

Coping Mechanism of Balinese Music: The Case of Kuta Tourist Destination in Bali, Indonesia

Ni Wayan Ardini, I Nyoman Cahyadi Wijaya, I Ketut Astawa, I Gede Mudana, Derinta Entas

ABSTRACT

Kuta, Bali, has undergone rapid tourism-driven transformation, significantly impacting its cultural landscape, particularly traditional Balinese music. The influx of globalized entertainment and shifting tourist demographics has led to the marginalization of traditional musical practices, raising concerns about cultural erosion. This study employs qualitative study to analyze the coping mechanism used by the Balinese community in preserving their musical traditions. Findings suggest that adaptive strategies, including musical hybridization, educational initiatives, and digital engagement, play a crucial role in sustaining Balinese music traditions. The study underscores the necessity of a multi-stakeholder approach, incorporating local government, tourism industry players, musicians, and digital media to balance economic demands with cultural sustainability, by fostering mindful tourism, Kuta can transition from a site of cultural erosion to one of cultural resilience, ensuring the enduring presence of Balinese music in a globalized era. This research contributes to broader discussions on cultural resilience, globalization, and sustainable tourism, highlighting the importance of integrating traditional arts into contemporary tourism experiences.

KEY WORDS

Balinese music preservation; cultural tourism; globalization and modernization

Introduction

It's a hot, bustling afternoon in Kuta, Bali, Indonesia. The air carries the sound of waves crashing against the shore, a reminder of its origins as a quiet fishing village. Over decades, Kuta has transformed into one of the world's most iconic tourist destinations. In the early 1900s, it was a remote Balinese settlement sustained by fishing and coconut farming. However, the arrival of surfers in the 1930s, followed by the opening of Ngurah Rai International Airport in the 1960s, accelerated its evolution into a major tourism hub. By the 1980s and 1990s, international hotels, shopping centers, and entertainment venues had replaced traditional structures.

Mudana (2000) and Mudana et al. (2023) describe Kuta's transition from a traditional village dominated by fishermen to a tourism hotspot, which transformed every aspect of local life, including its musical traditions. Moreover, tourism has reshaped Balinese culture, including music and dance, as traditional arts increasingly catered to tourist entertainment (Howe 2005). The influx of global influences has altered Kuta's soundscape, replacing

the gamelan's rhythmic melodies with electronic dance music (EDM), reggae, and international pop. Traditional Balinese music, once an integral part of daily life, now struggles to maintain its place amid these shifts.

I Gede Roby Supriyanto (Roby), a local musician and cultural advocate, has observed a declining interest among younger generations in traditional music. He acknowledges the world's growing appetite for exotic experiences but questions the cost of this cultural exchange.

A series of interviews was conducted by three authors, namely Cahyadi, Mudana, and Astawa.

"Traditional music, once vibrant and essential to Balinese daily life, now struggles to find its place within Kuta's tourism-driven economy." (Roby, April 21, 2024)

The challenge extends beyond shifting preferences; it threatens deeper cultural connections to spirituality and community.

"Economic prosperity has created opportunities, yet globalized entertainment is steadily pushing traditional music to the margins." (Roby, April 21, 2024)

Ni Wayan Ardini is coordinator of the Arts Education Master's Program at ISI Bali. She earned her Master's in Cultural Studies from Udayana University (2016). Beyond academia, she is a songwriter, Balinese music composer, and a judge in regional music competitions, contributing actively to the preservation and evolution of Balinese performing arts.

I Nyoman Cahyadi Wijaya is a seasoned tourism practitioner focused on culture and gastronomy. He served as a registered expert since 2022-2024 at the Ministry of Research and Higher Education in gastronomy arts for vocational education. Since 2024, he has been a full-time lecturer at the Faculty of Tourism, Convention and Events Management at Universitas Pendidikan Nasional.

Alexander, whose father is Balinese and mother Australian, grew up learning gamelan as part of his father's efforts to immerse him in Balinese culture.

"Before 2002, *banjars* were vibrant spaces where young Balinese learned gamelan, dance, and singing. A decade later, these spaces are quieter, with fewer young participants, signaling a challenge in maintaining cultural continuity." (Alexander, May 1, 2024)

He also observes a rising trend of Westerners coming to Bali to learn Balinese arts.

"If local cultural heritage isn't actively preserved and passed down, we risk a future where traditional arts are performed more by foreign enthusiasts than by Balinese themselves." (Alexander, May 1, 2024)

Kuta is now a cultural battleground where tradition meets modernity. Community hubs like *banjars* play a crucial role in cultural preservation, helping ensure that gamelan remains integral to Balinese identity and rituals (Mariyana and Sentana 2021; Rai et al. 2023).

