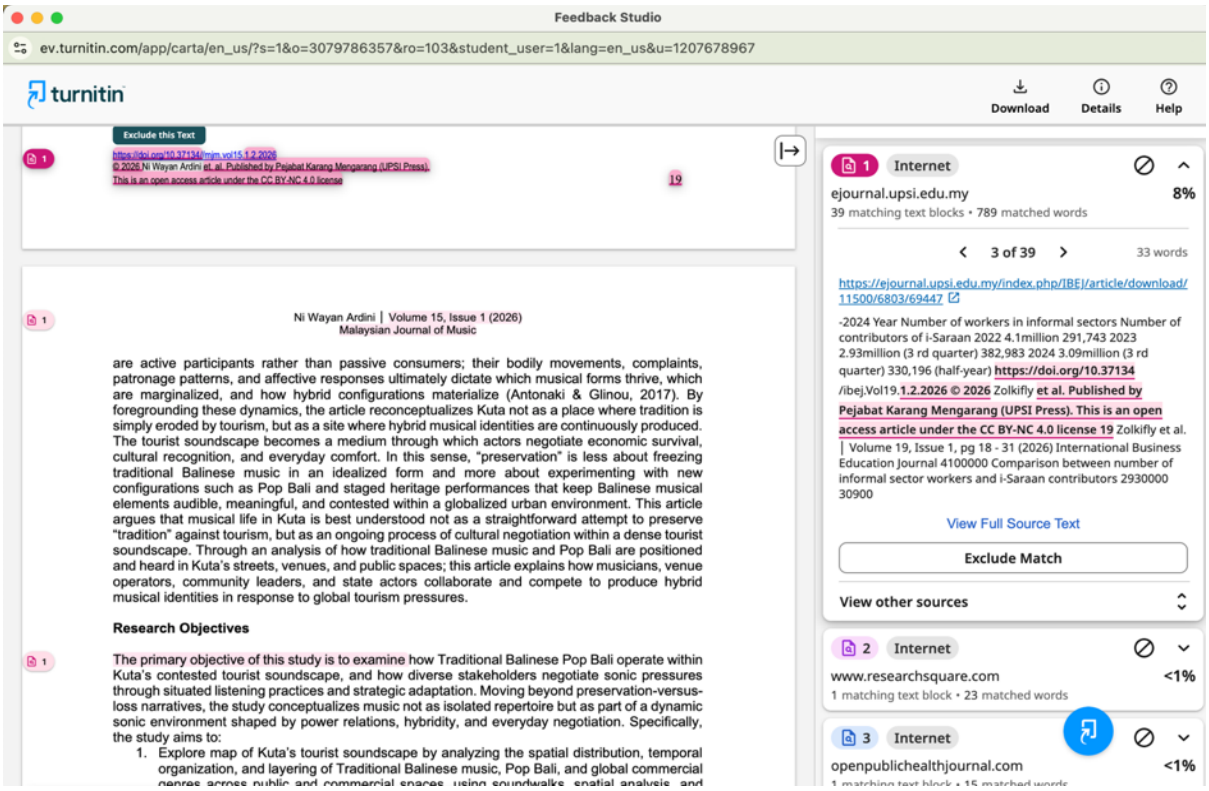
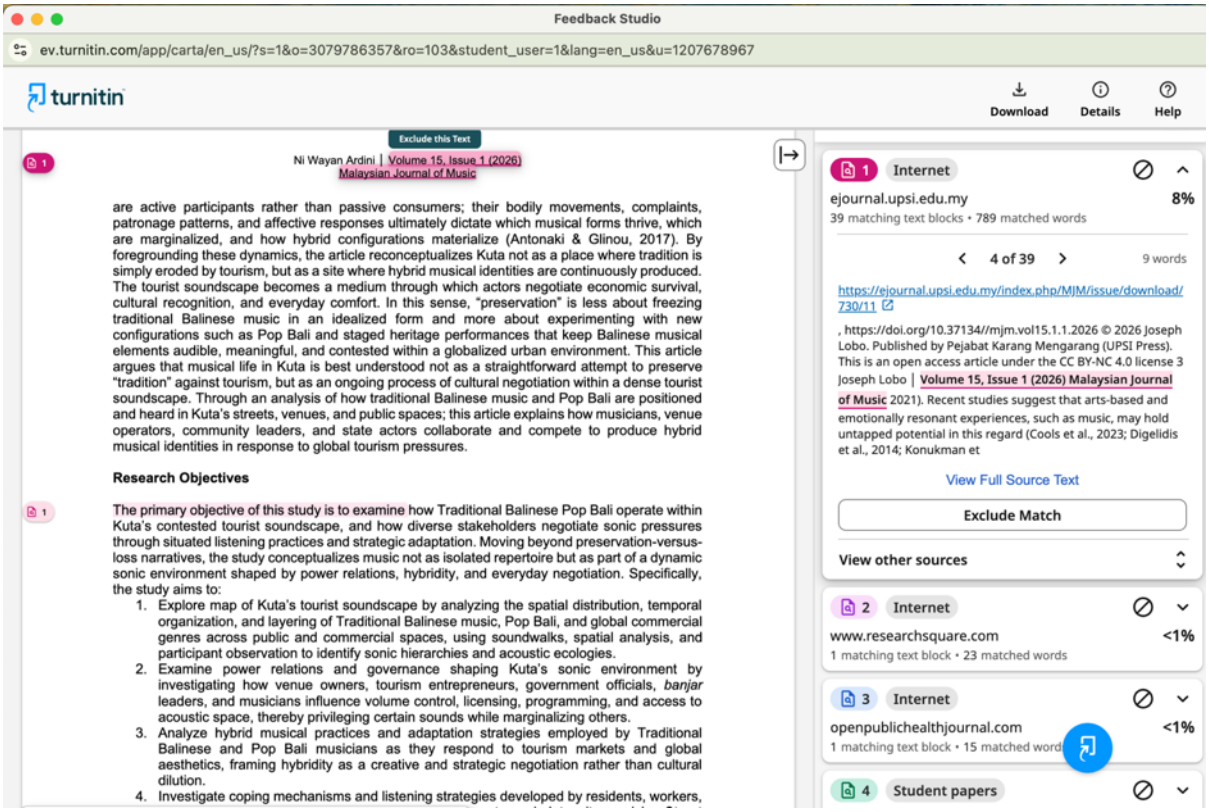
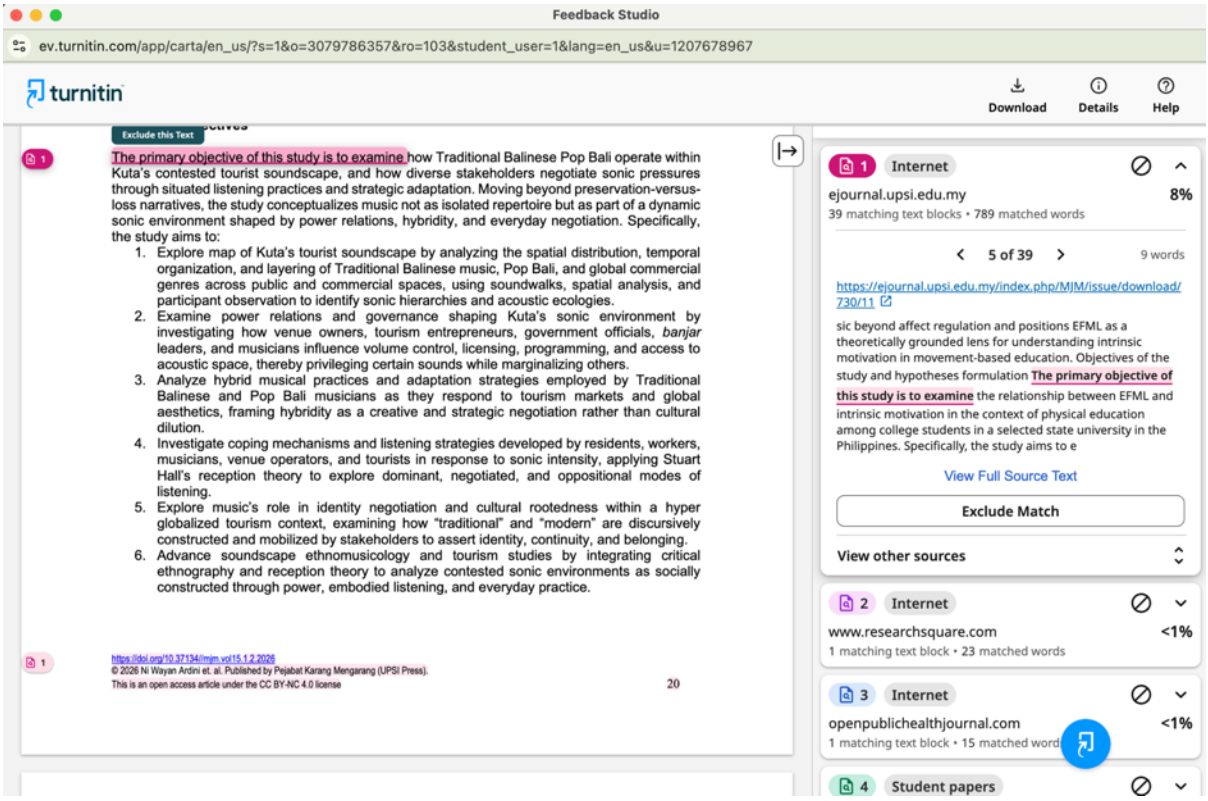
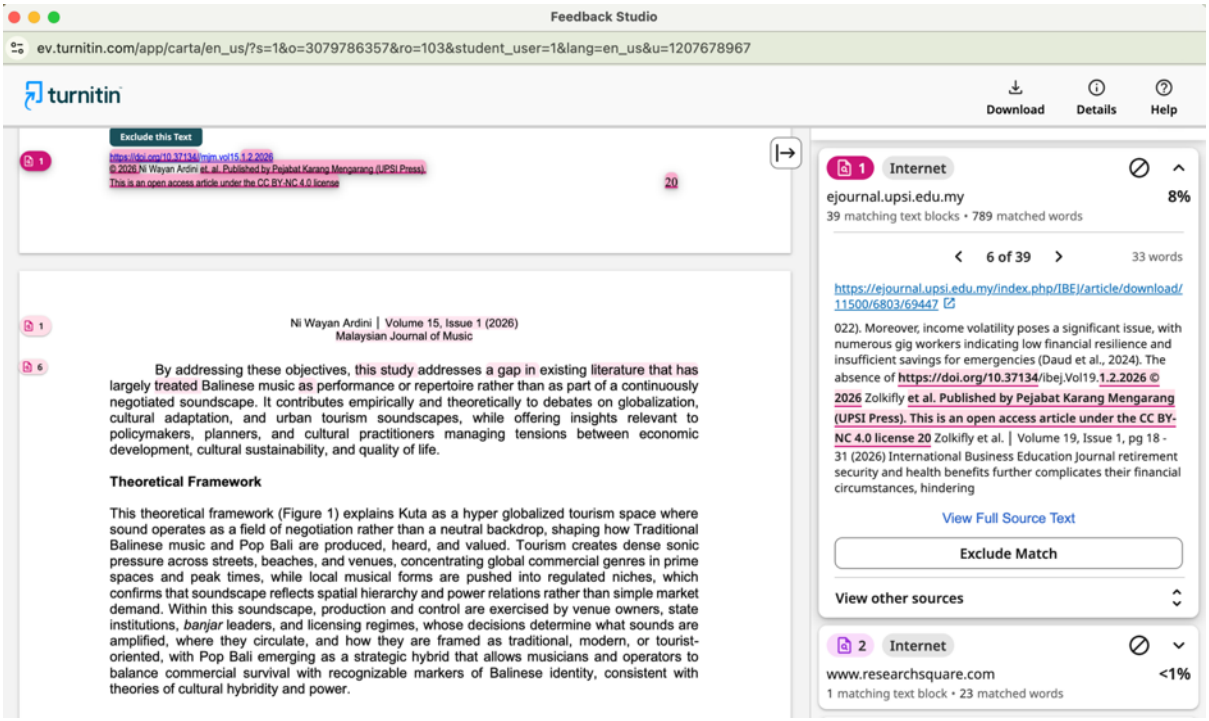
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are active participants rather than passive consumers; their bodily movements, complaints, patronage patterns, and affective responses ultimately dictate which musical forms thrive, which are marginalized, and how hybrid configurations materialize (Antonaki & Glinou, 2017). By foregrounding these dynamics, the article reconceptualizes Kuta not as a place where tradition is simply eroded by tourism, but as a site where hybrid musical identities are continuously produced. The tourist soundscape becomes a medium through which actors negotiate economic survival, cultural recognition, and everyday comfort. In this sense, "preservation" is less about freezing traditional Balinese music in an idealized form and more about experimenting with new configurations such as Pop Bali and staged heritage performances that keep Balinese musical elements audible, meaningful, and contested within a globalized urban environment. This article argues that musical life in Kuta is best understood not as a straightforward attempt to preserve "tradition" against tourism, but as an ongoing process of cultural negotiation within a dense tourist soundscape. Through an analysis of how traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are positioned and heard in Kuta's streets, venues, and public spaces; this article explains how musicians, venue operators, community leaders, and state actors collaborate and compete to produce hybrid musical identities in response to global tourism pressures.
Research Objectives
The primary objective of this study is to examine how Traditional Balinese Pop Bali operate within Kuta's contested tourist soundscape, and how diverse stakeholders negotiate sonic pressures through situated listening practices and strategic adaptation. Moving beyond preservation-versus-loss narratives, the study conceptualizes music not as isolated repertoire but as part of a dynamic sonic environment shaped by power relations, hybridity, and everyday negotiation. Specifically, the study aims to:
1. Explore map of Kuta's tourist soundscape by analyzing the spatial distribution, temporal organization, and layering of Traditional Balinese music, Pop Bali, and global commercial
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-2024 Year Number of workers in informal sectors Number of contributors of i-Saraan 2022 4.1million 291,743 2023 2.93million (3 rd quarter) 382,983 2024 3.09million (3 rd quarter) 330,196 (half-year) https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 19 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal 4100000 Comparison between number of informal sector workers and i-Saraan contributors 2930000 30900
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2. Examine power relations and governance shaping Kuta's sonic environment by investigating how venue owners, tourism entrepreneurs, government officials, *banjar* leaders, and musicians influence volume control, licensing, programming, and access to acoustic space, thereby privileging certain sounds while marginalizing others.
3. Analyze hybrid musical practices and adaptation strategies employed by Traditional Balinese and Pop Bali musicians as they respond to tourism markets and global aesthetics, framing hybridity as a creative and strategic negotiation rather than cultural dilution.
4. Investigate coping mechanisms and listening strategies developed by residents, workers,
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4. Investigate coping mechanisms and listening strategies developed by residents, workers, musicians, venue operators, and tourists in response to sonic intensity, applying Stuart Hall's reception theory to explore dominant, negotiated, and oppositional modes of listening.
5. Explore music's role in identity negotiation and cultural rootedness within a hyper globalized tourism context, examining how "traditional" and "modern" are discursively constructed and mobilized by stakeholders to assert identity, continuity, and belonging.
6. Advance soundscape ethnomusicology and tourism studies by integrating critical ethnography and reception theory to analyze contested sonic environments as socially constructed through power, embodied listening, and everyday practice.
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sic beyond affect regulation and positions EFML as a theoretically grounded lens for understanding intrinsic motivation in movement-based education. Objectives of the study and hypotheses formulation The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between EFML and intrinsic motivation in the context of physical education among college students in a selected state university in the Philippines. Specifically, the study aims to e
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Theoretical Framework
This theoretical framework (Figure 1) explains Kuta as a hyper globalized tourism space where sound operates as a field of negotiation rather than a neutral backdrop, shaping how Traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are produced, heard, and valued. Tourism creates dense sonic pressure across streets, beaches, and venues, concentrating global commercial genres in prime spaces and peak times, while local musical forms are pushed into regulated niches, which confirms that soundscape reflects spatial hierarchy and power relations rather than simple market demand. Within this soundscape, production and control are exercised by venue owners, state institutions, banjar leaders, and licensing regimes, whose decisions determine what sounds are amplified, where they circulate, and how they are framed as traditional, modern, or tourist-oriented, with Pop Bali emerging as a strategic hybrid that allows musicians and operators to balance commercial survival with recognizable markers of Balinese identity, consistent with theories of cultural hybridity and power.
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022). Moreover, income volatility poses a significant issue, with numerous gig workers indicating low financial resilience and insufficient savings for emergencies (Daud et al., 2024). The absence of https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 20 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal retirement security and health benefits further complicates their financial circumstances, hindering
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LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Balinese music and tourism has evolved from examining isolated performances to understanding music as part of contested everyday soundscapes shaped by power, hybridity, and active listener engagement. Early studies emphasized the tension between cultural continuity and commercialization, demonstrating how performances are adapted, commodified, and staged for visitors while maintaining ritual and social functions (Ardini, 2017; Mudana *et al*., 2018). Rather than framing these changes as straightforward cultural decline, scholars increasingly conceptualize them as processes of adaptation and negotiation influenced by economic dependence, artistic labor, institutional support, and cultural policy. This perspective positions musical life in tourist areas like Kuta not as simple preservation or loss, but as part of broader transformations in urban space, labor markets, and governance structures. Building on this

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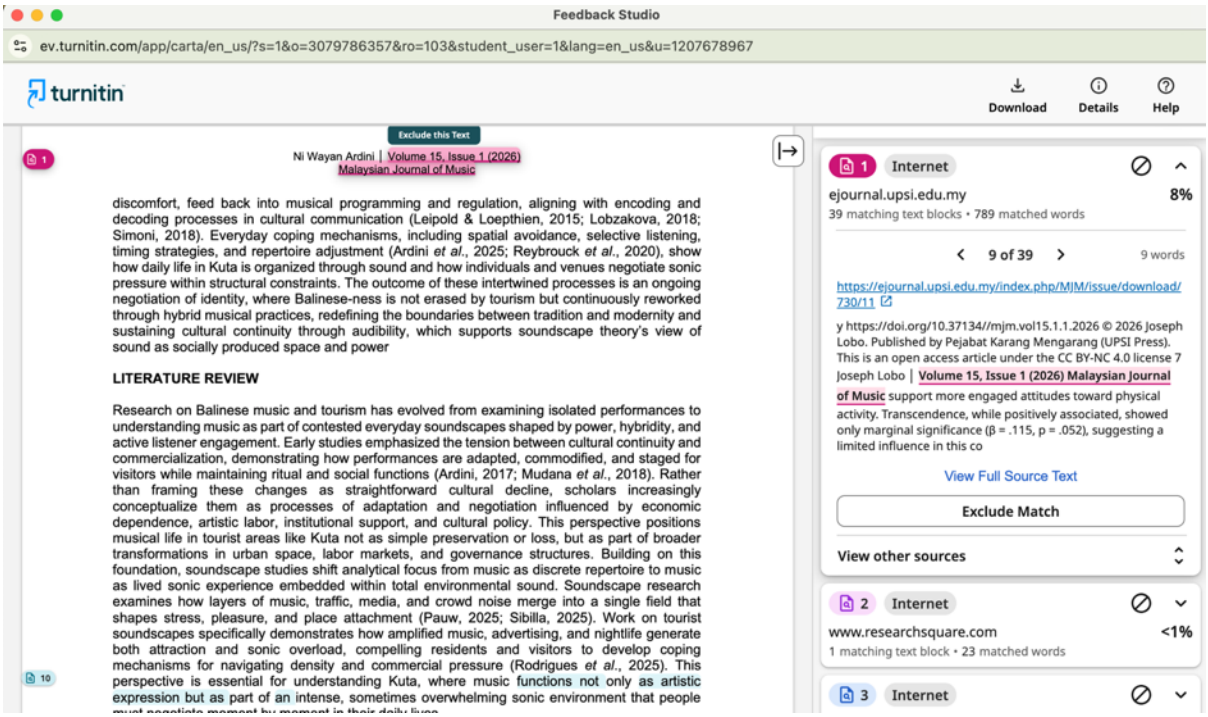
tform companies and workers, workplace injury compensation, and anti-discrimination measures (Medina, 2025). For example, platform operators can purchase workplace injury compensation (WIC) for their https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 21 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal workers (Ministry of Manpower of Singapore, 2024). These measures aim to address long-standing chall

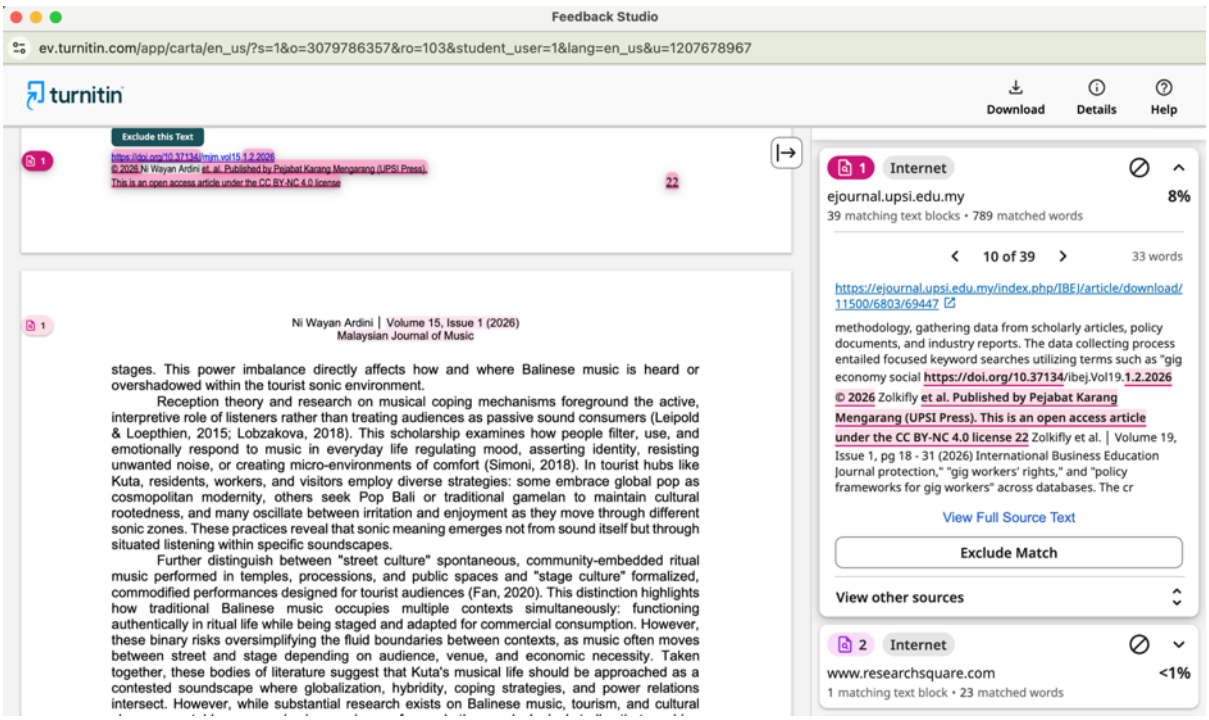
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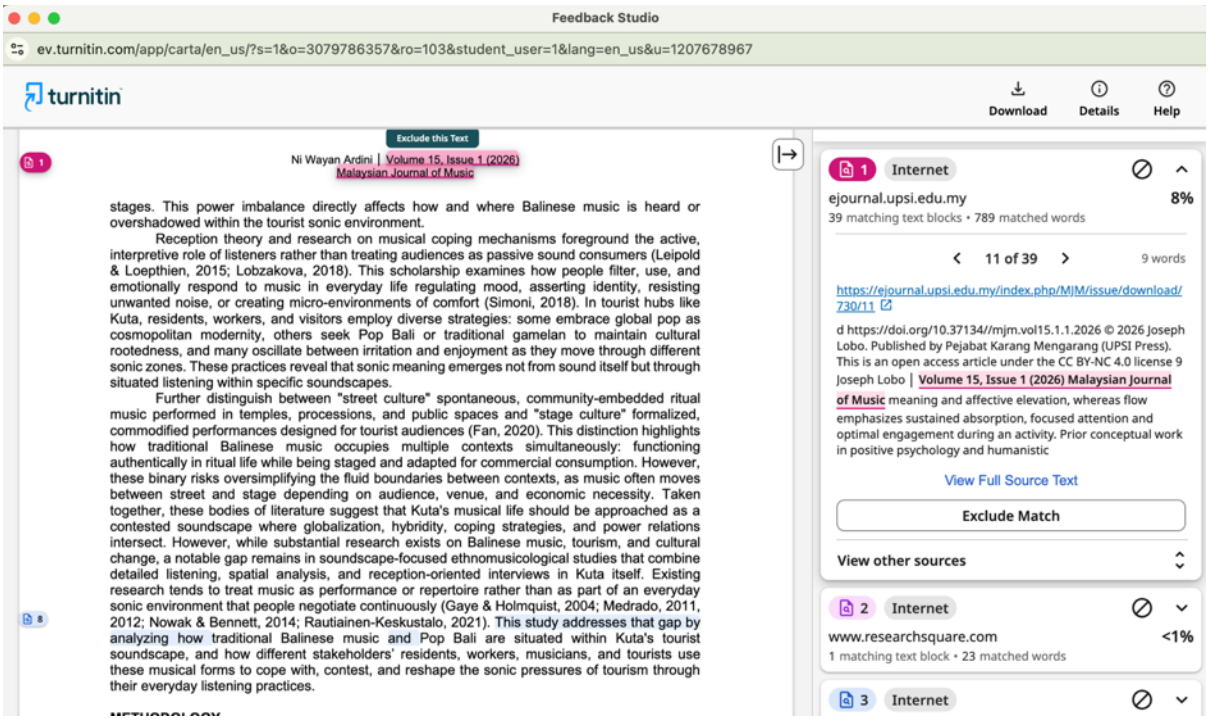
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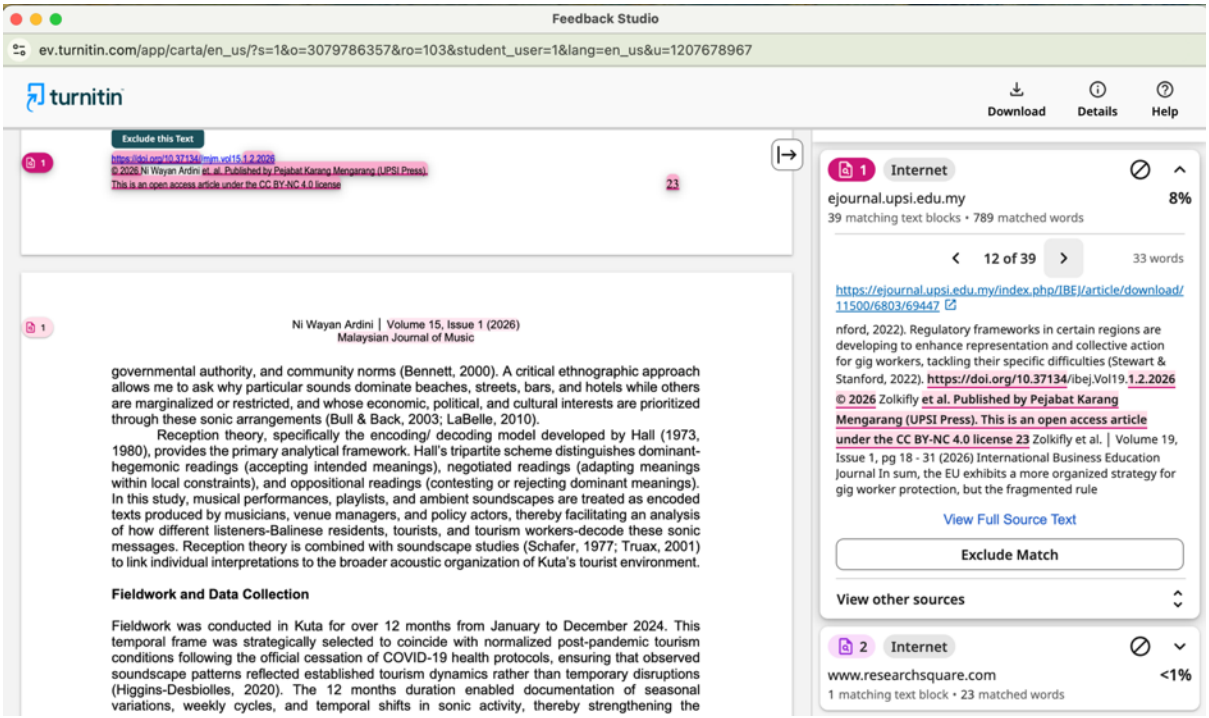
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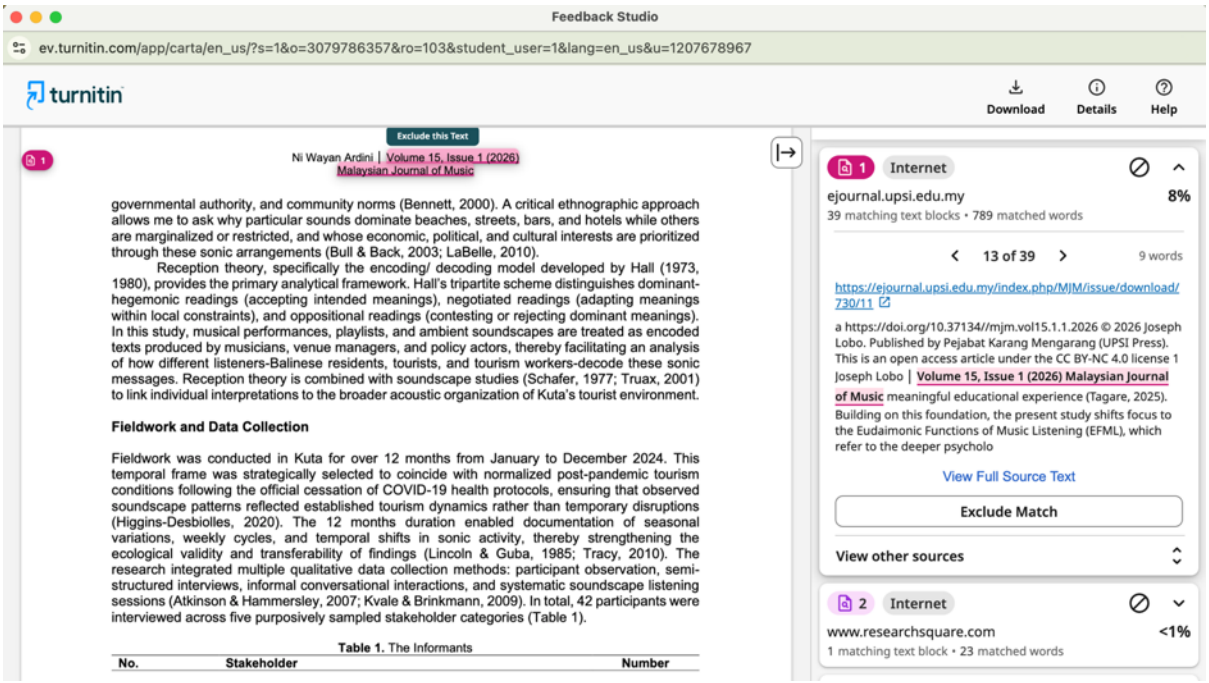
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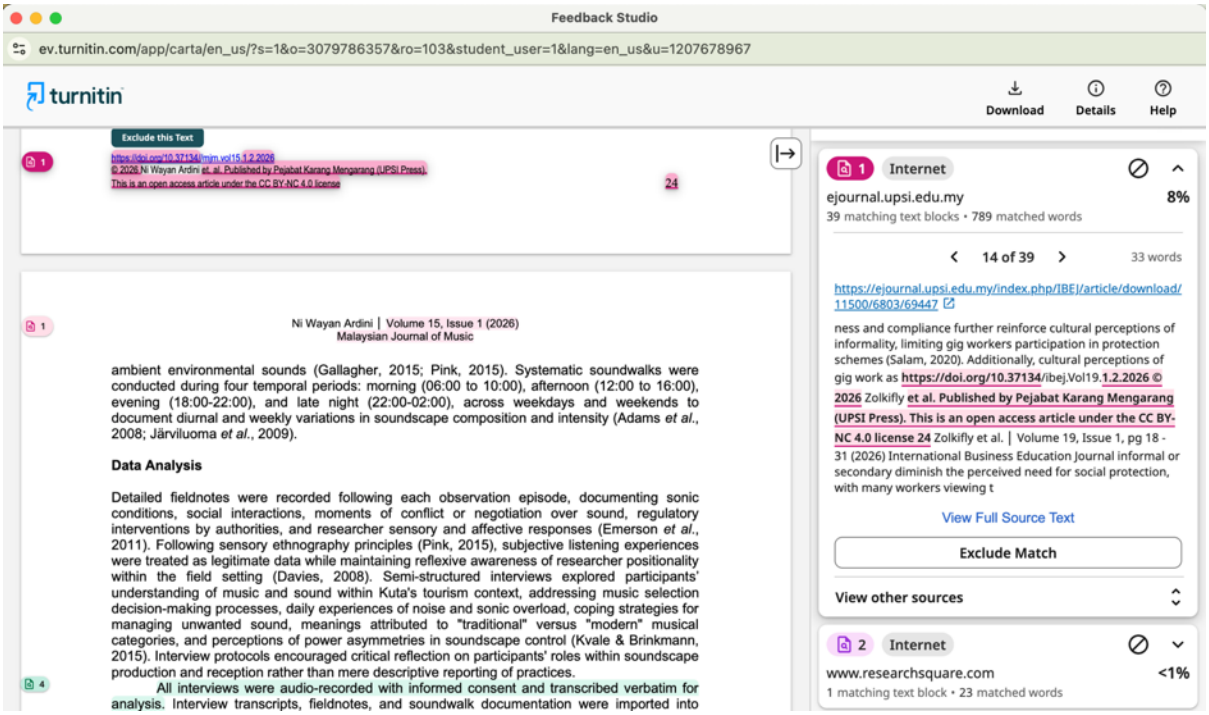

