

Staging Bali: The Transformation of Cultural Performance Through Disneyfication and Spectacle

Ni Made Prasiwi Bestari^{1)*}, Melati Budi Srikandi²⁾, Budi Shantika³⁾

¹⁾ Art Tourism Destination Study Program, Faculty of Tourism, Universitas Pendidikan Nasional, Indonesia.

²⁾ Communication Studies Program, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universitas Pendidikan Nasional, Indonesia.

³⁾ MICE Study Program, Faculty of Tourism, Universitas Pendidikan Nasional, Indonesia.

*Corresponding Author

Email : prasiwibestari@undiknas.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the transformation of Balinese and Indonesian cultural performances through the processes of Disneyfication and spectacle, focusing on three popular case studies: the Kecak dance at Uluwatu Temple, the Devdan Show in Nusa Dua, and the Varuna Show at Bali Safari. Through comparative analysis and the integration of audience reviews, this research examines how traditional rituals are increasingly repackaged as theatrical entertainment designed to appeal to global tourists. The findings reveal a progressive shift from sacred, community-centered expressions to visually driven, commercially oriented performances. While these adaptations enhance the accessibility and visibility of Indonesian culture, they also raise critical questions about authenticity, commodification, and the loss of spiritual depth. The study argues that cultural performances are not only shaped by tradition but are continually reimagined through the dynamics of tourism, technology, and global consumer expectations. This evolution invites reflection on the broader implications of cultural tourism in shaping how heritage is presented, perceived, and preserved in contemporary society.

KEYWORDS

Cultural Tourism
Disneyfication
Cultural
Commodification
Performing Arts

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INTRODUCTION

Bali has long held a prominent position on the global tourism map, not only for its picturesque landscapes but also for its vibrant cultural heritage. Central to the island's allure are its traditional performances, ritual dances, epic stories, and community-based arts that provide visitors with a glimpse into its spiritual and cultural life. Bali has long been celebrated for its cultural heritage with its traditional performances. Picard offers a balanced view on the impact of tourism on Balinese culture. He argues that tourism has “*contributed to the renewal and even the invention of Balinese cultural heritage*,” as it has helped preserve and promote traditional arts and rituals by giving them new relevance in the modern economy (Picard, 1996). However, Picard also cautions that this revival often involves reinterpreting traditions to suit tourist expectations, which can lead to commodification and a loss of cultural authenticity. Thus, while tourism may support cultural survival, it also raises concerns about the transformation of sacred practices into staged performances.

The influx within tourism sector in Bali has led to commodification of Balinese culture, wherein traditional performances adapted to cater tourist experiences and expectations (Abdillah et al., 2022; Indrianto, 2005; Pradnyadari & Ahimsa-Putra, 2023; Pratiwi et al., 2017). Practices that were once sacred and deeply rooted in community life have, in many instances, been transformed into commodified forms of entertainment designed for mass

consumption(Olsen, 2003). This process often involves modification, including modifying the length, content, and context of performances to make them more accessible and entertaining for foreign audiences coming from all around the world (Andrew, 2023; Coronado, 2014).

This transformation reflects a broader trend known as the Disneyfication, a term used to describe the simplification and sanitization of cultural elements to enhance their appeal to mass audiences. Disneyfication of culture within the tourism industry happens where traditional expressions are restructured, simplified, and repackaged to enhance their appeal and accessibility for tourists (Beames & Brown, 2017; Matusitz & Palermo, 2014). In the context of Balinese performances, Disneyfication manifests through the incorporation of spectacle, the use of universal narratives, and the emphasis on entertainment over authenticity. Theatrical productions in Bali now frequently adopt the logic of theme parks. While these shifts may generate economic benefits and allow for wider cultural exposure, they also raise critical questions about cultural integrity, identity, and representation. Such change raise concerns about the erosion of cultural integrity and the potential loss of meaning in traditional art forms.

