, secondary data were gathered through a literature study to identify and analyze relevant academic works, providing additional support for the analysis and offering a broader context for the issue being studied. These secondary data were

collected using the Publish or Perish (PoP) software, which retrieves bibliometric data from Google Scholar. The search used the primary keywords “*Overtourism*” and “*Bali*”, limiting the publication years from 2015 to 2025 to capture the development of research on Bali as a destination affected by overtourism. This search identified 216 articles, which were then analyzed further. The bibliographic data were processed using VOSviewer, a software tool for visualizing scientific landscapes. VOSviewer was chosen over alternatives due to its enhanced usability, ability to create visual cluster maps, and compatibility with Google Scholar datasets (Syamsuadi, 2025). This was done to map the study’s position within the broader academic discourse on overtourism and its connection to media studies.

Data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis and bibliometrics co-occurrence analysis. Qualitative content analysis aimed to describe and interpret the media content by identifying key themes, patterns, and narratives in the media, while the co-occurrence analysis mapped how frequently specific keywords appeared together in the articles, providing insights into key themes and trends in overtourism research (Hafiar et al., 2022). Following the Miles and Huberman (2009) model, the analysis was conducted in three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During data reduction, key terms were identified and categorized, capturing not only the impacts of overtourism in Bali but also proposed solutions and critiques of government policies. This ensured all relevant aspects of the issue were considered. In the data display stage, the reduced data were organized into tables and matrices, visually mapping patterns and illustrating how Balebengong.id addressed overtourism. Finally, conclusion drawing/verification involved interpreting the results to determine if Balebengong.id functions as an advocacy platform, highlighting issues, proposing solutions, critiquing policies, and reflecting the perspectives of local communities. The conclusions drawn from both the qualitative content analysis and bibliometric analysis were then verified through comparison with existing research, ensuring the findings were robust and aligned with the broader academic conversation.

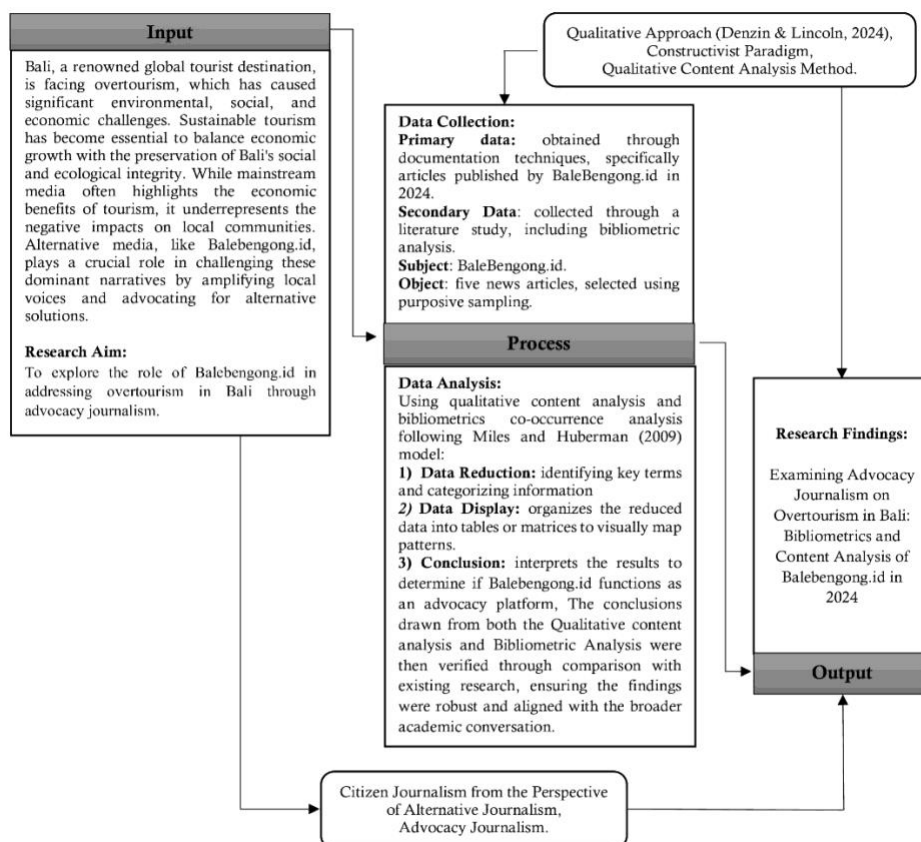
This bibliometric analysis complements the content analysis by placing the study’s findings in the context of broader academic discussions. While content analysis focuses on the specific media narratives around overtourism in Bali, the bibliometric analysis situates these findings within the global academic landscape. They strengthen the study by linking local media insights with international research trends, highlighting its original