A team of researchers, comprising musicologists, tourism experts, and educators, explores strategies for preserving and promoting traditional Balinese music. Efforts include hybridizing gamelan with contemporary genres, leveraging digital platforms for global outreach, and integrating traditional music into cultural tourism experiences. However, balancing authenticity with commercial interests remains a challenge. To explore these challenges, this study investigates the coping mechanisms employed by the Balinese community to sustain their musical heritage in the face of rapid tourism development. This qualitative research adopts a critical ethnographic approach to capture the lived experiences of local musicians, cultural leaders, and stakeholders. The study employs multiple data collection methods:

1. **Ethnographic fieldwork** – Immersive engagement in Kuta provided firsthand insights into how traditional music is practiced, adapted, and perceived within the tourism landscape.
2. **Document studies** – A comprehensive review of cultural policies, festival programs, and historical records was conducted to trace the evolution of Balinese music and its integration into tourism.
3. **Interviews** – Semi-structured interviews with musicians, tourism operators, and community leaders facilitated a deeper understanding of the socio-economic factors influencing musical preservation efforts.
4. **Observations** – Participant observation at cultural events, performances, and festivals captured the dynamics between traditional Balinese music and modern entertainment trends.

Furthermore, applying Stuart Hall's reception theory provides insights into how different stakeholders perceive the commercialization of Balinese traditional music, as meaning is constructed through the interaction between media texts and audiences, who interpret messages based on their cultural background and experiences (Hall 1980). In Kuta's context:

1. Local musicians adopt a negotiated reading, acknowledging globalization while striving to preserve cultural identity. Many integrate gamelan into contemporary music to reach wider audiences.
2. Tourism operators exhibit a dominant reading, treating traditional music as a commercial asset, often prioritizing entertainment over authenticity.
3. Government officials take a negotiated reading, promoting traditional music while implementing policies to safeguard Balinese heritage.
4. Tourists vary in response — some adopt an oppositional reading, critiquing commodification, while others take a dominant reading, viewing performances as entertainment without deeper cultural understanding.

Stakeholders actively contribute to educating tourists about Balinese music. The Kuta Tourism Office, police tourism unit, village authorities, and *pecalang* (traditional security) play a role in visitor education. *Sekeha teruna* (youth organizations) promote traditional arts, while tourism and hospitality schools conduct community outreach programs. Tourists in Kuta should respect and appreciate local traditions through:

1. **Educational programs:** Tour operators and cultural groups can develop workshops and guided tours to teach tourists about Balinese music. Educational institutions like the Indonesian Institute of Arts Bali contribute through projects like "*Mapariguna*", which bridges academia and local traditions.
2. **Authentic cultural experiences:** Encouraging tourists to attend traditional performances is important. Interacting with local musicians fosters genuine appreciation and support for Balinese arts.
3. **Community involvement:** Despite global music influences in Kuta, Balinese music thrives in local communities like *banjars* (village organizations) and *sanggar* (art studios). These groups pass down musical traditions, especially gamelan, through festivals and ritual performances. Events like Festival Seni Budaya, Desa Adat Kuta showcase traditional performances, reinforcing cultural identity. Local ensembles, such as Sekaa Gong Semara Budaya, keep these traditions alive in temple ceremonies, ensuring younger generations learn and preserve Balinese music.

I Ketut Astawa is a lecturer at Politeknik Negeri Bali, specializing in Tourism Management and Marketing. He holds a Master's in Management from Udayana University. Born and raised in Kuta, he has contributed significantly to the development of tourism in Bali, particularly in revitalizing Kuta's appeal as a tourism hub.

I Gede Mudana is Professor of Cultural Tourism and former Head of the Master's Program in Applied Tourism Planning at Politeknik Negeri Bali. He holds a PhD in Cultural Studies and leads innovative tourism promotion projects, including metaverse-based campaigns for destinations like Labuan Bajo in East Nusa Tenggara.

Derinta Entas is Director of Sahid Polytechnic (2023-2025). She is an expert in Cultural Anthropology, Cultural Tourism, and Tourism Marketing. Her academic interests include qualitative social research and cultural heritage studies, with a strong focus on preserving and promoting Indonesia's intangible cultural assets through education and community engagement.

By adopting mindful tourism principles, stakeholders can ensure that Balinese music remains a respected and integral aspect of Bali's cultural identity rather than a mere commodity. Recognizing these dynamics allows for more sustainable policies that balance economic benefits with cultural preservation, ensuring that Kuta's transformation does not come at the cost of its heritage.

Context

Kuta's transformation into a major international tourist hub exemplifies the profound effects of unplanned tourism development, where rapid growth often outpaces cultural and environmental considerations. That's why in musical context, contemporary Western music genres, such as electronic dance music (EDM), reggae, and jazz, dominate the area's nightlife and entertainment venues, marginalizing traditional Balinese music in the process.