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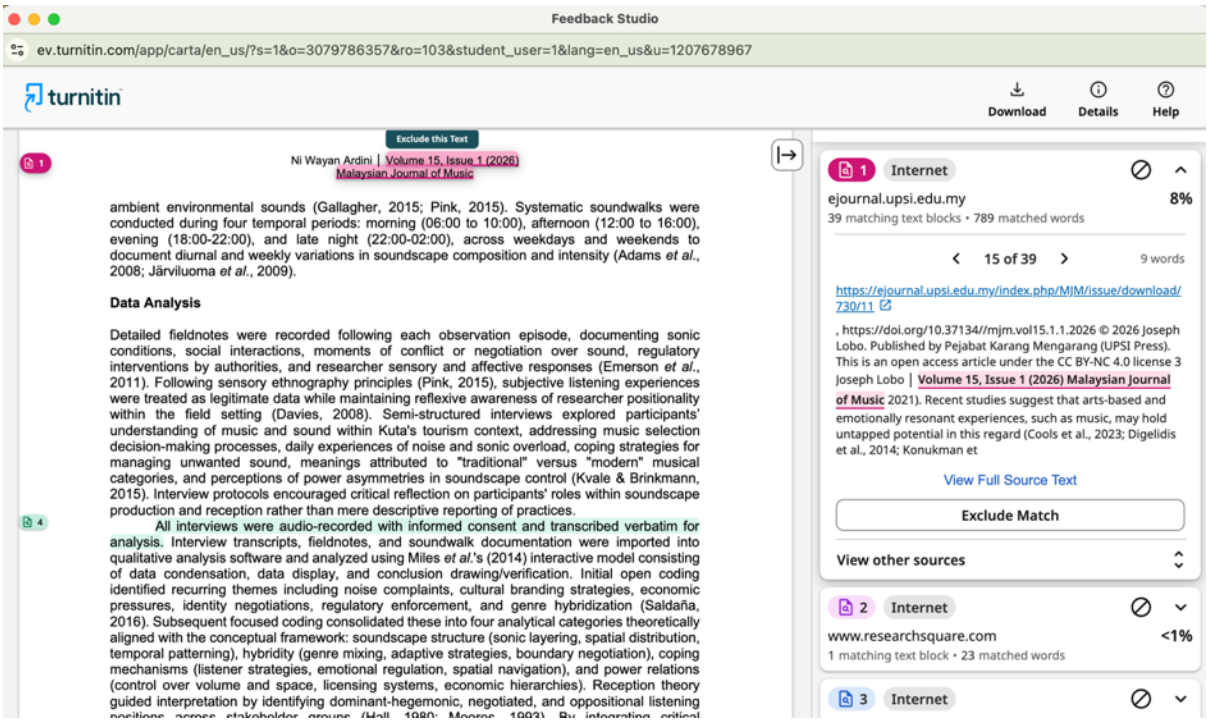

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stages. This power imbalance directly affects how and where Balinese music is heard or overshadowed within the tourist sonic environment.
Reception theory and research on musical coping mechanisms foreground the active, interpretive role of listeners rather than treating audiences as passive sound consumers (Leipold & Loepthien, 2015; Lobzakova, 2018). This scholarship examines how people filter, use, and emotionally respond to music in everyday life regulating mood, asserting identity, resisting unwanted noise, or creating micro-environments of comfort (Simoni, 2018). In tourist hubs like Kuta, residents, workers, and visitors employ diverse strategies: some embrace global pop as cosmopolitan modernity, others seek Pop Bali or traditional gamelan to maintain cultural rootedness, and many oscillate between irritation and enjoyment as they move through different sonic zones. These practices reveal that sonic meaning emerges not from sound itself but through situated listening within specific soundscapes.
Further distinguish between "street culture" spontaneous, community-embedded ritual music performed in temples, processions, and public spaces and "stage culture" formalized, commodified performances designed for tourist audiences (Fan, 2020). This distinction highlights how traditional Balinese music occupies multiple contexts simultaneously: functioning authentically in ritual life while being staged and adapted for commercial consumption. However, these binary risks oversimplifying the fluid boundaries between contexts, as music often moves between street and stage depending on audience, venue, and economic necessity. Taken together, these bodies of literature suggest that Kuta's musical life should be approached as a contested soundscape where globalization, hybridity, coping strategies, and power relations intersect. However, while substantial research exists on Balinese music, tourism, and cultural
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methodology, gathering data from scholarly articles, policy documents, and industry reports. The data collecting process entailed focused keyword searches utilizing terms such as "gig economy social https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 22 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal protection," "gig workers' rights," and "policy frameworks for gig workers" across databases. The cr
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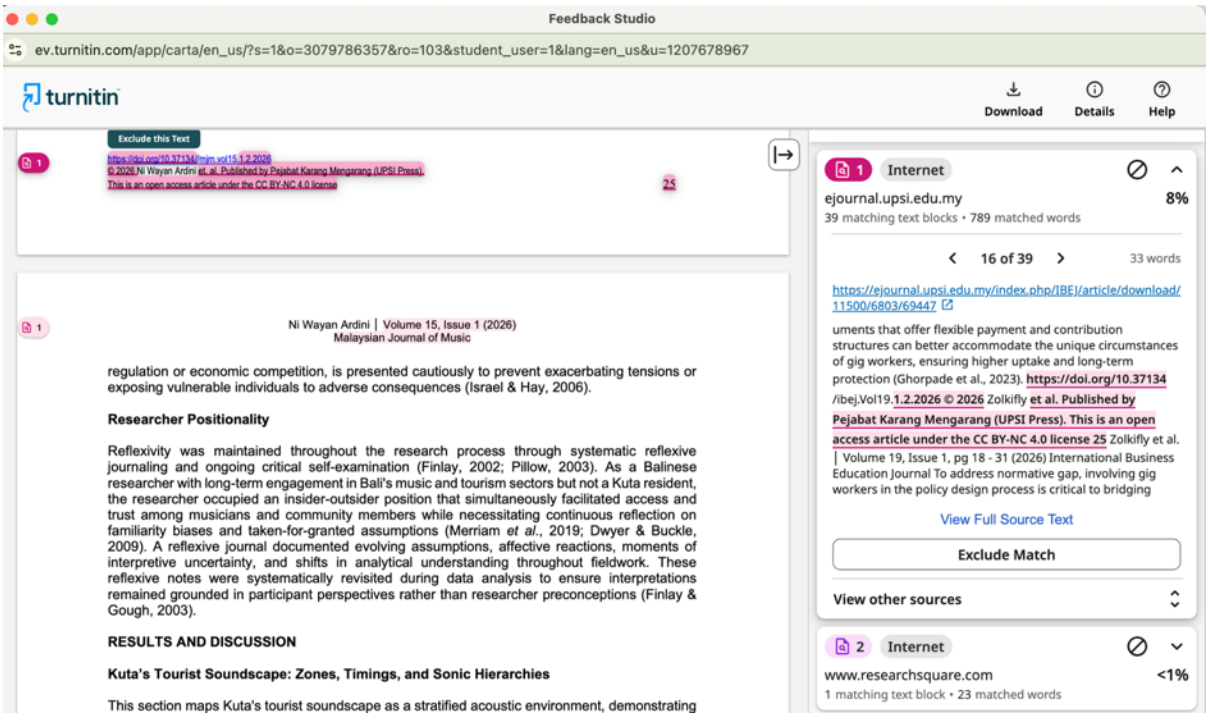

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stages. This power imbalance directly affects how and where Balinese music is heard or overshadowed within the tourist sonic environment.
Reception theory and research on musical coping mechanisms foreground the active, interpretive role of listeners rather than treating audiences as passive sound consumers (Leipold & Loepthien, 2015; Lobzakova, 2018). This scholarship examines how people filter, use, and emotionally respond to music in everyday life regulating mood, asserting identity, resisting unwanted noise, or creating micro-environments of comfort (Simoni, 2018). In tourist hubs like Kuta, residents, workers, and visitors employ diverse strategies: some embrace global pop as cosmopolitan modernity, others seek Pop Bali or traditional gamelan to maintain cultural rootedness, and many oscillate between irritation and enjoyment as they move through different sonic zones. These practices reveal that sonic meaning emerges not from sound itself but through situated listening within specific soundscapes.
Further distinguish between "street culture" spontaneous, community-embedded ritual music performed in temples, processions, and public spaces and "stage culture" formalized, commodified performances designed for tourist audiences (Fan, 2020). This distinction highlights how traditional Balinese music occupies multiple contexts simultaneously: functioning authentically in ritual life while being staged and adapted for commercial consumption. However, these binary risks oversimplifying the fluid boundaries between contexts, as music often moves between street and stage depending on audience, venue, and economic necessity. Taken together, these bodies of literature suggest that Kuta's musical life should be approached as a contested soundscape where globalization, hybridity, coping strategies, and power relations intersect. However, while substantial research exists on Balinese music, tourism, and cultural change, a notable gap remains in soundscape-focused ethnomusicological studies that combine detailed listening, spatial analysis, and reception-oriented interviews in Kuta itself. Existing research tends to treat music as performance or repertoire rather than as part of an everyday sonic environment that people negotiate continuously (Gaye & Holmquist, 2004; Medrado, 2011, 2012; Nowak & Bennett, 2014; Rautiainen-Keskustalo, 2021). This study addresses that gap by analyzing how traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are situated within Kuta's tourist soundscape, and how different stakeholders' residents, workers, musicians, and tourists use these musical forms to cope with, contest, and reshape the sonic pressures of tourism through their everyday listening practices.
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d https://doi.org/10.37134//mjm.vol15.1.1.2026 © 2026 Joseph Lobo. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 9 Joseph Lobo | Volume 15, Issue 1 (2026) Malaysian Journal of Music meaning and affective elevation, whereas flow emphasizes sustained absorption, focused attention and optimal engagement during an activity. Prior conceptual work in positive psychology and humanistic
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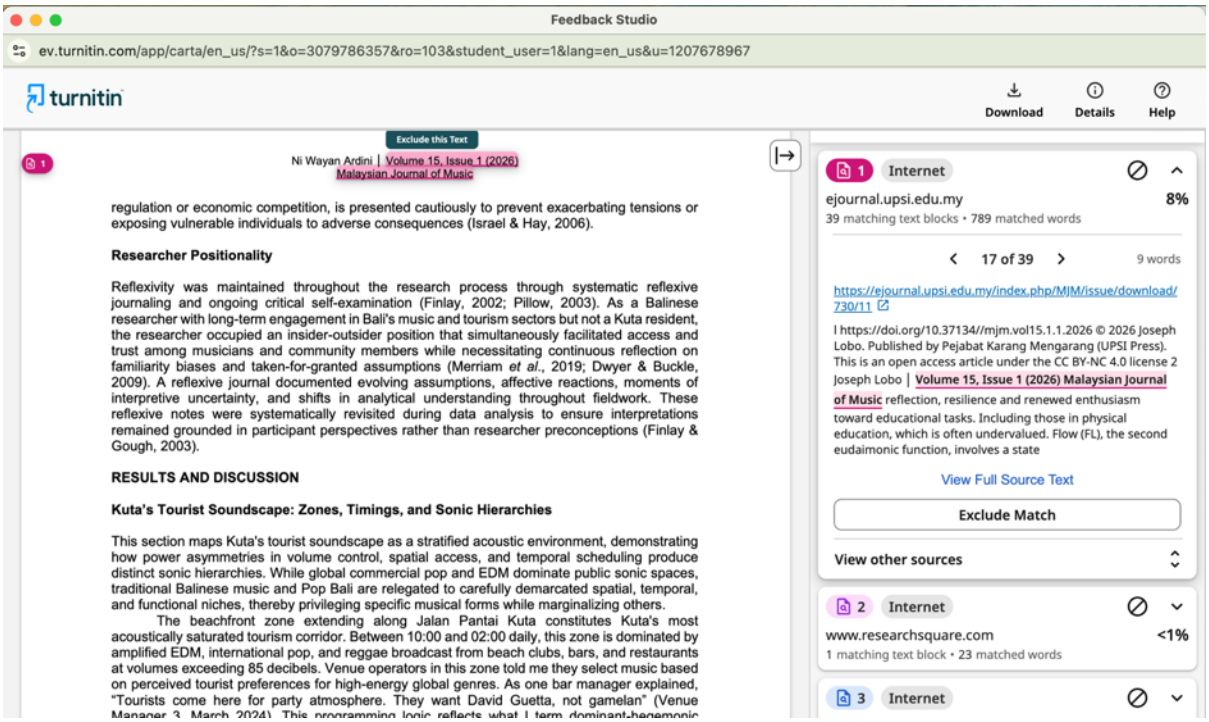

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23
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governmental authority, and community norms (Bennett, 2000). A critical ethnographic approach allows me to ask why particular sounds dominate beaches, streets, bars, and hotels while others are marginalized or restricted, and whose economic, political, and cultural interests are prioritized through these sonic arrangements (Bull & Back, 2003; LaBelle, 2010).
Reception theory, specifically the encoding/ decoding model developed by Hall (1973, 1980), provides the primary analytical framework. Hall's tripartite scheme distinguishes dominant-hegemonic readings (accepting intended meanings), negotiated readings (adapting meanings within local constraints), and oppositional readings (contesting or rejecting dominant meanings). In this study, musical performances, playlists, and ambient soundscapes are treated as encoded texts produced by musicians, venue managers, and policy actors, thereby facilitating an analysis of how different listeners-Balinese residents, tourists, and tourism workers-decode these sonic messages. Reception theory is combined with soundscape studies (Schafer, 1977; Truax, 2001) to link individual interpretations to the broader acoustic organization of Kuta's tourist environment.
Fieldwork and Data Collection
Fieldwork was conducted in Kuta for over 12 months from January to December 2024. This temporal frame was strategically selected to coincide with normalized post-pandemic tourism conditions following the official cessation of COVID-19 health protocols, ensuring that observed soundscape patterns reflected established tourism dynamics rather than temporary disruptions (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). The 12 months duration enabled documentation of seasonal variations, weekly cycles, and temporal shifts in sonic activity, thereby strengthening the
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nford, 2022). Regulatory frameworks in certain regions are developing to enhance representation and collective action for gig workers, tackling their specific difficulties (Stewart & Stanford, 2022). https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 23 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal In sum, the EU exhibits a more organized strategy for gig worker protection, but the fragmented rule
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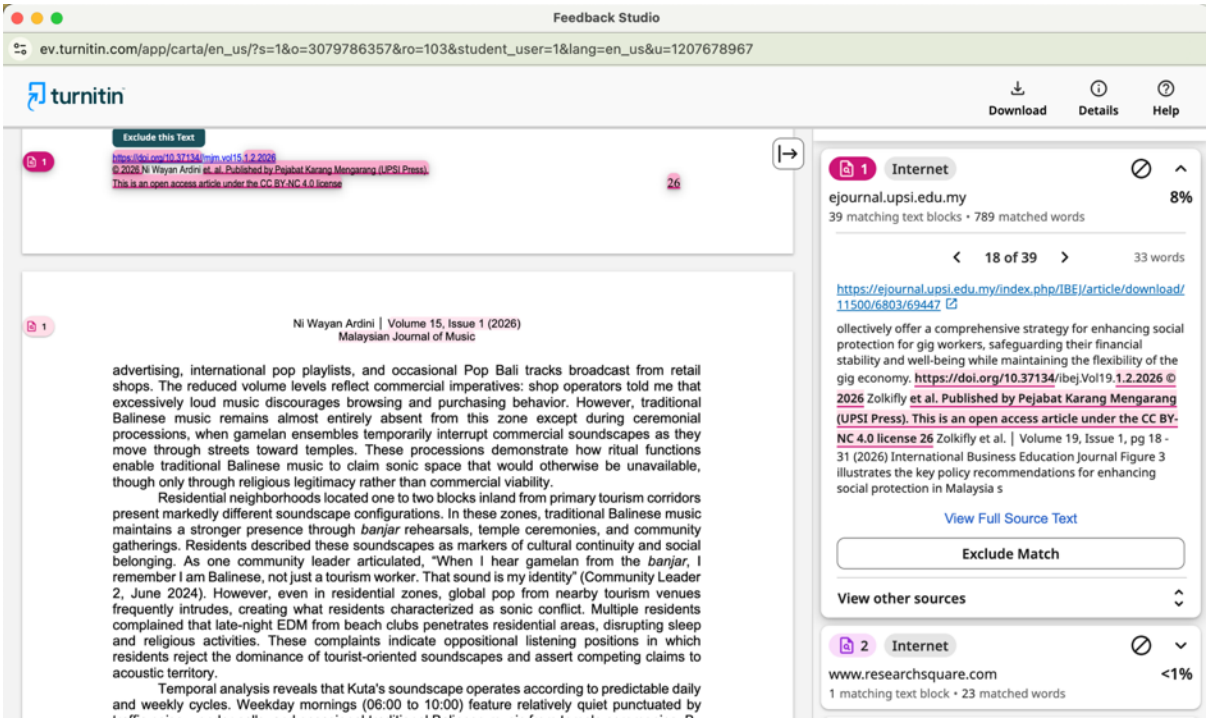

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Malaysian Journal of Music
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Table 1. The Informants
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a https://doi.org/10.37134//mjm.vol15.1.1.2026 © 2026 Joseph Lobo. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 1 Joseph Lobo | Volume 15, Issue 1 (2026) Malaysian Journal of Music meaningful educational experience (Tagare, 2025). Building on this foundation, the present study shifts focus to the Eudaimonic Functions of Music Listening (EFML), which refer to the deeper psycholo
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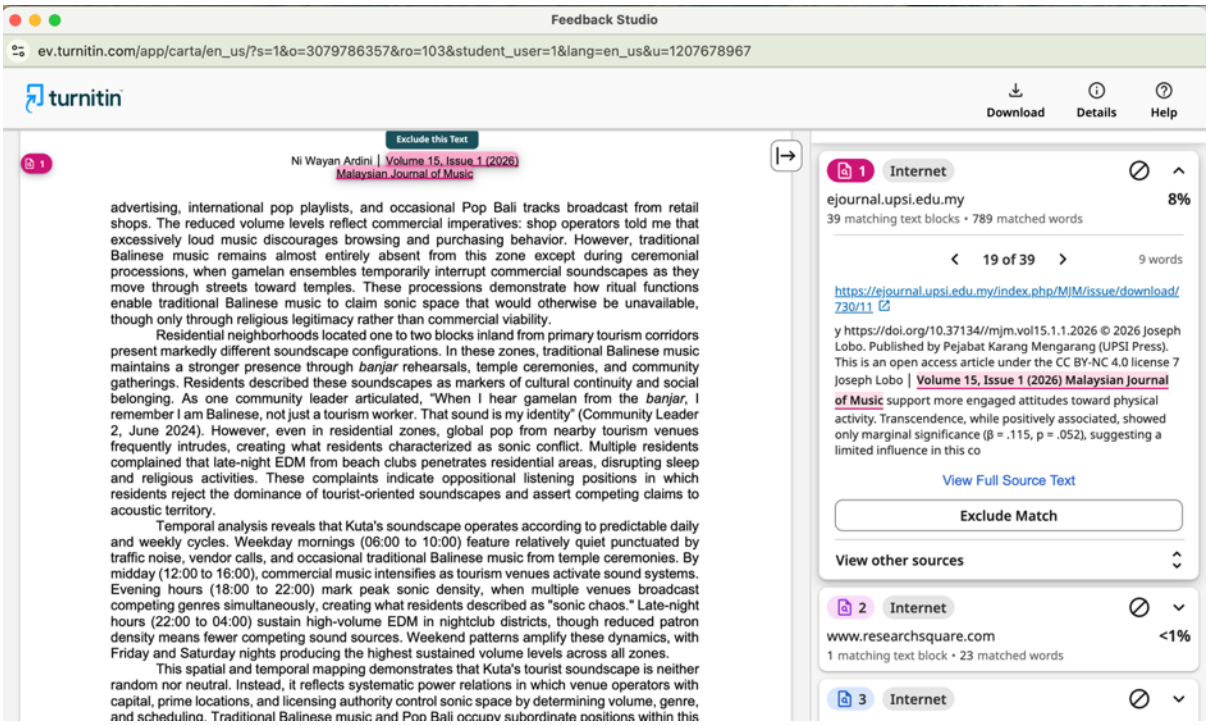

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ambient environmental sounds (Gallagher, 2015; Pink, 2015). Systematic soundwalks were conducted during four temporal periods: morning (06:00 to 10:00), afternoon (12:00 to 16:00), evening (18:00-22:00), and late night (22:00-02:00), across weekdays and weekends to document diurnal and weekly variations in soundscape composition and intensity (Adams *et al.*, 2008; Järviluoma *et al.*, 2009).
Data Analysis
Detailed fieldnotes were recorded following each observation episode, documenting sonic conditions, social interactions, moments of conflict or negotiation over sound, regulatory interventions by authorities, and researcher sensory and affective responses (Emerson *et al.*, 2011). Following sensory ethnography principles (Pink, 2015), subjective listening experiences were treated as legitimate data while maintaining reflexive awareness of researcher positionality within the field setting (Davies, 2008). Semi-structured interviews explored participants' understanding of music and sound within Kuta's tourism context, addressing music selection decision-making processes, daily experiences of noise and sonic overload, coping strategies for managing unwanted sound, meanings attributed to "traditional" versus "modern" musical categories, and perceptions of power asymmetries in soundscape control (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Interview protocols encouraged critical reflection on participants' roles within soundscape production and reception rather than mere descriptive reporting of practices.
All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and soundwalk documentation were imported into
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ness and compliance further reinforce cultural perceptions of informality, limiting gig workers participation in protection schemes (Salam, 2020). Additionally, cultural perceptions of gig work as https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 24 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal informal or secondary diminish the perceived need for social protection, with many workers viewing t
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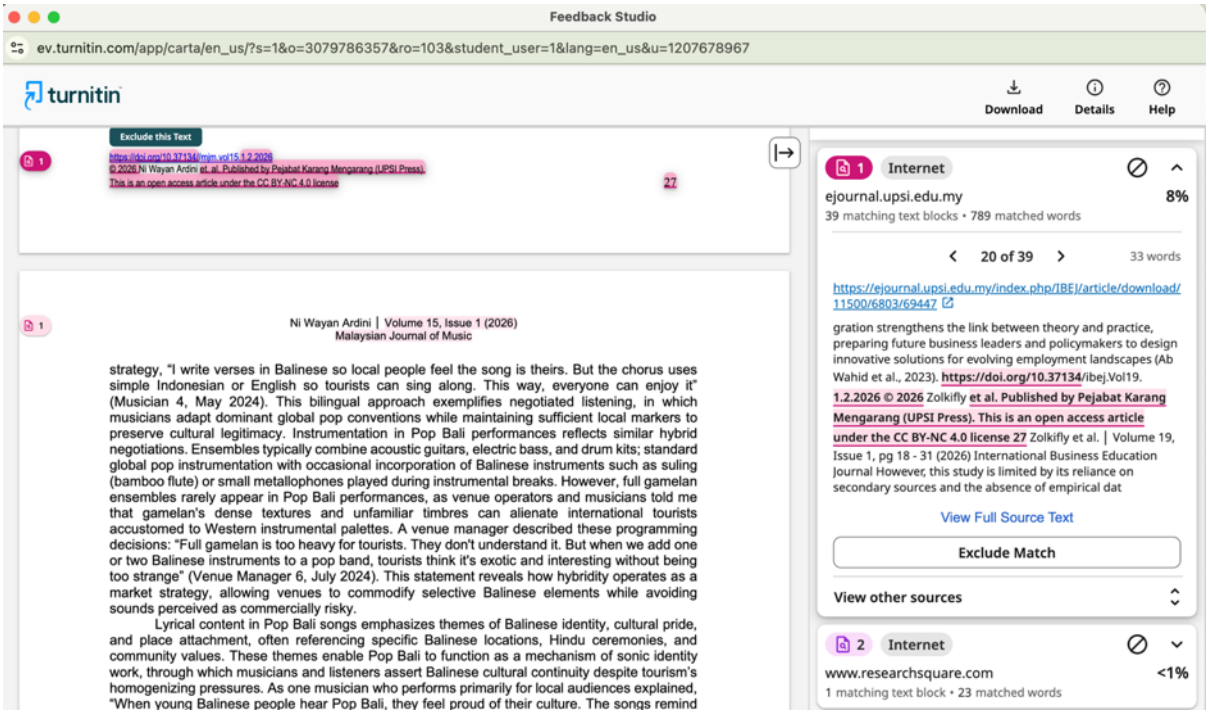

