

## International Tourists' Perceptions of Cultural Tour Packages Service Quality at PT. Destination Asia, Bali

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### ABSTRACT

Cultural tourism is increasingly popular among international tourists for its authentic experiences and cultural insights. This study examines international tourists' perceptions of the service quality of PT Destination Asia Sanur Bali's cultural tour packages. Using a descriptive mixed-method approach, data were gathered from 50 international tourists via questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and observations. The SERVQUAL model (Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy) with a Likert scale was applied for quantitative analysis, while qualitative data were thematically interpreted. Findings indicate very good overall perceptions, with Responsiveness scoring highest (4.40) and Tangibles lowest (3.86). Tourists valued the tours' emotional, educational, and meaningful aspects, particularly interactions with local communities and participation in traditions. PT Destination Asia successfully meets expectations, though improvements are needed in visual and interpretative presentation of local culture.

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays a strategic role in the economic, social, and cultural development of a country. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2022), tourism refers to travel activities undertaken by individuals for leisure, business, or other purposes within a temporary period. In the globalization era, tourism is not only a driver of economic growth but also a medium for cultural exchange, job creation, and sustainable development (UNWTO, 2020; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012). In Indonesia, Bali has emerged as one of the country's flagship destinations, renowned for its exotic landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and warm hospitality. Cultural tourism, in particular, has shown significant growth, serving both as an economic asset and a means of preserving local identity and cultural diplomacy. Data from BPS Bali (2024) indicate that 70% of international tourists visit primarily for cultural experiences, with a consistent annual growth of around 15% in international arrivals from 2020 to 2024.

In the post-pandemic recovery period, Bali has experienced a notable rebound in international arrivals – from 1.2 million visitors in 2020 to a projected 5.3 million in 2024 – driven largely by demand for authentic and meaningful cultural encounters. The proportion of culture-motivated visitors rose steadily from 65% in 2020 to an estimated 72% in 2024 (BPS, 2024). Modern travelers increasingly seek experiences that combine authenticity, education, and sustainability (Richards, 2018), with 62% expressing a preference for environmentally responsible cultural tourism (Booking.com, 2023). This trend underscores the need for tourism providers to integrate sustainability and local engagement into their products. Destination Management Companies (DMCs) like PT Destination Asia Sanur play a vital role in meeting these expectations by designing immersive and responsible cultural experiences (UNWTO, 2024).

PT Destination Asia offers 11 travel style categories, with Arts & Culture emerging as the most popular among international markets, particularly in Europe and Australia. Sales data from 2024–2025 show that nearly half (49.3%) of cultural tour bookings came from the One Day Tour to Guliang Village, Bangli. This tour includes interactive activities such as Balinese dance lessons, gamelan playing, canang making, traditional oil processing, and arak distillation, providing emotional, educational, and socially meaningful value. Despite its popularity, there has been limited research on how international tourists perceive such flagship cultural products, particularly in terms of authenticity, sustainability, and cultural representation. This study addresses that gap by focusing on tourist perceptions of the Guliang Village tour, aiming to provide insights that can inform sustainable product development, strengthen Bali's cultural tourism appeal, and support policy-making for authentic and inclusive tourism experiences (Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1976; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Tourist Perception*

Perception is a cognitive process involving the selection, organization, and interpretation of stimuli received from the surrounding environment. In tourism, tourist perception plays a central role in shaping experiences and satisfaction.

Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) define perception as the process by which individuals select, organize, and interpret stimuli to create a meaningful picture of their world.

In this study, the perception of international tourists refers to how foreign visitors view, evaluate, and experience the cultural tour packages provided by PT Destination Asia. Such perceptions are formed through the interaction between tourists' expectations, their actual experiences at the destination, and other factors such as service quality, engagement with local culture, educational value, and environmental sustainability. Styliadis et al. (2017) emphasize that tourist perceptions are influenced by prior knowledge, consumed information sources, and subjective experiences during the visit.

Understanding tourist perceptions is essential for aligning cultural tourism products with visitor expectations and needs. Products designed to be participatory, inclusive, and sustainable are more likely to deliver positive experiences, foster tourist loyalty, and enhance the destination's reputation.