Historically, traditional Balinese music was not merely an art form but a vital thread in the fabric of daily life and community rituals. Gamelan ensembles, with their intricate rhythms and layered harmonies, served as both spiritual offerings and communal expressions of identity. However, in contemporary Kuta, these expressions have been relegated to curated cultural events or commercialized spaces, such as hotel dining rooms and tourist-focused performances. This shift represents more than just a change in musical preference; it underscores a broader tension between preserving cultural identity and catering to the demands of global tourism markets.

The marginalization of traditional Balinese music in Kuta has sparked significant debates about its sustainability in a rapidly modernizing and globalizing environment. These discussions revolve around critical questions: Can Balinese music remain a vibrant and relevant cultural force in the face of mounting pressures from tourism-driven modernization? Is it possible to reconcile the economic benefits of catering to international tourists with the need to safeguard the spiritual and cultural essence of traditional music?

This evolving dynamic makes Kuta an essential subject for analysis in the fields of arts and cultural management, sustainable tourism, and cultural policy studies. It serves as a microcosm of the challenges faced by many cultural traditions around the world, where globalization brings both opportunities and risks. The case of Kuta highlights the importance of balancing economic development with cultural preservation, offering valuable lessons for stakeholders seeking to sustain heritage in similarly complex environments.

Challenges

The preservation of Balinese music in Kuta faces significant challenges due to economic, cultural, and generational pressures. The evolving tourist demographics and their expectations create tension between maintaining cultural authenticity and catering to a globalized tourism industry that prioritizes commercial appeal. Historically, Kuta attracted young backpackers and surfers (1960s-1970s) who sought authentic cultural experiences. However, as tourism expanded (1980s-2000s), visitors diversified, including families and package tour groups who prioritized beach activities, shopping, and nightlife over cultural immersion. In the present day (2010s-present), Kuta's tourism landscape is dominated by young travelers (18-35) influenced by social media trends, favoring Western-style nightlife, beach clubs, and "Instagrammable" moments over traditional performances. This demographic shift underscores the struggle of Balinese music to survive in Kuta – modern tourism trends create market pressures favoring contemporary entertainment over traditional art forms. Addressing this challenge requires innovative strategies balancing cultural preservation with evolving tourist expectations.

One major challenge is the dominance of global music genres in Kuta Beach. Despite its small size (1.5 km), Kuta offers diverse musical experiences catering to international tourists. Electronic dance music (EDM), discos, beach clubs, and festivals, while reggae, rock'n'roll, rhythm and blues, jazz, and international pop dominate the music scene.

To address this issue, sustainable cultural tourism strategies should be considered, such as:

1. **Interactive workshops** – Engaging tourists through gamelan workshops can enhance appreciation for Balinese music.
2. **Musical hybridization** – The concept of "*bebalihan*" reflects a contra-hegemonic adaptation to globalization by blending traditional Balinese music with contemporary styles, artists can make it more accessible while preserving its essence (Sudirga 2020).
3. **Active tourist participation** – Encouraging tourists to engage in dance, percussion sessions, or storytelling about Balinese music enhances cultural immersion.
4. **Multilingual Explanations** – Providing translations and digital resources ensures accessibility for tourists unfamiliar with Balinese music's historical and spiritual significance.

Economic pressures further exacerbate the marginalization of traditional music. As tourism shifts toward more profitable and globally appealing genres, opportunities for traditional musicians

continue to shrink. Financial sustainability becomes difficult when venues prioritize music that draws larger audiences. Research indicates that young people's musical preferences significantly shape musicians' practices, linking social and personal factors to both music consumption and creation (Lorenzo-Quiles, Soares-Quadros, and Abril 2021; Bonneville-Roussy et al. 2013). These preferences often vary by age and gender, with younger individuals tending to favor contemporary and mellow styles — an influence that extends to both performance trends and the broader music industry (Cremades-Andreu et al. 2024; Boer et al. 2011). Moreover, high-performing musicians report more frequent experiences of flow, further reinforcing engagement with preferred musical styles (O'Neill 1999).

Hall's encoding-decoding model illustrates how local musicians embed cultural significance into their performances, while tourists and industry stakeholders often interpret them merely as entertainment rather than as expressions of cultural practice. This divergence influences how traditional music is perceived, valued, and preserved. The model also highlights the underlying power dynamics that shape these interpretations (Hall 1980).