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All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and soundwalk documentation were imported into qualitative analysis software and analyzed using Miles et al.'s (2014) interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Initial open coding identified recurring themes including noise complaints, cultural branding strategies, economic pressures, identity negotiations, regulatory enforcement, and genre hybridization (Saldaña, 2016). Subsequent focused coding consolidated these into four analytical categories theoretically aligned with the conceptual framework: soundscape structure (sonic layering, spatial distribution, temporal patterning), hybridity (genre mixing, adaptive strategies, boundary negotiation), coping mechanisms (listener strategies, emotional regulation, spatial navigation), and power relations (control over volume and space, licensing systems, economic hierarchies). Reception theory guided interpretation by identifying dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional listening
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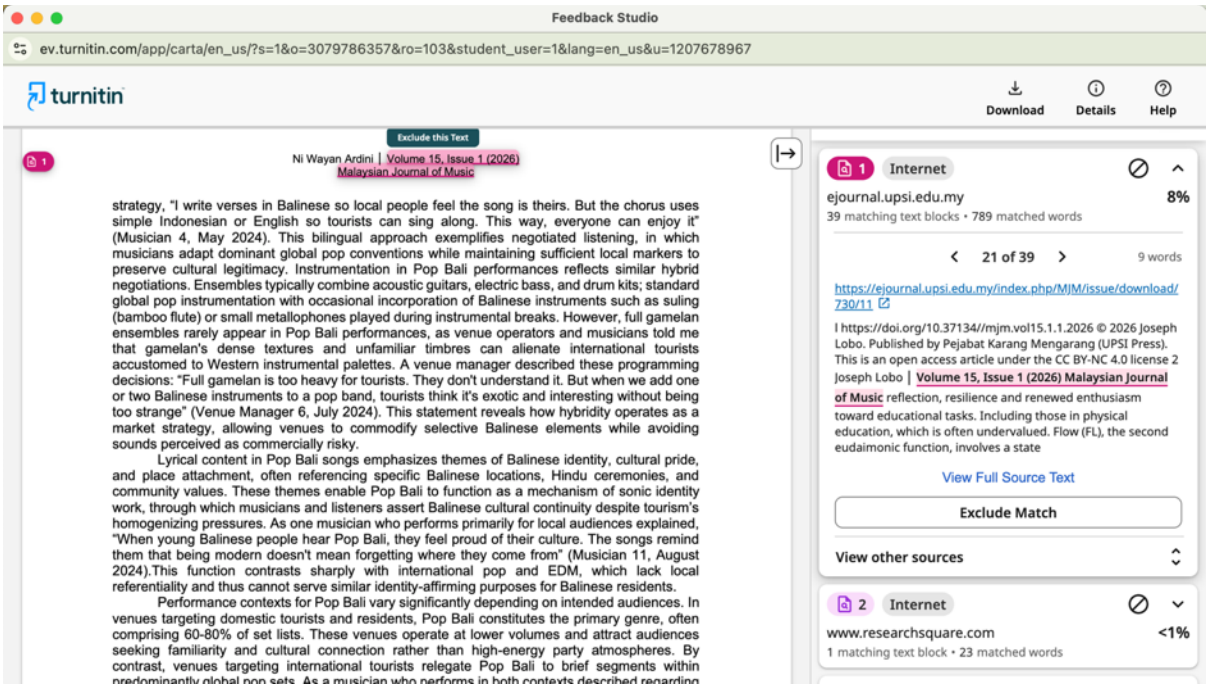

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regulation or economic competition, is presented cautiously to prevent exacerbating tensions or exposing vulnerable individuals to adverse consequences (Israel & Hay, 2006).
Researcher Positionality
Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process through systematic reflexive journaling and ongoing critical self-examination (Finlay, 2002; Pillow, 2003). As a Balinese researcher with long-term engagement in Bali's music and tourism sectors but not a Kuta resident, the researcher occupied an insider-outsider position that simultaneously facilitated access and trust among musicians and community members while necessitating continuous reflection on familiarity biases and taken-for-granted assumptions (Merriam et al., 2019; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). A reflexive journal documented evolving assumptions, affective reactions, moments of interpretive uncertainty, and shifts in analytical understanding throughout fieldwork. These reflexive notes were systematically revisited during data analysis to ensure interpretations remained grounded in participant perspectives rather than researcher preconceptions (Finlay & Gough, 2003).
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Kuta's Tourist Soundscape: Zones, Timings, and Sonic Hierarchies
This section maps Kuta's tourist soundscape as a stratified acoustic environment, demonstrating
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uments that offer flexible payment and contribution structures can better accommodate the unique circumstances of gig workers, ensuring higher uptake and long-term protection (Ghorpade et al., 2023). https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 25 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal To address normative gap, involving gig workers in the policy design process is critical to bridging
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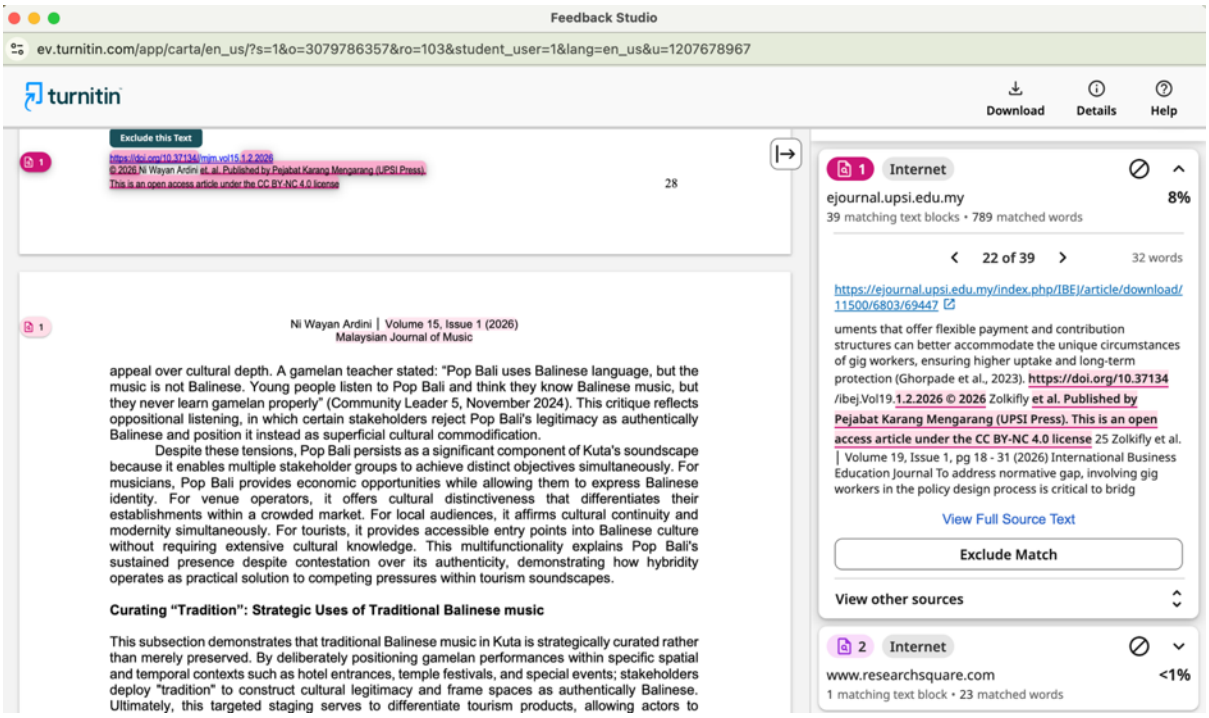

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Kuta's Tourist Soundscape: Zones, Timings, and Sonic Hierarchies
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The beachfront zone extending along Jalan Pantai Kuta constitutes Kuta's most acoustically saturated tourism corridor. Between 10:00 and 02:00 daily, this zone is dominated by amplified EDM, international pop, and reggae broadcast from beach clubs, bars, and restaurants at volumes exceeding 85 decibels. Venue operators in this zone told me they select music based on perceived tourist preferences for high-energy global genres. As one bar manager explained, "Tourists come here for party atmosphere. They want David Guetta, not gamelan" (Venue
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I https://doi.org/10.37134//mjm.vol15.1.1.2026 © 2026 Joseph Lobo. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 2 Joseph Lobo | Volume 15, Issue 1 (2026) Malaysian Journal of Music reflection, resilience and renewed enthusiasm toward educational tasks. Including those in physical education, which is often undervalued. Flow (FL), the second eudaimonic function, involves a state
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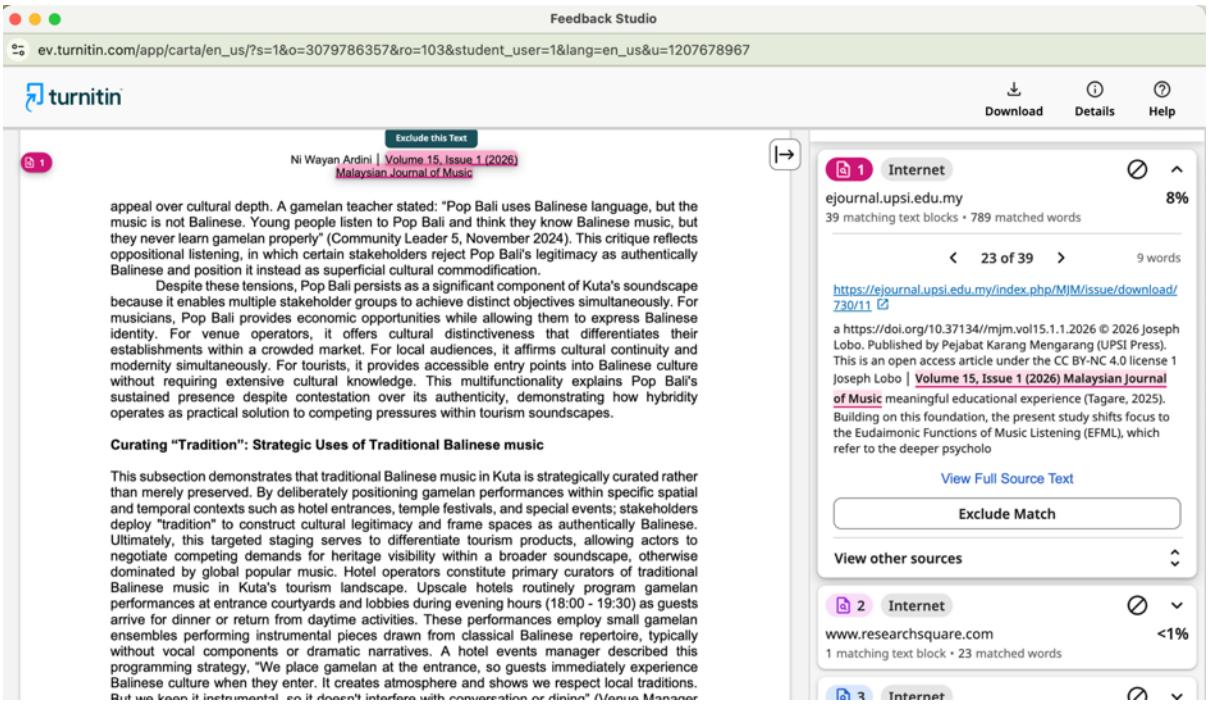

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advertising, international pop playlists, and occasional Pop Bali tracks broadcast from retail shops. The reduced volume levels reflect commercial imperatives: shop operators told me that excessively loud music discourages browsing and purchasing behavior. However, traditional Balinese music remains almost entirely absent from this zone except during ceremonial processions, when gamelan ensembles temporarily interrupt commercial soundscapes as they move through streets toward temples. These processions demonstrate how ritual functions enable traditional Balinese music to claim sonic space that would otherwise be unavailable, though only through religious legitimacy rather than commercial viability.
Residential neighborhoods located one to two blocks inland from primary tourism corridors present markedly different soundscape configurations. In these zones, traditional Balinese music maintains a stronger presence through banjar rehearsals, temple ceremonies, and community gatherings. Residents described these soundscapes as markers of cultural continuity and social belonging. As one community leader articulated, "When I hear gamelan from the banjar, I remember I am Balinese, not just a tourism worker. That sound is my identity" (Community Leader 2, June 2024). However, even in residential zones, global pop from nearby tourism venues frequently intrudes, creating what residents characterized as sonic conflict. Multiple residents complained that late-night EDM from beach clubs penetrates residential areas, disrupting sleep and religious activities. These complaints indicate oppositional listening positions in which residents reject the dominance of tourist-oriented soundscapes and assert competing claims to acoustic territory.
Temporal analysis reveals that Kuta's soundscape operates according to predictable daily and weekly cycles. Weekday mornings (06:00 to 10:00) feature relatively quiet punctuated by
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ollectively offer a comprehensive strategy for enhancing social protection for gig workers, safeguarding their financial stability and well-being while maintaining the flexibility of the gig economy. https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 26 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal Figure 3 illustrates the key policy recommendations for enhancing social protection in Malaysia s
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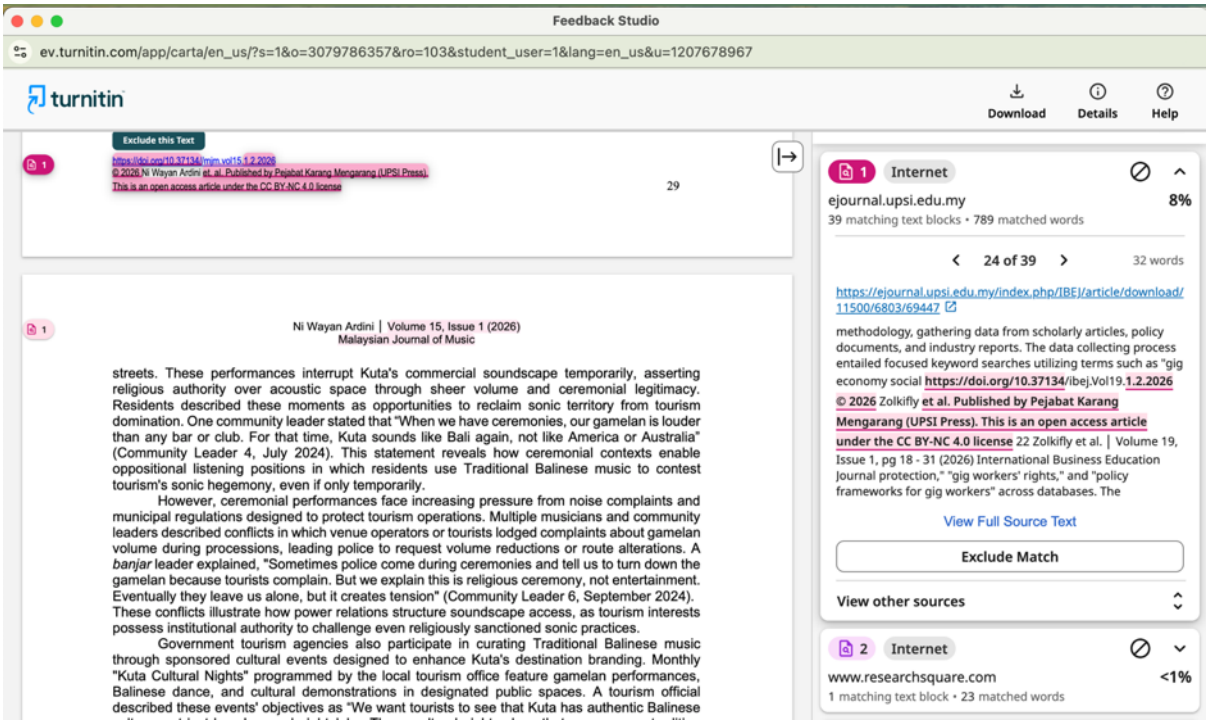

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Temporal analysis reveals that Kuta's soundscape operates according to predictable daily and weekly cycles. Weekday mornings (06:00 to 10:00) feature relatively quiet punctuated by traffic noise, vendor calls, and occasional traditional Balinese music from temple ceremonies. By midday (12:00 to 16:00), commercial music intensifies as tourism venues activate sound systems. Evening hours (18:00 to 22:00) mark peak sonic density, when multiple venues broadcast competing genres simultaneously, creating what residents described as "sonic chaos." Late-night hours (22:00 to 04:00) sustain high-volume EDM in nightclub districts, though reduced patron density means fewer competing sound sources. Weekend patterns amplify these dynamics, with Friday and Saturday nights producing the highest sustained volume levels across all zones.
This spatial and temporal mapping demonstrates that Kuta's tourist soundscape is neither random nor neutral. Instead, it reflects systematic power relations in which venue operators with capital, prime locations, and licensing authority control sonic space by determining volume, genre, and scheduling. Traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali occupy subordinate positions within this
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y https://doi.org/10.37134//mjm.vol15.1.1.2026 © 2026 Joseph Lobo. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 7 Joseph Lobo | Volume 15, Issue 1 (2026) Malaysian Journal of Music support more engaged attitudes toward physical activity. Transcendence, while positively associated, showed only marginal significance (β = .115, p = .052), suggesting a limited influence in this co
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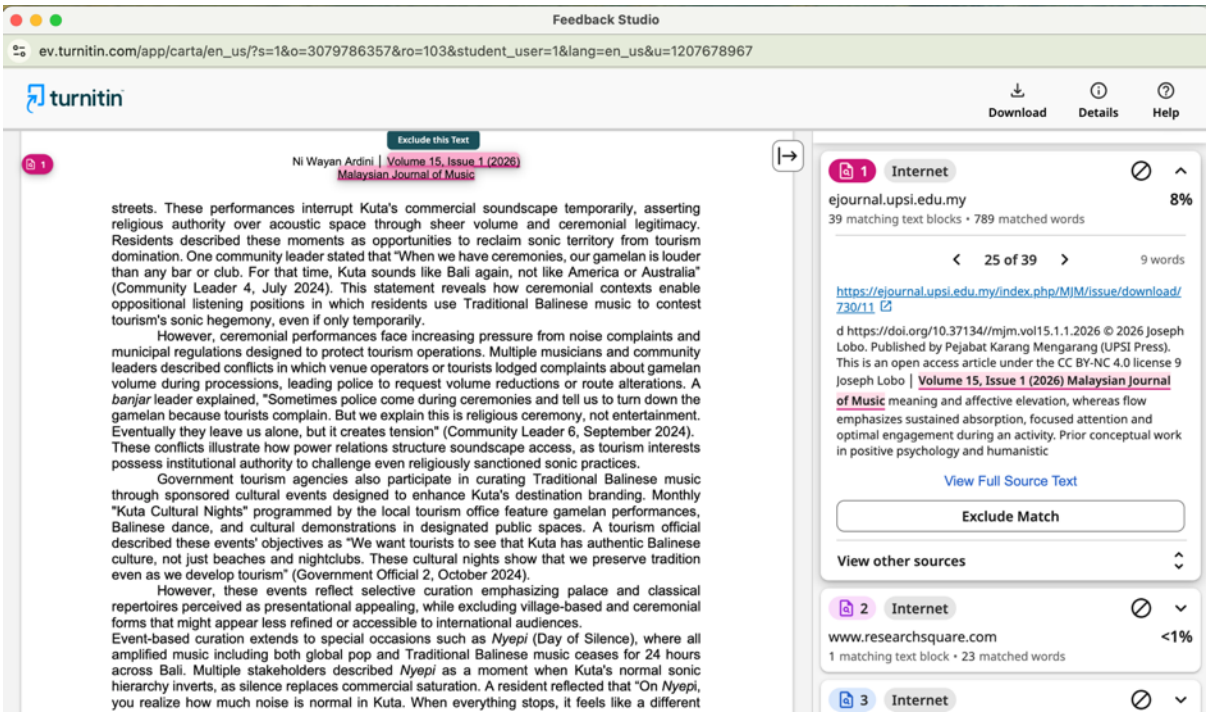

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Lyrical content in Pop Bali songs emphasizes themes of Balinese identity, cultural pride, and place attachment, often referencing specific Balinese locations, Hindu ceremonies, and community values. These themes enable Pop Bali to function as a mechanism of sonic identity work, through which musicians and listeners assert Balinese cultural continuity despite tourism's homogenizing pressures. As one musician who performs primarily for local audiences explained, "When young Balinese people hear Pop Bali, they feel proud of their culture. The songs remind
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gration strengthens the link between theory and practice, preparing future business leaders and policymakers to design innovative solutions for evolving employment landscapes (Ab Wahid et al., 2023). https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 27 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal However, this study is limited by its reliance on secondary sources and the absence of empirical dat
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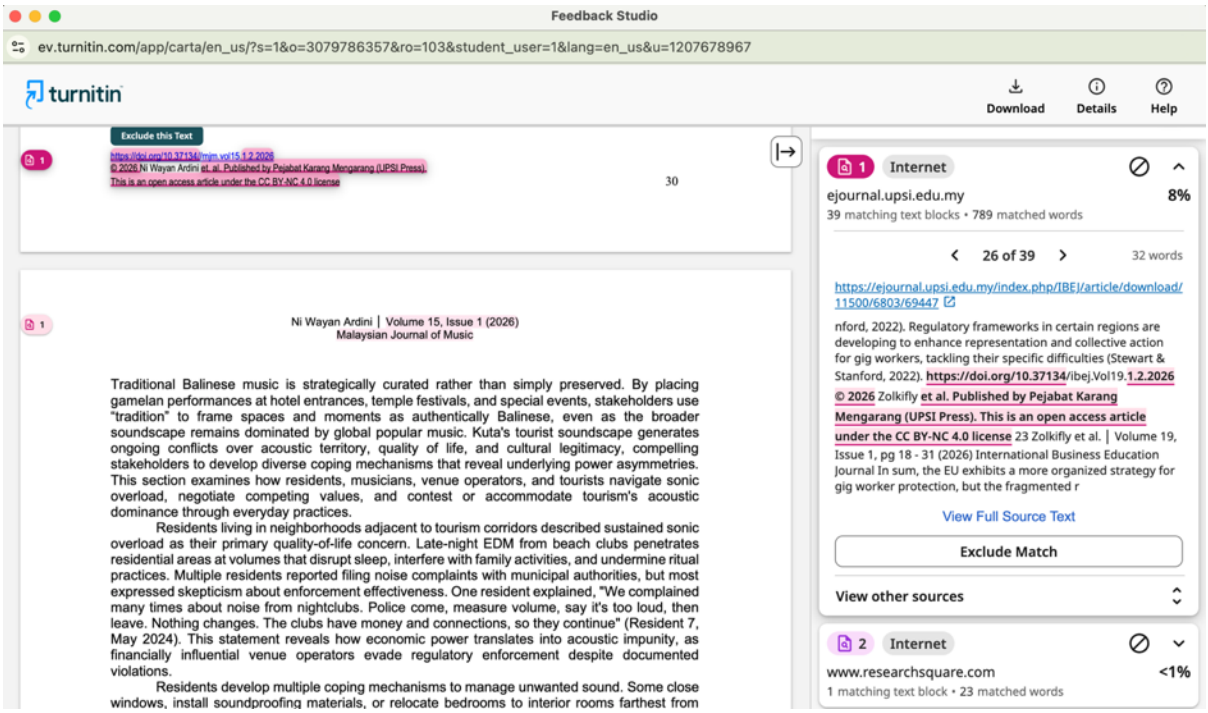

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Performance contexts for Pop Bali vary significantly depending on intended audiences. In venues targeting domestic tourists and residents, Pop Bali constitutes the primary genre, often comprising 60-80% of set lists. These venues operate at lower volumes and attract audiences seeking familiarity and cultural connection rather than high-energy party atmospheres. By contrast, venues targeting international tourists relegate Pop Bali to brief segments within
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I https://doi.org/10.37134//mjm.vol15.1.1.2026 © 2026 Joseph Lobo. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 2 Joseph Lobo | Volume 15, Issue 1 (2026) Malaysian Journal of Music reflection, resilience and renewed enthusiasm toward educational tasks. Including those in physical education, which is often undervalued. Flow (FL), the second eudaimonic function, involves a state
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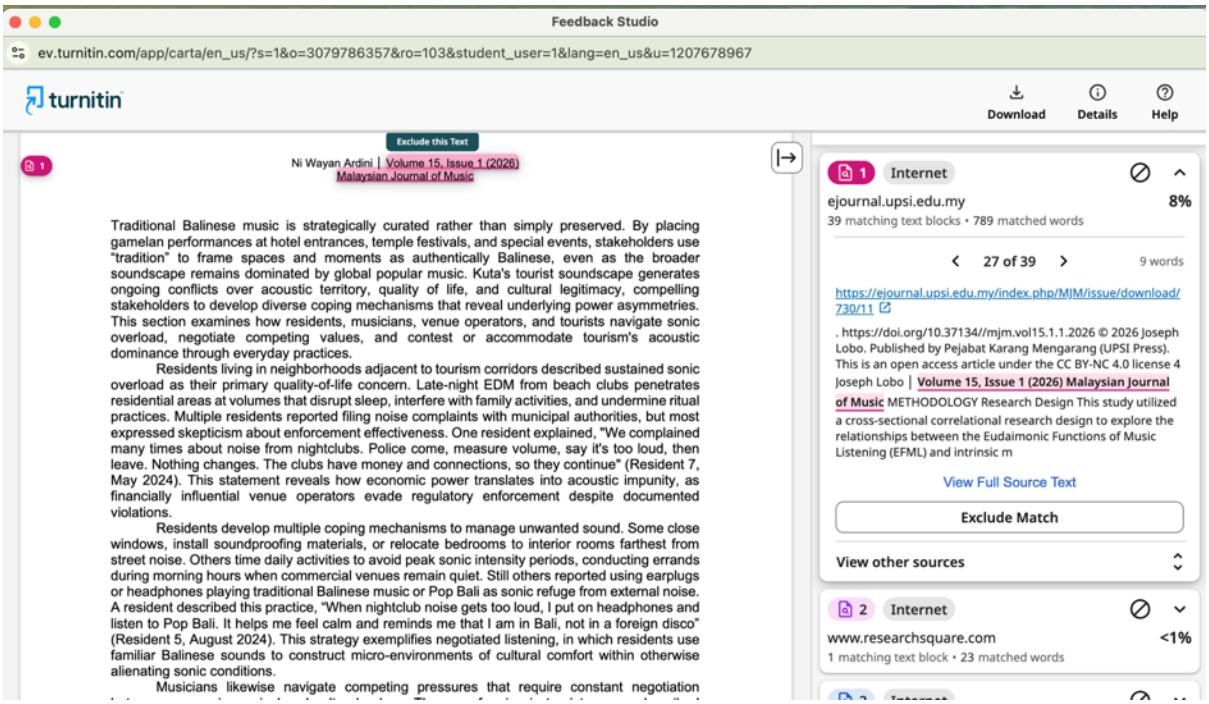

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Despite these tensions, Pop Bali persists as a significant component of Kuta's soundscape because it enables multiple stakeholder groups to achieve distinct objectives simultaneously. For musicians, Pop Bali provides economic opportunities while allowing them to express Balinese identity. For venue operators, it offers cultural distinctiveness that differentiates their establishments within a crowded market. For local audiences, it affirms cultural continuity and modernity simultaneously. For tourists, it provides accessible entry points into Balinese culture without requiring extensive cultural knowledge. This multifunctionality explains Pop Bali's sustained presence despite contestation over its authenticity, demonstrating how hybridity operates as practical solution to competing pressures within tourism soundscapes.
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This subsection demonstrates that traditional Balinese music in Kuta is strategically curated rather than merely preserved. By deliberately positioning gamelan performances within specific spatial and temporal contexts such as hotel entrances, temple festivals, and special events; stakeholders deploy "tradition" to construct cultural legitimacy and frame spaces as authentically Balinese. Ultimately, this targeted staging serves to differentiate tourism products, allowing actors to
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uments that offer flexible payment and contribution structures can better accommodate the unique circumstances of gig workers, ensuring higher uptake and long-term protection (Ghorpade et al., 2023). https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 25 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal To address normative gap, involving gig workers in the policy design process is critical to bridg
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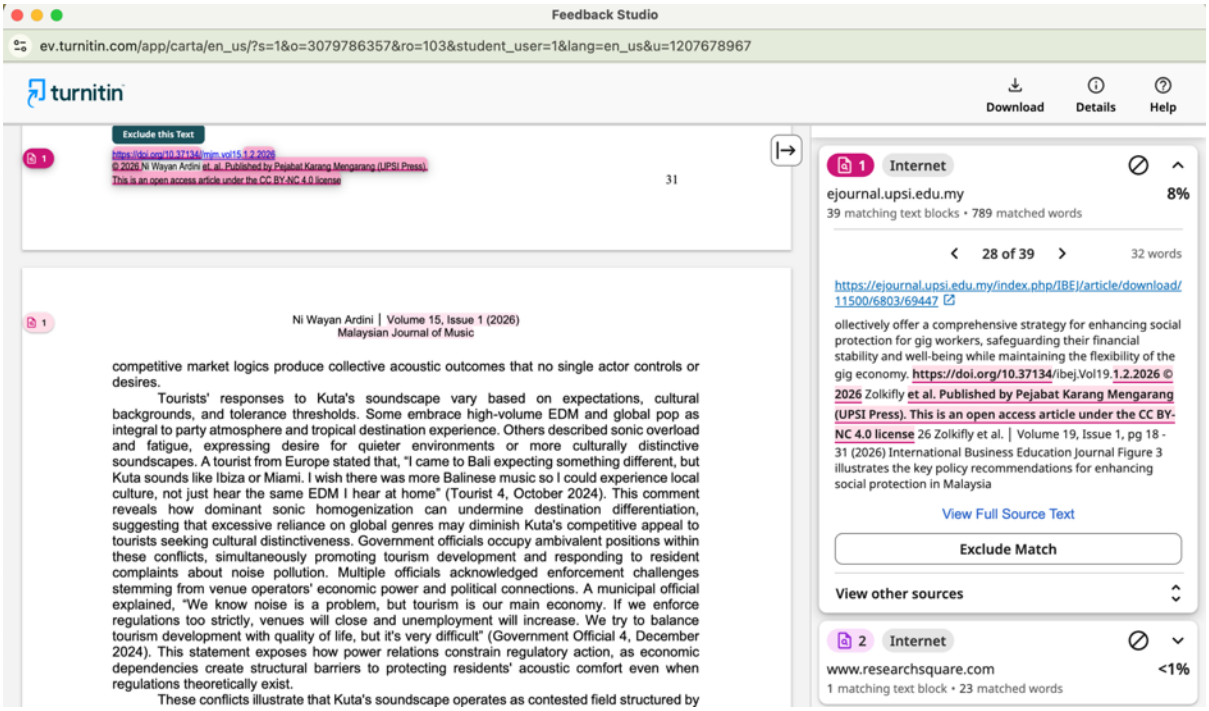

