

KUTA AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CULTURAL TOURISM: THE POPULARITY OF BEACH RESORT STRENGTHENED BY BALINESE ART AND CULTURAL ATTRACTION

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Abstract - Kuta is the most popular tourist resorts in the international destination of Bali, Indonesia. It is generally known for its three S's, namely sea, sand, and sun, although not relatively identified regarding the support provided by Balinese art and culture. This study aims to investigate the combination of beach and art and culture tourism that have contributed to the rapid development of Kuta as a prominent tourist resort. It was carried out using qualitative analysis techniques, an interactive model, through the stages of data reduction, and presentation, as well as conclusions. The results showed that Kuta existed with beach tourism and was significantly supported by Balinese art, as well as cultural practices and texts. The Balinese art and culture were considered street culture and staged culture. Street culture pertained to all various authentic artistic and cultural practices/texts in the local society and staged culture emphasized all various artistic and cultural practices/texts for tourists in hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues, and parties on the side of Kuta Beach. That is the implementation of Balinese cultural tourism as stated in tourism regulations in Bali.

Keywords: Beach resort, art and cultural attraction, cultural tourism

INTRODUCTION

Bali is an Indonesian tourism destination province with a tourist business that has rapidly developed to become a large industry for more than five decades. This indicates that existing tourism has been historically able to improve the standard of living and welfare of Balinese people. Since the completion of the construction of Beach Hotel in Sanur, Denpasar City, and Ngurah Rai International Airport in Tuban, Badung Regency, in the 1950s and 1960s, Bali tourism has changed and developed into an industry providing various needs for tourists (Anom et al., 2017; Putra, 2017). The significant impact of tourism on this province has also prompted several scholars to describe its development as a driving force for various sectors, including agriculture, small industries, and societal transformation towards an industrial society (Bagus, 1999; Pitana, 1999). Tourism development in Bali is realized by completing and perfecting various components of the industry, which are considered prospective and profitable to attract tourists. This was initially achieved through the deregulation of the direct flights to Bali policy in the early 1980s (Governor Ida Bagus Oka era), accompanied by the opening of large-scale investment within tourism sector in the late 1980s (Governor Ida Bagus Oka era) (Mudana, 2005). Although the impacts are not always positive, these policies are still justified because Bali has many potential and actual tourist attractions.

As a village, Kuta is one of the villages in Kuta District, Badung Regency, whose location is very strategic to be reached from other main tourism resorts, such as Nusa Dua and Sanur. It is also relatively very close to I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport, which was only 2 km away, corroborating the difficulty in determining the appropriate number of tourist arrivals daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly. Since 2000, visits to Kuta have only been quiet after the Bali bombings in 2002 and 2005, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2022. After 2022, tourist visits are



gradually becoming normal, enhancing the development of the tourism sector (Putra et al., 2021; Udhyani et al., 2022; Utama & Krismawintari, 2022; Wulandari & Mahagangga, 2023). Almost all tourists visiting Bali generally visit Kuta, with CNN Indonesia (2023) stating that 10,940,928 domestic and foreign explorers visited Bali throughout 2022. According to the Central Statistics Agency for Bali Province (2023), the foreign tourists with direct arrival to Bali were 370,832 people or increased by 14.59% in March 2023, compared to the previous month reaching 323,623 individuals. The tourists from Australia dominated the foreign arrivals to Bali, with a share of 24.21%.

Bali Province is generally known as a culture-based tourism destination with social-traditional customary and community life (Picard, 1996; Picard, 2009), although Kuta is basically nature-based, with Kuta Beach being attraction mainstay in the area (Astawa et al., 2018; Utama & Krismawintari, 2022; Wahyudi et al., 2019). This indicates that two categories of areas or tourism destination are realistically observed for Bali, namely coastal and cultural (art and culture) locations. The coastal location consisted of Kuta and various surrounding beach areas, Uluwatu, Nusa Dua, Sanur, Candidasa, Lovina, Nusa Penida, etc. Meanwhile, cultural location contained Ubud and several surrounding tourist areas and villages, including Penglipuran, Tenganan, Besakih, Kintamani, Trunyan, etc.