Scholars have noted that while tourism can provide economic benefits and opportunities for cultural exchange, it also poses several challenges to the preservation of cultural authenticity (Ruastiti et al., 2020; Zhang, 2024). The adaptation of cultural performances for tourist consumption often leads to various tension between maintaining traditional values and also at the same time meeting commercial demands (White & Adu-Ampong, 2024). This tension is evident in the way performances are modified, sometimes resulting in the dilution of their original significance and the reinforcement of stereotypes (Baker et al., 2006).

This study explores how Balinese cultural performances are reimagined and staged for tourism through a lens of Disneyfication. By analyzing three key tourist-oriented stage shows—the traditional Kecak performance at Uluwatu, the Devdan Show at Nusa Dua, and the Varuna Show at Bali Safari Marine Park, this research traces the shifting trajectory of cultural staging in Bali. These three performances were selected to illustrate a continuum of transformation: from ritual-rooted traditional performance (Kecak), to a semi-contemporary theatrical reinterpretation of archipelagic culture (Devdan), to a technologically driven aquatic spectacle (Varuna). Each represents a distinct phase in the evolution of Bali's cultural tourism offerings.

Through this comparative framework, the study investigates how traditional symbols, rituals, and narratives are transformed into consumable entertainment products for global audiences. The research pays special attention to elements such as authenticity, spectacle, language use, tourist adaptation, and the construction of cultural narratives in performance. By focusing on these three case studies, the study highlights how the idea of “Staging Bali” is increasingly shaped by market demands, visual extravaganza, and hybridized storytelling, raising critical questions about the sustainability of cultural preservation in a commercial context. Ultimately, the research will assess the balance between cultural preservation and commercial adaptation, offering insights into how Balinese identity is negotiated within the global tourism economy through performance.

Understanding the extent and nature of this transformation is crucial for balancing cultural preservation with tourism development. This research contributes to the growing discourse on the commodification of culture in tourism studies, offering a comparative lens on how different types of performances negotiate the tension between cultural representation and commercial spectacle.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative netnographic approach to explore how Balinese cultural performances are represented and perceived in digital spaces. Netnography, an ethnographic method adapted for online environments, allows for the analysis of cultural tourism without field visits. The study focuses on three performances that represent varying degrees of traditional and modern adaptation: the Kecak dance at Uluwatu Temple, the Devdan Show at Nusa Dua Theater, and the Varuna Show at Bali Safari & Marine Park. These performances were selected for their online presence, popularity, and contrasting presentation styles, making them ideal case studies for examining commodification and Disneyfication.

Data was collected from publicly accessible online sources between January and May 2025. These include official websites, travel platforms like TripAdvisor and Google Review, social media, and travel blogs. Videos, captions, tourist reviews, promotional posts, and commentaries were gathered, where each item was categorized into the content type (official or user-generated), platform, cultural elements, narrative themes, spectacle components (lighting, acrobatics), language used, and audience reactions (authentic, entertaining, spiritual, etc.). Central themes that emerged included the emphasis on visual spectacle over cultural depth, the simplification of traditional narratives for international audiences, the emotional appeal of theatrical performances, and tensions between preserving authenticity and meeting tourist expectations. A comparative analysis was then carried out to examine how each show frames Balinese culture differently in the context of tourism.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The commodification of cultural performance in tourism is not a new phenomenon, but the intensification of visual spectacle and the influence of global entertainment formats have dramatically reshaped how culture is presented to tourists in the digital era. In Bali, once-sacred dances and rituals are now carefully curated, choreographed, and narrated for tourist consumption (Mayuzumi, 2022). As scholars have noted, the line between education and entertainment is increasingly blurred, particularly when performances are staged to cater to an international audience with limited cultural knowledge (Mazlan et al., 2025). The evolving dynamics of cultural tourism in Bali call for a deeper analysis of how digital representations both reflect and influence the transformation of cultural authenticity.