contribution to ongoing scholarly debates on overtourism, media, and policy.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, several strategies were employed throughout the research process. Credibility was established through triangulation, where both qualitative content analysis and bibliometric analysis were used to cross-verify the findings. This multi-method approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of how overtourism is portrayed in Balebengong.id and its alignment with the broader academic discourse on the topic. In terms of transferability, detailed descriptions of the articles selected and the process of their inclusion were provided, allowing for the possibility that the findings could be applied to other contexts or studies on overtourism. Lastly, confirmability was achieved through reflexivity, where the researcher critically reflected on their own position and potential biases during the data analysis phase, ensuring that the interpretation of the data remained as objective as possible.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the study. Given that the research utilized publicly available articles from Balebengong.id, formal informed consent was not required from individual participants. As the study involved no direct interaction with people, issues of privacy and confidentiality were not a concern. The articles analyzed were all publicly accessible and did not contain any personal or sensitive data. All research data were handled in strict accordance with established academic standards, ensuring both transparency and ethical integrity throughout the study.

A flowchart (Figure 1) visually summarizes the methodological steps this study undertook to provide additional clarity and support for the research process. The flowchart outlines the sequential flow from formulating research questions and data collection to the data analysis and interpretation stages.



**Figure 1.** Flowchart of Research Design

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Bibliometric Exploration of Overtourism in Bali

To gain a preliminary insight into the position of this study within the broader academic context, a bibliometric analysis was conducted on 216 peer-reviewed articles associated with the keywords “Overtourism” and “Bali”. The resulting visual representations unveiled six distinct thematic clusters, each reflecting key trends and areas of scholarly focus within the field. This initial exploration provides valuable insights into the major research themes, ongoing discussions, and dominant academic interests surrounding the topics of overtourism and its impact on Bali. Importantly, this mapping also helps identify areas that remain underexplored, particularly the role of media in shaping perceptions and discourse around overtourism.

The first cluster (red) examines the challenges in tourism development and the local community's critical role in shaping this growth. Key terms like “challenge,” “community,” and “development” indicate a focus on the



complexities surrounding tourism's expansion, particularly in how it interacts with the local communities (Ayaviri-nina et al., 2023; Dolezal & Trupp, 2015; Fadila, 2023; Haryanto & Soukotta, 2024; Pramudya et al., 2025; Ting et al., 2022; Wiranta, 2023; Wulandari, 2024). The inclusion of *"importance"* and *"resident"* underscores the essential involvement of residents in tourism planning and management (Dewi et al., 2024; Sharia & Sitchinava, 2023). However, despite the centrality of community engagement, the cluster does not explicitly address how media discourse influences local communities' understanding or participation in tourism planning. Considering media's function as an agenda-setter, this gap signals a missed opportunity to explore how regional and national media could empower communities by highlighting sustainable practices and community-led tourism initiatives.

Cluster 2 (green) focuses on the factors affecting mass tourism and its impact on natural resources and society. Keywords such as *"impact," "mass tourism,"* and *"nature"* underscore environmental pressures (Fang et al., 2024; Fretes et al., 2023; Ilyas et al., 2023; Kamal & Hidayah, 2024; Mandić & McCool, 2023; Padma & Ramakrishna, 2022; Rahmiati et al., 2021; Sacramento, 2023; Salam et al., 2024; Sentanu et al., 2024). While terms like *"role"* and *"hospitality"* suggest that the hospitality industry and its stakeholders play a significant part in managing the adverse effects of tourism, particularly in maintaining a balance between tourism growth and environmental preservation (Fatina et al., 2023; Sidiq & Sahman, 2025; Yang, 2024). Yet, the role of media as a communicator of sustainability challenges and as a platform for dialogue among hospitality actors and tourists is noticeably absent. Integrating media analysis here could illuminate how narratives about mass tourism's environmental toll might affect tourist behavior or industry policies.