Since the 1970s, the development of Bali tourism was formally and legally based on cultural tourism (pariwisatabudaya). From this context, the first decree was issued by the Regional Government of Bali through Regulation Number 3 of 1974 concerning Cultural Tourism (Peraturan Daerah Bali Nomor 3 Tahun 1974 tentang Pariwisata Budaya). This was accompanied by the issuance of Regulation Number 3 of 1991 concerning Cultural Tourism (Peraturan Daerah Bali Nomor 3 Tahun 1991 tentang Pariwisata Budaya) which revised the first regional policy. Furthermore, the Regional Regulation Number 2 of 2012 concerning Bali Cultural Tourism (Peraturan Daerah Bali Nomor 2 Tahun 2012 tentang Kepariwisata Budaya Bali) was enacted to replace Regulation Number 3 of 1991. This policy was then replaced by the Bali Regional Regulation Number 5 of 2020 regarding Standards for Implementing Balinese Cultural Tourism (Peraturan Daerah Bali Nomor 5 Tahun 2020 tentang Standar Penyelenggaraan Kepariwisata Budaya Bali). Based on these regulations, cultural tourism emphasized Balinese culture, which was anchored on Hinduism as the major capital philosophy. In this case, tourism subsequently serves as a medium for actualization. Bali Regional Regulation Nomor 5 of 2020 was also preceded by Bali Regional Regulation Number 4 of 2020 concerning Strengthening and Promoting Balinese Culture (Peraturan Daerah Bali Nomor 4 Tahun 2020 tentang Penguatan dan Pemajuan Kebudayaan Bali). This was accompanied by the issuance of Bali Governance Regulation Number 28 of 2020 concerning Bali Tourism Governance (Peraturan Gubernur Bali Nomor 28 Tahun 2020 tentang Tata Kelola Pariwisata Bali). Regarding these regulations, cultural tourism and Balinese culture were specifically and mutually reinforced.

Based on these descriptions, Bali tourism is considered cultural tourism (Picard, 1996; Picard, 2009; Mudana, 2000; Mudana, 2021), with all stakeholders striving to preserve and develop art and culture, as well as the existence and custom of Balinese people through Hinduism. According to McKean & Smith (1978), Picard (1996), Geriya (1991), and Pitana (2006), Balinese cultural tourism was analogized to a tree, with the "roots", "stem", and "fruit" emphasizing Hinduism, customs & culture of the community, and art (tourism products), respectively. This morally prioritized the protection and preservation of Bali tourism, which was very beneficial for the natives and all stakeholders, namely the government, tourism industry, and the community. Tourists should also maintain Balinese customs and culture, as well as respect Hinduism.

Regarding the implementation of Balinese artistic and cultural resources to cater to global tourism, the analysis of Kuta is very interesting despite the relatively less advanced development of its attraction and traditional entities, compared to Ubud and other areas. This is because Kuta possesses the unique advantage of being a coastal area with access to beautiful beach, compared to other art and cultural locations in Bali. The area is primarily and traditionally recognized as beach resort. This presents an interesting issue due to a seeming contradiction between the concepts of natural beach and cultural tourism, which over shadow art-culture and natural-

environmental aspects, respectively. From this context, the scientific contradiction is considered art and culture and associated with expressive and traditional customs, as classified by Alisjahbana (1975). As an economic enterprise, tourism is then prioritized under the realm of progressive and modern culture. This leads to the present analysis, to understand the relationship between the existence of local art and culture in global tourism business activities in Kuta, which was originally a type of beach attraction. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the combination of beach and art and cultural tourism that have contributed to the rapid development of Kuta as a prominent tourism resort.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The actual concept of nature and its position in human culture can be traced in scientific works of cultural anthropology. According to Goodman et al. (2003), Giblett (2008), Watson (2013), nature and culture were often considered opposites. This was because the belongings of nature were unable to lead to human intervention, although cultural development was achieved against them. In the evolutionary development of humans, several studies also stated that culture was part and parcel of the ecological niche where mankind thrived. This rendered culture a chapter in the biological development of a species (Borghini, 2019).

Based on the distinction between nature and culture, a specific division was observed between natural and cultural tourism. Moreover, Widyastuty (2021) presented the distinction between both tourism practices, with natural and cultural attraction being nature-based and culture-oriented, respectively. Nature and culture were managed for human benefit purposes.

