



Cultural Preservation and Architectural Evolution: The Impact of Tourism on *Bale Banjar* in Kuta Bali

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Abstract—This article explores the relationship between tourism and cultural preservation as well as the evolution of *bale banjar* architecture in Kuta, Bali. In the context of increasing tourist visits, this study analyzes both the positive and negative impacts on traditional architectural structures and local cultural practices. The expansion of the tourism industry in Kuta has had a significant impact on local culture and traditional architecture, particularly on the *bale banjar*, which generally serves as a symbol of community gathering for the local adat. The study broadly aims to examine how tourism influences cultural preservation and the evolution of *bale banjar* architecture. The methods used include qualitative analysis through interviews with local residents, direct observations, and literature reviews. The findings reveal that tourism drives changes in the design of *bale banjar* to attract visitors, but it also poses risks to traditional values. On the one hand, increased attention to local culture has the potential to strengthen preservation efforts, but on the other hand, commercialization can undermine the authenticity of the architecture. These findings highlight the need for sustainable tourism management strategies to maintain a balance between economic development and cultural preservation in Kuta, Bali.

Keywords: *Bale banjar*; preservation; architecture evolution; tourism; Bali

1. Introduction

Bali as one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, has long been a magnet for domestic and international tourists. The uniqueness of its culture, natural beauty, and the friendliness of its people are the main attractions that attract millions of visitors every year. However, behind the glittering tourism industry, Bali faces a major challenge in maintaining a balance between economic development and the preservation of its cultural heritage. One of the key elements in the architecture and social structure of Balinese society that is significantly impacted by tourism development is *bale banjar*. *Bale banjar*, as the center of activities for indigenous communities in Bali, plays a vital role in maintaining social cohesion and the cultural identity of the local community. Traditionally, *bale*

banjar functions as a place for meetings, discussions, and the implementation of various traditional rituals. However, along with the rapid

development of the tourism industry, especially in the Kuta area, the function and form of *bale banjar* architecture have begun to experience significant changes.

Tourism in Bali has grown rapidly since the 1970s, with Kuta as one of the main growth centers. According to data from the Bali Provincial Statistics Agency, the number of foreign tourist visits to Bali reached 6.3 million in 2019, before a drastic decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This growth has brought significant economic impacts, but has also put pressure on infrastructure, the environment, and the socio-cultural structure of the local community. In this context, *bale banjar* in Kuta faces a dilemma between maintaining its traditional function and adapting to the demands of

the tourism industry. Their study revealed that tourism has influenced the sustainability of traditional *bale banjar* in Denpasar, with several Bale Banjar undergoing changes in function to accommodate tourism activities (Gantini & Hanan, 2017). A similar phenomenon also occurs in Kuta, where several *bale banjar* have been modified to become tourist attractions or even converted into commercial facilities.

These changes raise important questions about how Balinese people, especially in Kuta, can maintain their cultural identity amidst the currents of globalization and commercialization. His study on cultural tourism in Bali emphasized the importance of a balanced approach between economic development and cultural preservation (Suryawan, 2019). He argued that cultural tourism, if managed well, can be a tool to strengthen local identity and at the same time drive economic growth. However, the reality on the ground shows that this balance is difficult to achieve. Several *bale banjar* in Bali's tourist areas have lost their social function and are more focused on economic aspects (Putra & Santosa, 2020). This raises concerns about the erosion of traditional values and social cohesion in the community.

On the other hand, there is also the view that tourism can be a catalyst for cultural revitalization. His analysis of the "*touristification*" of Balinese culture argues that interaction with tourists and the demands of the tourism industry have encouraged Balinese people to better appreciate and preserve their cultural heritage (Picard, 2006). In the context of *bale banjar*, this could mean adapting function and design to allow for the preservation of core values while accommodating the needs of the modern economy. The architectural evolution of *bale banjar* in Kuta reflects the broader dynamics between tradition and modernity in Bali. Their study of the transformation of traditional Balinese architecture identify several factors that influence change, including tourism, urbanization, and lifestyle changes (Sutarja & Yudiantini, 2018). They emphasize the importance of an approach that considers functional, aesthetic, and cultural aspects in the adaptation of traditional architecture.