### ***Cultural Tourism Products***

Cultural tourism products encompass all forms of tourism experiences that highlight and promote local cultural elements, both tangible heritage (such as historical sites, architecture, and artifacts) and intangible heritage (such as traditions, arts, and lifestyles). McKercher and du Cros (2002) explain that cultural tourism involves travel motivated by the desire to learn, understand, and appreciate the culture and heritage of a community or region. Similarly, the UNWTO (2024) defines cultural tourism as travel in which the primary motivation is to discover and appreciate a destination's cultural assets, offering not merely cultural displays but also educational and preservation value. These products can include visits to heritage sites, museums, traditional performances, festivals, and hands-on workshops.

In the context of PT Destination Asia, cultural tourism products are offered as integrated packages designed to deliver authentic and immersive experiences. Central elements include authenticity, sustainability, and direct benefits to local communities. Richards (2018) notes a growing global demand for original and interactive cultural experiences, which requires tourism products to be developed with sensitivity to local socio-cultural dynamics and the avoidance of excessive commodification. PT Destination Asia addresses this demand through principles such as *Local Engagement* and *Giving Back*, ensuring that cultural tourism packages contribute to heritage preservation, reduce environmental impact, and empower local economies.

Cultural tourism packages can take various forms, from short half-day or full-day tours to extended overnight trips and special interest tours. In particular, *special interest tours*, such as PT Destination Asia's programs, focus on local wisdom, community interaction, and cultural sustainability. These packages may include activities like Balinese dance lessons, gamelan playing, craft-making workshops, or participation in religious ceremonies. By integrating multiple tourism services (Mill & Morrison, 2012; Yoeti, 2008) into one structured product, these tours provide convenience, added value, and meaningful engagement,

aligning with modern tourists' pursuit of personal, authentic, and responsible travel experiences (UNWTO, 2023).

### *The Five Dimensions Theory*

To understand how tourists perceive a tourism product, particularly culture-based products offered by PT. Destination Asia Sanur Bali, a comprehensive conceptual framework is needed. One widely used approach is the five dimensions of service quality developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) through the SERVQUAL model. This model has been adapted in tourism contexts to assess both the quality of the tourism experience and customer perceptions, especially for sustainable tourism tailored to the needs of international travelers.

The five dimensions include: Tangibles, referring to physical and visual elements such as facilities, cleanliness, aesthetics, transportation, and accommodation; Reliability, the provider's ability to deliver promised services consistently; Responsiveness, the willingness to assist and respond quickly; Assurance, which involves safety, courtesy, staff knowledge, and credibility of cultural information; and Empathy, the personal attention and adaptability shown to tourists from diverse cultural backgrounds. These dimensions directly influence how visitors evaluate cultural tourism products, from site appearance and guide performance to the handling of on-site challenges.

This model is considered highly relevant for analyzing international tourists' perceptions of cultural tour packages because it provides specific indicators of interaction quality between tourists and service providers. In PT. Destination Asia's case, the five dimensions can evaluate how well cultural products meet tourist expectations in terms of physical conditions, cultural interpretation, service quality, and social care. As Marković and Janković (2013) noted, the five dimensions are effective in assessing visitor experiences in culture- and history-based destinations, particularly when catering to international audiences with diverse expectations.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a mixed methods embedded design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), integrating quantitative surveys as the primary approach and qualitative interviews as a complementary component. The research focuses on evaluating international tourists' perceptions of the *one-day cultural tour* to Guliang Village, offered by PT. Destination Asia Sanur Bali, with emphasis on service quality, cultural engagement, and alignment with sustainable tourism values. The study was conducted between March and June 2025 at two main locations: PT. Destination Asia's head office in Sanur and Guliang Village in Bangli, where on-site observations, surveys, and interviews with tourists, guides, and local stakeholders were carried out.

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on the SERVQUAL framework (Parasuraman et al., 1988), covering five service dimensions: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). A total of 50 international tourists were surveyed using *accidental*

*sampling*, meeting the minimum sample size recommendation of Hair et al. (2019) ( $n \geq 5 \times$  number of indicators). Data were processed with SPSS v2.7 for descriptive statistics, calculating frequency distributions, mean scores, and classifying perceptions into categories such as “Good” or “Very Good.” Reliability was tested using Cronbach’s Alpha, ensuring internal consistency.