Nature tourism is the domestic or international travel activities involving the observation or enjoyment of natural ecosystems and wildlife for educational or recreational purposes (HaySmith& Hunt, 1995). However, cultural tourism encompasses the primary motivation of visitors to learn, discover, experience, and engage with the tangible and intangible traditional attraction and products of destination (World Tourism Organization, 2017b). In this case, only a few tourist destinations in the world have successfully and effectively combined natural and cultural tourism, as observed for Kuta resort.

The conceptualization of cultural tourism also presents several challenges due to the diverse nature of cultures across different parts of the world (Mudana et al., 2021). According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010), culture tourism was defined as attraction of tourists and distinction of destination from one another. It also served as a source of identity and differentiation during globalization.

Based on several previous studies, significant differences were observed between Western and Eastern cultural tourism, as well as amid modern and traditional communities. In Western countries, cultural tourism provided different types of products, such as museums, heritage, and modern events. Meanwhile, attraction relied on rich traditions, art, and culture in Eastern nations. This indicated that cultural tourism in Eastern regions, including the tourist destination of Bali, mostly encompassed the elements of symbolic ethnic culture and a part of popular folk customs (Mudana et al., 2021). Since culture was relative, the discourse on Balinese cultural tourism had a significant difference from the analysis of global attraction. This condition was because cultural tourism emphasized Balinese customs, which were synonymous with the existence of the Hindu religion.

Regarding Regional Regulation Number 5 of 2020 concerning Standards for Implementing Balinese Cultural Tourism, "Balinese Cultural Tourism encompassed the Bali Culture imbued with the Tri Hita Karana philosophy originating from traditional values and local wisdom, Sad Kerthi, and Taksu". This proved that Tri Hita Karana was the relationships among humans, nature, and God (Dewi et al., 2022), with Sad Kerthi being the balance within soul, individual, society, sea, forest/mountain, and lake/water. For Taksu, the magical and spiritual power of Bali was prioritized (Dibia, 2012).

In Indonesia, the aspects of art and culture were generally the strong markers stating that tourism activity was cultural tourism. This was in line with the general/broad or specific/narrow patterns of

conceptualizing culture. From a general or broad perspective, culture included all customary elements, namely language, knowledge, livelihood, religious, and social organization systems, living devices and technology, as well as art (Kluckhohn, 1953; Koentjaraningrat, 1994). However, only art was considered culture from a specific or narrow perspective (Koentjaraningrat, 1994). In Indonesia and Bali, "seni dan budaya" ("seni" is art and "budaya" is culture) was observed, meaning "art and non-art aspects of culture". This highlighted the level of strength exhibited by artistic entities within Indonesian tradition. Cultural tourism, as a complement to existing natural tourism, significantly emphasized artistic and traditional aspects in Bali, including Kuta.

Based on the Decree of the Governor of Bali Province Number 394 of 1997 concerning the Arrangement of Regional Art in the Province of Bali, three categories of Balinese art were observed, namely "(1) *wali* (most sacred), (2) *bebali* (sacred), and (3) *balih-balihan* (not sacred)" (Mudana&Ardini, 2012). From this context, art of *wali* was performed in temples (Hindu shrines) due to religious (Hindu) ceremonies. Art of *bebali* art was also considered sacred, due to serving as an accompaniment to religious ceremonies, although not highly spiritual as observed in *wali*. This was because the tradition of *wali* was performed in the inner area of the temple, not in the main position. Meanwhile, art of *balih-balihan* was performed outside the temple area and served as entertainment due to being non-sacred.

Barong and Kecak Dances were the most popular Balinese events for tourists. Compared to the Barong Dance with Chinese influences, the Kecak Dance was considered to be more representative of Balinese culture. It also involved a larger group, with at least 20 to more than 50 people (Listianingsih&Sarjono, 2020; Mudana, 2000; Putriani et al., 2023; Seriasih, 2019). The Barong and Keris Dances were performed only on temple odalan days with the theme of Calonarang (Antari, 2018; Putriani et al., 2023). These were carried out for the purification (*ruwatan*) and restoration of balance between the positive and negative forces represented by Barong and Calonarang, respectively. The climax of the dance also involved a fight between Rangda and the Keris dancers (Erawati, 2019; Sumiati&Girsang, 2018). Both dances were initially categorized as art of *bebali* by the decree of the governor (Seriasih, 2019), with Balinese artists creatively adopting them to develop new non-sacred forms (art of *balih-balihan*). This indicated that the new Barong and Kecak Dances were performed on various stages, hotels, restaurants, and even on beach. During on-stage performances, including those at hotels and restaurants, the act of stabbing a *keris* into the body of the Barong dancer was merely a staged trick, leading to the illusion of trance.