"Who controls how Balinese music is presented in Kuta?" (Roby, April 27, 2024)

The tourism industry and event organizers frequently reframe traditional music to fit commercial interests, altering its original cultural meaning. The marginalization of Balinese music is driven by global music preferences, cultural homogenization, and the commodification of Balinese traditions for tourism. The shortage of appropriate performance venues and limited tourist education continues to exacerbate the decline of traditional Balinese music. Nevertheless, cultural festivals such as the Bali Arts Festival (BAF) serve as strongholds of authenticity, celebrating Balinese heritage through traditional dance, music, drama, and vocal arts (Septiawati and Aulia 2023). By resisting the pressures of modernization, BAF plays a vital role in preserving the presence and integrity of Balinese performing arts.

To mitigate cultural erosion, scholars propose sustainable cultural tourism strategies, collaboration between the tourism industry and local communities, and creative hybridization of music. Richards (2018) emphasizes integrating cultural elements into tourism strategies for sustainability. Moreover, Barbieri and Mahoney (2010) explore audience preferences in cultural tourism, highlighting the importance of live performances. Furthermore, Chen (2022) analyzes performing arts' role in boosting tourism economies, while Zhou, Lei, and Yan (2020) examine how performing arts shape tourists' destination perceptions. Other scholars discuss globalization's impact on cultural heritage and the

role of technology in cultural tourism (Okech 2008; Garau 2014).

Addressing cultural erosion requires giving prominence to the preservation of traditional Balinese music. Key strategies include:

1. **Encouraging youth engagement** – Integrating traditional music into education can foster appreciation among younger generations.
2. **Protecting cultural integrity** – Avoiding excessive modification for tourism ensures authenticity.
3. **Creating dedicated spaces** – Establishing performance venues focused on Balinese music supports its visibility.
4. **Promoting cultural exchange** – Initiatives emphasizing genuine interaction between tourists and local musicians help sustain Balinese music.

By fostering collaboration between stakeholders, the tourism industry, and cultural organizations, Kuta can balance modern tourism demands with the preservation of Balinese music, ensuring its sustainability within an evolving tourism landscape, to foster a deeper respect for Balinese music and mitigate cultural erosion, multiple stakeholders must be involved in educating tourists. Each plays a crucial role in shaping visitor perceptions and ensuring that tourism becomes a tool for cultural preservation rather than commodification. Table 1 shows the roles of key stakeholders on educating tourist.

As tourism in Kuta continues to grow, the dominance of modern global music increasingly overshadows traditional Balinese music. However, despite this challenge, traditional music remains deeply rooted in local religious and cultural practices. Unlike other art forms that may fade due to changing entertainment trends, traditional Balinese music is intrinsically tied to Hindu ceremonies and local traditions, ensuring its survival regardless of shifting tourism dynamics. Since the 1970s, Bali has officially adopted a cultural tourism paradigm, as outlined in local regulations (The Regional Regulation or Perda No. 3/1974, No. 3/1991, No. 2/2012, and No. 5/2020). These regulations emphasize that Bali's tourism industry is built upon Balinese culture, which is deeply infused with Hindu values — making the preservation of traditional music not just a cultural effort, but also an integral part of maintaining the island's tourism identity.

While modernization may reduce the number of practitioners, it means traditional Balinese music will never completely disappear. Its role in religious rituals ensures that it remains a vital component of Bali's cultural heritage. To further reinforce its presence in the tourism sector, a multi-stakeholder approach is necessary. By fostering interactive cultural workshops, immersive tourism programs,

TABLE 1

ROLES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS	
Stakeholders	Roles
Local government and cultural institutions	– Establish policies that require or incentivize cultural education in tourism experiences.
	– Fund and support initiatives that integrate traditional Balinese music into public events.
	– Collaborate with local musicians to ensure their work is fairly represented and compensated.
Tourism industry players (hotels, tour operators, and travel agencies)	– Incorporate traditional Balinese music experiences into tour packages.
	– Train hospitality staff to educate tourists about Balinese musical heritage.
	– Promote live traditional performances in hotels and resorts rather than solely relying on Western entertainment.
Balinese musicians, artists, and cultural practitioner.	– Act as cultural ambassadors by engaging with tourists through interactive performances.
	– Offer music workshops or storytelling sessions to educate visitors on the history and significance of Balinese music.
	– Collaborate with social media influencers or content creators to share insights about Balinese music in engaging ways.
Educational institutions and universities	– Develop cultural tourism modules or programs that emphasize the importance of preserving Balinese music.
	– Partner with tour guides and tourism businesses to provide structured learning experiences for visitors.
	– Conduct research on sustainable ways to integrate cultural education into tourism without diluting authenticity.
Tourists themselves	– Encourage responsible tourism through educational campaigns on mindful cultural appreciation.
	– Offer incentives for tourists who participate in authentic Balinese music experiences (e.g., discounts for attending traditional performances).
	– Promote engagement with local musicians rather than passive consumption of simplified tourist-oriented performances.
Digital media and influencers	– Leverage platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok to share educational content on Balinese music.
	– Collaborate with musicians and cultural practitioners to showcase traditional performances to a global audience.
	– Counteract the dominance of Western music in tourism marketing by highlighting the uniqueness of Balinese sounds.
Local authorities and community-based organizations in Kuta	– The Kuta Tourism Office, Police Tourism Unit, village officials handling tourism, and <i>pecalang</i> (traditional security) play a key role in educating tourists about cultural norms, including the significance of traditional music.
	– Youth organizations (<i>sekeha teruna</i>) actively promote traditional arts and music to younger generations, ensuring their continuity.
	– Tourism and hospitality schools in Kuta, both public and private, engage in social service initiatives that educate both tourism professionals and visitors about the value of traditional Balinese music.
	– Public service announcements, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and promotional campaigns — both physical and digital — serve as means of educating tourists about traditional Balinese music.
	– Advertisements promoting live traditional music performances in theaters, hotels, and restaurants help attract tourists to engage with and appreciate Balinese musical heritage.