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews using *purposive sampling* to select knowledgeable informants, including Destination Asia staff, cultural guides, and local community members. Interview questions were also aligned with SERVQUAL dimensions, allowing deeper exploration of service experiences, cultural interactions, and emotional engagement during the tour. Data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and to enrich quantitative findings. Triangulation of sources, methods, and peer debriefing (Moleong, 2017; Sugiyono, 2021) was applied to enhance data validity.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### *Respondent Profile*

Respondent characteristics were obtained through questionnaires distributed to 50 international tourists who joined PT Destination Asia Sanur’s cultural tours in Bali. The gender distribution was relatively balanced, with slightly more females (27) than males (23). In terms of age, most respondents were young adults aged 20–29 years (56%), followed by those aged 30–39 years (32%), while only 6% each were in the 40–50 and above-50 age groups. This indicates that PT Destination Asia’s cultural tours attract a predominantly younger demographic, especially millennials.

Regarding origin, the largest proportion of respondents came from Europe (42%), including the UK, France, and Germany, followed by Asia and Australia (34%), America (16%), and Africa (8%). These findings reflect Bali’s broad global appeal, attracting both regional and long-haul travelers. Visit types were almost evenly split, with 52% being first-time visitors and 48% repeat visitors. This balance suggests a combination of sustained destination appeal for newcomers and high satisfaction among returning tourists, aligning with Cohen’s (1988) view that repeat visitation is a strong indicator of positive past experiences.

### *Data Presentation*

Each dimension across five SERVQUAL dimensions consisted of several indicators evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, with the results showing strong average ratings between 4.18 and 4.42, most of which fell into the “Very Good” category. This indicates a generally positive perception toward the cultural tour’s service quality.

The Tangibles dimension assessed tourists’ perceptions of physical and visual aspects of the cultural tour, such as the beauty of the environment, facilities, and direct presentation of culture. The highest-rated statement, “The tour environment is visually beautiful and rich in cultural atmosphere,” scored an average of 4.28 (“Very Good”), while “I enjoyed observing traditional

architecture and landscapes” received the lowest score in this category, 3.44 (“Good”).

Table 1. Tangibles Dimension Data

Statement	Average Score	Category
The tour environment is visually beautiful and rich in cultural atmosphere	4.28	Very Good
I enjoyed observing traditional architecture and landscapes	3.44	Good

Source: data processing results, 2025

Despite high ratings, the relatively lower score for architecture and landscape observation suggests that improvements could be made to enhance this aspect. Tourists provided specific feedback, such as adding more historical explanations about buildings and allowing longer exploration time, possibly with the opportunity to enter traditional houses. The second dimension is Reliability.

Table 2. Reliability Dimension Data

Statement	Average Score	Category
I learned something new about Balinese culture during the tour	4.34	Very Good
The tour encourages understanding and respect for culture	4.36	Very Good

Source: data processing results, 2025

This dimension measured the consistency between services provided and the promises made. Tourists gave high scores for “I learned new things about Balinese culture during the tour” (4.34) and “The tour encouraged understanding and respect for culture” (4.36), both in the “Very Good” category. These results reflect PT Destination Asia’s ability to meet tourists’ expectations by delivering accurate and valuable cultural knowledge. The similar result also happens in the responsiveness dimension.

Table 3. Responsiveness Dimension Data

Statement	Average Score	Category
The guide explained cultural elements clearly and informatively	4.40	Very Good
I actively participated in cultural activities (distilling arak, making traditional oil, etc.)	4.28	Very Good

Source: data processing results, 2025

Responsiveness focused on how quickly and effectively staff and guides responded to tourists’ needs. The statement “The guide explained cultural elements clearly and informatively” received 4.40, while “I actively participated in cultural activities” received 4.28. Tourists appreciated guides’ proactive communication and willingness to assist, with examples such as demonstrating how to make offerings or helping with traditional dance movements. The next dimension is assurance.

Table 4. Assurance Dimension Data

Statement	Average Score	Category
I felt emotionally engaged during the tour activities	4.42	Very Good
This experience made me feel detached from my daily routine	4.38	Very Good

*Source: data processing results, 2025*

Assurance relates to tourists' sense of safety, trust, and professionalism during the tour. Statements such as "I felt emotionally engaged during the tour" (4.42) and "This experience took me out of my daily routine" (4.38) were highly rated. These results indicate a strong sense of comfort and emotional security among participants, aligning with the concept of "existential authenticity" in cultural tourism. The last dimension is empathy.

Table 5. Empathy Dimension Data

Statement	Average Score	Category
I had meaningful interactions with local residents during the tour	4.36	Very Good
This cultural tour was enjoyable and entertaining	4.22	Very Good

*Source: data processing results, 2025*

The Empathy dimension reflected the extent to which tourists felt personally cared for and warmly received. "I had meaningful interactions with local residents" scored 4.36, while "The cultural tour was enjoyable and entertaining" scored 4.22. Tourists shared positive experiences of being addressed by name, having their comfort checked regularly, and receiving personalized adjustments, such as substituting ingredients due to allergies.