As one of the oldest forms of attraction worldwide, cultural tourism consistently thrived in most countries (Richards & Munsters, 2010). According to the UNWTO, the significance of cultural tourism was recently reaffirmed, accounting for over 39% of tourist arrivals (Richards, 2018). Culture also emerged as an essential product in the international tourism market, with cultural activities attracting 40% of international arrivals in 2016 (World Tourism Organization, 2017a). In addition, cultural tourism played a supportive role in community economic growth and contributed to the preservation of traditional elements (Richards, 2001).

2. RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, a descriptive-qualitative method was implemented, leading to more emphasis on the analytical process than the results. The data analysis was also inductive, prioritizing the main concern in the analytical approach (Danim, 2002; Moleong, 2019). Moreover, qualitative methods were employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricate and multifaceted relationship between natural tourism, represented by Kuta Beach allure, and Balinese art and culture within global tourism industry in Kuta.

Several data collection techniques were also implemented, such as observation of the natural setting of the study and interviews. This showed that unstructured interviews were conducted with various parties, including hotel general managers, an art expert, performance group executives, a local artist, a community leader, a tour guide, and visiting tourists. Document study activities also used online and physical journal articles, study results, books, scientific work papers, and

regulations. To achieve data validity, triangulation was performed on both data collection techniques and sources.

Furthermore, the flow of data analysis consisted of information reduction and presentation, as well as inference known as an interactive model (Miles & Huberman, 1992). From this context, procedural stages were specifically involved, namely obtaining data, inductively analyzing information, building from specific things to general themes, and developing data interpretations toward a conclusion. This qualitative analysis activity was assisted by Nvivo 12 Plus.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results, Kuta was inevitably and presently an icon of Bali tourism (Putra & Husrin, 2017). "Kuta" etymologically derived its meaning from "fortress" or "city" and was anciently known as "Kuta Mimba", which translated to "Alas Kuta", with "alas" emphasizing "forest" (Sattwika et al., 2023). However, Kuta did not presently possess forests due to its transformation into a bustling hub with thousands of hotel rooms (Tunjungsari et al., 2017), as well as numerous tourist attraction, entertainment venues, restaurants, travel agencies, and other complementary facilities (Panjaitan & Ariwangsa, 2018). As a renowned global resort, Kuta was grateful to Mr. Mads Johansen Lange (1807-1856), a Danish individual that arrived in Bali in 1839 and 1844 and subsequently became the Dutch Agent. This individual played a pivotal role in promoting Kuta and its Beach to the world stage (Mudana, 2000; Sattwika et al., 2023). Along this road, the grave of the esteemed figure in the history of Kuta tourism was found, with a monument erected in honor of the invaluable contributions provided.

Before the huge development of tourism, Kuta was only a traditional and coastal village without tourists and tourism activities, where all the inhabitants were Balinese Hindus, fishermen, and farmers (Mudana, 2000; Sattwika et al., 2023). Considering its dazzling white sand, the enchantment of Kuta coast line beauty gradually captivated foreign tourists, attracting them to visit and indulge in tourism activities, known as the three S (sea, sand, and sun), complemented by the stunning sunset views. This led to the transformation of Kuta into an international hub, where visitors from all corners of the world incessantly visited. Job seekers, from Bali, other parts of Indonesia, and abroad, also visited the vibrant resort. Kuta was no longer an area primarily inhabited by fishermen and farmers, due to being occupied by tourists reveling in their tourism experiences. It was also occupied by the migrants engaging in business ventures and seeking employment opportunities. Additionally, the majority of its residents actively work in tourism industry and/or provided various tourism-related services and amenities.