This section presents a comparative analysis of three tourist-oriented cultural performances in Bali: the Kecak dance at Uluwatu Temple, the Devdan Show at Nusa Dua, and the Varuna Show at Bali Safari. Each of these shows reflects a different degree of cultural adaptation and theatrical innovation, illustrating the diverse ways in which Balinese and Indonesian identity is staged for the global gaze. These performances were selected not only for their popularity but also for their visibility in online discourse. Together, they exemplify the evolution of Disneyfication in Balinese cultural tourism, moving along a spectrum from tradition-rooted performance to immersive digital spectacle.

The Kecak dance remains largely traditional, performed outdoors at a sacred temple with minimal staging and no digital enhancement and its power lies in the communal chants and ritualistic ambiance. The Devdan Show, by contrast, introduces elements of theatrical storytelling and visual choreography, blending cultural motifs with stage effects and multimedia. Finally, the Varuna Show represents the most technologically advanced example, combining acrobatics, water effects, lighting design, and digital projections. This progression reflects how cultural expression in Bali is increasingly shaped by spectacle,

interactivity, and global entertainment aesthetics, aligning with broader trends of commodification and themed performance often discussed in the context of Disneyfication.

The discussion is framed using key concepts such as Disneyfication (Bryman, 2004), staged authenticity (Cohen, 1988), and more recent scholarship that examines digital spectacle and shifts in cultural tourism. The rise of themed performances such as Devdan and Varuna demonstrates how global entertainment values, such as fast-paced storytelling, multimedia effects, and emotional spectacle are integrated into traditional cultural expressions. This aligns with Urry and Larsen's concept of the "tourist gaze 3.0," which emphasizes visual saturation, short-form content, and shareable experiences (Larsen & Urry, 2011).

In the following sections, the analysis is structured around three key themes that emerged from the data: (1) the shift from ritual to spectacle, (2) the framing of culture between education and entertainment, and (3) tourist perceptions and the evolving idea of authenticity. These themes will be discussed in relation to the three selected performances to demonstrate how Bali's cultural heritage is being reimagined in the context of global tourism and digital media.

The Shift from Ritual to Spectacle Performances

Balinese cultural performances, historically rooted in religious rituals and community ceremonies, are increasingly repurposed as theatrical spectacles for tourism consumption. This transformation aligns with the Disneyfication of culture, where complex, sacred, or traditional elements are simplified, visually enhanced, and reformatted to appeal to mass audiences. This shift reflects broader global trends in which tourism-oriented performances prioritize spectacle and accessibility over ritual meaning and contextual authenticity (Mahendra, 2024).

Table 1. A Comparison of Three Cultural Performances in Bali
(Source: Author, 2025)

No	Criteria	Kecak Dance – Uluwatu	Devdan Show – Nusa Dua	Varuna Show – Bali Safari
1	Setting	Sacred temple (Uluwatu), outdoors, sunset backdrop	Indoor modern theatre (Bali Nusa Dua Theatre)	High-tech water theatre at Bali Safari
2	Cultural Roots	Based on traditional ritual (Ramayana, Sanghyang dance)	Loosely inspired by Indonesian traditions across regions	Fictional maritime story, loosely tied to Balinese marine mythology
3	Spiritual Elements	High — chanting, fire, sacred ambiance	Minimal — theatrical reinterpretation without ritual function	None — emphasis on spectacle over sacred meaning
4	Use of Technology	Very minimal (natural lighting, torch)	Moderate (lighting, props, staging effects)	High (multimedia, immersive sound, digital effects, water stage)
5	Main Appeal	Ritual authenticity, sunset experience	Visual storytelling, dance variety	Immersive fantasy and technological wow-factor

The Kecak performance at Uluwatu Temple serves as a compelling case of cultural negotiation between tradition and tourism. The origins of Kecak itself reflect a process of creative cultural commodification. The dance was collaboratively recreated in the late 1920s by local artist Wayan Limbak of Bedulu, Gianyar, and German painter Walter Spies, during Spies' stay in Ubud. Since the 1970s, the Kecak dance has been performed regularly at Uluwatu Temple, making it one of the most recognized cultural attractions in Bali. While the dance retains strong elements of ritual such as the spiritual chanting of a male choir and its dramatic staging during sunset in a cliff-top temple the performance has been choreographed into a predictable nightly show designed for large tourist audiences. The circular chanting formation and invocation of the Ramayana story still reflect cultural continuity, but its repetition and commercialization diminish the dance's former sacred context. These spiritual performances adapted for tourism often become "rituals without belief" as it disconnected from their original ceremonial purpose.