## DISCUSSION

### *Tangibles*

The overall results across the five SERVQUAL dimensions indicate that PT Destination Asia delivers a consistently high standard of service in its cultural tour offerings. All dimensions achieved average scores above 4.20, placing them in the "Very Good" category. This reinforces the notion that the program successfully combines operational excellence with cultural depth. However, the Tangibles dimension reveals a nuanced gap that warrants attention.

While tourists praised the visual beauty and cultural richness of the tour environment (mean score 4.28), the lowest score in the entire assessment – 3.44 for "I enjoyed observing traditional architecture and landscapes" – signals a partial shortfall in fulfilling the potential of this element. This aligns with Zhang et al. (2018) and Trinh & Ryan (2016), who argue that physical settings in cultural tourism are not merely passive scenery but can serve as active mediators of visitor satisfaction and cultural engagement. The feedback from Australian and Dutch respondents points to a clear demand for greater interpretive depth and experiential immersion.

These insights suggest that tourists are not content with surface-level appreciation; they seek layered narratives that connect architectural forms and landscapes to historical, symbolic, and social contexts. To address this, PT Destination Asia could integrate structured heritage interpretation – possibly through trained local cultural interpreters, offering insights into symbolic motifs, spatial arrangements, and their relation to Balinese cosmology. In addition, extending tour durations at architectural sites or allowing entry into private traditional houses could create intimate encounters with living culture. These enhancements would elevate the Tangibles dimension from passive observation to active cultural dialogue, thereby deepening the sense of place.

### ***Reliability***

Reliability emerged as a solid strength, with mean scores of 4.34 and 4.36 for the statements “I learned new things about Balinese culture” and “The tour encouraged understanding and respect for culture,” respectively. This suggests that PT Destination Asia is delivering experiences that closely match, and possibly exceed, pre-tour expectations. This is critical, as Stanovčić et al. (2021) emphasize that reliability in cultural tourism is not only about service delivery consistency but also about the accuracy, authenticity, and educational value of cultural content.

The tour’s ability to meet these expectations reflects well on guide preparation and program design. Lin et al. (2022) and Vu et al. (2020) note that in cultural tourism, perceived reliability is strengthened when knowledge transfer is both accurate and contextually relevant. This seems to be the case here, as tourists valued the cultural learning embedded in the itinerary. However, to reinforce this advantage, PT Destination Asia might consider diversifying the thematic content, for example, offering seasonal or thematic variations of the tour focusing on rituals, art forms, or agricultural cycles. Pre-tour digital materials, such as short videos or interactive guides, could also prime visitor expectations and enhance retention of cultural information.

### ***Responsiveness***

Responsiveness scored highly, with 4.40 for the clarity and informativeness of guide explanations, and 4.28 for active participation in cultural activities. This dimension benefits from PT Destination Asia’s evident emphasis on interpersonal engagement. As Cheok et al. (2015) and Pirnar et al. (2018) note, responsive service delivery in cultural tourism requires both proactive facilitation and adaptive communication skills. The reported interactions, such as the Canadian visitor being taught how to make offerings or the Japanese tourist receiving immediate dance assistance, illustrate how staff responsiveness fosters emotional rapport and encourages active participation.

Such moments are vital because they generate what Tung & Ritchie (2011) describe as “memorable tourism experiences,” where active involvement and personalized support create lasting emotional connections. Maintaining this strength will require ongoing investment in guide training – not just in cultural knowledge, but also in emotional intelligence, improvisational skills, and cross-cultural communication. Moreover, PT Destination Asia could systematize this

responsiveness through small group sizes, enabling guides to maintain personal attention levels even as demand grows.

### *Assurance*

The Assurance dimension was the highest-rated aspect overall, with a 4.42 mean score for “I felt emotionally engaged during the tour” and 4.38 for “This experience took me out of my daily routine.” These findings suggest that tourists experienced not just transactional service, but transformative engagement—what Kirillova et al. (2016) term “existential authenticity,” where tourism becomes a space for personal meaning-making and self-reflection.