In Kuta, significant participation was observed from the community, where tourism and the local society positively provided for each other. This indicated that the natives were generally intensely involved in tourism entrepreneurship or at least worked as attraction personnel. Several Australian tourists observed at a drink shop near Kuta Beach also stated their desire to purchase food and drinks from local traders because of the cheap prices, compared to the locations where products were sold at "tourist costs". This demonstrated that many establishments in Kuta sold products at "non-tourist prices", due to spontaneous tourism development, compared to region with planned and enclaved developments, such as Nusa Dua (Jackson, 1989; Mudana, 2000).

KUTA BEACH AS THE MAIN PRODUCT

The most important attraction in Kuta was Kuta Beach (Mudana, 2000; Utama & Krismawintari, 2022). Regarding the popularity of Kuta Beach in Bali according to I Ketut Subandira, a senior tour guide, the following motto was observed,

"if you never go to Kuta, you will never know Bali; if you never go to Kuta Beach, you will never know Kuta" (interview with I Ketut Subandira, 11 June 2023).

The tour guide also provided the following statements during the interview session,

"People may argue, but that's how it is, if you visit Bali without visiting Kuta, then you are said to have not visited Bali. Of course, it is because of beach. This is the general view of many of the guests I handled around Bali including Kuta. Whether Kuta is good or not, Kuta is still Bali and part

of Bali. I understand this very well, because since the late 1980s, I have been working as a tour guide, moreover, my wife is from Kuta.”

Located approximately 12 km from Denpasar, the capital of Bali province, Kuta Beach spanned about 3 km, stretching from Tuban Beach to Legian Beach in the Southern and Northern regions, respectively. Despite its allure, the beach still presented inherent dangers due to its powerful waves, which had claimed lives through drowning or being swept away by strong currents. This posed a unique challenge for tourists, especially surf enthusiasts. The mesmerizing sunset over the western horizon was also enjoyed by tourists around 18:00 WITA (Central Indonesian Time or Bali time).

The results of the text search query analysis in Figure 1 showed by Nvivo 12 Plus on the secondary data, showed that they support Ketut Subandira's interview statement. Kuta Beach as the main product offers a variety of advantages. The most word often raised to refer to Kuta Beach is "sunset", showing the beauty of the sunset on Kuta Beach.

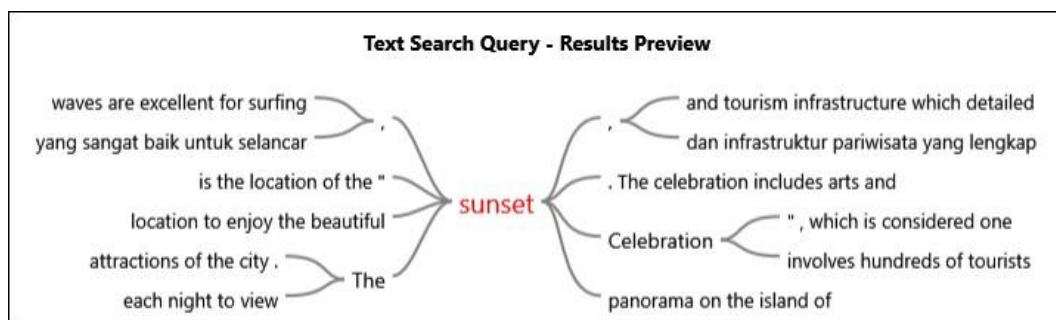


Figure 1. Cluster analysis of “sunset”

During the 1970s to the 1990s, Kuta emerged as the primary tourist hub of the island, with other external region similarly experiencing significant development in Bali. This indicated that the area consistently teemed with tourists and a wide array of tourism-related business. By 1998, Kuta village boasted 30 travel agencies, and 23 star-rated hotels, including 4 five-star, 5 four-star, 7 three-star, and 8 two-star guesthouses. It also boasted 105 non-star accommodations, such as inns, bungalows, and cottages. However, the acquisition of precise data from the local village government proved challenging due to the abundance of tourism facilities.

As a coastal resort and immensely popular tourist region, Kuta traditionally attracted a substantial share of the Australian tourist market, a trend that was continuous until the present (Ady, 1999a). This was because the Australians highly cherished the proximity of Bali and its affordability, especially in Kuta. The frequency of flights between Australia and Bali also supported the trend (Ady, 1999b). For many of the foreigners (Australians), Kuta was akin to a second home, with the Aussies permeating every nook and cranny of resort, from beach, streets, and discotheques, to the bars (Ady, 1999a).