Recent reviews on Kecak Dance Uluwatu's Google Review and TripAdvisor how the kecak performance has been repackaged for global audience while still preserving elements of its ritualistic origins.

"Watching the Kecak Dance at Uluwatu Temple was an unforgettable experience! The performance takes place during sunset, creating a magical atmosphere with breathtaking ocean views. The combination of traditional Balinese chanting, fire performances, and the stunning backdrop of the temple made this one of the highlights of my trip..." (Otakar Klika on Google Review, 2025)

In his words, the show was "an unforgettable experience." Emphasizing the traditional Balinese chanting and fire performances as central features. His enthusiasm highlights the carefully crafted ambiance that blends natural scenery with sacred performance, creating what he calls a "magical atmosphere with breathtaking ocean views." On the other hand, Marnelli (2025) echoes this sentiment, describing the performance as "cultural magic at sunset," and emphasizes that the storytelling and views were just stunning.

"The Keak and Fire Dance at Uluwatu is a must-see cultural experience. Set against a stunning sunset over the Indian Ocean, the performance is captivating, with rhythmic chanting and dramatic fire elements bringing the Ramayana story to life..." (Marnelli on Tripadvisor, 2025)

Many of the reviews similarly praises the experience as unforgettable cultural experience, drawing attention to the sunset's beauty, spiritual cadence of the chanting, and the thrill of the fire dance. The reviews reveal how the performance is skillfully curated to align with tourists' expectation and visually rich cultural experiences. These reviews subtly underscore how ritual elements are preserved but also strategically positioned for tourist consumption, aligning with (MacCannell, 1973) notion of staged authenticity. Tourists are not participants in a ritual but observers of a cultural product, designed to be "must-see" entertainment. This transformation is an example of Disneyfication, where traditional content is adapted into theatrical format that prioritize visual drama and accessibility over spiritual depth.

In contrast, the Devdan Show, performed in a modern theater in Nusa Dua, symbolizes a deliberate departure from religious ritual toward a more visual and theatrical celebration of cultural diversity. The show blends acrobatics, theatrical lighting, contemporary music, and stylized costumes to present a dramatized "tour" of Indonesian culture. While it references various ethnic dances and traditional attire, the absence of a ceremonial or

religious context transforms culture into a visual spectacle rather than a ritual act. It appeals to international audiences by offering a fast-paced, emotionally stimulating show that showcases the richness of Indonesian culture in digestible segments, reflecting Pine and Gilmore's (1999) notion of the "experience economy."

Visitors who have watched and wrote down reviews, praised the show as an amazing view with lots of cultural content, being it very colorful and highlighting the use of sounds, lights, decorations and performer costumes. This situation reflects a shift in focus from sacred meaning to entertainment value, with tourists captivated by the production's sensory appeal, rather than its ritual depth. Another review also describes the Devdan Show as a stunning blend of traditional Indonesian culture and modern stage performance, reinforcing the production recontextualizes heritage into a choreographed spectacle.

"One of the best shows I've ever seen. A cool concept when artists take turns talking about the regions of Indonesia. A bunch of dances, outfits, music, interactive with the audience and incredible acrobatic tricks. Don't even think about it, take the tickets. You will remember it for sure." (Dmitry on TripAdvisor, 2025)

While the performance references ethnic dances and traditional attire, the absence of ceremonial or religious context transforms culture into a visual spectacle. Tourists are not participants in or witnesses to a sacred tradition; they are observers of an immersive, entertaining package of "Indonesian-ness."