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a https://doi.org/10.37134//mjm.vol15.1.1.2026 © 2026 Joseph Lobo. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 1 Joseph Lobo | Volume 15, Issue 1 (2026) Malaysian Journal of Music meaningful educational experience (Tagare, 2025). Building on this foundation, the present study shifts focus to the Eudaimonic Functions of Music Listening (EFML), which refer to the deeper psycholo
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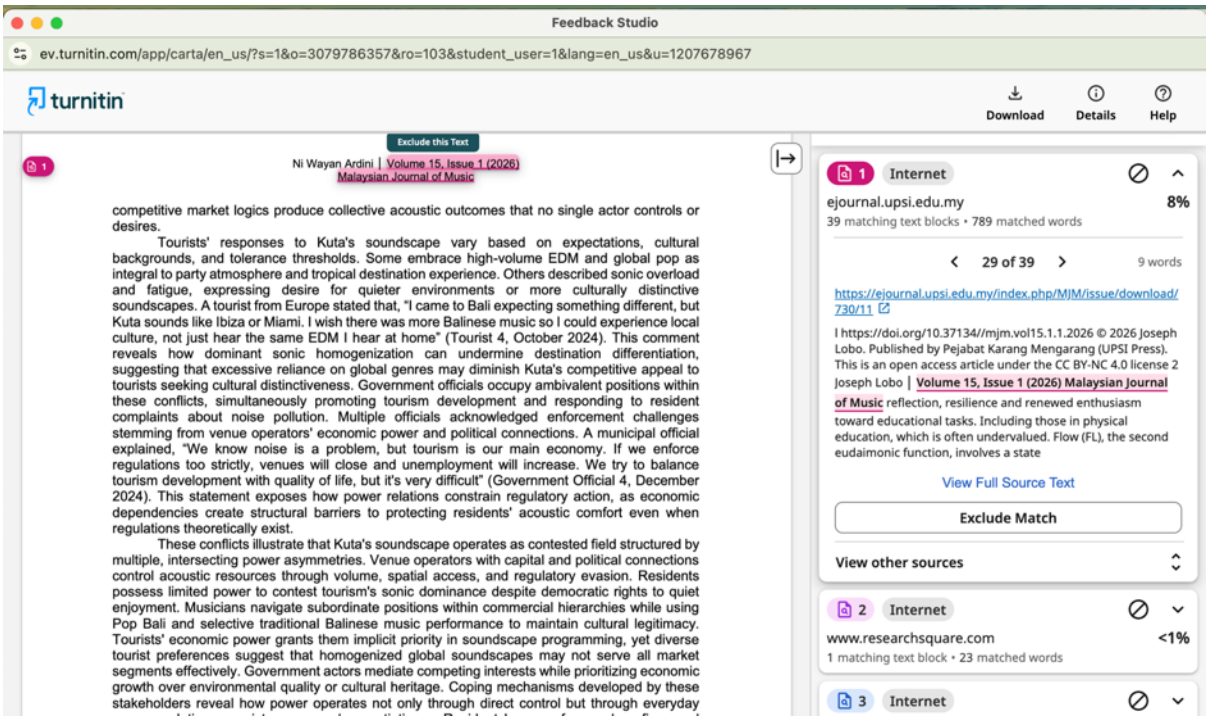

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streets. These performances interrupt Kuta's commercial soundscape temporarily, asserting religious authority over acoustic space through sheer volume and ceremonial legitimacy. Residents described these moments as opportunities to reclaim sonic territory from tourism domination. One community leader stated that "When we have ceremonies, our gamelan is louder than any bar or club. For that time, Kuta sounds like Bali again, not like America or Australia" (Community Leader 4, July 2024). This statement reveals how ceremonial contexts enable oppositional listening positions in which residents use Traditional Balinese music to contest tourism's sonic hegemony, even if only temporarily.
However, ceremonial performances face increasing pressure from noise complaints and municipal regulations designed to protect tourism operations. Multiple musicians and community leaders described conflicts in which venue operators or tourists lodged complaints about gamelan volume during processions, leading police to request volume reductions or route alterations. A *banjar* leader explained, "Sometimes police come during ceremonies and tell us to turn down the gamelan because tourists complain. But we explain this is religious ceremony, not entertainment. Eventually they leave us alone, but it creates tension" (Community Leader 6, September 2024). These conflicts illustrate how power relations structure soundscape access, as tourism interests possess institutional authority to challenge even religiously sanctioned sonic practices.
Government tourism agencies also participate in curating Traditional Balinese music through sponsored cultural events designed to enhance Kuta's destination branding. Monthly "Kuta Cultural Nights" programmed by the local tourism office feature gamelan performances, Balinese dance, and cultural demonstrations in designated public spaces. A tourism official described these events' objectives as "We want tourists to see that Kuta has authentic Balinese
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methodology, gathering data from scholarly articles, policy documents, and industry reports. The data collecting process entailed focused keyword searches utilizing terms such as "gig economy social https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 22 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal protection," "gig workers' rights," and "policy frameworks for gig workers" across databases. The
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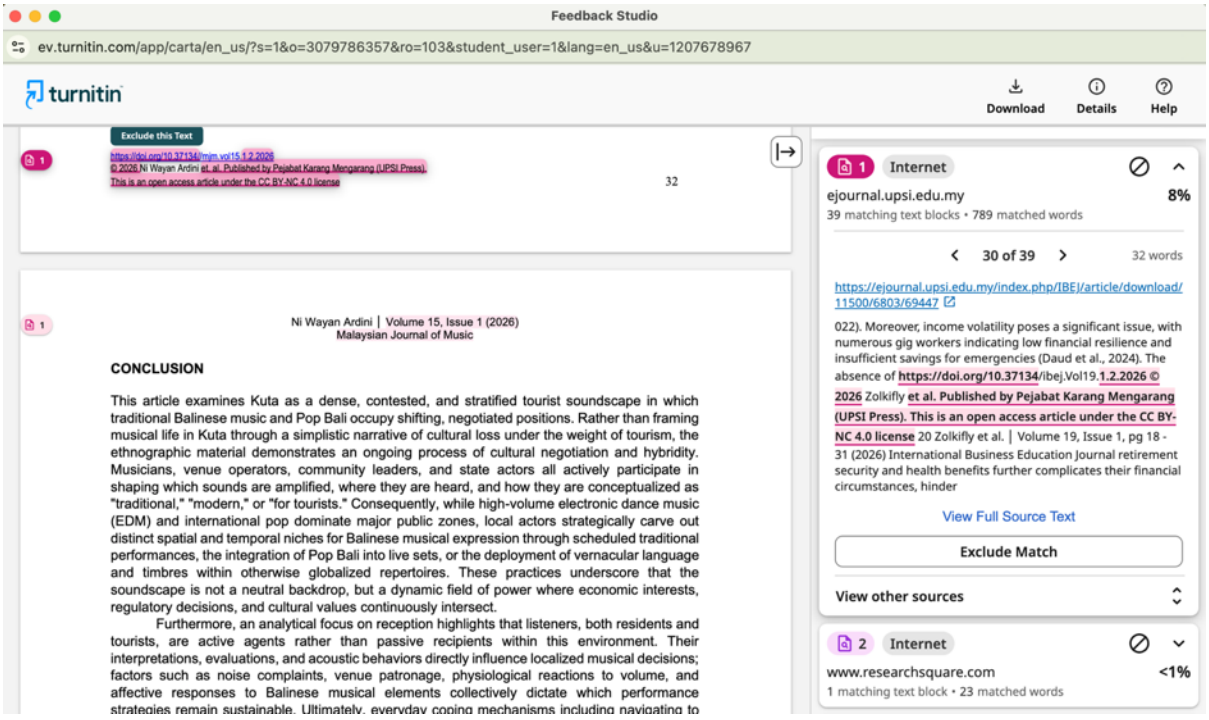

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However, these events reflect selective curation emphasizing palace and classical repertoires perceived as presentational appealing, while excluding village-based and ceremonial forms that might appear less refined or accessible to international audiences.
Event-based curation extends to special occasions such as Nyepi (Day of Silence), where all amplified music including both global pop and Traditional Balinese music ceases for 24 hours across Bali. Multiple stakeholders described Nyepi as a moment when Kuta's normal sonic hierarchy inverts, as silence replaces commercial saturation. A resident reflected that "On Nyepi, you realize how much noise is normal in Kuta. When everything stops, it feels like a different
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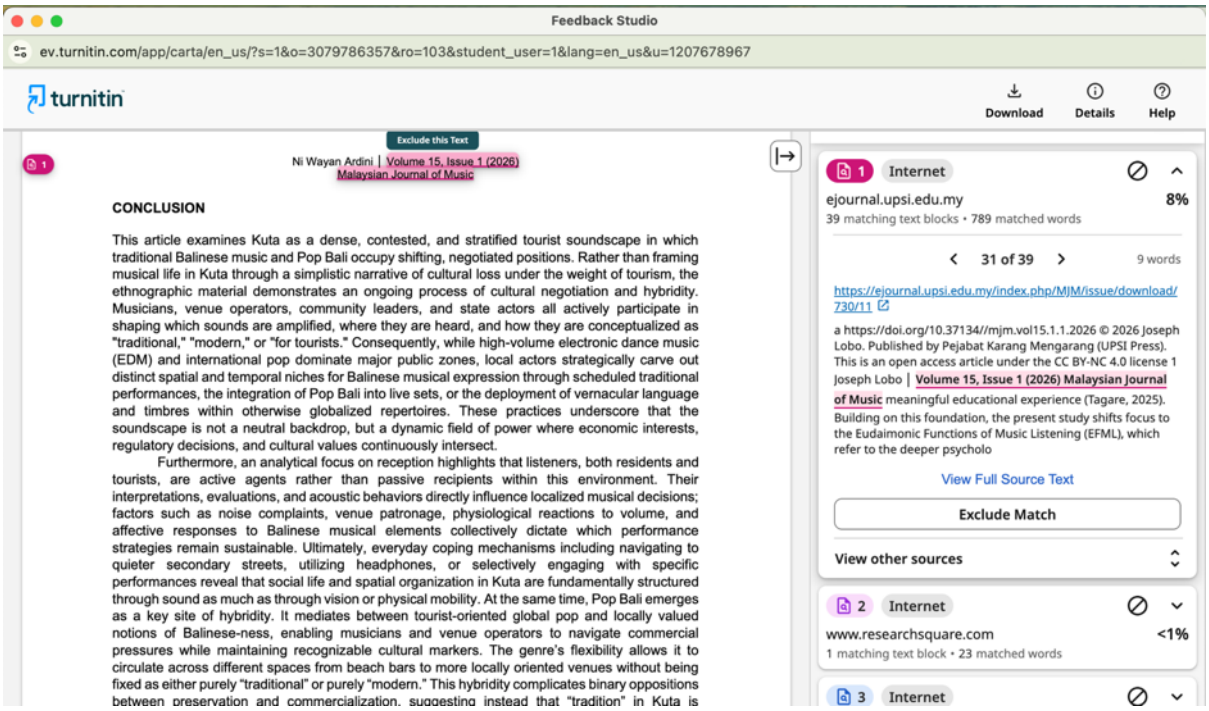

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Residents living in neighborhoods adjacent to tourism corridors described sustained sonic overload as their primary quality-of-life concern. Late-night EDM from beach clubs penetrates residential areas at volumes that disrupt sleep, interfere with family activities, and undermine ritual practices. Multiple residents reported filing noise complaints with municipal authorities, but most expressed skepticism about enforcement effectiveness. One resident explained, "We complained many times about noise from nightclubs. Police come, measure volume, say it's too loud, then leave. Nothing changes. The clubs have money and connections, so they continue" (Resident 7, May 2024). This statement reveals how economic power translates into acoustic impunity, as financially influential venue operators evade regulatory enforcement despite documented violations.
Residents develop multiple coping mechanisms to manage unwanted sound. Some close windows, install soundproofing materials, or relocate bedrooms to interior rooms farthest from
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nford, 2022). Regulatory frameworks in certain regions are developing to enhance representation and collective action for gig workers, tackling their specific difficulties (Stewart & Stanford, 2022). https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 23 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal In sum, the EU exhibits a more organized strategy for gig worker protection, but the fragmented r
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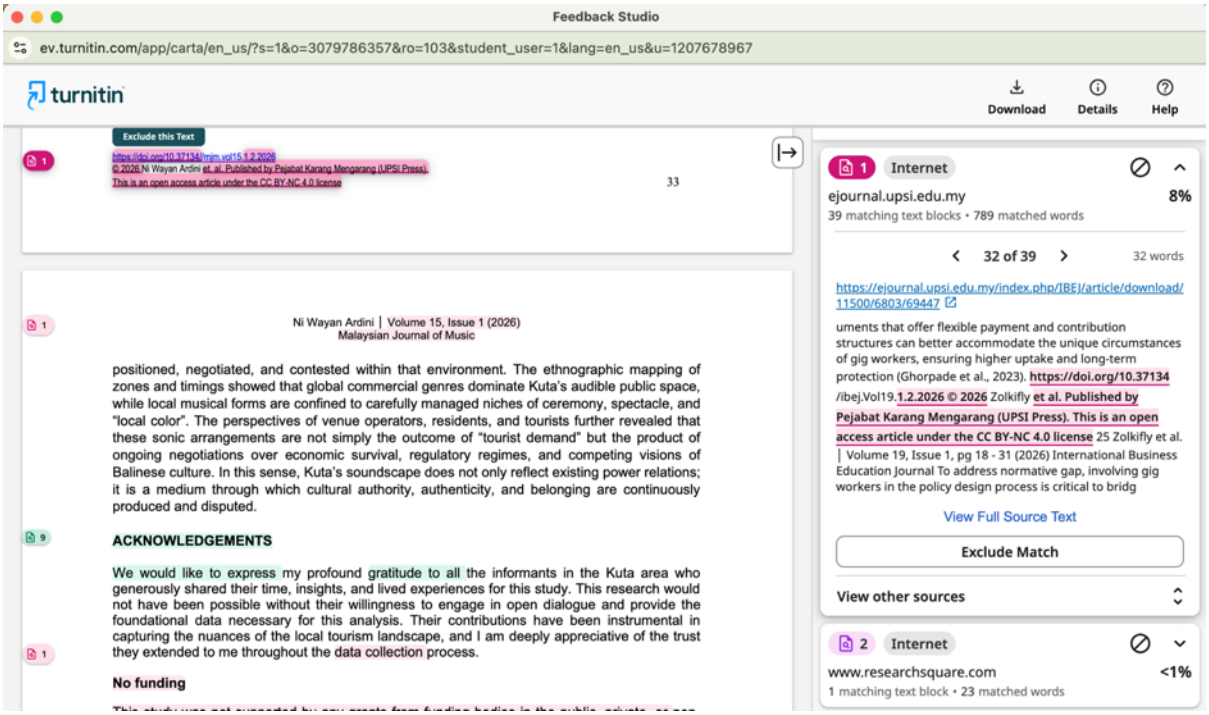

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Residents develop multiple coping mechanisms to manage unwanted sound. Some close windows, install soundproofing materials, or relocate bedrooms to interior rooms farthest from street noise. Others time daily activities to avoid peak sonic intensity periods, conducting errands during morning hours when commercial venues remain quiet. Still others reported using earplugs or headphones playing traditional Balinese music or Pop Bali as sonic refuge from external noise. A resident described this practice, "When nightclub noise gets too loud, I put on headphones and listen to Pop Bali. It helps me feel calm and reminds me that I am in Bali, not in a foreign disco" (Resident 5, August 2024). This strategy exemplifies negotiated listening, in which residents use familiar Balinese sounds to construct micro-environments of cultural comfort within otherwise alienating sonic conditions.
Musicians likewise navigate competing pressures that require constant negotiation
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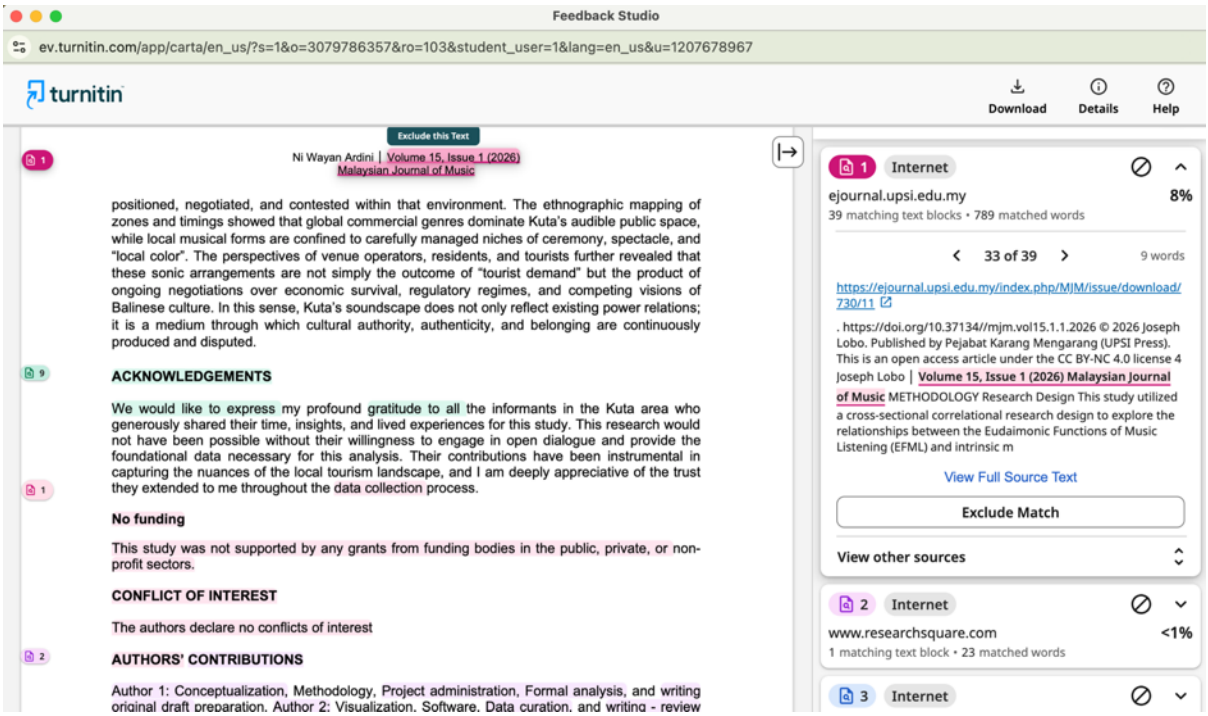

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competitive market logics produce collective acoustic outcomes that no single actor controls or desires.
Tourists' responses to Kuta's soundscape vary based on expectations, cultural backgrounds, and tolerance thresholds. Some embrace high-volume EDM and global pop as integral to party atmosphere and tropical destination experience. Others described sonic overload and fatigue, expressing desire for quieter environments or more culturally distinctive soundscapes. A tourist from Europe stated that, "I came to Bali expecting something different, but Kuta sounds like Ibiza or Miami. I wish there was more Balinese music so I could experience local culture, not just hear the same EDM I hear at home" (Tourist 4, October 2024). This comment reveals how dominant sonic homogenization can undermine destination differentiation, suggesting that excessive reliance on global genres may diminish Kuta's competitive appeal to tourists seeking cultural distinctiveness. Government officials occupy ambivalent positions within these conflicts, simultaneously promoting tourism development and responding to resident complaints about noise pollution. Multiple officials acknowledged enforcement challenges stemming from venue operators' economic power and political connections. A municipal official explained, "We know noise is a problem, but tourism is our main economy. If we enforce regulations too strictly, venues will close and unemployment will increase. We try to balance tourism development with quality of life, but it's very difficult" (Government Official 4, December 2024). This statement exposes how power relations constrain regulatory action, as economic dependencies create structural barriers to protecting residents' acoustic comfort even when regulations theoretically exist.
These conflicts illustrate that Kuta's soundscape operates as contested field structured by
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ollectively offer a comprehensive strategy for enhancing social protection for gig workers, safeguarding their financial stability and well-being while maintaining the flexibility of the gig economy. https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 26 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal Figure 3 illustrates the key policy recommendations for enhancing social protection in Malaysia
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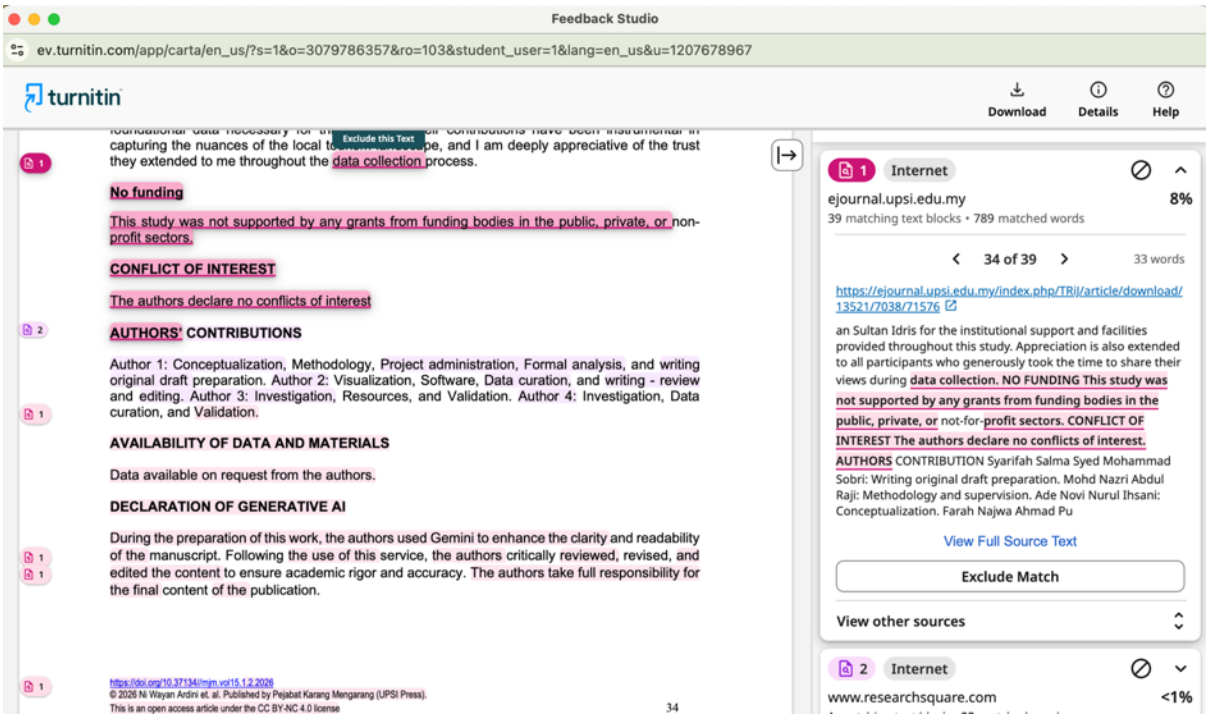

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competitive market logics produce collective acoustic outcomes that no single actor controls or desires.
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These conflicts illustrate that Kuta's soundscape operates as contested field structured by multiple, intersecting power asymmetries. Venue operators with capital and political connections control acoustic resources through volume, spatial access, and regulatory evasion. Residents possess limited power to contest tourism's sonic dominance despite democratic rights to quiet enjoyment. Musicians navigate subordinate positions within commercial hierarchies while using Pop Bali and selective traditional Balinese music performance to maintain cultural legitimacy. Tourists' economic power grants them implicit priority in soundscape programming, yet diverse tourist preferences suggest that homogenized global soundscapes may not serve all market segments effectively. Government actors mediate competing interests while prioritizing economic growth over environmental quality or cultural heritage. Coping mechanisms developed by these stakeholders reveal how power operates not only through direct control but through everyday
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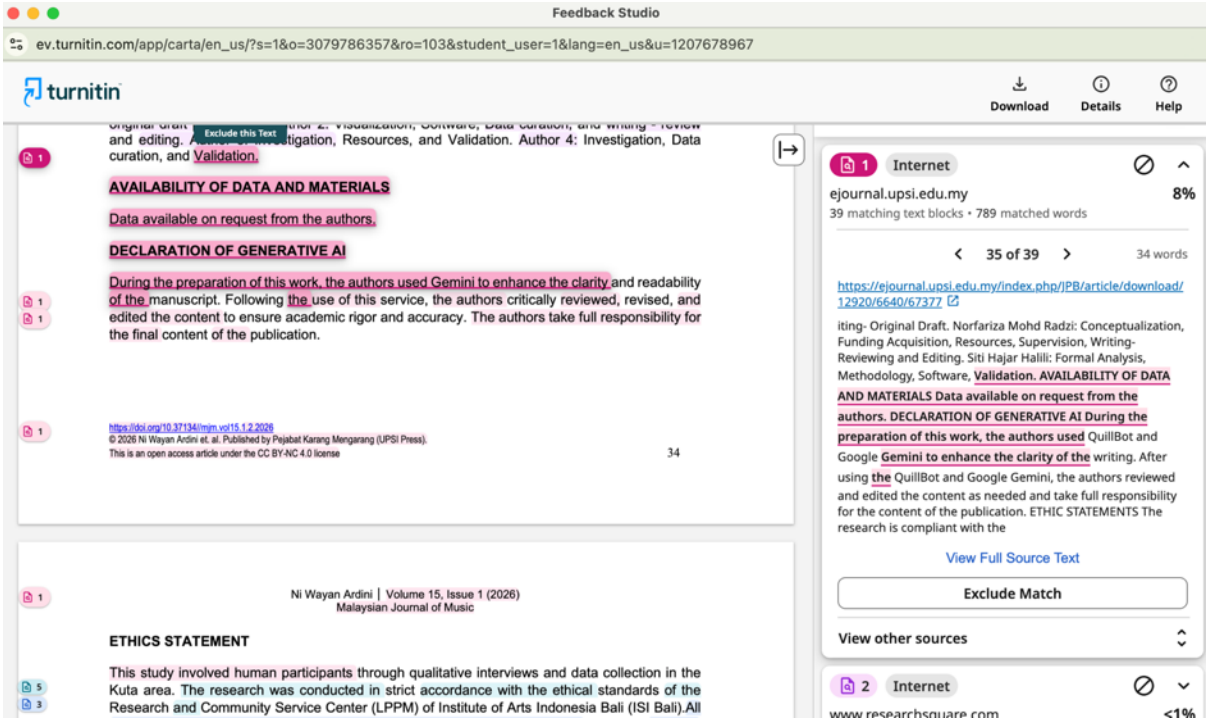