The challenges in preserving *bale banjar* are not only limited to the physical aspects of the building, but also involve social and spiritual dimensions. His research on the Tri Hita Karana concept in Balinese architecture emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance between humans, nature, and spiritual aspects in every preservation and development effort (Dwijendra, 2019). This concept is very relevant in the context of *bale banjar*, which traditionally functions as a meeting point between the social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of Balinese society. Given the complexity of this issue, a holistic approach is needed in examining the impact of tourism on *bale banjar* in Kuta. This paper aims to analyze in depth how tourism affects the preservation of culture and the evolution of *bale banjar* architecture. With a focus on Kuta as one of the main tourism centers in Bali, this study will explore the changes in

function, design, and cultural meaning of *bale banjar* in the context of rapid tourism development.

Furthermore, this paper will investigate the adaptation strategies developed by local communities in the face of tourism pressures. How do communities in Kuta negotiate between economic demands and the desire to maintain their cultural identity? Are there innovative models that allow *bale banjar* to remain culturally relevant while benefiting from the economic opportunities offered by tourism? Through an in-depth analysis of the physical changes, functions, and community perceptions of *bale banjar*, this study is expected to provide valuable insights into the dynamics between tourism, cultural preservation, and architectural evolution in Bali. The findings of this study will not only contribute to the academic understanding of the impacts of tourism on cultural heritage, but can also provide valuable input for policymakers and practitioners in formulating sustainable tourism development strategies that are sensitive to local values.

In a broader context, this study is also relevant to the global discussion on sustainable tourism and cultural heritage preservation. With Bali as a case study, this paper can provide a unique perspective on how cultural tourism destinations can manage the pressures of modernization while maintaining their cultural essence. This is especially important considering that more and more tourism destinations around the world are facing similar dilemmas between economic development and cultural heritage preservation.

2. Methods

Before discussing the research method section, the author conducted a literature review to further strengthen the discussion in this article. There are several previous articles that have discussed culture and tourism in Bali. Tourism in Bali, especially in Kuta, has become an interesting research subject for many academics because of its significant impact on local culture and architecture. *bale banjar*, as the center of the traditional Balinese community, is the main focus in observing these changes.

(1) Tourism and Cultural Transformation in Bali

The study of cultural tourism in Bali, revealed that the development of the tourism industry has created a complex dynamic between the preservation of tradition and the commodification of culture (Picard, 2008). He argues that the Balinese people are actively involved in the process of "reinvention of tradition" to meet tourist expectations while maintaining their cultural identity. In line with Picard, Yamashita (2003) observes that tourism in Bali has created a unique "tourism culture", where traditional elements are modified for tourist consumption. However, he also emphasizes that this process is not simply cultural

exploitation, but involves active negotiation by the Balinese people in redefining their identity.

(2) *Bale Banjar*: Traditional Function and Transformation

Bale banjar, as the center of the traditional Balinese community, plays a vital role in the social and cultural structure of the community. Dwijendra (2009) explains that *bale banjar* functions not only as a meeting place, but also as a center for social, cultural, and spiritual activities of the community. He emphasized that *bale banjar* is a physical manifestation of the concept of Tri Hita Karana, a Balinese philosophy about the balance between humans, nature, and God. However, along with the development of tourism, the function and form of *bale banjar* have changed. The study on the transformation of traditional Balinese architecture in tourist areas, found that several *bale banjar* have been modified to accommodate tourism activities (Sutarja & Yudiantini, 2019). They observed that these changes often sacrifice the traditional social and spiritual functions of *bale banjar*.

(3) Evolution of Traditional Balinese Architecture in the Context of Tourism

Traditional Balinese architecture, including Bale Banjar, has undergone significant evolution in response to tourism. The study of Putra, et.al (2021) about transformation of Balinese architecture in tourist areas, observed that many traditional buildings, including *bale banjar*, have undergone architectural “hybridization.” They explained that this process involves combining traditional elements with modern designs to create visual appeal for tourists while maintaining local identity. The study of the modernization of Balinese architecture, noted the emergence of a “new Balinese style” that combines traditional elements with modern technology and materials to meet the needs of the tourism industry (Sentosa, 2015). However, he also warned of the risk of over-commercialization that could erode the cultural meaning of these buildings.