and storytelling-driven performances, tourists can develop a deeper appreciation for Balinese musical heritage beyond passive consumption. Sustainable tourism regulations, such as mandating the inclusion of traditional music in hospitality and entertainment venues, can further integrate it into mainstream tourism offerings. Additionally, leveraging digital media and public awareness campaigns can shift perceptions, transforming Balinese music from a commodified attraction into a respected cultural legacy. Ultimately, through the collaboration of local governments, tourism industry players, musicians, educators, and tourists themselves, the preservation of Balinese music can move beyond symbolic efforts, ensuring it remains a vibrant and integral part of Bali's cultural identity amid global influences.



Adaptive Strategies

Stakeholders in Kuta have responded to the challenges facing traditional Balinese music with a variety of innovative coping mechanisms. These strategies are driven by local musicians, educators, tourism operators, and cultural policymakers, each playing a vital role in balancing the preservation of cultural authenticity with the demands of modernization. By employing creative approaches, these stakeholders aim to sustain the relevance and integrity of Balinese music in a rapidly changing cultural and economic landscape.

One of the most notable strategies is the hybridization of traditional Balinese music with contemporary styles. Hybridization is part of counter strategy of hegemony in this scene. The hybridization of traditional Balinese culture in general and Balinese music in specific. The hybridization of traditional Balinese music with contemporary styles raises important questions about cultural erosion, as it can dilute the authenticity and significance of traditional practices. While this blending may create new forms of expression and attract diverse audiences, it also risks overshadowing the unique identity of Balinese music. To address these concerns, it is essential to consider how the Balinese community responds to this challenge through strategies such as the “*bebalihan* approach,” as well as the distinction between different types of Balinese dance. In 2015, UNESCO recognized three traditional, namely: *Wali*, *Bebali* and *Bebalihan* (*Balih-balihan*) dance genres as part of the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This recognition took place during a convention held in Windhoek, Namibia, from November 29 to December 4, 2015. The three genres are: (1) *Tari Wali*, which is very sacred, is preserved in its traditional form, reflecting the community's spiritual beliefs and cultural heritage. (2) *Tari Bebal*, which

is a semi-sacred dance, is held in the middle of temple which usually known as *madya mandala* (a part of sacred place) (Bandem 1983). *Tari Bebal* usually combines a mix of entertainment and sacred side either from the music or the dance. (2) *Tari Bebalihan*, which is profane, is primarily performed for entertainment purposes.

In response to the challenges posed by hybridization and cultural erosion, the Balinese community has developed the “*bebalihan* approach,” which emphasizes the importance of maintaining cultural integrity while allowing for creative expression. The term “*bebalihan*” refers to a philosophy of cultural resilience and adaptability, rooted in the belief that traditional practices can coexist with contemporary influences without losing their core identity. This approach involves several key strategies:

1. **Cultural education:** The “*bebalihan* approach” promotes education about traditional Balinese music and its cultural significance. By fostering a deep understanding of their heritage among younger generations, the community can ensure that traditional practices are valued and preserved.
2. **Community involvement:** Engaging local musicians and community members in the hybridization process is crucial. The “*bebalihan* approach” encourages collaboration between traditional musicians and contemporary artists, allowing for the creation of new music that respects and honors traditional elements while exploring innovative expressions.
3. **Cultural festivals and events:** Organizing cultural festivals that celebrate both traditional and contemporary music provides a platform for dialogue and appreciation. These events can showcase the richness of Balinese music, allowing for a coexistence of styles that honors the past while embracing the future.
4. **Balancing tradition and innovation:** The “*bebalihan* approach” advocates for a balance between preserving traditional practices and embracing contemporary influences. This can involve setting guidelines for hybridization that prioritize the authenticity of traditional music while allowing for creative exploration.