The Varuna Show, the newest of the three, takes the concept of spectacle even further. Held in an aquatic theater with 360-degree visuals, water effects, and aerial stunts, the show offers a fantasy-inspired performance loosely rooted in Balinese mythology. The storyline is imaginative and immersive, but distant from any traditional ritual practice. This performance exemplifies the growing trend of multimedia cultural entertainment, where heritage becomes a flexible narrative tool embedded in a visually striking format designed to evoke wonder. According to Urry and Larsen's (2022) idea of the "tourist gaze 3.0," such shows respond to the demands of a digital audience seeking Instagrammable moments and emotional engagement over cultural depth. Varuna Bali, the underwater theater performance at Taman Safari Bali, has received several prestigious accolades, including *Bali Leading Tourism Show* at the Bali Tourism Award 2024 and *Best Outstanding Tourism Innovation 2024* from CNN Indonesia. These awards recognize Varuna Bali's innovation in delivering a luxurious dining experience combined with a spectacular theatrical performance.

Reviews from visitors reinforce this transformation of culture into spectacle. One guest describes the performance as "grandiose" and "amazing," emphasizing not religious or spiritual meanings but the *technical mastery* and *human creativity* involved.

"The performance on stage and in the aquarium is something grandiose, amazing. No holograms or television, everything was done by the people themselves from the script, engineering, costumes, music, bravo to the craftsmen and talent of Bali! All the seats are good, the hall is small and cozy. We took a ticket with dinner. Everything was clean and tidy. We were there in the evening, starting at 19-30. It was amazing!." (Tatis on TripAdvisor, 2025)

The review illustrates how Varuna is designed and consumed primarily as immersive, theatrical entertainment, rather than a medium of cultural transmission or sacred experience. Cultural references exist, but they are filtered through fantasy, technology, and aesthetics that prioritize emotional resonance and visual impact, hallmarks of the contemporary experience economy.

Across all three case studies, the shift from ritual to spectacle reveals a reorientation of cultural priorities, from community-driven religious meaning to audience-driven theatrical effect. While this shift enhances the visibility and global reach of Balinese culture, it also raises concerns about the loss of sacred context and symbolic meaning. Cultural performances, once meant to invoke divine presence or mark communal rites of passage, are increasingly framed as consumer experiences curated for visual impact and emotional resonance. This transition invites reflection on how tourism continues to reshape not just the form of cultural expression, but also its function and meaning in contemporary society.

Narratives of Culture: Between Education and Entertainment

As cultural performances adapt for tourism, they often inhabit a space between educational intent and entertainment spectacle. While some shows attempt to introduce audiences to Indonesian or Balinese heritage, their narrative frameworks are frequently shaped more by the expectations of international tourists than by a commitment to accurate or meaningful cultural representation. The line between cultural education and commodified storytelling has become increasingly blurred in the age of global tourism and digital media, where cultural content is curated to be engaging, digestible, and emotionally impactful.

The Kecak performance at Uluwatu, for example, retains traditional elements but is also designed to offer a coherent, engaging story that transcends linguistic and cultural barriers. By focusing on the Ramayana epic, the performance utilizes a universally appealing narrative of love, conflict, and triumph, made comprehensible through dramatic gestures, fire effects, and printed guides for tourists. Although the spiritual dimension is present, it is narrated in a way that centers audience understanding and visual drama. This adaptation reflects a common trend in heritage performances where education is framed through spectacle, making culture palatable without overwhelming the viewer with unfamiliar concepts.

Reviewers on Google Review notes the cultural depth embedded in the show's storyline and advises visitors to read about the story beforehand to fully appreciate the performance indicating that there is still an educational aspect to this spectacle. This aligns with the idea that while the performance is visually spectacular, its traditional roots and epic content offer the potential for cultural learning, if the audience is willing to engage with it intellectually. The tension between experiencing the Kecak as a cultural story and consuming it as a memorable show is illustrative of the broader dynamics at play in today's cultural tourism. Performances like the Kecak become "edu-tainment" hybrids, where the line between heritage learning and visual pleasure is deliberately blurred to accommodate diverse tourist expectations. In essence, these reviews suggest that while cultural education is still possible within performances like the Kecak, it is increasingly mediated through the lens of tourist entertainment, where visuals, setting, and comfort may sometimes overshadow the deeper meanings embedded in traditional narratives.