(4) Socio-Cultural Impact of Tourism on Local Communities

In addition to the physical impact on architecture, tourism has also brought significant changes to the social structure and cultural practices of Balinese society, especially in tourist areas such as Kuta. The study of cultural tourism and local community participation in Bali, revealed a complex dynamic between preserving tradition and adapting to the demands of the tourism economy (Suryawan, 2016). He found that although tourism opens up new economic opportunities, it can also result in a shift in traditional values and an erosion of social cohesion. On the other hand, Hitchcock & Putra (2007) argue that Balinese society has shown resilience and creativity in dealing with the pressures of tourism.

They exemplify how some communities have successfully integrated tourism activities into their customary structures, creating a symbiosis between tradition and modernity.

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the impact of tourism on cultural preservation and architectural evolution of *bale banjar* in Kuta, Bali. The main data collection methods include direct observation and in-depth interviews. Direct observation was conducted on several *bale banjar* in the Kuta area to observe physical changes, functions, and activities taking place within them. The researcher recorded architectural details, structural modifications, and patterns of space use that reflect adaptation to tourism demands. In-depth interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, including indigenous community leaders, *bale banjar* managers, tourism industry players, and local residents. These interviews aimed to obtain diverse perspectives on changes in the function and form of *bale banjar* and their impact on the socio-cultural life of the community. The collected data were then analyzed using narrative analysis methods to analyze local people's stories and experiences related to changes in *bale banjar*. Triangulation of data from various sources was conducted to increase the validity of the research findings.

3. Results and Discussion

Bale banjar in the Kuta area has undergone significant physical and functional transformation as a result of tourism development. Based on field observations and interviews with local people, it was found that most of the *bale banjar* in Kuta have undergone modifications both in terms of architecture and use.

Evolution of the Appearance of Bale Banjar

Physically, some *bale banjar* which were originally one-story open buildings (*wantilan*) have now developed into two to three-story structures. This change was made to accommodate the need for larger spaces along with the increase in tourism activities, and the increasing number of banjar members and activities taking place in them. For example, Bale Banjar Temacun Kuta which previously only functioned as a meeting place for residents, has now been converted into a two-story building with the ground floor rented out as a mini market.

Similar changes are also seen in Bale Banjar Legian Kelod, where the front of the building is now rented out as a shop, in this case a souvenir shop, money changer, and motorbike rental place. Some of these visible transformations reflect the community's efforts to optimize the economic value of the communal buildings of their *banjar* residents amidst the rapid development of tourism in Kuta.

In terms of function, there has been a significant

shift from the initial function of *bale banjar* as a center for social, cultural, and religious activities to a more commercially oriented multifunctional space. Data from interviews shows that around 70% of Bale Banjar in Kuta now have a dual function, not only as a place for residents to gather but also as a center for economic activities.

A concrete example of this shift in function is seen in Bale Banjar Tuban Griya, where the front of the building is now rented out as a billboard. This shows how traditional communal spaces have adapted to the demands of the tourism economy. This transformation is in line with the findings of Gantini & Hanan (2017) who noted similar changes in *bale banjar* in Denpasar. However, the intensity of change in Kuta appears to be higher, possibly due to the greater pressure of tourism in this area.



Figure 1. Bale Banjar Temacun Kuta, the ground floor is used as mini market
Source: Mahastuti, 2024



Figure 2. Bale Banjar Legian Kelod, ground floor rented for shops
Source: Mahastuti, 2024



Figure 3. Bale Banjar Tuban Griya, the front part is rented out as billboard
Source: Mahastuti, 2024

Socio-Cultural Implications

The physical and functional changes of *bale banjar* in Kuta have profound socio-cultural implications for the local community. Observations and interviews revealed shifts in patterns of social interaction and traditional cultural practices. One of the most significant impacts was the reduced intensity of traditional communal activities in *bale banjar*. Many residents reported that the frequency of customary meetings and traditional ceremonies had decreased drastically. A community leader stated, "Before, *bale banjar* was always busy with customary activities every week. Now, we see it more often used for commercial events."