An example of music digitalization is Palawara group products, initiated by young Balinese music composer, I Wayan Ari Wijaya, focusing on a gamelan usually used in cultural ceremony during Nyepi (silent day) when the youngster gathers to make *ogoh-ogoh* (a manifest of bad behaviour of human transform into a form of bhutakala or evil). His work not only tries to blend a global taste into the gamelan instrument, but also preserves his music digitally in several online music platform. This action also indicates to broaden his music awareness to the global stage. Moreover, far before I Wayan

Ari Wijaya, Gus Teja with his album “Bali World Music” (<https://www.gustejaworldmusic.com/>) introducing flute Balinese music to the industry. This music is often played in restaurants, hotel lobby or cafe to increase the ambience and the presence of cultural music in tourism industry. In 2024, together with Garin Nugroho who is a famous art and film director in Indonesia, a Balinese musician named I Wayan Sudirana in the fields of music, drama and dance created a concept for music and performance without dialogue entitled “Samsara” was performed in the tourist area of Nusa Dua, South Kuta, in 2024, creating a hybridization of gamelan with electronic music.

Educational initiatives also play a pivotal role in preserving and promoting Balinese music. These programs, aimed at both local youth and international visitors, provide opportunities to engage directly with the music through workshops, gamelan classes, and cultural immersion experiences. The design and implementation of educational programs aimed at enhancing tourists’ understanding of traditional Balinese music typically involve a collaboration among various stakeholders, including local cultural organizations, tourism boards, community leaders, and educational institutions.

While educational programs can provide tourists with a deeper understanding of Balinese music and its cultural significance, there is a risk that these initiatives may inadvertently prioritize a festive, folkloric representation of the music over its authentic, traditional context. Cultural tourism often emphasizes performance and spectacle, which can lead to the commodification of cultural practices (Richards 2018). This commodification may result in a version of traditional music that is tailored to meet tourist expectations rather than preserving its original form and meaning. Moreover, the design of these programs can sometimes reflect the interests of the tourism industry more than the needs and desires of the local community. For instance, if educational programs are primarily aimed at enhancing the tourist experience, they may focus on entertaining aspects of Balinese music while neglecting its deeper cultural and spiritual dimensions. This can lead to a superficial understanding of the art form, ultimately undermining the very traditions that these programs seek to promote.

To mitigate these risks, it is essential for stakeholders to engage local musicians and cultural practitioners in the development of educational programs. While educational programs can enhance tourists’ appreciation of Balinese music, careful consideration must be given to their design and implementation. By involving local stakeholders and prioritizing authenticity, these programs can serve as a valuable tool for cultural preservation

rather than a vehicle for cultural erosion. By transforming traditional musical forms into engaging festival experiences, communities can not only provide authentic cultural immersion for visitors but also create direct economic opportunities for local artists, musicians, and related support industries. Such initiatives ensure that the vibrant heritage of traditional music remains alive and relevant, passing it down to future generations while simultaneously contributing to the local economy and diversifying the tourism offerings. The Kuta Beach Festival, Festival Seni Budaya Desa Adat Kuta, and Beachwalk Kuta Festival are annual events celebrating Balinese culture through traditional music, gamelan, and dance. These festivals aim to promote local heritage, engage the community, and attract tourists, showcasing the richness of Balinese traditions in a vibrant atmosphere. The Kuta Beach Festival, initiated in 2002, is a lively celebration that transforms Kuta Beach into a cultural hub, featuring traditional Balinese music, gamelan performances, and captivating dance shows. This festival not only highlights the artistic talents of local performers but also serves as a platform for cultural exchange, drawing both locals and tourists to experience the essence of Bali’s rich heritage. The Festival Seni Budaya Desa Adat Kuta, held annually since 2010, focuses on preserving and promoting the unique customs and traditions of the Kuta village. It showcases a variety of traditional art forms, including dance, music, and crafts, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the local culture while fostering a sense of community pride among residents. Lastly, the Beachwalk Kuta Festival, which began in 2015, combines modern shopping experiences with traditional cultural displays. This festival features live performances of gamelan and traditional dances, creating a dynamic environment where contemporary and traditional elements coexist. Together, these festivals play a crucial role in celebrating and sustaining Bali’s cultural identity, making them essential events for anyone looking to explore the island’s vibrant traditions.