The Devdan Show on the other hand explicitly brands itself as an educational experience, "Treasure of the Archipelago", yet the mode of delivery leans heavily toward showmanship. Each region of Indonesia is represented through short dance segments, often accompanied by narration and visual effects. However, the representation of diverse cultures is stylized and simplified, reducing centuries of heritage into a few minutes of choreographed movement. While this format is effective in introducing a general overview of Indonesia's cultural diversity, it also risks reinforcing superficial understandings of deeply complex traditions. The narrative becomes less about cultural context and more about entertainment value, which raises concerns about selective representation and cultural flattening.

Several reviews on TripAdvisor point out how the show introduces audiences, especially those unfamiliar with traditional Indonesian dances, to a rich collage of performances that span from Bali to Sumatra and Borneo. The use of acrobatics, multimedia effects, and contemporary dance moves enhances accessibility and excitement, aligning with concept of the experience economy, where culture is consumed as an immersive, emotional event (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). For many visitors, Devdan becomes a captivating gateway into Indonesian traditions, even if those traditions are reimagined in more performative, less ritualistic ways.

However, this curated approach to representation raises questions about inclusivity and authenticity. One reviewer, a tourist from Makassar, expressed disappointment that Sulawesi, one of Indonesia's largest islands, was not featured in the show.

"The event was spectacular, we were very pleased, hoping it would last longer. From the beginning to the end, from Sabang to Merauke, unfortunately one of the largest islands, Sulawesi is not shown, while the show is the only one in Indonesia. I happen to be from Makassar. Overall the show is very good, success continues Devdan Show." (Stay66876504733 on TripAdvisor, 2025)

This omission underscores the risk of selective representation, where certain cultural narratives are emphasized while others are sidelined to fit a theatrical storyline. While Devdan succeeds in entertaining and informing, it also reflects the broader tension in cultural tourism: balancing authenticity with marketability, and education with spectacle. Ultimately, the show reveals how Indonesia's cultural identity is both celebrated and simplified through the lens of performance.

Meanwhile, the Varuna Show makes minimal claims to educational purpose. Although inspired by Balinese legends and symbols, its narrative is constructed as a fantasy adventure, with original characters, a hero's journey structure, and audiovisual spectacle that mirrors international aquatic shows such as Cirque du Soleil. Culture in this context becomes a creative backdrop rather than the central message. While the show may spark curiosity or appreciation for Balinese themes, it does not aim to inform or educate its audience. Instead, it exemplifies what Bryman (2004) describes as cultural hybridization, where traditional elements are reinterpreted through global entertainment languages.

Collectively, these performances illustrate how cultural narratives are increasingly shaped by the desire to entertain and attract global tourists. Even when educational themes are present, they are often subordinated to storytelling conventions and media aesthetics that prioritize engagement over depth. This shift invites critical reflection on how cultural tourism mediates knowledge what is shown, what is omitted, and how meanings are constructed for unfamiliar audiences. In the long term, such dynamics influence how cultures are perceived, remembered, and commodified in global tourist imaginaries.

Tourist Perception and the Idea of Authenticity

The transformation of traditional cultural performances into tourism spectacles inevitably raises questions about authenticity, what it means, how it is perceived, and who defines it. As performances shift from sacred ceremonies to curated shows, tourists' perceptions often become the primary lens through which authenticity is negotiated. This reflects seminal concept of "staged authenticity," where what is presented may appear traditional, but is in fact designed to fulfill tourist expectations of the "exotic other" (MacCannell, 1973).