Domestic tourists often balanced the crowds at hotels throughout Kuta, during the low season for foreigners (interview with Ratu Agung Bagus Ngurah Putra, General Manager of Whyndham Garden Kuta Beach Bali, located on Jalan Pantai Kuta, 19 June 2023). Putra provided the following statements,

"Thankful that our hotel has a sea view and only needs to cross the road to get to Kuta Beach, with the rooms almost always full except during the Covid-19 pandemic. We both know that Bali and Kuta are not so far from neighboring countries such as Australia. Our hotel is seldom empty of foreign guests, including Australian guests. In addition, domestic guests, including guests from Bali, often have a meeting, entertainment, and recreational activities here, of course, the aim is to enjoy beach and sea views".

Table 1. Word frequency query of secondary data

No	Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
1	Beach	5	11	002
2	Culture	7	7	002
3	People	6	7	002
4	Tourists	8	7	002
5	Balinese	8	6	001
6	Hotel	5	4	001
7	Beaches	7	3	001
8	Community	9	3	001
9	History	7	3	001
10	Villages	8	3	001

The primary data which is the results of interview transcripts in this study showed that "beach", "culture", and "balinese" are three words that are in the top 5 words that appear most often and are discussed (Table 1 and Figure 2). This further strengthens the results of the interviews, as well as shows that beach deserves to be the main product of Kuta.



Figure 2. Word cloud query of secondary data

In the 2000s, an unexpected bomb explosion occurred at several tourism facilities in Kuta, destroying the entire Balinese attraction sector. This occurrence momentarily paralyzed tourism business in Kuta, with the lives of the dependent natives heavily and adversely affected (Hitchcock & Putra, 2005). From this context, the first bombing occurred on 12 October 2002, where more than 200 tourists (mostly foreigners) and natives were killed, with 209 injured (Andalas et al., 2022; Rahma, 2018; Sujaya, 2004). This was accompanied by the second explosion on 1 October 2005, which occurred at the same time at several other locations near Kuta, killing and injuring at least 23 and 196 people, respectively (Suryana, 2012). According to the news, the perpetrators of the bombing were the terrorist groups that politically disliked superpowers for specific reasons related to religion. In this case, Kuta, as an international tourism resort, was considered a representation of the superpower country. After the two very violent bombings (2002 and 2005), tourism activities in Kuta and Bali gradually developed into normal conditions. However, the eruption of Mount Agung in Karangasem Regency (about 70 km from Kuta) on 25 November 2017 significantly influenced tourist visitation, due to the closure of I Gusti Ngurah Rai Airport for several days. As the new year



(2018) approached, the situation slowly improved for longer periods until the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, when almost every business sector was paralyzed. These conditions were subsequently overcome, with all business sectors, including tourism, gradually improving since 2023.

Kuta remained a village centered around its main attraction, Kuta Beach, regardless of the numerous challenges encountered. These beach conditions were influenced by the East (June-September) and West (December-March) monsoons, with an average D50 of 1.07 mm. Gravel and sand were also distributed in the breakwater area, with fine sand observed behind the breakwater (Saputra et al., 2013). Despite occasional influxes of trash from external region, beach was still highly popular among tourists (Attamimi et al., 2015; Maharta et al., 2021; Putra & Husrin, 2017). From these contexts, the management of the accumulated garbage required immediate action from tourism managers, village and community officials, as well as government authorities. Additionally, in line with other beach, natural erosion often occurred on Kuta Beach (Syamsudin et al., 2015).

Understanding the distinction between "nature" and "culture" was highly crucial when examining tourism activities in Kuta. According to Raymond Williams, a prominent figure in cultural studies, three meanings of culture were identified, namely the ideal, documentary, and social. In this categorization, based on (Storey, 1993), the first meaning emphasized the general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development, while the second interpretation pertained to cognitive works and practices, especially artistic activities. Meanwhile, the third meaning signified a specific pattern of life, regarding people, periods, or groups (Storey, 1993).