In cluster 3 (purple), the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry and the sector's sustainability during the recovery process are explored, using keywords such as *"COVID," "pandemic,"* and *"effect."* (Anguera-Torrell et al., 2021; Cahyadi & Newsome, 2021; I. G. A. M. Dewi, 2021; Ibrahim et al., 2024; Liestiane et al., 2024; Lim, 2021; Mustari & Sari, 2022; Susilo & Chen, 2023; Yudha et al., 2022). The inclusion of *"case study"* suggests that the research in this cluster focuses on specific locations and their unique experiences during the pandemic, helping to understand how different destinations navigated the crisis (Putra et al., 2021; Rumani et al., 2024). The presence of *"sustainability"* points to ongoing efforts to build a more resilient and sustainable tourism industry post-pandemic (Foroozanfar et al., 2024; Januar, 2024; Noor et al., 2024; Sana, 2025; Yeap & Liow, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025). There is no emphasis

on how media shaped public perceptions of Bali as a safe or risky destination during and after the pandemic. Given that media coverage heavily influenced travel intentions and destination image during COVID-19, future studies could explore media framing as a driver of post-pandemic recovery and sustainability narratives.

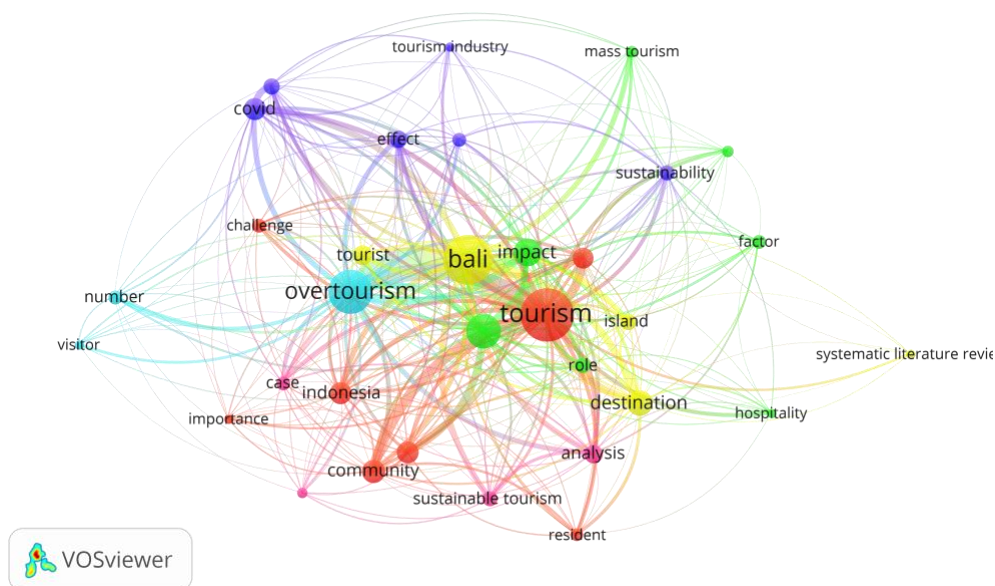
Cluster 4 (yellow) is dedicated to systematic literature reviews concerning tourism in Bali as a leading tourist destination. The keywords “*Bali*,” “*destination*,” and “*island*” emphasize the focus on Bali as a globally recognized hotspot for tourism (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022; Prabawa et al., 2025; Saraswati, 2024; Srianan et al., 2025; Sukmawati et al., 2022; Sunarta et al., 2022; Sunaryo & Ardhana, 2025; Wibowo, 2024). The use of “*systematic literature review*” suggests that this cluster brings together and analyzes previous research to gain a comprehensive understanding of tourism development in Bali (Alsharif et al., 2024; Barbosa et al., 2024; Hiererra et al., 2023; Pourjahan et al., 2025; Septiawan et al., 2023; Subramaniam et al., 2024).