This interaction also opens the door for more diverse opportunities for collaboration, whether between local musicians and international artists or through the creation of music festivals and events that are broadcast globally, there are several collaborations that exist in the current situation:

1. **Collaborations with international artists:** One notable example of collaboration is the partnership between Balinese gamelan musicians and renowned international artists. For instance, the Gamelan Sekar Jaya, a Balinese gamelan ensemble based in California, has collaborated with various artists across genres, including jazz and

contemporary music. Their performances often blend traditional gamelan with modern influences, showcasing the adaptability of Balinese music while still honoring its roots. This type of collaboration not only introduces Balinese music to new audiences but also fosters a dialogue between cultures, enriching both the local and global music scenes. Another example is the collaboration between Balinese musicians and the British composer David Arnold, who incorporated gamelan instruments into his film scores. This fusion of traditional Balinese music with contemporary film music highlights the versatility of gamelan and its ability to resonate in diverse contexts, further promoting its appreciation on a global scale.

2. **Global music festivals featuring Balinese music:** Bali Arts Festival (*Pesta Kesenian Bali*), held annually since 1979, is a significant event that showcases the richness of Balinese culture, including traditional music and dance. In recent years, the festival has expanded its reach by inviting international artists to perform alongside local musicians, creating a platform for cultural exchange. The festival not only celebrates Balinese heritage but also emphasizes the importance of collaboration in preserving and promoting traditional art forms. Additionally, the Ubud Village Jazz Festival (UVJF) has featured Balinese musicians alongside international jazz artists, creating a unique fusion of styles that attracts a diverse audience. This festival serves as a testament to the resilience of the Balinese community, as it embraces modern influences while maintaining a strong connection to traditional music.
3. **Digital collaborations and global reach:** The rise of digital platforms has enabled local musicians to collaborate with international artists in innovative ways. For example, the “Bali World Music” project, which features Gus Teja’s collaborations with artists from various genres, showcases how traditional music can be adapted and appreciated in contemporary contexts. These collaborations are often shared on platforms like Spotify, Joox, Soundcloud, YouTube and social media, where audiences can engage with the content and provide feedback, further fostering dialogue.
4. **Kuta’s community initiatives and cultural preservation:** Local initiatives, such as the Kuta Beach Festival and the Festival Seni Budaya Desa Adat Kuta, actively promote traditional Balinese music and dance while encouraging community participation. These festivals not only provide a platform for local artists to showcase their talents but also engage tourists in the cultural heritage of Bali.

Digital platforms have revolutionized the way Balinese music can be promoted and preserved, offering powerful tools for reaching a global audience in unprecedented ways. Social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, as well as streaming services such as Spotify and Apple Music, allow Balinese musicians to share their work beyond the geographical limitations of Kuta and Bali, to reconcile the apparent contradiction regarding the impact of digital platforms on traditional Balinese music, it is essential to recognize that while these platforms can indeed promote mainstream and global culture, they also provide unique opportunities for local musicians to showcase their artistry and connect with a broader audience. Here’s how digital platforms can effectively boost the careers of local musicians and enhance the knowledge and appreciation of traditional Balinese music:

1. **Increased visibility and accessibility:** Digital platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, and social media channels allow local musicians to share their music with a global audience without the need for traditional gatekeepers like record labels or radio stations.
2. **Cultural exchange and collaboration:** Digital platforms facilitate cultural exchange by connecting Balinese musicians with artists from different backgrounds and genres, for example, a Balinese musician might collaborate with a global artist to create a cross-genre piece that incorporates traditional gamelan sounds, thereby introducing Balinese music to fans of other genres and fostering appreciation for its uniqueness.
3. **Educational content and resources:** Many digital platforms offer educational content that can enhance understanding and appreciation of traditional Balinese music. Musicians and cultural organizations can create tutorials, documentaries, and behind-the-scenes videos that explain the cultural significance of their music, the instruments used, and the stories behind the performances. This educational aspect can spark curiosity among viewers, encouraging them to explore Balinese culture more deeply. For instance, a series of videos showcasing the intricacies of gamelan music can help demystify the art form for a global audience.
4. **Direct engagement with audiences:** Social media platforms allow musicians to engage directly with their audiences, fostering a sense of community and connection. Musicians can share their personal stories, cultural insights, and the significance of their music, creating a narrative that resonates with listeners. This direct engagement can lead to a deeper appreciation for traditional Balinese music, as audiences gain insight into the cultural context and emotional depth of the performances.

5. **Opportunities for live performances:** Digital platforms can also serve as a springboard for live performances. Musicians who gain popularity online may receive invitations to perform at international festivals, cultural events, or collaborations with other artists. These opportunities not only enhance their careers but also allow them to serve as cultural ambassadors, sharing the richness of Balinese musical heritage with global audiences and fostering cross-cultural understanding through artistic exchange.