In its physical form, Kuta Beach did not encompass culture, which was distinct from nature. From this context, culture was a human phenomenon, with naturally inherent activities such as three S, falling under Williams (2014) categorization of lived cultures and cultural practices, namely, the patterns of life and habits. Although the three S's activities were associated with natural attraction, especially at Kuta Beach, challenges were still observed in separating the aspects of cultural and tourism studies in the empirical world. This was in line with the definition of Williams (2014), where the annual *melasti* religious ritual activities were considered lived cultures and cultural practices despite occurring in the natural setting of Kuta Beach.

The allure of Kuta continuously captivated tourists over time, although many incidents and problems were recently encountered. These issues undeniably included the phenomenon of over-tourism, quite severe traffic jams, security disturbances such as robbery, theft, rape, and bomb threats, deviant behavior of tourists, beach garbage pollution, etc. Despite experiencing a decline in tourist numbers since the early 2000s, Kuta remained bustling. This declination was due to the exploration of lesser-known beach tourism areas by tourists, such as Seminyak, Canggu, Pererenan, Seseh, and Nyanyi, located in the northern region. Since the beginning of 2023, Kuta had regained its vibrancy, due to the diminished status of the Covid-19 pandemic. Until now, Kuta remains unrivaled in terms of the attractiveness of Kuta Beach because it is strengthened by its rich artistic and cultural appeal.

ART AND CULTURE AS TOURISM PRODUCT IN KUTA

Historically, Balinese culture had always revolved around the tradition of rice cultivation. During the previous and present periods, the natives were often grateful to the Creator for a successful rice harvest through traditional art forms (Pitana & Putra, 2009), especially cultural dances, songs, and *gamelan* (Balinese traditional instrumental) music. This was due to the belief that art should be initiated, created, performed, and presented as an offering to God (Mudana & Ardini, 2012). The local community, consisting of homogeneous farming groups, also served as both producers and consumers of their art. In this period, Balinese were entirely unfamiliar with tourism and its sector, compared to the present existence.

In the religious ritual aspects of Balinese people, various types of art offerings were specifically found easily. This included the culture of religious ceremonies regarding the human life cycle (birth, life, death) of the natives, which always included a combination of dance and music (both instrumental and vocal). It also emphasized spiritual art in the form of offerings and other

ceremonial equipment. Based on the convergence between various art and religious ritual traditions, art became a habitual practice, commonly existing unconsciously or as a "habitus" according to Pierre Bourdieu (Fashri, 2014). In addition, Balinese possessed a unique form of "cultural capital" in art and culture.

The present existence of "art" and "Bali" emphasized two different sides of a coin (Mudana & Ardini, 2012). When the significance of art was identified within Balinese society and culture, globally recognized cultural event in destination became the Bali Art Festival (Pesta Kesenian Bali), compared to the Bali Cultural Festival (Pesta Kebudayaan Bali). From these descriptions, Balinese art gained widespread recognition through global tourism, which served as a crucial economic sector for the province. Art and culture were also deeply intertwined with the daily lives of the people, exemplifying the local knowledge of Balinese Hindu society, known as *Tri Wisesa*, encompassing *satyam* (truth), *shivam* (chastity), and *sundaram* (beauty) (Sena et al., 2022). Art and culture were inseparable from the lives of the natives, including Kuta local community activities involved in tourism industry within their region.

The most common traditional Balinese art and culture existing or performed in Kuta were dance and/or music genres. This demonstrated that dances were often performed with songs from a tape recorder, compact discs (CDs), MP3s, etc., as well as live music, namely *gamelan*. However, the *gamelan* was commonly played without dance accompaniment, as observed in restaurants and hotels. Traditional Balinese dance and/or music was also frequently featured in hotels, restaurants, party events, office/business launches, and product promotions.

From these descriptions, several dances and music were found in various Kuta tourism facilities. This emphasized the Barong and Kecak Dances, which were complemented by their respective traditional music. These dances were considered important due to being the most popular in Bali. Both activities were also commonly performed in large hotels, restaurants, supermarkets, and tourist stages, regarding their implementation of at least 30 local artists.