Tourist reviews and online platforms like Google and TripAdvisor reveal that visitors to the Kecak performance at Uluwatu frequently perceive it as both authentic and spiritual, due to its outdoor temple setting, dramatic chants, and sunset atmosphere. However, such reviews often focus on visual and emotional impact rather than deeper understanding of the ritual's religious significance. As observe, authenticity here is largely constructed through ambiance, rather than cultural or ceremonial accuracy (Suardana et al. 2018; Wahyuni et al. 2023). For many tourists, the experience “feels real” because it aligns with their expectations of a traditional Balinese performance, even if its function has shifted.

In the case of the Devdan Show, reviews often highlight its entertaining value and educational snippets, but rarely describe it as “authentic.” Tourists see it as a polished, modern show that introduces Indonesian culture in a theatrical way, not a traditional experience. While this show offers access to Indonesia's diversity, it also exemplifies the commercialization of heritage, where cultural knowledge is commodified into digestible narratives. The audience tends to value entertainment over ethnographic depth, indicating a shifting standard of what counts as valuable cultural experience (Ruastiti et al 2020).

For the Varuna Show, tourist perception leans almost entirely toward spectacle and fantasy, praising the visual effects and immersive atmosphere. Authenticity is rarely mentioned nor expected suggesting that for some tourist segments, cultural framing is less important than the emotional and visual stimulation provided. In this context, the notion of authenticity is deliberately abandoned, as the show positions itself as imaginative and globally inspired. This supports (Cohen, 1988) argument that postmodern tourists are often more interested in experiential authenticity, how a performance makes them feel rather than historical or ritual accuracy.

These case studies demonstrate that the definition of authenticity is not fixed but negotiated between performers, producers, and audiences. While performers may attempt to maintain traditional elements, the audience's desire for clarity, visual drama, and emotional connection frequently reshapes how culture is presented. The pressure to entertain in competitive tourism markets contributes to a reimagining market-authenticity, where cultural expressions are validated not by heritage institutions but by tourist demand and positive reviews. This dynamic suggests that authenticity in cultural tourism is less about preserving the past than it is about meeting the needs of the present.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined how Balinese and Indonesian cultural performances have been transformed through processes of Disneyfication and spectacle, using the Kecak dance at Uluwatu, the Devdan Show in Nusa Dua, and the Varuna Show at Bali Safari as case studies. Each performance reflects a different degree of adaptation from ritual-based enactments to high-tech fantasy, highlighting the complex negotiation between tradition and modernity in the staging of culture for tourism. While these performances succeed in capturing international attention and generating economic value, they also reveal deeper shifts in how culture is framed, consumed, and understood.

Across all three case studies, the shift from ritual to spectacle reveals a reorientation of cultural priorities, from community-driven religious meaning to audience-driven theatrical effect. While this shift enhances the visibility and global appeal of Balinese culture, it raises concerns about the loss of sacred context and symbolic meaning. Rituals that once invoked divine presence or marked communal rites are increasingly curated as visually engaging experiences, optimized for emotional impact rather than spiritual depth. This transformation

invites ongoing reflection on how tourism not only changes the form of cultural expression but also its function and meaning in contemporary society.

Moreover, these performances illustrate how cultural narratives are increasingly shaped by the imperative to entertain global audiences. Even when educational elements are present, they are often embedded within storytelling techniques and media aesthetics that emphasize spectacle over substance. This raises critical questions about the politics of cultural representation on what is shown, what is excluded, and how meaning is constructed for unfamiliar audiences. Over time, such dynamics influence how Indonesian cultures are perceived, remembered, and commodified within the global tourist imagination.

Lastly, these cases show that authenticity in cultural performance is not a static or inherent quality, but one that is constantly negotiated between performers, producers, and spectators. While artists may strive to preserve traditional forms, they often face pressure to adapt to tourist expectations for clarity, drama, and emotional resonance. The rise of “market-authenticity” means that what counts as authentic is increasingly validated not by cultural institutions but by consumer demand and favorable reviews. In this context, cultural heritage is less about preserving the past than about resonating with the present, highlighting the fluid, performative, and commercially influenced nature of authenticity in today’s cultural tourism landscape.

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