In cluster 5 (pink), the focus is on the negative impacts of overtourism and how sustainable tourism practices can help mitigate these effects. Keywords like “*analysis*,” “*case*,” “*negative impact*,” and “*sustainable tourism*” focus on the negative impacts of overtourism and potential mitigation via sustainable tourism (Akhirson et al., 2025; Anwar et al., 2024; Asmoro & Cahyadi, 2022; Astuti et al., 2023; Day et al., 2021; K. Fuchs, 2023; Giampiccoli et al., 2023; Nuraini et al., 2025; Oka & Subadra, 2024; Puspitarini et al., 2024; Sampaio et al., 2023; Setiawati & Dwipayanti, 2025; Supartini et al., 2024; Surya et al., 2024; Yanti, 2024). Despite this critical approach, discussions on the media’s potential to promote sustainable alternatives or discourage harmful tourist behaviors remain limited. For instance, media campaigns could highlight lesser-known attractions to redistribute tourist flows, but this strategy is not evident in current literature.

Finally, cluster 6 (light blue) addresses the issue of visitor numbers and the management of overtourism. Keywords such as “*number*,” “*overtourism*,” and “*visitor*” indicate that the cluster focuses on understanding the relationship between the sheer number of visitors and the phenomenon of overtourism (Aulia & Listyorini, 2025; Islam, 2025; Mahendra & Wiradika, 2024; Miocevic, 2025; Ningsih & Sari, 2024; Nurrahma et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2024). There is little exploration of media’s role in shaping demand: media could influence tourist decision-making by framing visitor caps, conservation fees, or seasonal limitations in a positive light. This omission suggests a significant gap in

understanding how strategic communication can manage tourist volume and distribution.

Across these clusters, the keyword “overtourism” is connected to terms like “impact,” “Bali,” “mass tourism,” and “destination,” but conspicuously lacks direct association with “media,” “communication,” or “framing.” This absence reflects a broader research gap: while overtourism is examined as a phenomenon with social, cultural, and environmental dimensions, the media’s power to frame these issues and influence local and global audiences remains underexplored.



**Figure 2.** Co-Occurrence from Scholar Google Database

The analysis thus reveals two significant gaps: first, the underrepresentation of media’s role in shaping perceptions, behaviors, and policies related to overtourism; and second, the limited attention to cultural impacts and tourism diversification. Media could catalyze sustainable tourism by reframing overtourism narratives, advocating alternative destinations, and amplifying local voices. Simultaneously, greater focus on cultural sustainability and diversified tourism offerings could help mitigate overtourism’s pressures on Bali’s iconic sites. Together, these underexplored dimensions highlight the potential for future research.

### 3.2 Thematic Analysis of Balebengong.id Articles

This study analyzes five articles published by BaleBengong.id in 2024 as its research objects to explore how the issue of overtourism is

represented in alternative media. The following section presents the findings related to these research objects.

**Table 1.** Research Object

Section	Title	Author	Date of Publication	Link/URL
Latest News, Opinion, Public Service	Overtourism Issues and the Impact of VAT Increase on Bali's Tourism in 2025	Renaldi Bayu	21 December 2024	<a href="https://balebengong.id/isu-overtourism-dan-dampak-kenaikan-ppn-pada-pariwisata-bali-2025/">https://balebengong.id/isu-overtourism-dan-dampak-kenaikan-ppn-pada-pariwisata-bali-2025/</a>
Latest News, Politics	Southern Bali Overtourism Will Spread Through New Road Development	I Gusti Ayu Septiari	17 December 2024	<a href="https://balebengong.id/overtourism-bali-selatan-akan-merata-lewat-pembangunan-jalan-baru/">https://balebengong.id/overtourism-bali-selatan-akan-merata-lewat-pembangunan-jalan-baru/</a>
Latest News, Environment	Overdevelopment and Spatial Hegemony in Bali	I Gusti Ayu Septiari	03 December 2024	<a href="https://balebengong.id/over-development-dan-hegemoni-ruang-di-bali/">https://balebengong.id/over-development-dan-hegemoni-ruang-di-bali/</a>
Latest News, Opinion	Where Is Bali Tourism Heading? Ask the Swaying Grass	I Dewa Ayu Anandhi ta Putri	28 September 2024	<a href="https://balebengong.id/pariwisata-bali-mau-kemana-tanyakan-pada-rumput-yang-bergoyang/">https://balebengong.id/pariwisata-bali-mau-kemana-tanyakan-pada-rumput-yang-bergoyang/</a>
Latest News, Opinion	Overtourism or Sustainable Tourism?	I Wayan Renaldi Bayu Permana	23 September 2024	<a href="https://balebengong.id/over-tourism">https://balebengong.id/over-tourism</a>

The content analysis of five articles published by *BaleBengong.id* in 2024 reveals four major, interconnected themes that frame overtourism in Bali not merely as a tourism issue, but as a product of deeper structural, environmental, and governance dynamics. By quantifying the frequency of

these themes across the articles, the analysis demonstrates how local media constructs critical narratives and highlights underrepresented perspectives in the debate on Bali's tourism.