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CONCLUSION
This article examines Kuta as a dense, contested, and stratified tourist soundscape in which traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali occupy shifting, negotiated positions. Rather than framing musical life in Kuta through a simplistic narrative of cultural loss under the weight of tourism, the ethnographic material demonstrates an ongoing process of cultural negotiation and hybridity. Musicians, venue operators, community leaders, and state actors all actively participate in shaping which sounds are amplified, where they are heard, and how they are conceptualized as "traditional," "modern," or "for tourists." Consequently, while high-volume electronic dance music (EDM) and international pop dominate major public zones, local actors strategically carve out distinct spatial and temporal niches for Balinese musical expression through scheduled traditional performances, the integration of Pop Bali into live sets, or the deployment of vernacular language and timbres within otherwise globalized repertoires. These practices underscore that the soundscape is not a neutral backdrop, but a dynamic field of power where economic interests, regulatory decisions, and cultural values continuously intersect.
Furthermore, an analytical focus on reception highlights that listeners, both residents and tourists, are active agents rather than passive recipients within this environment. Their interpretations, evaluations, and acoustic behaviors directly influence localized musical decisions; factors such as noise complaints, venue patronage, physiological reactions to volume, and affective responses to Balinese musical elements collectively dictate which performance strategies remain sustainable. Ultimately, everyday coping mechanisms including navigating to
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022). Moreover, income volatility poses a significant issue, with numerous gig workers indicating low financial resilience and insufficient savings for emergencies (Daud et al., 2024). The absence of https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 20 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal retirement security and health benefits further complicates their financial circumstances, hinder
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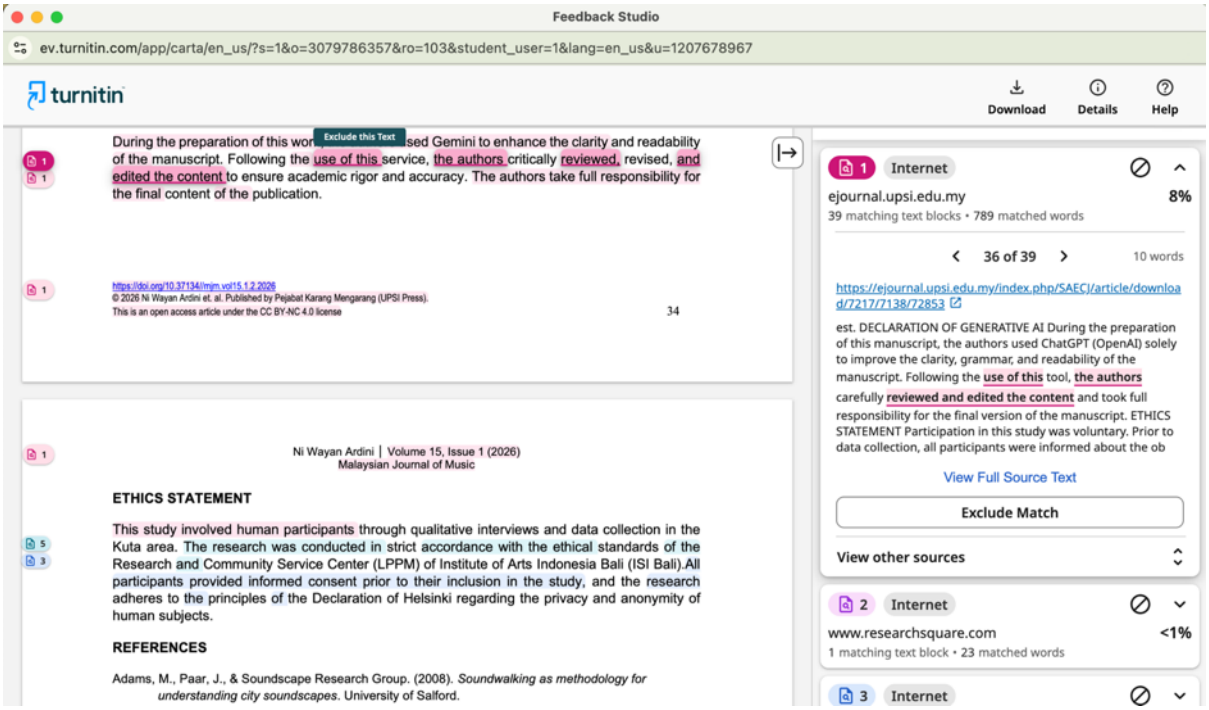

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Furthermore, an analytical focus on reception highlights that listeners, both residents and tourists, are active agents rather than passive recipients within this environment. Their interpretations, evaluations, and acoustic behaviors directly influence localized musical decisions; factors such as noise complaints, venue patronage, physiological reactions to volume, and affective responses to Balinese musical elements collectively dictate which performance strategies remain sustainable. Ultimately, everyday coping mechanisms including navigating to quieter secondary streets, utilizing headphones, or selectively engaging with specific performances reveal that social life and spatial organization in Kuta are fundamentally structured through sound as much as through vision or physical mobility. At the same time, Pop Bali emerges as a key site of hybridity. It mediates between tourist-oriented global pop and locally valued notions of Balinese-ness, enabling musicians and venue operators to navigate commercial pressures while maintaining recognizable cultural markers. The genre's flexibility allows it to circulate across different spaces from beach bars to more locally oriented venues without being fixed as either purely "traditional" or purely "modern." This hybridity complicates binary oppositions between preservation and commercialization, suggesting instead that "tradition" in Kuta is
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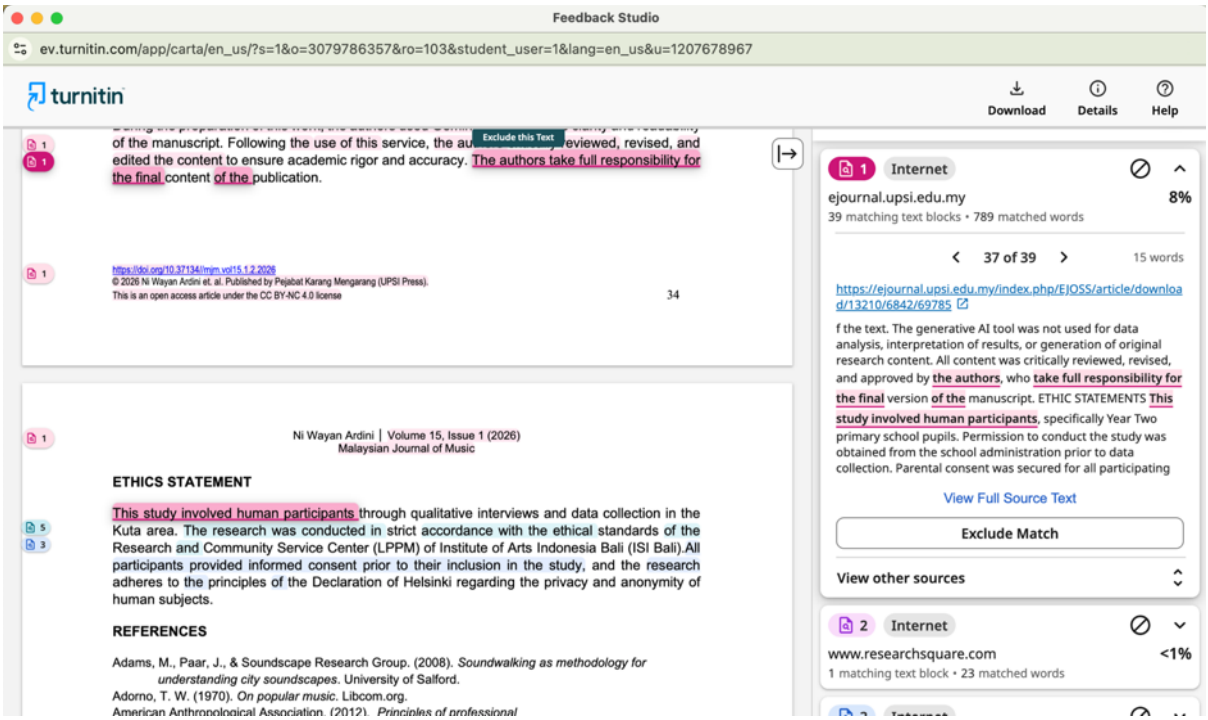

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
We would like to express my profound gratitude to all the informants in the Kuta area who generously shared their time, insights, and lived experiences for this study. This research would not have been possible without their willingness to engage in open dialogue and provide the foundational data necessary for this analysis. Their contributions have been instrumental in capturing the nuances of the local tourism landscape, and I am deeply appreciative of the trust they extended to me throughout the data collection process.
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uments that offer flexible payment and contribution structures can better accommodate the unique circumstances of gig workers, ensuring higher uptake and long-term protection (Ghorpade et al., 2023). https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 25 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal To address normative gap, involving gig workers in the policy design process is critical to bridg
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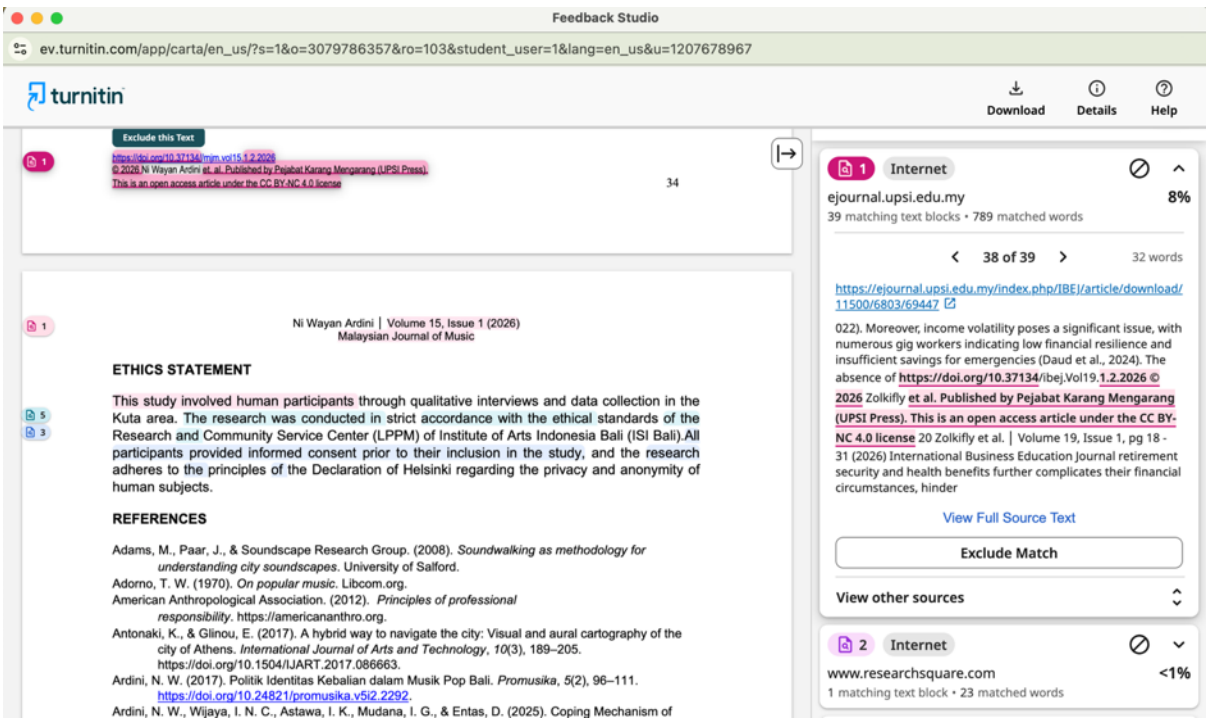

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST
The authors declare no conflicts of interest
AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS
Author 1: Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration, Formal analysis, and writing original draft preparation. Author 2: Visualization, Software, Data curation, and writing - review
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. https://doi.org/10.37134//mjm.vol15.1.1.2026 © 2026 Joseph Lobo. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 4 Joseph Lobo | Volume 15, Issue 1 (2026) Malaysian Journal of Music METHODOLOGY Research Design This study utilized a cross-sectional correlational research design to explore the relationships between the Eudaimonic Functions of Music Listening (EFML) and intrinsic m
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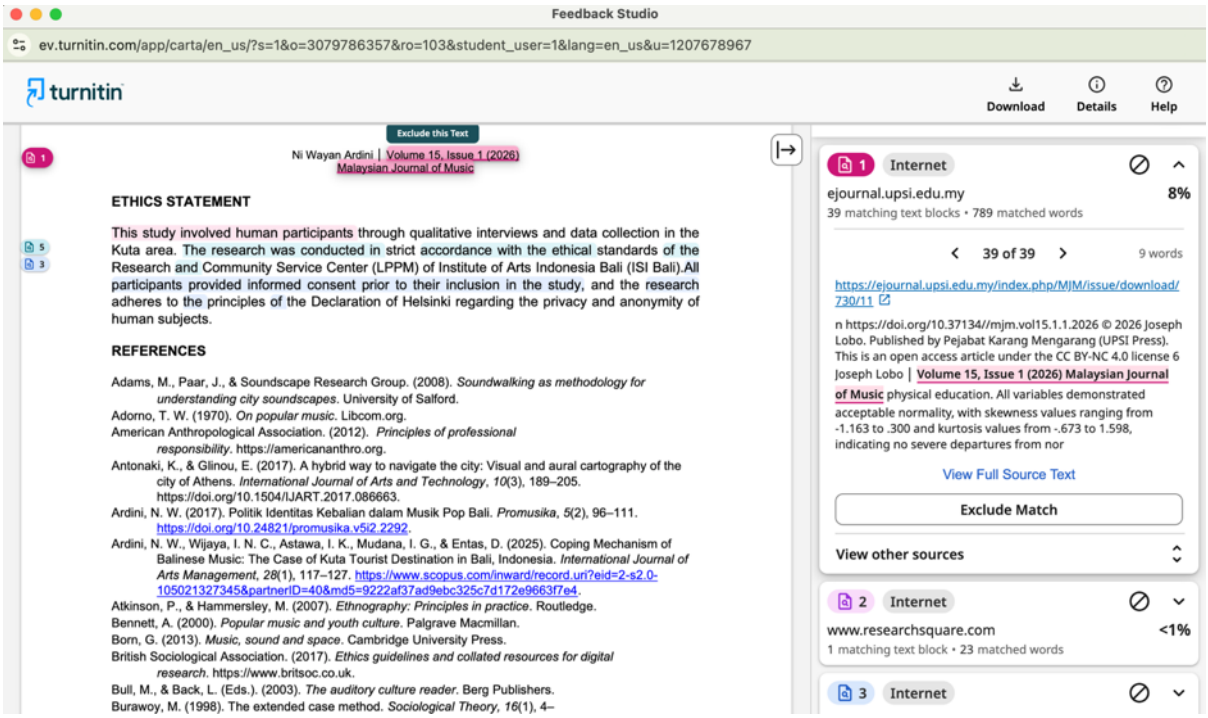

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST
The authors declare no conflicts of interest
AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS
Author 1: Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration, Formal analysis, and writing original draft preparation. Author 2: Visualization, Software, Data curation, and writing - review and editing. Author 3: Investigation, Resources, and Validation. Author 4: Investigation, Data curation, and Validation.
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an Sultan Idris for the institutional support and facilities provided throughout this study. Appreciation is also extended to all participants who generously took the time to share their views during data collection. NO FUNDING This study was not supported by any grants from funding bodies in the public, private, or not-for-profit sectors. CONFLICT OF INTEREST The authors declare no conflicts of interest. AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION Syarifah Salma Syed Mohammad Sobri: Writing original draft preparation. Mohd Nazri Abdul Raji: Methodology and supervision. Ade Novi Nurul Ihsani: Conceptualization. Farah Najwa Ahmad Pu
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est. DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) solely to improve the clarity, grammar, and readability of the manuscript. Following the use of this tool, the authors carefully reviewed and edited the content and took full responsibility for the final version of the manuscript. ETHICS STATEMENT Participation in this study was voluntary. Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the ob
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f the text. The generative AI tool was not used for data analysis, interpretation of results, or generation of original research content. All content was critically reviewed, revised, and approved by the authors, who take full responsibility for the final version of the manuscript. ETHIC STATEMENTS This study involved human participants, specifically Year Two primary school pupils. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school administration prior to data collection. Parental consent was secured for all participating
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022). Moreover, income volatility poses a significant issue, with numerous gig workers indicating low financial resilience and insufficient savings for emergencies (Daud et al., 2024). The absence of https://doi.org/10.37134/ibej.Vol19.1.2.2026 © 2026 Zolkifly et al. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 20 Zolkifly et al. | Volume 19, Issue 1, pg 18 - 31 (2026) International Business Education Journal retirement security and health benefits further complicates their financial circumstances, hinder
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ETHICS STATEMENT
This study involved human participants through qualitative interviews and data collection in the Kuta area. The research was conducted in strict accordance with the ethical standards of the Research and Community Service Center (LPPM) of Institute of Arts Indonesia Bali (ISI Bali).All participants provided informed consent prior to their inclusion in the study, and the research adheres to the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki regarding the privacy and anonymity of human subjects.
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Ardini, N. W., Wijaya, I. N. C., Astawa, I. K., Mudana, I. G., & Entas, D. (2025). Coping Mechanism of Balinese Music: The Case of Kuta Tourist Destination in Bali, Indonesia. International Journal of Arts Management, 28(1), 117–127. https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-105021327345&partnerID=40&md5=9222af37ad9ebc325c7d172e9663f7e4.
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n https://doi.org/10.37134//mjm.vol15.1.1.2026 © 2026 Joseph Lobo. Published by Pejabat Karang Mengarang (UPSI Press). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license 6 Joseph Lobo | Volume 15, Issue 1 (2026) Malaysian Journal of Music physical education. All variables demonstrated acceptable normality, with skewness values ranging from -1.163 to .300 and kurtosis values from -.673 to 1.598, indicating no severe departures from nor
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An Ethnographic Approach to Balinese Music Resilience: Adaptive Strategies in a Globalized Tourism Landscape (A Case Study of Kuta, Bali)

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ABSTRACT This article examines how musical practices are negotiated within Kuta, Bali's changing tourist soundscape. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, interviews with musicians, venue managers, community leaders, and policy actors, as well as participant observations in beaches, bars, hotels, and temples, the study analyzes how traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are positioned in everyday acoustic life. Traditional Balinese music is understood here as ritual and community-based performance rooted in temples, *banjar* (sub-village), and ceremonial contexts, while Pop Bali is treated as a modern-traditional hybrid genre that blends Balinese language, melodic and rhythmic elements, and global popular music styles. The findings show that Kuta's soundscape is dominated by amplified global pop, electronic dance music (EDM), and commercial advertising. Yet, Balinese musical forms persist through strategic placement, temporal scheduling, and targeted programming for both residents and tourists. Stakeholders use Pop Bali and curated performances of traditional Balinese music to negotiate cultural visibility, economic survival, and identity in a competitive tourist market. Rather than a simple story of loss or preservation, the article argues that Kuta's musical life is characterized by ongoing cultural negotiation and hybridity in which collaborations between musicians, businesses, and local authorities reshape what counts as "traditional" and "modern" in Bali's premier tourism hub.

INTRODUCTION

Located in the Badung Regency of Bali, Kuta is a globally renowned international destination that originated as a modest coastal settlement. Over a century ago, it operated as a vital fishing village and maritime port linking the economies of Batavia (now Jakarta), Lombok, and Sumbawa through a strategic spice trade network. The locality holds a legendary status in Balinese history as the island's pioneer tourism-driven economy. While foreign sailors and backpackers began frequenting the area in the 1930s prompting the construction of rudimentary beachfront lodgings its status as Indonesia's premier tourist hub was firmly secured following the 1966 opening of the

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I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport in neighboring Tuban, just one kilometer away. By the 1980s, the region underwent substantial infrastructural urbanization driven by the widespread nightclubs, retail complexes, and entertainment venues catering to the "3S" (sea, sand, sun) beach club and nightlife culture (Ardini et al., 2025). Gradually securing its place on the global stage, this coastal enclave has come to symbolize Bali's broader metamorphosis into an international leisure hub, a destination long romanticized by foreign writers as a "paradise on earth" for coastal tourism enthusiasts. Unfortunately, unlike current tourist areas and villages, Kuta developed naturally without adequate development planning and management. It is an area with unplanned development. This includes the fact that the Bali tourism development paradigm in the form of cultural tourism, whose regional regulations have been in place since the 1970s are not working properly. In the field of music services as an entertainment product for tourists, what is developing dominantly is today's music, all of which is based on western music, such as electronic dance music (EDM), reggae, rock'n'roll, R&B, jazz, international pop, and live acoustic (Ardini *et al*.). It must be noted that tourists generally come from western countries, and this type of music is suitable for the coastal tourism atmosphere and is popular. In contrast, traditional music in Kuta is experiencing intense systemic pressure due to the hegemony of globalized commercial tourism music. Within this landscape, residents exercise cultural agency by maintaining traditional lineages through a popular contemporary hybrid known among local youth as "Balinese pop music." Although the commodification of music for the tourist market provides substantial economic prosperity for musicians and commercial stakeholders, it simultaneously requires traditional practices to constantly negotiate the tensions between financial viability and cultural preservation.

Increasingly, younger generations are gravitating toward contemporary music due to its perceived economic viability and career prospects, rather than investing efforts into preserving traditional musical practices (Ferlaino, 2023; Wankhede et al., 2023). This is where the tourism paradox occurs where traditional Balinese music among residents, which should be maintained and developed according to the principles of cultural tourism based on Balinese culture according to existing regional regulations, is slowly being replaced by western music. Rather than treating Kuta as a site where "authentic" traditional Balinese music is either preserved or lost under the weight of mass tourism, this article approaches the town as a contested soundscape shaped by negotiation, compromise, and creative adaptation. Within this soundscape, traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali occupy different but related positions. Traditional Balinese music is tied to ritual, local identity, and state-supported heritage discourses, while Pop Bali functions as a modern-traditional hybrid that combines Balinese language and musical motifs with global popular music forms. Both are mobilized by different stakeholders to claim space, attract audiences, and articulate competing visions of what it means to be Balinese in a tourist economy.

The central argument is that preservation in Kuta operates through cultural negotiation rather than through simple protection of a fixed tradition. Musicians adjust repertoires, performance formats, and staging to meet the expectations of international tourists, domestic visitors, and residents (Hynson, 2021). Venue managers and tourism businesses selectively program Balinese sounds sometimes as atmospheric markers of place, sometimes as main attractions balancing ideas of "local color" with commercial demands for familiarity and high-energy global genres such as EDM and Anglo-American pop (Fowler, 2016). Community leaders and government actors, in turn, invoke cultural heritage and regional identity to justify regulations, support events, or promote specific musical genres in branding campaigns (Madrid, 2016). These negotiations take place within concrete power relations. The ability to control volume, scheduling, and the placement of speakers gives certain businesses disproportionate influence over the shared soundscape, often drowning out quieter or less commercially powerful musical practices (Gidron, 2021). Concurrently, Balinese musicians and community organizations utilize Pop Bali

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and curated performances of traditional Balinese music to carve out sonic niches, assert cultural presence, and navigate subtle forms of resistance and accommodation. Local and tourist listeners are active participants rather than passive consumers; their bodily movements, complaints, patronage patterns, and affective responses ultimately dictate which musical forms thrive, which are marginalized, and how hybrid configurations materialize (Antonaki & Glinou, 2017). By foregrounding these dynamics, the article reconceptualizes Kuta not as a place where tradition is simply eroded by tourism, but as a site where hybrid musical identities are continuously produced. The tourist soundscape becomes a medium through which actors negotiate economic survival, cultural recognition, and everyday comfort. In this sense, "preservation" is less about freezing traditional Balinese music in an idealized form and more about experimenting with new configurations such as Pop Bali and staged heritage performances that keep Balinese musical elements audible, meaningful, and contested within a globalized urban environment. This article argues that musical life in Kuta is best understood not as a straightforward attempt to preserve "tradition" against tourism, but as an ongoing process of cultural negotiation within a dense tourist soundscape. Through an analysis of how traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are positioned and heard in Kuta's streets, venues, and public spaces; this article explains how musicians, venue operators, community leaders, and state actors collaborate and compete to produce hybrid musical identities in response to global tourism pressures.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to examine how Traditional Balinese Pop Bali operate within Kuta's contested tourist soundscape, and how diverse stakeholders negotiate sonic pressures through situated listening practices and strategic adaptation. Moving beyond preservation-versus-loss narratives, the study conceptualizes music not as isolated repertoire but as part of a dynamic sonic environment shaped by power relations, hybridity, and everyday negotiation. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Explore map of Kuta's tourist soundscape by analyzing the spatial distribution, temporal organization, and layering of Traditional Balinese music, Pop Bali, and global commercial genres across public and commercial spaces, using soundwalks, spatial analysis, and participant observation to identify sonic hierarchies and acoustic ecologies.
2. Examine power relations and governance shaping Kuta's sonic environment by investigating how venue owners, tourism entrepreneurs, government officials, *banjar* leaders, and musicians influence volume control, licensing, programming, and access to acoustic space, thereby privileging certain sounds while marginalizing others.
3. Analyze hybrid musical practices and adaptation strategies employed by Traditional Balinese and Pop Bali musicians as they respond to tourism markets and global aesthetics, framing hybridity as a creative and strategic negotiation rather than cultural dilution.
4. Investigate coping mechanisms and listening strategies developed by residents, workers, musicians, venue operators, and tourists in response to sonic intensity, applying Stuart Hall's reception theory to explore dominant, negotiated, and oppositional modes of listening.
5. Explore music's role in identity negotiation and cultural rootedness within a hyper globalized tourism context, examining how "traditional" and "modern" are discursively constructed and mobilized by stakeholders to assert identity, continuity, and belonging.
6. Advance soundscape ethnomusicology and tourism studies by integrating critical ethnography and reception theory to analyze contested sonic environments as socially constructed through power, embodied listening, and everyday practice.

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By addressing these objectives, this study addresses a gap in existing literature that has largely treated Balinese music as performance or repertoire rather than as part of a continuously negotiated soundscape. It contributes empirically and theoretically to debates on globalization, cultural adaptation, and urban tourism soundscapes, while offering insights relevant to policymakers, planners, and cultural practitioners managing tensions between economic development, cultural sustainability, and quality of life.

Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework (Figure 1) explains Kuta as a hyper globalized tourism space where sound operates as a field of negotiation rather than a neutral backdrop, shaping how Traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are produced, heard, and valued. Tourism creates dense sonic pressure across streets, beaches, and venues, concentrating global commercial genres in prime spaces and peak times, while local musical forms are pushed into regulated niches, which confirms that soundscape reflects spatial hierarchy and power relations rather than simple market demand. Within this soundscape, production and control are exercised by venue owners, state institutions, *banjar* leaders, and licensing regimes, whose decisions determine what sounds are amplified, where they circulate, and how they are framed as traditional, modern, or tourist-oriented, with Pop Bali emerging as a strategic hybrid that allows musicians and operators to balance commercial survival with recognizable markers of Balinese identity, consistent with theories of cultural hybridity and power.

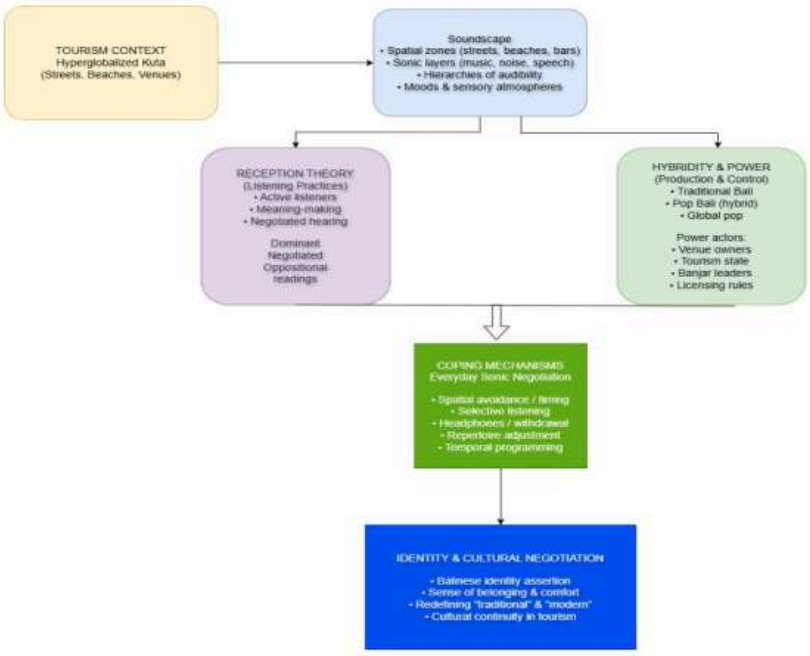


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

Reception theory clarifies that residents and tourists are active listeners who interpret and evaluate these sonic environments through bodily comfort, emotional response, and cultural

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meaning, and whose reactions, such as complaints, venue choices, and expressions of pride or discomfort, feed back into musical programming and regulation, aligning with encoding and decoding processes in cultural communication (Leipold & Loepthien, 2015; Lobzakova, 2018; Simoni, 2018). Everyday coping mechanisms, including spatial avoidance, selective listening, timing strategies, and repertoire adjustment (Ardini *et al.*, 2025; Reybrouck *et al.*, 2020), show how daily life in Kuta is organized through sound and how individuals and venues negotiate sonic pressure within structural constraints. The outcome of these intertwined processes is an ongoing negotiation of identity, where Balinese-ness is not erased by tourism but continuously reworked through hybrid musical practices, redefining the boundaries between tradition and modernity and sustaining cultural continuity through audibility, which supports soundscape theory's view of sound as socially produced space and power

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Balinese music and tourism has evolved from examining isolated performances to understanding music as part of contested everyday soundscapes shaped by power, hybridity, and active listener engagement. Early studies emphasized the tension between cultural continuity and commercialization, demonstrating how performances are adapted, commodified, and staged for visitors while maintaining ritual and social functions (Ardini, 2017; Mudana *et al.*, 2018). Rather than framing these changes as straightforward cultural decline, scholars increasingly conceptualize them as processes of adaptation and negotiation influenced by economic dependence, artistic labor, institutional support, and cultural policy. This perspective positions musical life in tourist areas like Kuta not as simple preservation or loss, but as part of broader transformations in urban space, labor markets, and governance structures. Building on this foundation, soundscape studies shift analytical focus from music as discrete repertoire to music as lived sonic experience embedded within total environmental sound. Soundscape research examines how layers of music, traffic, media, and crowd noise merge into a single field that shapes stress, pleasure, and place attachment (Pauw, 2025; Sibilla, 2025). Work on tourist soundscapes specifically demonstrates how amplified music, advertising, and nightlife generate both attraction and sonic overload, compelling residents and visitors to develop coping mechanisms for navigating density and commercial pressure (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2025). This perspective is essential for understanding Kuta, where music functions not only as artistic expression but as part of an intense, sometimes overwhelming sonic environment that people must negotiate moment by moment in their daily lives.