While assurance traditionally encompasses safety and professionalism, in cultural tourism it also involves the creation of environments where tourists feel comfortable exploring unfamiliar traditions. This is evident here: the high emotional engagement scores imply that the guides and program design successfully reduced cultural barriers, encouraged participation, and fostered trust. To further build on this, PT Destination Asia could develop follow-up touchpoints after the tour—such as sending curated photo collections, sharing local festival calendars, or inviting guests to return for advanced workshops. Such continuity can reinforce emotional bonds and promote repeat visitation.

### *Empathy*

Empathy received strong ratings, with tourists appreciating meaningful local interactions (4.36) and overall enjoyment (4.22). Shakeela & Jose (2025) and Vu et al. (2020) highlight that in cross-cultural tourism contexts, empathy manifests through personalized attention, flexibility, and genuine cultural exchange. The quotes from French and German tourists—describing being addressed by name, receiving regular comfort checks, and having allergies accommodated without request—are direct evidence of service personalization at work.

This level of attentiveness is particularly significant in cultural tourism because it transforms the guest from a passive observer into an active participant in a shared cultural moment. Such experiences also serve as a powerful driver of positive destination image and word-of-mouth promotion. To capitalize on this, PT Destination Asia could introduce guest preference tracking systems, enabling guides to recall personal details in future interactions, and perhaps even create a “returning guest” recognition program. These steps could turn empathy from an incidental strength into a signature feature of the brand.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### *Conclusion*

Based on the findings, the perceptions of 50 international tourists toward the one-day cultural tour to Guliang Village, developed by PT Destination Asia Sanur Bali, were generally rated as “very good.” The assessment, conducted using a 1-5 Likert scale and the SERVQUAL model, covered five dimensions of service quality. Among these, *Tangibles* received the lowest score (3.86), indicating that while the physical environment and cultural visuals were appreciated, the

interpretation of traditional architecture and landscapes was perceived as less in-depth. This highlights the need to enhance the presentation of physical elements to be more immersive, informative, and culturally meaningful.

The *Reliability* dimension scored 4.20, reflecting that the tour was delivered according to schedule, promises, and initial expectations, with accurate pre-tour information and smooth execution. *Responsiveness* achieved the highest score (4.34), as tourists valued the quick and enthusiastic assistance provided by guides and field staff. Similarly, *Assurance* (4.32) indicated strong trust in staff professionalism, politeness, and mastery of cultural knowledge, which fostered a sense of comfort and security throughout the program.

Finally, *Empathy* scored 4.29, showing that tourists felt personally attended to and enjoyed meaningful interactions with both guides and the local community. The cultural tour was not only enjoyable but also emotionally engaging, reinforcing positive perceptions of Bali's cultural values. These results support the view that high service quality, especially in responsiveness and empathy, can significantly enhance the cultural tourism experience and strengthen destination appeal.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed for PT Destination Asia Sanur Bali to enhance their cultural tour product. First, improving the *Tangibles* dimension by enriching cultural narratives and interpreting traditional architecture is essential. This can be achieved by involving knowledgeable local guides or using interpretative media such as leaflets or QR codes to deepen tourists' understanding (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Additionally, increasing interactive activities like traditional cooking workshops or visits to local homes will boost tourist engagement and cultural immersion. Maintaining high standards in *Responsiveness* and *Empathy* by personalizing services to accommodate diverse tourist needs, such as mobility or dietary restrictions, is also encouraged. Furthermore, regular participant feedback should be adopted to ensure consistent quality in *Reliability* and *Assurance*. Lastly, empowering local communities to participate not only in implementation but also in planning and evaluation aligns with sustainable tourism principles and enhances authenticity (UNWTO, 2024).

For regional governments and policymakers, it is crucial to support sustainable tourism businesses through appropriate regulations and incentives. Collaboration among industry players, local communities, and government agencies is recommended to design inclusive cultural tourism programs that benefit all stakeholders and preserve local heritage (BPS Bali, 2024).

### **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

This study also has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample consisted of international tourists selected through accidental sampling at PT. Destination Asia's office in Sanur within a limited timeframe, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to a broader tourist population. Future research is recommended to include larger and more diverse samples, possibly incorporating tourists from other Destination Asia travel categories such

as Wellness, Nature & Adventure, and Culinary. Moreover, this study employed only a quantitative approach using questionnaires, which limits the depth of understanding regarding tourists' subjective experiences and cultural interactions. Incorporating qualitative methods like interviews or focus group discussions could provide richer insights into tourists' perceptions and emotional engagement. Subsequent studies should consider these aspects to offer a more comprehensive understanding of tourism dynamics in Bali and similar destinations.

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