### *3.2.1 Critique of Overdevelopment and Spatial Domination.*

One theme that emerges consistently across all five articles (100%) is the critique of overdevelopment and spatial domination, which frames overtourism in Bali not merely as an issue of excessive visitor numbers but as the product of an aggressive, investor-driven development paradigm. Articles such as *"Overdevelopment and Spatial Hegemony in Bali"* and *"Southern Bali Overtourism Will Spread Through New Road Development"* argue that power over land and urban planning has become concentrated in the hands of external investors and speculative real estate interests, facilitated by weak local governance. This process commodifies agricultural fields, cultural sites, and communal spaces, transforming them into villas, luxury hotels, and commercial infrastructure while systematically marginalising residents and eroding traditional community control. I Gusti Ayu Septiari, author of *"Overdevelopment and Spatial Hegemony in Bali,"* emphasised: *"Spatial hegemony means domination over space in Bali by a particular party due to the high return on investment."* This concept of *"spatial hegemony"* highlights that overtourism should not be reduced to counting tourists alone, but understood as part of a broader political-economic system that privileges outside capital over local well-being. Ultimately, unchecked development deepens social inequality, sacrifices spaces that should sustain Balinese livelihoods, and transforms the island's landscape into a commodity serving external interests rather than the community itself.

### *3.2.2 The Environmental Crisis and Land Conversion*

The second dominant theme identified in four articles (80%) is the environmental crisis and large-scale land conversion driven by unregulated tourism growth. Articles like *"Overtourism Issues and the Impact of VAT Increase on Bali's Tourism in 2025"* and *"Where Is Bali Tourism Heading? Ask the Swaying Grass"* vividly describe concrete ecological impacts: daily unmanaged plastic waste exceeding 1,200 tons, worsening traffic congestion in areas like Kuta, Sanur, and Canggu, and the systematic loss of rice fields and green belts transformed into luxury villas and tourism estates. Strong, emotive language such as *"plastic apocalypse"* and *"the tide of tourism development is eroding the green lands that were once a source of life"* underscores the urgency and perceived irreversibility of this environmental degradation. Beyond highlighting physical damage, the articles frame these trends as betraying earlier sustainability commitments like the SCETO Plan and as evidence of policy failures prioritizing short-term economic

gain over long-term ecological resilience. Crucially, the environmental crisis is not presented merely as an issue of tourist comfort, but as a deeper structural problem that exacerbates social tensions, marginalises local communities, and threatens Bali's cultural and ecological identity.

### 3.2.3 Policy Critique

The analysis shows that policy critique and governance failures emerge as a dominant theme across all five articles (100%). This highlights that overtourism in Bali is deeply rooted in development choices and weak regulatory frameworks rather than tourist numbers alone. Articles such as *"Southern Bali Overtourism Will Spread Through New Road Development"* and *"Overdevelopment and Spatial Hegemony in Bali"* argue that large-scale infrastructure projects promoted under the narrative of decentralization, like new roads linking Bali's north, west, and east, risk spreading overtourism island-wide instead of addressing its structural causes. As Mang De from Warmadewa University warns:

*"What will happen is that all regions will become crowded. The south will remain as it is, but the west will be crowded, the north crowded, and the east crowded."*

This statement exposes how, without strict spatial planning or tourist number controls, decentralisation becomes an illusion that merely redistributes congestion rather than resolving it.