The resilience and creativity of the Balinese community in preserving their heritage are clearly reflected in their collaborations with international artists, participation in global music festivals, and strategic use of digital platforms to promote traditional music. By harnessing these platforms for visibility, collaboration, education, and direct engagement, Balinese musicians are successfully introducing their musical traditions to diverse global audiences, sparking curiosity and deepening appreciation for its distinctive cultural value.



Discussion

This case study illuminates the intricate dynamics of preserving traditional Balinese music amid Kuta's rapid tourism development. Since the 1960s, Kuta's soundscape has undergone dramatic shifts, with global genres like EDM, reggae, and jazz dominating, marginalizing traditional music. However, the collaborative efforts of diverse stakeholders — including local musicians, cultural organizations, and the tourism industry — have led to innovative coping mechanisms aimed at safeguarding Bali's musical heritage. The adaptive strategies identified in this study encompass a wide range of approaches, from organized auditions and competitions to the integration of Balinese elements in contemporary genres. These efforts, including musical hybridization, educational initiatives, festivals, and the utilization of digital technology, reflect a delicate balance between tradition and evolution. They showcase the resilience of Balinese culture in the face of globalization, highlighting the potential for traditional music to coexist with modern influences.

To effectively address the challenges of cultural erosion, economic disparities, and waning youth interest, a multifaceted approach is necessary. This includes:

1. **Targeted tourist education programs:** Implementing educational initiatives that inform tourists about the cultural significance of traditional Balinese music can foster greater appreciation and respect. These programs should be designed to engage visitors in meaningful ways, encouraging them to participate in cultural experiences rather than merely observing.

2. **Collaborative business models:** Fostering partnerships between traditional musicians and the tourism industry can create sustainable income sources for artists while enhancing the authenticity of the tourist experience. Collaborative models could include joint performances, workshops, and cultural events that highlight traditional music.

3. **Modernizing music education:** Integrating technology into music education can attract younger generations to traditional music. By utilizing digital platforms for learning and collaboration, educators can make traditional music more accessible and relevant to today's youth.

4. **Glocalization:** Applying the concept of "glocalization" allows for the selective adaptation of global elements while preserving the cultural essence of Balinese music. This approach can help traditional musicians innovate without losing their cultural identity.

Creating multifunctional spaces in Kuta that accommodate authentic performances while meeting modern tourism needs is crucial. These spaces can serve as venues for traditional music, providing a platform for local artists to showcase their talents and engage with tourists. Additionally, implementing zoning strategies to protect sacred musical traditions will help ensure that cultural practices are preserved amidst the pressures of commercialization.

Strengthening partnerships between music communities, the tourism sector, local government, and media is essential for fostering a supportive environment for traditional music. Collaborative efforts can lead to more effective marketing strategies, increased visibility for local artists, and a shared commitment to cultural preservation.

While this case study provides valuable insights, it also highlights the need for further research. Future studies should explore how traditional music in Kuta can play a more significant role in developing cultural tourism, particularly music tourism, as a complement to existing coastal tourism activities. Additionally, research is needed to investigate how tourism and its associated economic activities can better nurture and sustain the existence of traditional music.

In conclusion, while traditional Balinese music in Kuta faces formidable challenges, the adaptive and collaborative mechanisms in place offer hope for its sustainability and evolution. The long-term success of these efforts will hinge on maintaining a delicate equilibrium between preservation and innovation, ensuring that the essence and cultural value of Balinese music endure. As Kuta continues to evolve, it serves as a compelling case study for destinations worldwide grappling with the

complexities of cultural preservation in an increasingly globalized tourism landscape. By embracing a proactive and collaborative approach, stakeholders can work together to ensure that traditional Balinese music not only survives but thrives in the modern era.

Conclusion

The case of Balinese music in Kuta highlights the intricate interplay between cultural preservation and the pressures of a rapidly globalizing tourism industry. As tourism development accelerates, traditional Balinese music faces marginalization, competing with global music trends that dominate Kuta's entertainment landscape. However, amidst these challenges, resilience emerges through adaptive strategies such as cultural hybridization, community-driven education, mindful tourism, and digital engagement. By integrating traditional music into tourism experiences, fostering cultural education, and utilizing digital platforms, Balinese music can remain relevant in contemporary society without losing its authenticity. Ultimately, the sustainability of Balinese music in Kuta will depend on collective efforts that prioritize cultural integrity over mere commodification, ensuring that the island's rich musical heritage continues to be an essential part of Bali's identity.

Teaching Notes

IJAM Case Studies are available for use in educational settings for a fee of \$5.00 CAN per student. If you would like to consider using this IJAM Case Study in class, a review copy of this case and teaching notes is available by request at ijam@hec.ca.

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