The concept of hybridity further clarifies how local musical forms respond to tourism and globalization. Rather than remaining "pure" or fixed, Balinese genres are recombined with global pop, rock, and electronic aesthetics, producing new hybrid styles that complicate binaries between traditional and modern, sacred and secular. Pop Bali exemplifies this creative hybridity: it draws on Balinese language, scales, and timbres while adopting production values and song structures from global popular music (Ardini *et al.*, 2025). This literature reframes hybridity not as cultural dilution but as an active strategic response to changing audiences, media infrastructures, and market demands. Youth music scenes in Bali represent localization processes reflecting the challenges of modernization and tourism, not mere Western imitation. These musical transformations are shaped by unequal power relations that determine which sounds dominate tourist spaces. Critical tourism and urban governance scholarship reveals that decisions about promoting, tolerating, or silencing sounds reflect broader struggles over space, class, and authority (Grguric, 2020). Venue owners, tourism entrepreneurs, local officials, and community leaders do not possess equal power to define a place's soundscape. In Kuta, control over loudspeakers, licensing, prime locations, and performance permits can privilege global

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commercial sounds while marginalizing or confining Balinese music to ritual contexts or controlled stages. This power imbalance directly affects how and where Balinese music is heard or overshadowed within the tourist sonic environment.

Reception theory and research on musical coping mechanisms foreground the active, interpretive role of listeners rather than treating audiences as passive sound consumers (Leipold & Loepthien, 2015; Lobzakova, 2018). This scholarship examines how people filter, use, and emotionally respond to music in everyday life regulating mood, asserting identity, resisting unwanted noise, or creating micro-environments of comfort (Simoni, 2018). In tourist hubs like Kuta, residents, workers, and visitors employ diverse strategies: some embrace global pop as cosmopolitan modernity, others seek Pop Bali or traditional gamelan to maintain cultural rootedness, and many oscillate between irritation and enjoyment as they move through different sonic zones. These practices reveal that sonic meaning emerges not from sound itself but through situated listening within specific soundscapes.

Further distinguish between "street culture" spontaneous, community-embedded ritual music performed in temples, processions, and public spaces and "stage culture" formalized, commodified performances designed for tourist audiences (Fan, 2020). This distinction highlights how traditional Balinese music occupies multiple contexts simultaneously: functioning authentically in ritual life while being staged and adapted for commercial consumption. However, these binary risks oversimplifying the fluid boundaries between contexts, as music often moves between street and stage depending on audience, venue, and economic necessity. Taken together, these bodies of literature suggest that Kuta's musical life should be approached as a contested soundscape where globalization, hybridity, coping strategies, and power relations intersect. However, while substantial research exists on Balinese music, tourism, and cultural change, a notable gap remains in soundscape-focused ethnomusicological studies that combine detailed listening, spatial analysis, and reception-oriented interviews in Kuta itself. Existing research tends to treat music as performance or repertoire rather than as part of an everyday sonic environment that people negotiate continuously (Gaye & Holmquist, 2004; Medrado, 2011, 2012; Nowak & Bennett, 2014; Rautiainen-Keskustalo, 2021). This study addresses that gap by analyzing how traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are situated within Kuta's tourist soundscape, and how different stakeholders' residents, workers, musicians, and tourists use these musical forms to cope with, contest, and reshape the sonic pressures of tourism through their everyday listening practices.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative ethnographic study draws on critical ethnography (Burawoy, 1998; Madison, 2012) and reception theory (Hall, 1973, 1980) to investigate how music functions within Kuta's contested tourist soundscape. Qualitative methods are epistemologically appropriate because sonic experience does not have a fixed physical form; musical meaning emerges through embodied listening, affective response, memory, and sociocultural context (Adorno, 1970; Meyer, 1956; Said, 1991). As Cage (1961) suggests, musical experience resists rigid definitional boundaries, while listeners interpret identical sonic stimuli differently depending on their positionality, cultural background, and situational context (Born, 2013; DeNora, 2000). Interpretive qualitative methods therefore offer the most valid way to examine how music operates within a complex tourism soundscape where meaning is continuously negotiated among multiple stakeholders. Critical ethnography extends beyond descriptive documentation to interrogate power relations, structural inequalities, and mechanisms of control embedded in everyday cultural practices (Burawoy, Carspecken, 1996; Madison, 2012). In Kuta, decisions about musical programming – including genre selection, volume regulation, temporal scheduling, and spatial

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distribution are not neutral, but shaped by commercial interests, tourism policy frameworks, governmental authority, and community norms (Bennett, 2000). A critical ethnographic approach allows me to ask why particular sounds dominate beaches, streets, bars, and hotels while others are marginalized or restricted, and whose economic, political, and cultural interests are prioritized through these sonic arrangements (Bull & Back, 2003; LaBelle, 2010).

Reception theory, specifically the encoding/ decoding model developed by Hall (1973, 1980), provides the primary analytical framework. Hall's tripartite scheme distinguishes dominant-hegemonic readings (accepting intended meanings), negotiated readings (adapting meanings within local constraints), and oppositional readings (contesting or rejecting dominant meanings). In this study, musical performances, playlists, and ambient soundscapes are treated as encoded texts produced by musicians, venue managers, and policy actors, thereby facilitating an analysis of how different listeners-Balinese residents, tourists, and tourism workers-decode these sonic messages. Reception theory is combined with soundscape studies (Schafer, 1977; Truax, 2001) to link individual interpretations to the broader acoustic organization of Kuta's tourist environment.

Fieldwork and Data Collection

Fieldwork was conducted in Kuta for over 12 months from January to December 2024. This temporal frame was strategically selected to coincide with normalized post-pandemic tourism conditions following the official cessation of COVID-19 health protocols, ensuring that observed soundscape patterns reflected established tourism dynamics rather than temporary disruptions (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). The twelve-month duration enabled documentation of seasonal variations, weekly cycles, and temporal shifts in sonic activity, thereby strengthening the ecological validity and transferability of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010). The research integrated multiple qualitative data collection methods: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, informal conversational interactions, and systematic soundscape listening sessions (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In total, 42 participants were interviewed across five purposively sampled stakeholder categories (Table 1).

Table 1. The Informants

No.	Stakeholder	Number
1	Musicians performing Pop Bali and Traditional Balinese music	14
2	Venue owners and managers operating bars, restaurants, hotels, and live music establishments	10
3	Event organizers and sound technicians	6
4	Community leaders and *banjar* representatives	7
5	Local government tourism officials	5

Purposive sampling ensured comprehensive representation of actors directly involved in producing, regulating, commodifying, and experiencing Kuta's soundscape (Patton, 2002). Initial participants were recruited through established professional and community networks, with subsequent participants identified via snowball sampling based on their documented involvement in musical programming, sound regulation, or community cultural governance (Noy, 2008). Participant observation was conducted across diverse sites where music shapes daily sonic experience, including beachfront bars, nightclubs, live music cafés, hotel lobbies, commercial shopping streets, temple courtyards during ceremonial events, and residential neighborhoods adjacent to tourism corridors (Emerson *et al*., 2011). Observational focus encompassed genre selection patterns, volume levels and amplification practices, loudspeaker spatial configurations,

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audience behavioral responses, and sonic interactions among music, traffic, conversation, and ambient environmental sounds (Gallagher, 2015; Pink, 2015). Systematic soundwalks were conducted during four temporal periods: morning (06:00 to 10:00), afternoon (12:00 to 16:00), evening (18:00-22:00), and late night (22:00-02:00), across weekdays and weekends to document diurnal and weekly variations in soundscape composition and intensity (Adams *et al*., 2008; Järviluoma *et al*., 2009).

Data Analysis

Detailed fieldnotes were recorded following each observation episode, documenting sonic conditions, social interactions, moments of conflict or negotiation over sound, regulatory interventions by authorities, and researcher sensory and affective responses (Emerson *et al*., 2011). Following sensory ethnography principles (Pink, 2015), subjective listening experiences were treated as legitimate data while maintaining reflexive awareness of researcher positionality within the field setting (Davies, 2008). Semi-structured interviews explored participants' understanding of music and sound within Kuta's tourism context, addressing music selection decision-making processes, daily experiences of noise and sonic overload, coping strategies for managing unwanted sound, meanings attributed to "traditional" versus "modern" musical categories, and perceptions of power asymmetries in soundscape control (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Interview protocols encouraged critical reflection on participants' roles within soundscape production and reception rather than mere descriptive reporting of practices.

All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and soundwalk documentation were imported into qualitative analysis software and analyzed using Miles *et al*.'s (2014) interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Initial open coding identified recurring themes including noise complaints, cultural branding strategies, economic pressures, identity negotiations, regulatory enforcement, and genre hybridization (Saldaña, 2016). Subsequent focused coding consolidated these into four analytical categories theoretically aligned with the conceptual framework: soundscape structure (sonic layering, spatial distribution, temporal patterning), hybridity (genre mixing, adaptive strategies, boundary negotiation), coping mechanisms (listener strategies, emotional regulation, spatial navigation), and power relations (control over volume and space, licensing systems, economic hierarchies). Reception theory guided interpretation by identifying dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional listening positions across stakeholder groups (Hall, 1980; Moores, 1993). By integrating critical ethnography, reception theory, and systematic soundscape observation within a rigorous qualitative framework, this methodology provides epistemologically valid and methodologically coherent tools for analyzing Kuta's musical life not as neutral acoustic background but as a contested sociocultural space structured by power asymmetries, cultural hybridity, adaptive coping strategies, and continuous everyday negotiation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical protocols adhered to established standards for ethnographic research (British Sociological Association, 2017; American Anthropological Association, 2012). All participants received comprehensive written and verbal information regarding research aims, data usage, and withdrawal rights. Informed consent forms were provided in Indonesian and English. Individual participants are identified through pseudonyms, and venue names are anonymized where disclosure could generate reputational or economic harm (Wiles *et al*., 2008). Researchers avoided disrupting performances, commercial operations, or religious rituals during observations.

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Sensitive information concerning inter-stakeholder conflicts, particularly disputes over noise regulation or economic competition, is presented cautiously to prevent exacerbating tensions or exposing vulnerable individuals to adverse consequences (Israel & Hay, 2006).

Researcher Positionality

Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process through systematic reflexive journaling and ongoing critical self-examination (Finlay, 2002; Pillow, 2003). As a Balinese researcher with long-term engagement in Bali's music and tourism sectors but not a Kuta resident, the researcher occupied an insider-outsider position that simultaneously facilitated access and trust among musicians and community members while necessitating continuous reflection on familiarity biases and taken-for-granted assumptions (Merriam *et al*., 2019; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). A reflexive journal documented evolving assumptions, affective reactions, moments of interpretive uncertainty, and shifts in analytical understanding throughout fieldwork. These reflexive notes were systematically revisited during data analysis to ensure interpretations remained grounded in participant perspectives rather than researcher preconceptions (Finlay & Gough, 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Kuta's Tourist Soundscape: Zones, Timings, and Sonic Hierarchies

This section maps Kuta's tourist soundscape as a stratified acoustic environment, demonstrating how power asymmetries in volume control, spatial access, and temporal scheduling produce distinct sonic hierarchies. While global commercial pop and EDM dominate public sonic spaces, traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are relegated to carefully demarcated spatial, temporal, and functional niches, thereby privileging specific musical forms while marginalizing others.

The beachfront zone extending along Jalan Pantai Kuta constitutes Kuta's most acoustically saturated tourism corridor. Between 10:00 and 02:00 daily, this zone is dominated by amplified EDM, international pop, and reggae broadcast from beach clubs, bars, and restaurants at volumes exceeding 85 decibels. Venue operators in this zone told me they select music based on perceived tourist preferences for high-energy global genres. As one bar manager explained, "Tourists come here for party atmosphere. They want David Guetta, not gamelan" (Venue Manager 3, March 2024). This programming logic reflects what I term dominant-hegemonic listening, in which stakeholders accept and reproduce assumptions that international tourists require familiar Western soundtracks to feel comfortable and entertained.

Traditional Balinese music appears in the beachfront zone only during tightly scheduled intervals. Hotel lobbies program *gamelan* performances from 18:00 to 19:00 as atmospheric background during guest check-in, while beachfront restaurants occasionally feature Pop Bali sets from 19:30 to 20:30 before transitioning to EDM for the remainder of the evening. These temporal placements confine Balinese musical forms to designated cultural moments rather than allowing them continuous presence in the sonic environment. A musician performing both Pop Bali and international cover songs highlighted this temporal division, "They give us one hour for Balinese songs, then we switch to English pop. The Balinese hour is for decoration, for showing culture. But the money comes from the party hours" (Musician 7, April 2024). This observation illustrates how temporal control functions as a mechanism of power, dictating which acoustic forms receive sustained audibility and which are reduced to token cultural representation. By contrast, the commercial shopping district along Jalan Legian operates under different sonic logics. During daytime hours (09:00 to 18:00), this zone features lower-volume commercial

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advertising, international pop playlists, and occasional Pop Bali tracks broadcast from retail shops. The reduced volume levels reflect commercial imperatives: shop operators told me that excessively loud music discourages browsing and purchasing behavior. However, traditional Balinese music remains almost entirely absent from this zone except during ceremonial processions, when gamelan ensembles temporarily interrupt commercial soundscapes as they move through streets toward temples. These processions demonstrate how ritual functions enable traditional Balinese music to claim sonic space that would otherwise be unavailable, though only through religious legitimacy rather than commercial viability.

Residential neighborhoods located one to two blocks inland from primary tourism corridors present markedly different soundscape configurations. In these zones, traditional Balinese music maintains a stronger presence through *banjar* rehearsals, temple ceremonies, and community gatherings. Residents described these soundscapes as markers of cultural continuity and social belonging. As one community leader articulated, “When I hear gamelan from the *banjar*, I remember I am Balinese, not just a tourism worker. That sound is my identity” (Community Leader 2, June 2024). However, even in residential zones, global pop from nearby tourism venues frequently intrudes, creating what residents characterized as sonic conflict. Multiple residents complained that late-night EDM from beach clubs penetrates residential areas, disrupting sleep and religious activities. These complaints indicate oppositional listening positions in which residents reject the dominance of tourist-oriented soundscapes and assert competing claims to acoustic territory.

Temporal analysis reveals that Kuta's soundscape operates according to predictable daily and weekly cycles. Weekday mornings (06:00 to 10:00) feature relatively quiet punctuated by traffic noise, vendor calls, and occasional traditional Balinese music from temple ceremonies. By midday (12:00 to 16:00), commercial music intensifies as tourism venues activate sound systems. Evening hours (18:00 to 22:00) mark peak sonic density, when multiple venues broadcast competing genres simultaneously, creating what residents described as "sonic chaos." Late-night hours (22:00 to 04:00) sustain high-volume EDM in nightclub districts, though reduced patron density means fewer competing sound sources. Weekend patterns amplify these dynamics, with Friday and Saturday nights producing the highest sustained volume levels across all zones.

This spatial and temporal mapping demonstrates that Kuta's tourist soundscape is neither random nor neutral. Instead, it reflects systematic power relations in which venue operators with capital, prime locations, and licensing authority control sonic space by determining volume, genre, and scheduling. Traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali occupy subordinate positions within this hierarchy, gaining audibility only through strategic placement at specific times and locations that do not threaten the commercial dominance of global popular music. The soundscape thus operates as a contested field in which competing visions of Kuta's cultural identity are negotiated through control over acoustic resources.

Pop Bali as Modern-Traditional Hybrid: Negotiating Visibility and Marketability

This subsection examines how Pop Bali functions as a modern-traditional hybrid genre, negotiating the tension between cultural distinctiveness and market demands within Kuta’s competitive tourist environment. The genre seamlessly integrates global popular music structures, instrumentation, and production aesthetics with traditional Balinese music al elements, particularly pelog and slendro scales. This hybridity extends to lyrical choices, where Balinese verses alternate with Indonesian or English choruses to engage both local communities and tourists with limited vernacular comprehension. Ultimately, these strategic musical and linguistic syntheses enable artists and venue operators to project a distinct Balinese cultural identity while maintaining commercial viability. As one Pop Bali musician explained regarding this compositional

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strategy, “I write verses in Balinese so local people feel the song is theirs. But the chorus uses simple Indonesian or English so tourists can sing along. This way, everyone can enjoy it” (Musician 4, May 2024). This bilingual approach exemplifies negotiated listening, in which musicians adapt dominant global pop conventions while maintaining sufficient local markers to preserve cultural legitimacy. Instrumentation in Pop Bali performances reflects similar hybrid negotiations. Ensembles typically combine acoustic guitars, electric bass, and drum kits; standard global pop instrumentation with occasional incorporation of Balinese instruments such as suling (bamboo flute) or small metallophones played during instrumental breaks. However, full gamelan ensembles rarely appear in Pop Bali performances, as venue operators and musicians told me that gamelan's dense textures and unfamiliar timbres can alienate international tourists accustomed to Western instrumental palettes. A venue manager described these programming decisions: “Full gamelan is too heavy for tourists. They don't understand it. But when we add one or two Balinese instruments to a pop band, tourists think it's exotic and interesting without being too strange” (Venue Manager 6, July 2024). This statement reveals how hybridity operates as a market strategy, allowing venues to commodify selective Balinese elements while avoiding sounds perceived as commercially risky.

Lyrical content in Pop Bali songs emphasizes themes of Balinese identity, cultural pride, and place attachment, often referencing specific Balinese locations, Hindu ceremonies, and community values. These themes enable Pop Bali to function as a mechanism of sonic identity work, through which musicians and listeners assert Balinese cultural continuity despite tourism’s homogenizing pressures. As one musician who performs primarily for local audiences explained, “When young Balinese people hear Pop Bali, they feel proud of their culture. The songs remind them that being modern doesn't mean forgetting where they come from” (Musician 11, August 2024).This function contrasts sharply with international pop and EDM, which lack local referentiality and thus cannot serve similar identity-affirming purposes for Balinese residents.

Performance contexts for Pop Bali vary significantly depending on intended audiences. In venues targeting domestic tourists and residents, Pop Bali constitutes the primary genre, often comprising 60-80% of set lists. These venues operate at lower volumes and attract audiences seeking familiarity and cultural connection rather than high-energy party atmospheres. By contrast, venues targeting international tourists relegate Pop Bali to brief segments within predominantly global pop sets. As a musician who performs in both contexts described regarding this programming logic, “In local cafés, people want Pop Bali all night. But in tourist bars, we play mostly English songs and add maybe three Pop Bali songs to show Balinese culture. If we play too much Pop Bali, tourists get bored and leave” (Musician 9, September 2024). This differentiation illustrates how market segmentation produces distinct soundscape configurations based on audience demographics and commercial calculations.

Pop Bali's commercial viability also depends on its capacity to circulate through media channels beyond live performance. Several musicians told me they prioritize recording and distributing Pop Bali songs through YouTube, Spotify, and social media platforms to reach broader audiences and generate income streams independent of live performance. This digital circulation extends Pop Bali's reach beyond Kuta's physical soundscape while simultaneously reinforcing its legitimacy as a contemporary Balinese musical form. As one musician explained, “When tourists hear Pop Bali online before visiting Bali, they recognize it when we perform. They feel like they understand Balinese culture better” (Musician 13, October 2024). This circulation strategy demonstrates how Pop Bali musicians actively construct marketability through multi-platform presence rather than relying solely on live performance contexts.

However, Pop Bali's hybrid status generates ongoing debates about authenticity and cultural integrity. Some community leaders and Traditional Balinese music practitioners expressed concern that Pop Bali dilutes Balinese musical traditions by privileging commercial

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appeal over cultural depth. A gamelan teacher stated: “Pop Bali uses Balinese language, but the music is not Balinese. Young people listen to Pop Bali and think they know Balinese music, but they never learn gamelan properly” (Community Leader 5, November 2024). This critique reflects oppositional listening, in which certain stakeholders reject Pop Bali's legitimacy as authentically Balinese and position it instead as superficial cultural commodification.

Despite these tensions, Pop Bali persists as a significant component of Kuta's soundscape because it enables multiple stakeholder groups to achieve distinct objectives simultaneously. For musicians, Pop Bali provides economic opportunities while allowing them to express Balinese identity. For venue operators, it offers cultural distinctiveness that differentiates their establishments within a crowded market. For local audiences, it affirms cultural continuity and modernity simultaneously. For tourists, it provides accessible entry points into Balinese culture without requiring extensive cultural knowledge. This multifunctionality explains Pop Bali's sustained presence despite contestation over its authenticity, demonstrating how hybridity operates as practical solution to competing pressures within tourism soundscapes.

Curating “Tradition”: Strategic Uses of Traditional Balinese music

This subsection demonstrates that traditional Balinese music in Kuta is strategically curated rather than merely preserved. By deliberately positioning gamelan performances within specific spatial and temporal contexts such as hotel entrances, temple festivals, and special events; stakeholders deploy "tradition" to construct cultural legitimacy and frame spaces as authentically Balinese. Ultimately, this targeted staging serves to differentiate tourism products, allowing actors to negotiate competing demands for heritage visibility within a broader soundscape, otherwise dominated by global popular music. Hotel operators constitute primary curators of traditional Balinese music in Kuta's tourism landscape. Upscale hotels routinely program gamelan performances at entrance courtyards and lobbies during evening hours (18:00 - 19:30) as guests arrive for dinner or return from daytime activities. These performances employ small gamelan ensembles performing instrumental pieces drawn from classical Balinese repertoire, typically without vocal components or dramatic narratives. A hotel events manager described this programming strategy, “We place gamelan at the entrance, so guests immediately experience Balinese culture when they enter. It creates atmosphere and shows we respect local traditions. But we keep it instrumental, so it doesn't interfere with conversation or dining” (Venue Manager 8, August 2024). This spatial placement functions as what I term sonic framing, in which Traditional Balinese music marks thresholds between external commercial soundscapes and interior spaces constructed as culturally refined and locally grounded.

However, these hotel performances reflect careful curation that balances heritage presentation with tourist comfort. Musicians told me that hotel managers request shortened performance durations, reduced volume levels, and omission of ceremonial pieces perceived as too complex or unfamiliar for international audiences. One gamelan musician explained that "Hotels want gamelan that sounds beautiful but not challenging. They ask us to play slow, gentle pieces without sudden loud parts. Ceremonial pieces are too intense for hotel lobbies, so we play palace repertoire instead" (Musician 5, June 2024). This curation process selectively presents traditional Balinese music through aestheticized frames that emphasize tranquility and exoticism while suppressing the dynamic, ritual-embedded qualities that characterize gamelan in ceremonial contexts.

Temple festivals and processions provide contrasting contexts in which traditional Balinese music operates under religious rather than commercial logics. During major ceremonial cycles, particularly Galungan, Kuningan, and temple Odalan (anniversary celebrations) gamelan ensembles perform processional music as they accompany offerings and deities through public

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streets. These performances interrupt Kuta's commercial soundscape temporarily, asserting religious authority over acoustic space through sheer volume and ceremonial legitimacy. Residents described these moments as opportunities to reclaim sonic territory from tourism domination. One community leader stated that “When we have ceremonies, our gamelan is louder than any bar or club. For that time, Kuta sounds like Bali again, not like America or Australia” (Community Leader 4, July 2024). This statement reveals how ceremonial contexts enable oppositional listening positions in which residents use Traditional Balinese music to contest tourism's sonic hegemony, even if only temporarily.

However, ceremonial performances face increasing pressure from noise complaints and municipal regulations designed to protect tourism operations. Multiple musicians and community leaders described conflicts in which venue operators or tourists lodged complaints about gamelan volume during processions, leading police to request volume reductions or route alterations. A *banjar* leader explained, "Sometimes police come during ceremonies and tell us to turn down the gamelan because tourists complain. But we explain this is religious ceremony, not entertainment. Eventually they leave us alone, but it creates tension" (Community Leader 6, September 2024). These conflicts illustrate how power relations structure soundscape access, as tourism interests possess institutional authority to challenge even religiously sanctioned sonic practices.

Government tourism agencies also participate in curating Traditional Balinese music through sponsored cultural events designed to enhance Kuta's destination branding. Monthly "Kuta Cultural Nights" programmed by the local tourism office feature gamelan performances, Balinese dance, and cultural demonstrations in designated public spaces. A tourism official described these events' objectives as “We want tourists to see that Kuta has authentic Balinese culture, not just beaches and nightclubs. These cultural nights show that we preserve tradition even as we develop tourism” (Government Official 2, October 2024).

However, these events reflect selective curation emphasizing palace and classical repertoires perceived as presentational appealing, while excluding village-based and ceremonial forms that might appear less refined or accessible to international audiences.

Event-based curation extends to special occasions such as *Nyepi* (Day of Silence), where all amplified music including both global pop and Traditional Balinese music ceases for 24 hours across Bali. Multiple stakeholders described *Nyepi* as a moment when Kuta's normal sonic hierarchy inverts, as silence replaces commercial saturation. A resident reflected that “On *Nyepi*, you realize how much noise is normal in Kuta. When everything stops, it feels like a different place. You can hear nature again waves, wind, birds” (Resident 3, March 2024).This annual silence functions as involuntary coping mechanism, providing temporary relief from tourism's acoustic intensity while simultaneously demonstrating religious authority's power to override commercial imperatives entirely.

These curated presentations reveal that "tradition" in Kuta operates not as fixed heritage requiring passive preservation, but as actively constructed category deployed strategically by stakeholders to achieve specific objectives. Hotels use Traditional Balinese music to differentiate their properties through cultural authenticity claims. Temple communities use it to assert religious authority and cultural continuity. Government agencies use it to construct destination identity that balances modernity with heritage. Musicians use it to access performance opportunities and claim cultural legitimacy. Each stakeholder group curates Traditional Balinese music according to distinct logics, producing multiple, sometimes contradictory, versions of "tradition" that coexist within Kuta's contested soundscape.

Coping, Conflict, and Power: Managing Noise, Value, and Cultural Legitimacy

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Traditional Balinese music is strategically curated rather than simply preserved. By placing gamelan performances at hotel entrances, temple festivals, and special events, stakeholders use "tradition" to frame spaces and moments as authentically Balinese, even as the broader soundscape remains dominated by global popular music. Kuta's tourist soundscape generates ongoing conflicts over acoustic territory, quality of life, and cultural legitimacy, compelling stakeholders to develop diverse coping mechanisms that reveal underlying power asymmetries. This section examines how residents, musicians, venue operators, and tourists navigate sonic overload, negotiate competing values, and contest or accommodate tourism's acoustic dominance through everyday practices.

Residents living in neighborhoods adjacent to tourism corridors described sustained sonic overload as their primary quality-of-life concern. Late-night EDM from beach clubs penetrates residential areas at volumes that disrupt sleep, interfere with family activities, and undermine ritual practices. Multiple residents reported filing noise complaints with municipal authorities, but most expressed skepticism about enforcement effectiveness. One resident explained, "We complained many times about noise from nightclubs. Police come, measure volume, say it's too loud, then leave. Nothing changes. The clubs have money and connections, so they continue" (Resident 7, May 2024). This statement reveals how economic power translates into acoustic impunity, as financially influential venue operators evade regulatory enforcement despite documented violations.

Residents develop multiple coping mechanisms to manage unwanted sound. Some close windows, install soundproofing materials, or relocate bedrooms to interior rooms farthest from street noise. Others time daily activities to avoid peak sonic intensity periods, conducting errands during morning hours when commercial venues remain quiet. Still others reported using earplugs or headphones playing traditional Balinese music or Pop Bali as sonic refuge from external noise. A resident described this practice, "When nightclub noise gets too loud, I put on headphones and listen to Pop Bali. It helps me feel calm and reminds me that I am in Bali, not in a foreign disco" (Resident 5, August 2024). This strategy exemplifies negotiated listening, in which residents use familiar Balinese sounds to construct micro-environments of cultural comfort within otherwise alienating sonic conditions.

Musicians likewise navigate competing pressures that require constant negotiation between economic survival and cultural values. Those performing in tourist venues described pressure to prioritize global pop and EDM over traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali because international tourists generate higher revenues through drink sales and tips. However, musicians also expressed concern about cultural disconnection when performing exclusively Western repertoire. One musician reflected that, "Sometimes I feel like a jukebox, just playing with what tourists want to hear. I forgot I am a Balinese musician. That's why I insist on playing at least a few Pop Bali songs every night, even if tourists don't request them. Those songs are for me, to remember who I am" (Musician 12, November 2024). This statement illustrates how musicians use Pop Bali as coping mechanism to preserve cultural identity despite commercial pressures toward musical homogenization.

Conflicts also emerge between venue operators regarding acoustic territory and market competition. Some operators invest in high-power sound systems and maximize volume to attract patron attention, creating acoustic arms races in which neighboring venues escalate volume levels to avoid being drowned out. A venue manager described this dynamic, "If the bar next door plays loud music, we must play even louder, or customers will go there instead. It becomes a volume war that nobody wins" (Venue Manager 9, September 2024). These arms races generate cumulative sonic intensity that exceeds any individual venue's intentions, demonstrating how competitive market logics produce collective acoustic outcomes that no single actor controls or desires.