Similarly, in *"Overtourism Issues and the Impact of VAT Increase on Bali's Tourism in 2025,"* the planned VAT increase is criticised as harming local purchasing power while leaving structural inequalities unaddressed. Further, *"Where is Bali's Tourism Heading? Ask the Swaying Grass"* describes how deregulation and permissive policies have enabled the large-scale transformation of agricultural land into tourism estates, framed as a *"modern robbery"* of public and ecological spaces. The author condemns local governments for *"selling off"* Bali's land to outside investors, betraying sustainability commitments like the SCETO Plan. Across these articles, BaleBengong consistently positions overtourism as a policy-driven phenomenon that prioritises investor interests over environmental preservation and the well-being of local communities, challenging readers to question whose interests current tourism strategies truly serve.

### 3.2.4 Community-Based Perspectives and Sustainable Alternatives.

Despite their critical stance, three articles (60%) also present concrete, community-driven alternatives to overtourism, emphasising the potential of locally rooted, sustainable tourism models. For instance, *"Where is Bali's Tourism Heading? Ask the Swaying Grass"* and *"Over Tourism or Sustainable Tourism?"* highlight *Desa Kiadan*, where ecotourism is practised through controlled

*visitor numbers, green space conservation, and direct community involvement*, demonstrating how tourism can benefit locals without degrading the environment. Across these articles, authors advocate practical measures such as tourist quotas in sensitive areas, adopting high-value, low-impact tourism models similar to Bhutan's approach, and grounding development policies in local philosophical frameworks like *Tri Hita Karana*, which promotes harmony among people, nature, and spiritual values.

They also stress that empowering Balinese communities to participate actively in tourism planning and restricting the conversion of agricultural and green spaces into tourism estates are vital to protect cultural identity and ecological balance. Additionally, the articles call for government action: postponing tax increases like VAT hikes until the economy stabilises, ensuring thorough spatial planning, integrating infrastructure with efficient public transport, and mandating environmental impact assessments (AMDAL) to safeguard ecosystems. Collectively, these perspectives show that BaleBengong's coverage goes beyond critique, envisioning sustainable tourism grounded in local knowledge, equity, and long-term environmental stewardship.

#### **4. Discussion**

This study combines bibliometric and content analysis to explore how overtourism is framed and examine the media's underexplored role. Bibliometric analysis of 216 articles revealed six thematic clusters ranging from community-based tourism to negative impacts of overtourism. However, it was striking that, despite the acknowledged agenda-setting power of media, terms such as "media," "communication," and "framing" were not central to these clusters. This gap highlights the underrepresentation of the media's role in shaping perceptions of overtourism, a crucial area that this study aims to address.

The content analysis of five articles from Balebengong.id helps ground these clusters in the lived realities of Bali, offering a deeper understanding of how alternative media frames overtourism. For example, while the bibliometric cluster focused on community involvement, Balebengong takes this further by framing it within the context of Desa Kiadan, where limits on tourist numbers are employed to protect both ecological and cultural integrity. This aligns with findings from Pramudya et al., (2025) who emphasize the importance of local community participation in tourism planning. Balebengong emphasizes that "*Kiadan Village is actually anti-tourism development by big investors*" reinforcing the need for community-driven approaches to sustainable tourism.

Similarly, bibliometric studies on negative impacts of overtourism such as those by Bagus et al. (2024), Bahadur (2023), Koens et al. (2018), Supartini et al. (2024) identify environmental and socio-cultural degradation, which directly aligns with Balebengong's use of strong language like "*plastic apocalypse*" to describe the unmanaged waste crisis in Bali. However, Balebengong goes further by linking these impacts to power structures, arguing in the article "*Overdevelopment and Spatial Hegemony in Bali*" that: "*Spatial hegemony means domination over space in Bali by a particular party due to the high return on investment.*" This deeper structural critique which frames overtourism as the result of investor-driven land commodification, is largely missing from the bibliometric analysis, which tends to focus on management and mitigation strategies (Asmoro & Cahyadi, 2022). This gap highlights the need for further research into the political economy behind overtourism, specifically how spatial injustice and extractive investment patterns contribute to the problem.

Moreover, the bibliometric literature on mass tourism's environmental pressures often isolates ecological issues, Balebengong connects these ecological crises to cultural erosion. In the article "*Where is Bali's Tourism Heading? Ask the Swaying Grass*," the author laments, "*The tide of tourism development is eroding the green lands that were once a source of life.*" This commentary not only highlights ecological degradation but also frames it as a cultural crisis that threatens Bali's *subak* systems, agrarian rituals, and the spatial balance embedded in the Tri Hita Karana philosophy. Unlike many academic discourses that compartmentalize ecology and culture, Balebengong presents them as inseparable, reinforcing the urgency for a more holistic approach to environmental governance that respects both the natural and cultural landscapes of Bali.