This shift has had an impact on the transmission of cultural values between generations. Younger generations in Kuta tend to be less involved in traditional activities in *bale banjar*, partly because the space is now more often used for commercial purposes. This raises concerns about the erosion of cultural identity in the long term. However, not all changes are negative. Some *bale banjar* have managed to creatively integrate traditional functions with tourism activities. For example, some *bale banjar* hold traditional art performances for tourists, which not only provide additional income but also help preserve local art. This finding strengthens Picard's (2008) argument about the "touristification" of Balinese culture, where elements of traditional culture are modified and presented for tourist consumption. However, contrary to the pessimistic view, this study finds that this adaptation process can also open up new opportunities for cultural preservation, as long as it is managed wisely.

Economic Impact and Community Adaptation Strategies

The evolution of *bale banjar* in Kuta has had a significant economic impact on the local community. Interview data shows that many *bale banjar* now generate additional income through space rentals and other commercial activities. For example, some *bale banjar* reported monthly incomes of up to IDR 50 million from space rentals for various events. This income is used to fund community activities and building maintenance. A *bale banjar* administrator stated, "The income from rentals helps us maintain the *bale banjar* without having to rely entirely on community contributions."

This economic adaptation strategy is in line with the findings of (Juniastira, 2021) who noted that many *bale banjar* in Bali now have a dual function as a center for communal and economic activities. However, this study found that in Kuta, the intensity of economic activities in *bale banjar* tends to be higher than in other areas in Bali. The Kuta community has developed various adaptation strategies to take advantage of economic opportunities from tourism while trying to maintain

traditional values. Some *bale banjar*, for example, have formed special management units to regulate commercial activities, separate from traditional customary structures. This allows them to maximize economic potential without disrupting the customary function of *bale banjar*. However, this adaptation strategy also poses new challenges. There is concern that excessive focus on the economic aspect could erode the cultural meaning of *bale banjar*. A traditional figure stated, "We must be careful not to lose the essence of *bale banjar* as the center of customary life in the pursuit of economic gain."

Architectural Evolution and Conservation Efforts

The architecture of *bale banjar* in Kuta has undergone significant evolution in response to the demands of tourism and modernization. Field observations show a trend of "hybridization" of architecture, where traditional elements are combined with modern designs. One clear example is the use of modern materials such as concrete and glass combined with traditional Balinese ornaments. Many *bale banjar* now have more durable concrete structures, but still maintain typical Balinese carvings and decorations on the facade and interior of the building.

This architectural evolution reflects the community's efforts to adapt to modern needs while maintaining cultural identity. However, efforts to preserve traditional architecture face various challenges. Limited funds and the availability of traditional craftsmen often become obstacles in maintaining original architectural elements. Some *bale banjar* are forced to sacrifice traditional details for the sake of cost efficiency and construction time. These findings strengthen Sentosa (2015) argument about the emergence of a "new Balinese style" in architecture, which combines traditional elements with modern technology. However, this study also underlines the importance of a more holistic approach to preservation, which considers not only the physical aspects of the building but also the cultural values attached to it.

4. Conclusion

The impact of tourism on *bale banjar* in Kuta, Bali, is complex and multidimensional. On the one hand, tourism has driven the physical and functional transformation of *bale banjar*, creating new economic opportunities for the community. However, on the other hand, these changes have also posed challenges in maintaining the traditional values and socio-cultural functions of Bale Banjar. The main findings of this study are: The physical transformation of *bale banjar*, from a traditional structure to a multifunctional building that accommodates tourism

needs. The shift in the function of *bale banjar* from a center of traditional activities to a more commercially oriented space. The emergence of creative adaptation strategies that attempt to balance tourism demands with the preservation of traditional values. Complex socio-economic implications, including new economic opportunities and changes in the social dynamics of the community.

Recommendations for future research include longitudinal studies to understand the long-term impacts of this transformation, as well as comparative research with other areas in Bali to identify best practices in the preservation and adaptation of *bale banjar*. *Bale banjar*, as a symbol of Balinese cultural identity, has great potential to be a bridge between tradition and modernity, between local communities and global tourists. With proper management, *bale banjar* can continue to serve as a center of community life while also becoming a valuable asset in Bali's sustainable cultural tourism landscape.

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