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Tourists' responses to Kuta's soundscape vary based on expectations, cultural backgrounds, and tolerance thresholds. Some embrace high-volume EDM and global pop as integral to party atmosphere and tropical destination experience. Others described sonic overload and fatigue, expressing desire for quieter environments or more culturally distinctive soundscapes. A tourist from Europe stated that, “I came to Bali expecting something different, but Kuta sounds like Ibiza or Miami. I wish there was more Balinese music so I could experience local culture, not just hear the same EDM I hear at home” (Tourist 4, October 2024). This comment reveals how dominant sonic homogenization can undermine destination differentiation, suggesting that excessive reliance on global genres may diminish Kuta's competitive appeal to tourists seeking cultural distinctiveness. Government officials occupy ambivalent positions within these conflicts, simultaneously promoting tourism development and responding to resident complaints about noise pollution. Multiple officials acknowledged enforcement challenges stemming from venue operators' economic power and political connections. A municipal official explained, “We know noise is a problem, but tourism is our main economy. If we enforce regulations too strictly, venues will close and unemployment will increase. We try to balance tourism development with quality of life, but it's very difficult” (Government Official 4, December 2024).

This statement exposes how power relations constrain regulatory action, as economic dependencies create structural barriers to protecting residents' acoustic comfort even when regulations theoretically exist.

These conflicts illustrate that Kuta's soundscape operates as contested field structured by multiple, intersecting power asymmetries. Venue operators with capital and political connections control acoustic resources through volume, spatial access, and regulatory evasion. Residents possess limited power to contest tourism's sonic dominance despite democratic rights to quiet enjoyment. Musicians navigate subordinate positions within commercial hierarchies while using Pop Bali and selective traditional Balinese music performance to maintain cultural legitimacy. Tourists' economic power grants them implicit priority in soundscape programming, yet diverse tourist preferences suggest that homogenized global soundscapes may not serve all market segments effectively. Government actors mediate competing interests while prioritizing economic growth over environmental quality or cultural heritage.

Coping mechanisms developed by these stakeholders reveal how power operates not only through direct control but through everyday accommodations, resistances, and negotiations. Residents' use of soundproofing and headphones represents adaptive responses that enable continued residence despite hostile acoustic conditions. Musicians' insistence on including Pop Bali in predominantly Western sets constitutes subtle resistance that preserves cultural identity within commercial constraints. Venue operators' volume escalation reflects competitive pressures that exceed individual intentions, demonstrating how market logics generate emergent collective outcomes. Tourists' complaints about sonic homogenization suggest market demand for greater cultural distinctiveness, creating potential leverage for stakeholders seeking to legitimize traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali within commercial programming.

By foregrounding these everyday practices of coping and conflict, this analysis reveals that soundscape negotiation occurs not only through formal regulations or explicit policies but through countless micro-decisions and embodied responses through which actors navigate, contest, and occasionally reshape Kuta's acoustic environment. Power relations structure these negotiations unevenly, but they do not determine all outcomes, as stakeholders continuously develop creative strategies to claim sonic space, assert cultural presence, and preserve quality of life within tourism's overwhelming acoustic pressures.

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CONCLUSION

This article examines Kuta as a dense, contested, and stratified tourist soundscape in which traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali occupy shifting, negotiated positions. Rather than framing musical life in Kuta through a simplistic narrative of cultural loss under the weight of tourism, the ethnographic material demonstrates an ongoing process of cultural negotiation and hybridity. Musicians, venue operators, community leaders, and state actors all actively participate in shaping which sounds are amplified, where they are heard, and how they are conceptualized as "traditional," "modern," or "for tourists." Consequently, while high-volume electronic dance music (EDM) and international pop dominate major public zones, local actors strategically carve out distinct spatial and temporal niches for Balinese musical expression through scheduled traditional performances, the integration of Pop Bali into live sets, or the deployment of vernacular language and timbres within otherwise globalized repertoires. These practices underscore that the soundscape is not a neutral backdrop, but a dynamic field of power where economic interests, regulatory decisions, and cultural values continuously intersect.

Furthermore, an analytical focus on reception highlights that listeners, both residents and tourists, are active agents rather than passive recipients within this environment. Their interpretations, evaluations, and acoustic behaviors directly influence localized musical decisions; factors such as noise complaints, venue patronage, physiological reactions to volume, and affective responses to Balinese musical elements collectively dictate which performance strategies remain sustainable. Ultimately, everyday coping mechanisms including navigating to quieter secondary streets, utilizing headphones, or selectively engaging with specific performances reveal that social life and spatial organization in Kuta are fundamentally structured through sound as much as through vision or physical mobility. At the same time, Pop Bali emerges as a key site of hybridity. It mediates between tourist-oriented global pop and locally valued notions of Balinese-ness, enabling musicians and venue operators to navigate commercial pressures while maintaining recognizable cultural markers. The genre's flexibility allows it to circulate across different spaces from beach bars to more locally oriented venues without being fixed as either purely "traditional" or purely "modern." This hybridity complicates binary oppositions between preservation and commercialization, suggesting instead that "tradition" in Kuta is continually reconfigured through sonic experimentation within the tourist economy. By bringing together soundscape studies, reception theory, and debates on hybridity and power, this article contributes to ethnomusicology's understanding of how tourism reshapes musical life in urban environments. It shows that attention to everyday listening practices and to the spatial distribution of sound can reveal forms of negotiation and resistance that might be missed if we focus only on formal performances or heritage policies. For studies of Balinese music, the findings suggest that Kuta should not be approached solely as a site of cultural degradation, but as a complex arena where different visions of Balinese identity are sounded, contested, and occasionally reconciled.

Future research could extend this approach by comparing Kuta's soundscape with those of other Balinese tourist centers or by examining how digital media and online platforms further transform the circulation and reception of traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali. Nonetheless, the Kuta case already makes clear that any discussion of "preserving" Balinese music under tourism must take seriously the lived experience of sound how it is heard, managed, and reworked by those who inhabit and make use of the city's sonic spaces. This analysis has asked how music functions within Kuta's tourist soundscape and how traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are

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positioned, negotiated, and contested within that environment. The ethnographic mapping of zones and timings showed that global commercial genres dominate Kuta's audible public space, while local musical forms are confined to carefully managed niches of ceremony, spectacle, and "local color". The perspectives of venue operators, residents, and tourists further revealed that these sonic arrangements are not simply the outcome of "tourist demand" but the product of ongoing negotiations over economic survival, regulatory regimes, and competing visions of Balinese culture. In this sense, Kuta's soundscape does not only reflect existing power relations; it is a medium through which cultural authority, authenticity, and belonging are continuously produced and disputed.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration, Formal analysis, and writing original draft preparation. Author 2: Visualization, Software, Data curation, and writing - review and editing. Author 3: Investigation, Resources, and Validation. Author 4: Investigation, Data curation, and Validation.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

Data available on request from the authors.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this work the authors used Gemini to enhance the clarity and readability of the manuscript. Following the use of this service, the authors critically reviewed, revised, and edited the content to ensure academic rigor and accuracy. The authors take full responsibility for the final content of the publication.

ETHICS STATEMENT

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This study involved human participants through qualitative interviews and data collection in the Kuta area. The research was conducted in strict accordance with the ethical standards of the Research and Community Service Center (LPPM) of Institute of Arts Indonesia Bali (ISI Bali). All participants provided informed consent prior to their inclusion in the study, and the research adheres to the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki regarding the privacy and anonymity of human subjects.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Ni Wayan Ardini is a dedicated academic specializing in arts management and arts education. Her research investigates the intersection of traditional arts, cultural preservation, and art pedagogy. She actively engages in interdisciplinary studies, recently exploring the socio-cultural resilience of local artists.

I Nyoman Cahyadi Wijaya is an enthusiastic researcher, educator, and tourism professional who specializes in gastronomy tourism, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions), and regenerative tourism business planning. I actively collaborate with interdisciplinary teams to create cutting-edge tourism solutions for sustainability, extending to the food and beverage sector with topics like food waste management, circular economy, and gastronomic tourism destinations.

I Ketut Astawa is a prominent academic and researcher focusing on tourism management, hospitality operations, and sustainable development. His scholarly contributions emphasize the optimization of green tourism practices, service quality, and community-based approaches within the hospitality sector. His collaborative research continues to bridge theoretical insights with practical applications in Bali's dynamic tourism landscape.

I Gede Mudana is an esteemed professor in cultural tourism at the State Polytechnic of Bali, renowned for his extensive research in cultural tourism, heritage conservation, and destination management. His work critically examines the socio-cultural dynamics of tourism on local communities, strongly advocating for sustainable and culturally embedded development models.

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An Ethnographic Approach to Balinese Music Resilience: Adaptive Strategies in a Globalized Tourism Landscape (A Case Study of Kuta, Bali)

66
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ABSTRACT This article examines how musical practices are negotiated within Kuta, Bali's changing tourist soundscape. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, interviews with musicians, venue managers, community leaders, and policy actors, as well as participant observations in beaches, bars, hotels, and temples, the study analyzes how traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are positioned in everyday acoustic life. Traditional Balinese music is understood here as ritual and community-based performance rooted in temples, *banjar* (sub-village), and ceremonial contexts, while Pop Bali is treated as a modern-traditional hybrid genre that blends Balinese language, melodic and rhythmic elements, and global popular music styles. The findings show that Kuta's soundscape is dominated by amplified global pop, electronic dance music (EDM), and commercial advertising. Yet, Balinese musical forms persist through strategic placement, temporal scheduling, and targeted programming for both residents and tourists. Stakeholders use Pop Bali and curated performances of traditional Balinese music to negotiate cultural visibility, economic survival, and identity in a competitive tourist market. Rather than a simple story of loss or preservation, the article argues that Kuta's musical life is characterized by ongoing cultural negotiation and hybridity in which collaborations between musicians, businesses, and local authorities reshape what counts as "traditional" and "modern" in Bali's premier tourism hub.

INTRODUCTION

Located in the Badung Regency of Bali, Kuta is a globally renowned international destination that originated as a modest coastal settlement. Over a century ago, it operated as a vital fishing village and maritime port linking the economies of Batavia (now Jakarta), Lombok, and Sumbawa through a strategic spice trade network. The locality holds a legendary status in Balinese history as the island's pioneer tourism-driven economy. While foreign sailors and backpackers began frequenting the area in the 1930s prompting the construction of rudimentary beachfront lodgings its status as Indonesia's premier tourist hub was firmly secured following the 1966 opening of the

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I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport in neighboring Tuban, just one kilometer away. By the 1980s, the region underwent substantial infrastructural urbanization driven by the widespread nightclubs, retail complexes, and entertainment venues catering to the "3S" (sea, sand, sun) beach club and nightlife culture (Ardini et al., 2025). Gradually securing its place on the global stage, this coastal enclave has come to symbolize Bali's broader metamorphosis into an international leisure hub, a destination long romanticized by foreign writers as a "paradise on earth" for coastal tourism enthusiasts. Unfortunately, unlike current tourist areas and villages, Kuta developed naturally without adequate development planning and management. It is an area with unplanned development. This includes the fact that the Bali tourism development paradigm in the form of cultural tourism, whose regional regulations have been in place since the 1970s are not working properly. In the field of music services as an entertainment product for tourists, what is developing dominantly is today's music, all of which is based on western music, such as electronic dance music (EDM), reggae, rock'n'roll, R&B, jazz, international pop, and live acoustic (Ardini *et al.*). It must be noted that tourists generally come from western countries, and this type of music is suitable for the coastal tourism atmosphere and is popular. In contrast, traditional music in Kuta is experiencing intense systemic pressure due to the hegemony of globalized commercial tourism music. Within this landscape, residents exercise cultural agency by maintaining traditional lineages through a popular contemporary hybrid known among local youth as "Balinese pop music." Although the commodification of music for the tourist market provides substantial economic prosperity for musicians and commercial stakeholders, it simultaneously requires traditional practices to constantly negotiate the tensions between financial viability and cultural preservation.

Increasingly, younger generations are gravitating toward contemporary music due to its perceived economic viability and career prospects, rather than investing efforts into preserving traditional musical practices (Ferlaino, 2023; Wankhede et al., 2023). This is where the tourism paradox occurs where traditional Balinese music among residents, which should be maintained and developed according to the principles of cultural tourism based on Balinese culture according to existing regional regulations, is slowly being replaced by western music. Rather than treating Kuta as a site where "authentic" traditional Balinese music is either preserved or lost under the weight of mass tourism, this article approaches the town as a contested soundscape shaped by negotiation, compromise, and creative adaptation. Within this soundscape, traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali occupy different but related positions. Traditional Balinese music is tied to ritual, local identity, and state-supported heritage discourses, while Pop Bali functions as a modern-traditional hybrid that combines Balinese language and musical motifs with global popular music forms. Both are mobilized by different stakeholders to claim space, attract audiences, and articulate competing visions of what it means to be Balinese in a tourist economy.

The central argument is that preservation in Kuta operates through cultural negotiation rather than through simple protection of a fixed tradition. Musicians adjust repertoires, performance formats, and staging to meet the expectations of international tourists, domestic visitors, and residents (Hynson, 2021). Venue managers and tourism businesses selectively program Balinese sounds sometimes as atmospheric markers of place, sometimes as main attractions balancing ideas of "local color" with commercial demands for familiarity and high-energy global genres such as EDM and Anglo-American pop (Fowler, 2016). Community leaders and government actors, in turn, invoke cultural heritage and regional identity to justify regulations, support events, or promote specific musical genres in branding campaigns (Madrid, 2016). These negotiations take place within concrete power relations. The ability to control volume, scheduling, and the placement of speakers gives certain businesses disproportionate influence over the shared soundscape, often drowning out quieter or less commercially powerful musical practices (Gidron, 2021). Concurrently, Balinese musicians and community organizations utilize Pop Bali

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and curated performances of traditional Balinese music to carve out sonic niches, assert cultural presence, and navigate subtle forms of resistance and accommodation. Local and tourist listeners are active participants rather than passive consumers; their bodily movements, complaints, patronage patterns, and affective responses ultimately dictate which musical forms thrive, which are marginalized, and how hybrid configurations materialize (Antonaki & Glinou, 2017). By foregrounding these dynamics, the article reconceptualizes Kuta not as a place where tradition is simply eroded by tourism, but as a site where hybrid musical identities are continuously produced. The tourist soundscape becomes a medium through which actors negotiate economic survival, cultural recognition, and everyday comfort. In this sense, "preservation" is less about freezing traditional Balinese music in an idealized form and more about experimenting with new configurations such as Pop Bali and staged heritage performances that keep Balinese musical elements audible, meaningful, and contested within a globalized urban environment. This article argues that musical life in Kuta is best understood not as a straightforward attempt to preserve "tradition" against tourism, but as an ongoing process of cultural negotiation within a dense tourist soundscape. Through an analysis of how traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are positioned and heard in Kuta's streets, venues, and public spaces; this article explains how musicians, venue operators, community leaders, and state actors collaborate and compete to produce hybrid musical identities in response to global tourism pressures.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to examine how Traditional Balinese Pop Bali operate within Kuta's contested tourist soundscape, and how diverse stakeholders negotiate sonic pressures through situated listening practices and strategic adaptation. Moving beyond preservation-versus-loss narratives, the study conceptualizes music not as isolated repertoire but as part of a dynamic sonic environment shaped by power relations, hybridity, and everyday negotiation. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Explore map of Kuta's tourist soundscape by analyzing the spatial distribution, temporal organization, and layering of Traditional Balinese music, Pop Bali, and global commercial genres across public and commercial spaces, using soundwalks, spatial analysis, and participant observation to identify sonic hierarchies and acoustic ecologies.
2. Examine power relations and governance shaping Kuta's sonic environment by investigating how venue owners, tourism entrepreneurs, government officials, *banjar* leaders, and musicians influence volume control, licensing, programming, and access to acoustic space, thereby privileging certain sounds while marginalizing others.
3. Analyze hybrid musical practices and adaptation strategies employed by Traditional Balinese and Pop Bali musicians as they respond to tourism markets and global aesthetics, framing hybridity as a creative and strategic negotiation rather than cultural dilution.
4. Investigate coping mechanisms and listening strategies developed by residents, workers, musicians, venue operators, and tourists in response to sonic intensity, applying Stuart Hall's reception theory to explore dominant, negotiated, and oppositional modes of listening.
5. Explore music's role in identity negotiation and cultural rootedness within a hyper globalized tourism context, examining how "traditional" and "modern" are discursively constructed and mobilized by stakeholders to assert identity, continuity, and belonging.
6. Advance soundscape ethnomusicology and tourism studies by integrating critical ethnography and reception theory to analyze contested sonic environments as socially constructed through power, embodied listening, and everyday practice.

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By addressing these objectives, this study addresses a gap in existing literature that has largely treated Balinese music as performance or repertoire rather than as part of a continuously negotiated soundscape. It contributes empirically and theoretically to debates on globalization, cultural adaptation, and urban tourism soundscapes, while offering insights relevant to policymakers, planners, and cultural practitioners managing tensions between economic development, cultural sustainability, and quality of life.

Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework (Figure 1) explains Kuta as a hyper globalized tourism space where sound operates as a field of negotiation rather than a neutral backdrop, shaping how Traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are produced, heard, and valued. Tourism creates dense sonic pressure across streets, beaches, and venues, concentrating global commercial genres in prime spaces and peak times, while local musical forms are pushed into regulated niches, which confirms that soundscape reflects spatial hierarchy and power relations rather than simple market demand. Within this soundscape, production and control are exercised by venue owners, state institutions, *banjar* leaders, and licensing regimes, whose decisions determine what sounds are amplified, where they circulate, and how they are framed as traditional, modern, or tourist-oriented, with Pop Bali emerging as a strategic hybrid that allows musicians and operators to balance commercial survival with recognizable markers of Balinese identity, consistent with theories of cultural hybridity and power.

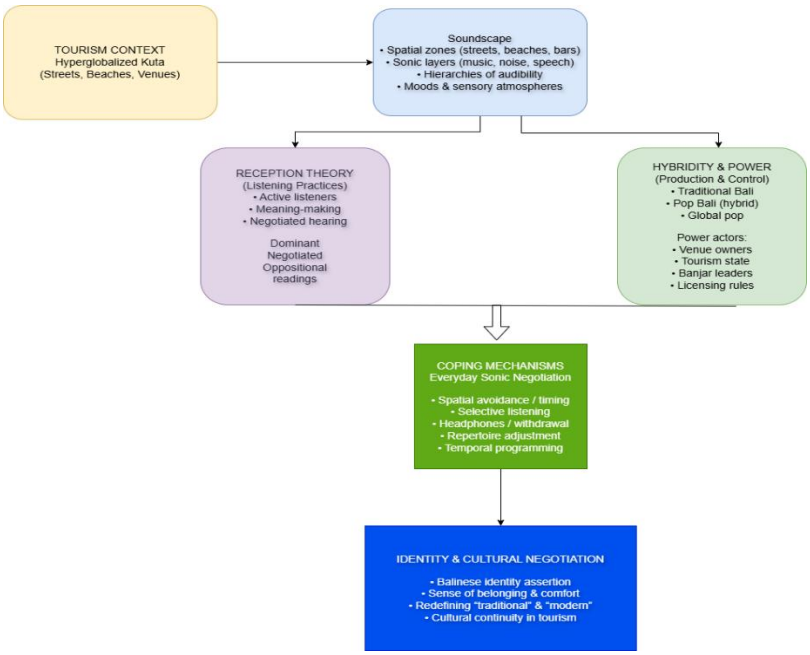


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

Reception theory clarifies that residents and tourists are active listeners who interpret and evaluate these sonic environments through bodily comfort, emotional response, and cultural

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meaning, and whose reactions, such as complaints, venue choices, and expressions of pride or discomfort, feed back into musical programming and regulation, aligning with encoding and decoding processes in cultural communication (Leipold & Loepthien, 2015; Lobzakova, 2018; Simoni, 2018). Everyday coping mechanisms, including spatial avoidance, selective listening, timing strategies, and repertoire adjustment (Ardini *et al*., 2025; Reybrouck *et al*., 2020), show how daily life in Kuta is organized through sound and how individuals and venues negotiate sonic pressure within structural constraints. The outcome of these intertwined processes is an ongoing negotiation of identity, where Balinese-ness is not erased by tourism but continuously reworked through hybrid musical practices, redefining the boundaries between tradition and modernity and sustaining cultural continuity through audibility, which supports soundscape theory's view of sound as socially produced space and power

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Balinese music and tourism has evolved from examining isolated performances to understanding music as part of contested everyday soundscapes shaped by power, hybridity, and active listener engagement. Early studies emphasized the tension between cultural continuity and commercialization, demonstrating how performances are adapted, commodified, and staged for visitors while maintaining ritual and social functions (Ardini, 2017; Mudana *et al*., 2018). Rather than framing these changes as straightforward cultural decline, scholars increasingly conceptualize them as processes of adaptation and negotiation influenced by economic dependence, artistic labor, institutional support, and cultural policy. This perspective positions musical life in tourist areas like Kuta not as simple preservation or loss, but as part of broader transformations in urban space, labor markets, and governance structures. Building on this foundation, soundscape studies shift analytical focus from music as discrete repertoire to music as lived sonic experience embedded within total environmental sound. Soundscape research examines how layers of music, traffic, media, and crowd noise merge into a single field that shapes stress, pleasure, and place attachment (Pauw, 2025; Sibilla, 2025). Work on tourist soundscapes specifically demonstrates how amplified music, advertising, and nightlife generate both attraction and sonic overload, compelling residents and visitors to develop coping mechanisms for navigating density and commercial pressure (Rodrigues *et al*., 2025). This perspective is essential for understanding Kuta, where music functions not only as artistic expression but as part of an intense, sometimes overwhelming sonic environment that people must negotiate moment by moment in their daily lives.

The concept of hybridity further clarifies how local musical forms respond to tourism and globalization. Rather than remaining "pure" or fixed, Balinese genres are recombined with global pop, rock, and electronic aesthetics, producing new hybrid styles that complicate binaries between traditional and modern, sacred and secular. Pop Bali exemplifies this creative hybridity: it draws on Balinese language, scales, and timbres while adopting production values and song structures from global popular music (Ardini *et al*., 2025). This literature reframes hybridity not as cultural dilution but as an active strategic response to changing audiences, media infrastructures, and market demands. Youth music scenes in Bali represent localization processes reflecting the challenges of modernization and tourism, not mere Western imitation. These musical transformations are shaped by unequal power relations that determine which sounds dominate tourist spaces. Critical tourism and urban governance scholarship reveals that decisions about promoting, tolerating, or silencing sounds reflect broader struggles over space, class, and authority (Grguric, 2020). Venue owners, tourism entrepreneurs, local officials, and community leaders do not possess equal power to define a place's soundscape. In Kuta, control over loudspeakers, licensing, prime locations, and performance permits can privilege global

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commercial sounds while marginalizing or confining Balinese music to ritual contexts or controlled stages. This power imbalance directly affects how and where Balinese music is heard or overshadowed within the tourist sonic environment.

Reception theory and research on musical coping mechanisms foreground the active, interpretive role of listeners rather than treating audiences as passive sound consumers (Leipold & Loepthien, 2015; Lobzakova, 2018). This scholarship examines how people filter, use, and emotionally respond to music in everyday life regulating mood, asserting identity, resisting unwanted noise, or creating micro-environments of comfort (Simoni, 2018). In tourist hubs like Kuta, residents, workers, and visitors employ diverse strategies: some embrace global pop as cosmopolitan modernity, others seek Pop Bali or traditional gamelan to maintain cultural rootedness, and many oscillate between irritation and enjoyment as they move through different sonic zones. These practices reveal that sonic meaning emerges not from sound itself but through situated listening within specific soundscapes.

Further distinguish between "street culture" spontaneous, community-embedded ritual music performed in temples, processions, and public spaces and "stage culture" formalized, commodified performances designed for tourist audiences (Fan, 2020). This distinction highlights how traditional Balinese music occupies multiple contexts simultaneously: functioning authentically in ritual life while being staged and adapted for commercial consumption. However, these binary risks oversimplifying the fluid boundaries between contexts, as music often moves between street and stage depending on audience, venue, and economic necessity. Taken together, these bodies of literature suggest that Kuta's musical life should be approached as a contested soundscape where globalization, hybridity, coping strategies, and power relations intersect. However, while substantial research exists on Balinese music, tourism, and cultural change, a notable gap remains in soundscape-focused ethnomusicological studies that combine detailed listening, spatial analysis, and reception-oriented interviews in Kuta itself. Existing research tends to treat music as performance or repertoire rather than as part of an everyday sonic environment that people negotiate continuously (Gaye & Holmquist, 2004; Medrado, 2011, 2012; Nowak & Bennett, 2014; Rautiainen-Keskustalo, 2021). This study addresses that gap by analyzing how traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are situated within Kuta's tourist soundscape, and how different stakeholders' residents, workers, musicians, and tourists use these musical forms to cope with, contest, and reshape the sonic pressures of tourism through their everyday listening practices.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative ethnographic study draws on critical ethnography (Burawoy, 1998; Madison, 2012) and reception theory (Hall, 1973, 1980) to investigate how music functions within Kuta's contested tourist soundscape. Qualitative methods are epistemologically appropriate because sonic experience does not have a fixed physical form; musical meaning emerges through embodied listening, affective response, memory, and sociocultural context (Adorno, 1970; Meyer, 1956; Said, 1991). As Cage (1961) suggests, musical experience resists rigid definitional boundaries, while listeners interpret identical sonic stimuli differently depending on their positionality, cultural background, and situational context (Born, 2013; DeNora, 2000). Interpretive qualitative methods therefore offer the most valid way to examine how music operates within a complex tourism soundscape where meaning is continuously negotiated among multiple stakeholders. Critical ethnography extends beyond descriptive documentation to interrogate power relations, structural inequalities, and mechanisms of control embedded in everyday cultural practices (Burawoy, Carspecken, 1996; Madison, 2012). In Kuta, decisions about musical programming – including genre selection, volume regulation, temporal scheduling, and spatial

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distribution are not neutral, but shaped by commercial interests, tourism policy frameworks, governmental authority, and community norms (Bennett, 2000). A critical ethnographic approach allows me to ask why particular sounds dominate beaches, streets, bars, and hotels while others are marginalized or restricted, and whose economic, political, and cultural interests are prioritized through these sonic arrangements (Bull & Back, 2003; LaBelle, 2010).

Reception theory, specifically the encoding/ decoding model developed by Hall (1973, 1980), provides the primary analytical framework. Hall's tripartite scheme distinguishes dominant-hegemonic readings (accepting intended meanings), negotiated readings (adapting meanings within local constraints), and oppositional readings (contesting or rejecting dominant meanings). In this study, musical performances, playlists, and ambient soundscapes are treated as encoded texts produced by musicians, venue managers, and policy actors, thereby facilitating an analysis of how different listeners-Balinese residents, tourists, and tourism workers-decode these sonic messages. Reception theory is combined with soundscape studies (Schafer, 1977; Truax, 2001) to link individual interpretations to the broader acoustic organization of Kuta's tourist environment.

Fieldwork and Data Collection

Fieldwork was conducted in Kuta for over 12 months from January to December 2024. This temporal frame was strategically selected to coincide with normalized post-pandemic tourism conditions following the official cessation of COVID-19 health protocols, ensuring that observed soundscape patterns reflected established tourism dynamics rather than temporary disruptions (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). The twelve-month duration enabled documentation of seasonal variations, weekly cycles, and temporal shifts in sonic activity, thereby strengthening the ecological validity and transferability of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010). The research integrated multiple qualitative data collection methods: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, informal conversational interactions, and systematic soundscape listening sessions (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In total, 42 participants were interviewed across five purposively sampled stakeholder categories (Table 1).

Table 1. The Informants

No.	Stakeholder	Number
1	Musicians performing Pop Bali and Traditional Balinese music	14
2	Venue owners and managers operating bars, restaurants, hotels, and live music establishments	10
3	Event organizers and sound technicians	6
4	Community leaders and *banjar* representatives	7
5	Local government tourism officials	5

Purposive sampling ensured comprehensive representation of actors directly involved in producing, regulating, commodifying, and experiencing Kuta's soundscape (Patton, 2002). Initial participants were recruited through established professional and community networks, with subsequent participants identified via snowball sampling based on their documented involvement in musical programming, sound regulation, or community cultural governance (Noy, 2008). Participant observation was conducted across diverse sites where music shapes daily sonic experience, including beachfront bars, nightclubs, live music cafés, hotel lobbies, commercial shopping streets, temple courtyards during ceremonial events, and residential neighborhoods adjacent to tourism corridors (Emerson *et al*., 2011). Observational focus encompassed genre selection patterns, volume levels and amplification practices, loudspeaker spatial configurations,

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audience behavioral responses, and sonic interactions among music, traffic, conversation, and ambient environmental sounds (Gallagher, 2015; Pink, 2015). Systematic soundwalks were conducted during four temporal periods: morning (06:00 to 10:00), afternoon (12:00 to 16:00), evening (18:00-22:00), and late night (22:00-02:00), across weekdays and weekends to document diurnal and weekly variations in soundscape composition and intensity (Adams *et al*., 2008; Järviluoma *et al*., 2009).