In third bibliometric cluster, which discuss policy harmonisation for sustainability, there is little focus on the role of the media in advocating for these policies. Balebengong, however, fills this gap by proposing concrete alternatives, such as implementing tourist quotas, delaying VAT increases, and utilizing Tri Hita Karana as a guiding principle for policy development. This active role of media in proposing alternatives shows the potential of local media to influence both public policy and tourism practices. This approach exemplifies advocacy journalism as it integrates empirical evidence with culturally grounded solutions, bridging local experiences with broader policy debates. Waisbord (2009) emphasizes that advocacy journalism aims not only to inform but also to influence policy and empower marginalized voices. Balebengong's proactive stance aligns with this notion by advocating for change that is deeply rooted in local knowledge and community-driven solutions.



When integrating the findings from both the bibliometric and content analyses, it is clear that while both approaches prioritize environmental and community concerns, Balebengong reframes overtourism as a political-economic injustice rather than merely a technical issue of tourism numbers. This framing underscores aspects of cultural identity that are often overlooked in global scholarship. The absence of terms like “*media*” in the bibliometric analysis contrasts with the active role that Balebengong.id plays as an advocacy platform, revealing the untapped potential of local journalism to influence both public discourse and policy.

Although the content analysis of the five Balebengong articles reveals a coherent critique of overdevelopment, environmental degradation, and policy failures, it also reveals an internal contradiction in the proposed solutions to tourism inequality. For instance, In the “*Overtourism or Sustainable Tourism?*” proposes spatial redistribution as a solution, encouraging tourism development in the underdeveloped regions of Bali, such as the North, East, and West, to reduce the pressure on the South. However, the article “*Overdevelopment and Spatial Hegemony in Bali*” challenges this assumption, arguing that such redistribution may only reinforce the capital-driven logic of tourism expansion. The article highlights that “*spatial hegemony*” is not just about where development occurs but about who controls it, suggesting that unless the power structures driving overdevelopment are dismantled, decentralization simply redistributes the problem rather than solving it.

This concern is echoed in the article “*Southern Bali Overtourism Will Spread Through New Road Development*”, where a local figure, Mang De, warns: “*the south will remain as it is, but the west will be crowded, the north crowded, and the east crowded.*” The article implies that new infrastructure projects, framed as tools for equitable growth, may result in the equal distribution of overtourism, not opportunity. Rather than leading to sustainable development, such policies risk reproducing unsustainable patterns under the guise of balance.

These contradictions should not be seen as inconsistencies in Balebngong’s position, but rather as a critical reflection of the complex, multi-scalar tensions embedded within tourism governance. Waisbord (2009) describes the tensions of advocacy journalism, where there is a delicate balance between raising awareness, proposing reforms, and avoiding oversimplified solutions. Balebengong does not present a monolithic stance, but instead curates divergent community voices and critiques, capturing the real-world complexity that cannot be resolved through singular policy fixes. As seen in academic discussions, pursuing spatial justice in tourism often runs up against environmental limits and

entrenched economic interests (Anwar et al., 2024; Ayaviri-nina et al., 2023). By publishing these diverse perspectives, Balebengong plays a crucial role in advocacy journalism, not only by proposing solutions but also by encouraging public debate, challenging state-led development narratives, and questioning whether redistribution without structural reform can truly achieve justice. This approach emphasizes the importance of uncovering underlying structural forces and reshaping public understanding, rather than simply offering “answers.”

In this way, Balebengong exemplifies social justice journalism, as defined by Waisbord (2009). It does not merely inform, it seeks to transform. By consistently highlighting overlooked dimensions of Bali’s tourism development, such as land commodification, the erosion of community control, and the hollowing out of local governance, it exposes structural issues often sidelined by mainstream media in favor of growth-centric narratives. It connects local grievances with broader political-economic critiques, illustrating that overtourism is not just about tourist numbers but about concentrated capital interests and deregulated planning systems. Many articles of Balebngong are written by local contributors: academics, environmentalists, youth, and villagers. This grassroots involvement democratizes knowledge production, echoing Waisbord (2009) assertion that advocacy journalism empowers the public not just by speaking on their behalf, but by equipping them to speak for themselves.