Data Analysis

Detailed fieldnotes were recorded following each observation episode, documenting sonic conditions, social interactions, moments of conflict or negotiation over sound, regulatory interventions by authorities, and researcher sensory and affective responses (Emerson *et al*., 2011). Following sensory ethnography principles (Pink, 2015), subjective listening experiences were treated as legitimate data while maintaining reflexive awareness of researcher positionality within the field setting (Davies, 2008). Semi-structured interviews explored participants' understanding of music and sound within Kuta's tourism context, addressing music selection decision-making processes, daily experiences of noise and sonic overload, coping strategies for managing unwanted sound, meanings attributed to "traditional" versus "modern" musical categories, and perceptions of power asymmetries in soundscape control (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Interview protocols encouraged critical reflection on participants' roles within soundscape production and reception rather than mere descriptive reporting of practices.

All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and soundwalk documentation were imported into qualitative analysis software and analyzed using Miles *et al*.'s (2014) interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Initial open coding identified recurring themes including noise complaints, cultural branding strategies, economic pressures, identity negotiations, regulatory enforcement, and genre hybridization (Saldaña, 2016). Subsequent focused coding consolidated these into four analytical categories theoretically aligned with the conceptual framework: soundscape structure (sonic layering, spatial distribution, temporal patterning), hybridity (genre mixing, adaptive strategies, boundary negotiation), coping mechanisms (listener strategies, emotional regulation, spatial navigation), and power relations (control over volume and space, licensing systems, economic hierarchies). Reception theory guided interpretation by identifying dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional listening positions across stakeholder groups (Hall, 1980; Moores, 1993). By integrating critical ethnography, reception theory, and systematic soundscape observation within a rigorous qualitative framework, this methodology provides epistemologically valid and methodologically coherent tools for analyzing Kuta's musical life not as neutral acoustic background but as a contested sociocultural space structured by power asymmetries, cultural hybridity, adaptive coping strategies, and continuous everyday negotiation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical protocols adhered to established standards for ethnographic research (British Sociological Association, 2017; American Anthropological Association, 2012). All participants received comprehensive written and verbal information regarding research aims, data usage, and withdrawal rights. Informed consent forms were provided in Indonesian and English. Individual participants are identified through pseudonyms, and venue names are anonymized where disclosure could generate reputational or economic harm (Wiles *et al*., 2008). Researchers avoided disrupting performances, commercial operations, or religious rituals during observations.

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Sensitive information concerning inter-stakeholder conflicts, particularly disputes over noise regulation or economic competition, is presented cautiously to prevent exacerbating tensions or exposing vulnerable individuals to adverse consequences (Israel & Hay, 2006).

Researcher Positionality

Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process through systematic reflexive journaling and ongoing critical self-examination (Finlay, 2002; Pillow, 2003). As a Balinese researcher with long-term engagement in Bali's music and tourism sectors but not a Kuta resident, the researcher occupied an insider-outsider position that simultaneously facilitated access and trust among musicians and community members while necessitating continuous reflection on familiarity biases and taken-for-granted assumptions (Merriam *et al*., 2019; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). A reflexive journal documented evolving assumptions, affective reactions, moments of interpretive uncertainty, and shifts in analytical understanding throughout fieldwork. These reflexive notes were systematically revisited during data analysis to ensure interpretations remained grounded in participant perspectives rather than researcher preconceptions (Finlay & Gough, 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Kuta's Tourist Soundscape: Zones, Timings, and Sonic Hierarchies

This section maps Kuta's tourist soundscape as a stratified acoustic environment, demonstrating how power asymmetries in volume control, spatial access, and temporal scheduling produce distinct sonic hierarchies. While global commercial pop and EDM dominate public sonic spaces, traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are relegated to carefully demarcated spatial, temporal, and functional niches, thereby privileging specific musical forms while marginalizing others.

The beachfront zone extending along Jalan Pantai Kuta constitutes Kuta's most acoustically saturated tourism corridor. Between 10:00 and 02:00 daily, this zone is dominated by amplified EDM, international pop, and reggae broadcast from beach clubs, bars, and restaurants at volumes exceeding 85 decibels. Venue operators in this zone told me they select music based on perceived tourist preferences for high-energy global genres. As one bar manager explained, "Tourists come here for party atmosphere. They want David Guetta, not gamelan" (Venue Manager 3, March 2024). This programming logic reflects what I term dominant-hegemonic listening, in which stakeholders accept and reproduce assumptions that international tourists require familiar Western soundtracks to feel comfortable and entertained.

Traditional Balinese music appears in the beachfront zone only during tightly scheduled intervals. Hotel lobbies program *gamelan* performances from 18:00 to 19:00 as atmospheric background during guest check-in, while beachfront restaurants occasionally feature Pop Bali sets from 19:30 to 20:30 before transitioning to EDM for the remainder of the evening. These temporal placements confine Balinese musical forms to designated cultural moments rather than allowing them continuous presence in the sonic environment. A musician performing both Pop Bali and international cover songs highlighted this temporal division, "They give us one hour for Balinese songs, then we switch to English pop. The Balinese hour is for decoration, for showing culture. But the money comes from the party hours" (Musician 7, April 2024). This observation illustrates how temporal control functions as a mechanism of power, dictating which acoustic forms receive sustained audibility and which are reduced to token cultural representation. By contrast, the commercial shopping district along Jalan Legian operates under different sonic logics. During daytime hours (09:00 to 18:00), this zone features lower-volume commercial

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advertising, international pop playlists, and occasional Pop Bali tracks broadcast from retail shops. The reduced volume levels reflect commercial imperatives: shop operators told me that excessively loud music discourages browsing and purchasing behavior. However, traditional Balinese music remains almost entirely absent from this zone except during ceremonial processions, when gamelan ensembles temporarily interrupt commercial soundscapes as they move through streets toward temples. These processions demonstrate how ritual functions enable traditional Balinese music to claim sonic space that would otherwise be unavailable, though only through religious legitimacy rather than commercial viability.

Residential neighborhoods located one to two blocks inland from primary tourism corridors present markedly different soundscape configurations. In these zones, traditional Balinese music maintains a stronger presence through *banjar* rehearsals, temple ceremonies, and community gatherings. Residents described these soundscapes as markers of cultural continuity and social belonging. As one community leader articulated, “When I hear gamelan from the *banjar*, I remember I am Balinese, not just a tourism worker. That sound is my identity” (Community Leader 2, June 2024). However, even in residential zones, global pop from nearby tourism venues frequently intrudes, creating what residents characterized as sonic conflict. Multiple residents complained that late-night EDM from beach clubs penetrates residential areas, disrupting sleep and religious activities. These complaints indicate oppositional listening positions in which residents reject the dominance of tourist-oriented soundscapes and assert competing claims to acoustic territory.

Temporal analysis reveals that Kuta's soundscape operates according to predictable daily and weekly cycles. Weekday mornings (06:00 to 10:00) feature relatively quiet punctuated by traffic noise, vendor calls, and occasional traditional Balinese music from temple ceremonies. By midday (12:00 to 16:00), commercial music intensifies as tourism venues activate sound systems. Evening hours (18:00 to 22:00) mark peak sonic density, when multiple venues broadcast competing genres simultaneously, creating what residents described as "sonic chaos." Late-night hours (22:00 to 04:00) sustain high-volume EDM in nightclub districts, though reduced patron density means fewer competing sound sources. Weekend patterns amplify these dynamics, with Friday and Saturday nights producing the highest sustained volume levels across all zones.

This spatial and temporal mapping demonstrates that Kuta's tourist soundscape is neither random nor neutral. Instead, it reflects systematic power relations in which venue operators with capital, prime locations, and licensing authority control sonic space by determining volume, genre, and scheduling. Traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali occupy subordinate positions within this hierarchy, gaining audibility only through strategic placement at specific times and locations that do not threaten the commercial dominance of global popular music. The soundscape thus operates as a contested field in which competing visions of Kuta's cultural identity are negotiated through control over acoustic resources.

Pop Bali as Modern-Traditional Hybrid: Negotiating Visibility and Marketability

This subsection examines how Pop Bali functions as a modern-traditional hybrid genre, negotiating the tension between cultural distinctiveness and market demands within Kuta’s competitive tourist environment. The genre seamlessly integrates global popular music structures, instrumentation, and production aesthetics with traditional Balinese music al elements, particularly pelog and slendro scales. This hybridity extends to lyrical choices, where Balinese verses alternate with Indonesian or English choruses to engage both local communities and tourists with limited vernacular comprehension. Ultimately, these strategic musical and linguistic syntheses enable artists and venue operators to project a distinct Balinese cultural identity while maintaining commercial viability. As one Pop Bali musician explained regarding this compositional

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strategy, “I write verses in Balinese so local people feel the song is theirs. But the chorus uses simple Indonesian or English so tourists can sing along. This way, everyone can enjoy it” (Musician 4, May 2024). This bilingual approach exemplifies negotiated listening, in which musicians adapt dominant global pop conventions while maintaining sufficient local markers to preserve cultural legitimacy. Instrumentation in Pop Bali performances reflects similar hybrid negotiations. Ensembles typically combine acoustic guitars, electric bass, and drum kits; standard global pop instrumentation with occasional incorporation of Balinese instruments such as suling (bamboo flute) or small metallophones played during instrumental breaks. However, full gamelan ensembles rarely appear in Pop Bali performances, as venue operators and musicians told me that gamelan's dense textures and unfamiliar timbres can alienate international tourists accustomed to Western instrumental palettes. A venue manager described these programming decisions: “Full gamelan is too heavy for tourists. They don't understand it. But when we add one or two Balinese instruments to a pop band, tourists think it's exotic and interesting without being too strange” (Venue Manager 6, July 2024). This statement reveals how hybridity operates as a market strategy, allowing venues to commodify selective Balinese elements while avoiding sounds perceived as commercially risky.

Lyrical content in Pop Bali songs emphasizes themes of Balinese identity, cultural pride, and place attachment, often referencing specific Balinese locations, Hindu ceremonies, and community values. These themes enable Pop Bali to function as a mechanism of sonic identity work, through which musicians and listeners assert Balinese cultural continuity despite tourism’s homogenizing pressures. As one musician who performs primarily for local audiences explained, “When young Balinese people hear Pop Bali, they feel proud of their culture. The songs remind them that being modern doesn't mean forgetting where they come from” (Musician 11, August 2024).This function contrasts sharply with international pop and EDM, which lack local referentiality and thus cannot serve similar identity-affirming purposes for Balinese residents.

Performance contexts for Pop Bali vary significantly depending on intended audiences. In venues targeting domestic tourists and residents, Pop Bali constitutes the primary genre, often comprising 60-80% of set lists. These venues operate at lower volumes and attract audiences seeking familiarity and cultural connection rather than high-energy party atmospheres. By contrast, venues targeting international tourists relegate Pop Bali to brief segments within predominantly global pop sets. As a musician who performs in both contexts described regarding this programming logic, “In local cafés, people want Pop Bali all night. But in tourist bars, we play mostly English songs and add maybe three Pop Bali songs to show Balinese culture. If we play too much Pop Bali, tourists get bored and leave” (Musician 9, September 2024). This differentiation illustrates how market segmentation produces distinct soundscape configurations based on audience demographics and commercial calculations.

Pop Bali's commercial viability also depends on its capacity to circulate through media channels beyond live performance. Several musicians told me they prioritize recording and distributing Pop Bali songs through YouTube, Spotify, and social media platforms to reach broader audiences and generate income streams independent of live performance. This digital circulation extends Pop Bali's reach beyond Kuta's physical soundscape while simultaneously reinforcing its legitimacy as a contemporary Balinese musical form. As one musician explained, “When tourists hear Pop Bali online before visiting Bali, they recognize it when we perform. They feel like they understand Balinese culture better” (Musician 13, October 2024). This circulation strategy demonstrates how Pop Bali musicians actively construct marketability through multi-platform presence rather than relying solely on live performance contexts.

However, Pop Bali's hybrid status generates ongoing debates about authenticity and cultural integrity. Some community leaders and Traditional Balinese music practitioners expressed concern that Pop Bali dilutes Balinese musical traditions by privileging commercial

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appeal over cultural depth. A gamelan teacher stated: “Pop Bali uses Balinese language, but the music is not Balinese. Young people listen to Pop Bali and think they know Balinese music, but they never learn gamelan properly” (Community Leader 5, November 2024). This critique reflects oppositional listening, in which certain stakeholders reject Pop Bali's legitimacy as authentically Balinese and position it instead as superficial cultural commodification.

Despite these tensions, Pop Bali persists as a significant component of Kuta's soundscape because it enables multiple stakeholder groups to achieve distinct objectives simultaneously. For musicians, Pop Bali provides economic opportunities while allowing them to express Balinese identity. For venue operators, it offers cultural distinctiveness that differentiates their establishments within a crowded market. For local audiences, it affirms cultural continuity and modernity simultaneously. For tourists, it provides accessible entry points into Balinese culture without requiring extensive cultural knowledge. This multifunctionality explains Pop Bali's sustained presence despite contestation over its authenticity, demonstrating how hybridity operates as practical solution to competing pressures within tourism soundscapes.

Curating “Tradition”: Strategic Uses of Traditional Balinese music

This subsection demonstrates that traditional Balinese music in Kuta is strategically curated rather than merely preserved. By deliberately positioning gamelan performances within specific spatial and temporal contexts such as hotel entrances, temple festivals, and special events; stakeholders deploy "tradition" to construct cultural legitimacy and frame spaces as authentically Balinese. Ultimately, this targeted staging serves to differentiate tourism products, allowing actors to negotiate competing demands for heritage visibility within a broader soundscape, otherwise dominated by global popular music. Hotel operators constitute primary curators of traditional Balinese music in Kuta's tourism landscape. Upscale hotels routinely program gamelan performances at entrance courtyards and lobbies during evening hours (18:00 - 19:30) as guests arrive for dinner or return from daytime activities. These performances employ small gamelan ensembles performing instrumental pieces drawn from classical Balinese repertoire, typically without vocal components or dramatic narratives. A hotel events manager described this programming strategy, “We place gamelan at the entrance, so guests immediately experience Balinese culture when they enter. It creates atmosphere and shows we respect local traditions. But we keep it instrumental, so it doesn't interfere with conversation or dining” (Venue Manager 8, August 2024). This spatial placement functions as what I term sonic framing, in which Traditional Balinese music marks thresholds between external commercial soundscapes and interior spaces constructed as culturally refined and locally grounded.

However, these hotel performances reflect careful curation that balances heritage presentation with tourist comfort. Musicians told me that hotel managers request shortened performance durations, reduced volume levels, and omission of ceremonial pieces perceived as too complex or unfamiliar for international audiences. One gamelan musician explained that "Hotels want gamelan that sounds beautiful but not challenging. They ask us to play slow, gentle pieces without sudden loud parts. Ceremonial pieces are too intense for hotel lobbies, so we play palace repertoire instead" (Musician 5, June 2024). This curation process selectively presents traditional Balinese music through aestheticized frames that emphasize tranquility and exoticism while suppressing the dynamic, ritual-embedded qualities that characterize gamelan in ceremonial contexts.

Temple festivals and processions provide contrasting contexts in which traditional Balinese music operates under religious rather than commercial logics. During major ceremonial cycles, particularly Galungan, Kuningan, and temple Odalan (anniversary celebrations) gamelan ensembles perform processional music as they accompany offerings and deities through public

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streets. These performances interrupt Kuta's commercial soundscape temporarily, asserting religious authority over acoustic space through sheer volume and ceremonial legitimacy. Residents described these moments as opportunities to reclaim sonic territory from tourism domination. One community leader stated that “When we have ceremonies, our gamelan is louder than any bar or club. For that time, Kuta sounds like Bali again, not like America or Australia” (Community Leader 4, July 2024). This statement reveals how ceremonial contexts enable oppositional listening positions in which residents use Traditional Balinese music to contest tourism's sonic hegemony, even if only temporarily.

However, ceremonial performances face increasing pressure from noise complaints and municipal regulations designed to protect tourism operations. Multiple musicians and community leaders described conflicts in which venue operators or tourists lodged complaints about gamelan volume during processions, leading police to request volume reductions or route alterations. A *banjar* leader explained, "Sometimes police come during ceremonies and tell us to turn down the gamelan because tourists complain. But we explain this is religious ceremony, not entertainment. Eventually they leave us alone, but it creates tension" (Community Leader 6, September 2024). These conflicts illustrate how power relations structure soundscape access, as tourism interests possess institutional authority to challenge even religiously sanctioned sonic practices.

Government tourism agencies also participate in curating Traditional Balinese music through sponsored cultural events designed to enhance Kuta's destination branding. Monthly "Kuta Cultural Nights" programmed by the local tourism office feature gamelan performances, Balinese dance, and cultural demonstrations in designated public spaces. A tourism official described these events' objectives as “We want tourists to see that Kuta has authentic Balinese culture, not just beaches and nightclubs. These cultural nights show that we preserve tradition even as we develop tourism” (Government Official 2, October 2024).

However, these events reflect selective curation emphasizing palace and classical repertoires perceived as presentational appealing, while excluding village-based and ceremonial forms that might appear less refined or accessible to international audiences.

Event-based curation extends to special occasions such as *Nyepi* (Day of Silence), where all amplified music including both global pop and Traditional Balinese music ceases for 24 hours across Bali. Multiple stakeholders described *Nyepi* as a moment when Kuta's normal sonic hierarchy inverts, as silence replaces commercial saturation. A resident reflected that “On *Nyepi*, you realize how much noise is normal in Kuta. When everything stops, it feels like a different place. You can hear nature again waves, wind, birds” (Resident 3, March 2024).This annual silence functions as involuntary coping mechanism, providing temporary relief from tourism's acoustic intensity while simultaneously demonstrating religious authority's power to override commercial imperatives entirely.

These curated presentations reveal that "tradition" in Kuta operates not as fixed heritage requiring passive preservation, but as actively constructed category deployed strategically by stakeholders to achieve specific objectives. Hotels use Traditional Balinese music to differentiate their properties through cultural authenticity claims. Temple communities use it to assert religious authority and cultural continuity. Government agencies use it to construct destination identity that balances modernity with heritage. Musicians use it to access performance opportunities and claim cultural legitimacy. Each stakeholder group curates Traditional Balinese music according to distinct logics, producing multiple, sometimes contradictory, versions of "tradition" that coexist within Kuta's contested soundscape.

Coping, Conflict, and Power: Managing Noise, Value, and Cultural Legitimacy

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Traditional Balinese music is strategically curated rather than simply preserved. By placing gamelan performances at hotel entrances, temple festivals, and special events, stakeholders use “tradition” to frame spaces and moments as authentically Balinese, even as the broader soundscape remains dominated by global popular music. Kuta's tourist soundscape generates ongoing conflicts over acoustic territory, quality of life, and cultural legitimacy, compelling stakeholders to develop diverse coping mechanisms that reveal underlying power asymmetries. This section examines how residents, musicians, venue operators, and tourists navigate sonic overload, negotiate competing values, and contest or accommodate tourism's acoustic dominance through everyday practices.

Residents living in neighborhoods adjacent to tourism corridors described sustained sonic overload as their primary quality-of-life concern. Late-night EDM from beach clubs penetrates residential areas at volumes that disrupt sleep, interfere with family activities, and undermine ritual practices. Multiple residents reported filing noise complaints with municipal authorities, but most expressed skepticism about enforcement effectiveness. One resident explained, "We complained many times about noise from nightclubs. Police come, measure volume, say it's too loud, then leave. Nothing changes. The clubs have money and connections, so they continue" (Resident 7, May 2024). This statement reveals how economic power translates into acoustic impunity, as financially influential venue operators evade regulatory enforcement despite documented violations.

Residents develop multiple coping mechanisms to manage unwanted sound. Some close windows, install soundproofing materials, or relocate bedrooms to interior rooms farthest from street noise. Others time daily activities to avoid peak sonic intensity periods, conducting errands during morning hours when commercial venues remain quiet. Still others reported using earplugs or headphones playing traditional Balinese music or Pop Bali as sonic refuge from external noise. A resident described this practice, “When nightclub noise gets too loud, I put on headphones and listen to Pop Bali. It helps me feel calm and reminds me that I am in Bali, not in a foreign disco” (Resident 5, August 2024). This strategy exemplifies negotiated listening, in which residents use familiar Balinese sounds to construct micro-environments of cultural comfort within otherwise alienating sonic conditions.

Musicians likewise navigate competing pressures that require constant negotiation between economic survival and cultural values. Those performing in tourist venues described pressure to prioritize global pop and EDM over traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali because international tourists generate higher revenues through drink sales and tips. However, musicians also expressed concern about cultural disconnection when performing exclusively Western repertoire. One musician reflected that, “Sometimes I feel like a jukebox, just playing with what tourists want to hear. I forgot I am a Balinese musician. That's why I insist on playing at least a few Pop Bali songs every night, even if tourists don't request them. Those songs are for me, to remember who I am” (Musician 12, November 2024). This statement illustrates how musicians use Pop Bali as coping mechanism to preserve cultural identity despite commercial pressures toward musical homogenization.

Conflicts also emerge between venue operators regarding acoustic territory and market competition. Some operators invest in high-power sound systems and maximize volume to attract patron attention, creating acoustic arms races in which neighboring venues escalate volume levels to avoid being drowned out. A venue manager described this dynamic, “If the bar next door plays loud music, we must play even louder, or customers will go there instead. It becomes a volume war that nobody wins” (Venue Manager 9, September 2024). These arms races generate cumulative sonic intensity that exceeds any individual venue's intentions, demonstrating how competitive market logics produce collective acoustic outcomes that no single actor controls or desires.

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Tourists' responses to Kuta's soundscape vary based on expectations, cultural backgrounds, and tolerance thresholds. Some embrace high-volume EDM and global pop as integral to party atmosphere and tropical destination experience. Others described sonic overload and fatigue, expressing desire for quieter environments or more culturally distinctive soundscapes. A tourist from Europe stated that, “I came to Bali expecting something different, but Kuta sounds like Ibiza or Miami. I wish there was more Balinese music so I could experience local culture, not just hear the same EDM I hear at home” (Tourist 4, October 2024). This comment reveals how dominant sonic homogenization can undermine destination differentiation, suggesting that excessive reliance on global genres may diminish Kuta's competitive appeal to tourists seeking cultural distinctiveness. Government officials occupy ambivalent positions within these conflicts, simultaneously promoting tourism development and responding to resident complaints about noise pollution. Multiple officials acknowledged enforcement challenges stemming from venue operators' economic power and political connections. A municipal official explained, “We know noise is a problem, but tourism is our main economy. If we enforce regulations too strictly, venues will close and unemployment will increase. We try to balance tourism development with quality of life, but it's very difficult” (Government Official 4, December 2024).

This statement exposes how power relations constrain regulatory action, as economic dependencies create structural barriers to protecting residents' acoustic comfort even when regulations theoretically exist.

These conflicts illustrate that Kuta's soundscape operates as contested field structured by multiple, intersecting power asymmetries. Venue operators with capital and political connections control acoustic resources through volume, spatial access, and regulatory evasion. Residents possess limited power to contest tourism's sonic dominance despite democratic rights to quiet enjoyment. Musicians navigate subordinate positions within commercial hierarchies while using Pop Bali and selective traditional Balinese music performance to maintain cultural legitimacy. Tourists' economic power grants them implicit priority in soundscape programming, yet diverse tourist preferences suggest that homogenized global soundscapes may not serve all market segments effectively. Government actors mediate competing interests while prioritizing economic growth over environmental quality or cultural heritage.

Coping mechanisms developed by these stakeholders reveal how power operates not only through direct control but through everyday accommodations, resistances, and negotiations. Residents' use of soundproofing and headphones represents adaptive responses that enable continued residence despite hostile acoustic conditions. Musicians' insistence on including Pop Bali in predominantly Western sets constitutes subtle resistance that preserves cultural identity within commercial constraints. Venue operators' volume escalation reflects competitive pressures that exceed individual intentions, demonstrating how market logics generate emergent collective outcomes. Tourists' complaints about sonic homogenization suggest market demand for greater cultural distinctiveness, creating potential leverage for stakeholders seeking to legitimize traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali within commercial programming.

By foregrounding these everyday practices of coping and conflict, this analysis reveals that soundscape negotiation occurs not only through formal regulations or explicit policies but through countless micro-decisions and embodied responses through which actors navigate, contest, and occasionally reshape Kuta's acoustic environment. Power relations structure these negotiations unevenly, but they do not determine all outcomes, as stakeholders continuously develop creative strategies to claim sonic space, assert cultural presence, and preserve quality of life within tourism's overwhelming acoustic pressures.

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CONCLUSION

This article examines Kuta as a dense, contested, and stratified tourist soundscape in which traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali occupy shifting, negotiated positions. Rather than framing musical life in Kuta through a simplistic narrative of cultural loss under the weight of tourism, the ethnographic material demonstrates an ongoing process of cultural negotiation and hybridity. Musicians, venue operators, community leaders, and state actors all actively participate in shaping which sounds are amplified, where they are heard, and how they are conceptualized as "traditional," "modern," or "for tourists." Consequently, while high-volume electronic dance music (EDM) and international pop dominate major public zones, local actors strategically carve out distinct spatial and temporal niches for Balinese musical expression through scheduled traditional performances, the integration of Pop Bali into live sets, or the deployment of vernacular language and timbres within otherwise globalized repertoires. These practices underscore that the soundscape is not a neutral backdrop, but a dynamic field of power where economic interests, regulatory decisions, and cultural values continuously intersect.

Furthermore, an analytical focus on reception highlights that listeners, both residents and tourists, are active agents rather than passive recipients within this environment. Their interpretations, evaluations, and acoustic behaviors directly influence localized musical decisions; factors such as noise complaints, venue patronage, physiological reactions to volume, and affective responses to Balinese musical elements collectively dictate which performance strategies remain sustainable. Ultimately, everyday coping mechanisms including navigating to quieter secondary streets, utilizing headphones, or selectively engaging with specific performances reveal that social life and spatial organization in Kuta are fundamentally structured through sound as much as through vision or physical mobility. At the same time, Pop Bali emerges as a key site of hybridity. It mediates between tourist-oriented global pop and locally valued notions of Balinese-ness, enabling musicians and venue operators to navigate commercial pressures while maintaining recognizable cultural markers. The genre's flexibility allows it to circulate across different spaces from beach bars to more locally oriented venues without being fixed as either purely "traditional" or purely "modern." This hybridity complicates binary oppositions between preservation and commercialization, suggesting instead that "tradition" in Kuta is continually reconfigured through sonic experimentation within the tourist economy. By bringing together soundscape studies, reception theory, and debates on hybridity and power, this article contributes to ethnomusicology's understanding of how tourism reshapes musical life in urban environments. It shows that attention to everyday listening practices and to the spatial distribution of sound can reveal forms of negotiation and resistance that might be missed if we focus only on formal performances or heritage policies. For studies of Balinese music, the findings suggest that Kuta should not be approached solely as a site of cultural degradation, but as a complex arena where different visions of Balinese identity are sounded, contested, and occasionally reconciled.

Future research could extend this approach by comparing Kuta's soundscape with those of other Balinese tourist centers or by examining how digital media and online platforms further transform the circulation and reception of traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali. Nonetheless, the Kuta case already makes clear that any discussion of "preserving" Balinese music under tourism must take seriously the lived experience of sound how it is heard, managed, and reworked by those who inhabit and make use of the city's sonic spaces. This analysis has asked how music functions within Kuta's tourist soundscape and how traditional Balinese music and Pop Bali are

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positioned, negotiated, and contested within that environment. The ethnographic mapping of zones and timings showed that global commercial genres dominate Kuta's audible public space, while local musical forms are confined to carefully managed niches of ceremony, spectacle, and "local color". The perspectives of venue operators, residents, and tourists further revealed that these sonic arrangements are not simply the outcome of "tourist demand" but the product of ongoing negotiations over economic survival, regulatory regimes, and competing visions of Balinese culture. In this sense, Kuta's soundscape does not only reflect existing power relations; it is a medium through which cultural authority, authenticity, and belonging are continuously produced and disputed.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration, Formal analysis, and writing original draft preparation. Author 2: Visualization, Software, Data curation, and writing - review and editing. Author 3: Investigation, Resources, and Validation. Author 4: Investigation, Data curation, and Validation.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

Data available on request from the authors.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Gemini to enhance the clarity and readability of the manuscript. Following the use of this service, the authors critically reviewed, revised, and edited the content to ensure academic rigor and accuracy. The authors take full responsibility for the final content of the publication.

ETHICS STATEMENT

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This study involved human participants through qualitative interviews and data collection in the Kuta area. The research was conducted in strict accordance with the ethical standards of the Research and Community Service Center (LPPM) of Institute of Arts Indonesia Bali (ISI Bali).All participants provided informed consent prior to their inclusion in the study, and the research adheres to the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki regarding the privacy and anonymity of human subjects.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Ni Wayan Ardini is a dedicated academic specializing in arts management and arts education. Her research investigates the intersection of traditional arts, cultural preservation, and art pedagogy. She actively engages in interdisciplinary studies, recently exploring the socio-cultural resilience of local artists.

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I Ketut Astawa is a prominent academic and researcher focusing on tourism management, hospitality operations, and sustainable development. His scholarly contributions emphasize the optimization of green tourism practices, service quality, and community-based approaches within the hospitality sector. His collaborative research continues to bridge theoretical insights with practical applications in Bali's dynamic tourism landscape.

I Gede Mudana is an esteemed professor in cultural tourism at the State Polytechnic of Bali, renowned for his extensive research in cultural tourism, heritage conservation, and destination management. His work critically examines the socio-cultural dynamics of tourism on local communities, strongly advocating for sustainable and culturally embedded development models.

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