BaleBengong embodies advocacy journalism’s participatory ethos by enabling citizen journalism and community authorship. Many articles are written by local contributors: academics, environmentalists, youth, and villagers, who use the platform to narrate experiences often excluded from policy conversations. This grassroots involvement democratizes knowledge production, echoing Waisbord (2009) assertion that advocacy journalism empowers the public not just by speaking on their behalf, but by equipping them to speak for themselves.

However, this study recognises several limitations. First, the content analysis covers only five purposively sampled articles published in 2024, which may not capture the full diversity of Balebengong’s coverage or the evolution of its editorial stance over time. Second, the purposive sampling method introduces potential bias by selecting articles that most explicitly discuss overtourism, possibly excluding less critical or more neutral pieces. Third, as a local advocacy media, Balebengong may have editorial biases that foreground critical and counter-hegemonic narratives, potentially underrepresenting other perspectives, such as those of tourism operators or policymakers.

Nevertheless, by integrating advocacy journalism theory, it is evident that Balebengong's strength lies in its dual role: as a critical watchdog that exposes policy contradictions and as a visionary platform proposing culturally grounded and community-centered alternatives. This duality demonstrates the potential of local media not only to narrate problems but to shape discourse and advocate for sustainable, locally resonant solutions.

## 5. Conclusion

This study integrated bibliometric mapping and content analysis to examine how overtourism in Bali is framed and contested by Balebengong.id, a local advocacy media platform. The findings reveal that Balebengong.id reframes overtourism not merely as an excess of tourists but as a structural problem rooted in investor-driven overdevelopment, environmental degradation, and governance failures. By amplifying local voices and proposing culturally grounded solutions such as the adoption of *Tri Hita Karana*, tourist quotas, and community-led ecotourism models, Balebengong illustrates the power of citizen journalism to challenge dominant narratives and propose alternative, community-centered visions of sustainable tourism.

A key observation from this study is the internal tension within the media discourse. While decentralizing tourism is suggested as a solution to relieve congestion in southern Bali, this idea is also critiqued for potentially spreading overtourism across the island. These contradictions, however, should not be seen as weaknesses, but rather as a reflection of the complex trade-offs inherent in policymaking. They underscore the need for holistic strategies that balance economic distribution with environmental preservation and cultural sustainability.

This research contributes to media theory by demonstrating how local, citizen-led platforms can act as agents of counter-hegemony. Balebengong moves beyond mere reporting by diagnosing deep-rooted issues, proposing locally contextualized solutions, and challenging dominant development paradigms. It aligning with Fisher's (2016) concept of advocacy journalism, showing how media can function not only as a voice of critique but as a catalyst for social change. Through this, Balebengong exemplifies a model of media practice that bridges journalistic narratives with policy agendas and public consciousness.

The implications of this research offer several actionable insights for various stakeholders. Policymakers are encouraged to integrate tourist quotas with community-led spatial planning as a means to protect Bali's cultural landscapes and manage visitor flows sustainably. For media practitioners, Balebengong's approach serves as an example of how media

can amplify marginalized voices, framing tourism not just as an economic force, but as a complex socio-cultural and ecological system. For scholars, this study opens pathways for further exploration of how advocacy journalism can shape policy discourse and influence public perceptions in over-touristed regions.

While the study is limited by its reliance on a small, purposively sampled corpus of five articles, it nonetheless offers a compelling foundation for future research. Further studies could investigate the measurable impact of Balebengong's journalism on policy outcomes or shifts in public perception, thereby enhancing our understanding of the role of media in tourism governance. Additionally, research could expand the sample size to include more articles, offering a broader scope of how alternative media contributes to the discourse on overtourism.

This research demonstrates that local, advocacy-oriented journalism functions not only as a watchdog but also as a catalyst for transformative change, offering grounded, community-based solutions for more equitable and sustainable futures in tourism. Balebengong's unique role in advocating for sustainable tourism policies and empowering local communities highlights the untapped potential of local media to shape the future of tourism governance.

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