At a big company, such as Discovery Shopping Mall on Jalan Kartika Plaza Kuta, Kecak Dance was routinely performed on Fridays. This was often supported by many dancers in the amphitheater of the mall, which had a backdrop of Kuta Beach with sunset views. Juli Erliyanto, the marketing communication manager of the mall, stated that the Kecak Dance was free for visitors (interview, 28 June 2023). This dance was mostly performed against the backdrop of Kuta Beach, with guests enjoying the dance and the sunset views since the show always began at 17 WITA (local time).

"Discovery Shopping Mall a mall that is in the heart of Bali tourism, namely in Kuta, wants to always present something unforgettable for its visitors, most of whom are foreign tourists. So, we always present various Balinese dances, such as the Kecak Dance we often perform on Sundays at the end of each month. The Kecak Dance is performed by 50 dancers. This show can be watched for free by our visitors while enjoying a very beautiful sunset. The aim is to introduce more diverse Balinese culture to tourists and to empower local communities."

The authors had seen three foreign tourists while taking an evening walk on Kuta Beach, suddenly they were interested in hearing boisterous sounds from a distance. Out of curiosity, they went straight to the sounds and it turned out that the origin of the sounds was the Kecak Dance performance which was taking place around the beach area of the Discovery Shopping Mall. They were immediately engrossed in watching this show until it was finished. After the show was over, one of them named Frank honestly admitted,

"This is really a dance that is the first time my friends and I have seen it in our lives. Really amazing. This is really different from the others. If you say dance, actually the vocals are more dominant. The dance moves are energetic and powerful. But its vocal playing is very interesting and unique. One day I want to come again to watch the Kecak Dance from the start of the show".

The Kecak Dance is truly an icon of Balinese cultural tourism art and is so loved by tourists. Considering how famous the Kecak Dance is, so that this dance is able to boost hotel promotions, statues of Kecak dancers are on display in the lobby of the Kuta Paradiso Hotel. The dance was categorized as a signifying practice or cultural text due to the conception of Williams (2014). This activity was the most popular besides from the Barong Dance and was part of the practices of

Balinese tourism. Observation results show that Kartika Plaza Hotel as an example has a fixed program of implementing Balinese traditional dances every day. Bali night dinner is held every Wednesday and *rindik* traditional *gamelan* every evening. Even traditional Balinese dance is performed every breakfast at the hotel restaurant.

One of the most popular footballers in the world and Bali mangrove ambassador, Ronaldo, launched a planting program with Indonesian President Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono in 2013. The player also stayed at the Kartika Plaza Hotel with his girlfriend, Irina Shayk, and had the opportunity to witness the captivating Kecak dance while savoring a delicious cow steak. During this event, Ronaldo was deeply fascinated by the synchronized movements of the numerous dancers, especially those dressed in checkered outfits resembling chessboards and repeatedly chanting "cak, cak, cak" in a mesmerizing trance pattern (<https://tekno.kompas.com/read/2013/06/27/0142007/Ronaldo.dan.Shayk.Terpesona.Tari.Kecak>). Kartika Plaza Hotel regularly presented the Barong and Kecak Dances, with the performance often observed at The Pond restaurant every Wednesday and Friday at 19.00 WITA. The restaurant, beautifully surrounded by the fishpond and renowned for its unique wide terrace design, provided an exquisite dining experience for guests, where captivating dances were performed. These enchanting dances were often enjoyed at the luxurious 5-star, as well as other smaller hotels and restaurants in Kuta.

In Kuta, the Barong Dance was frequently incorporated into the Keris Dance, which entailed dancing with the traditional *keris* weapon, accompanied by a demonstrative scene of self-stabbing. These dances were often combined and considered the "Barong and Keris Dances." Similarly, the Kecak Dance was commonly included in the Fire Dance, leading to the combined activity known as the "Kecak and Fire Dance".

The Kecak Dance was inseparable from Bali tourism, including Kuta attraction (interview with I Wayan Eka Adnyana, Kuta traditional Balinese dancer and *gamelan* player as well as the owner of a coffee shop, 16 June 2023). Adnyana argued,

"I swear I will never tire of admiring this dance. What a unique dance. In Bali, it is so iconic. Even though it is displayed in front of paying tourists, from what is displayed by dozens of dancers, the magical aura of the Kecak Dance can still be felt from the shouts of "cak" which are sometimes weak, and thunderous. You know, the Kecak Dance is just a sound dance."

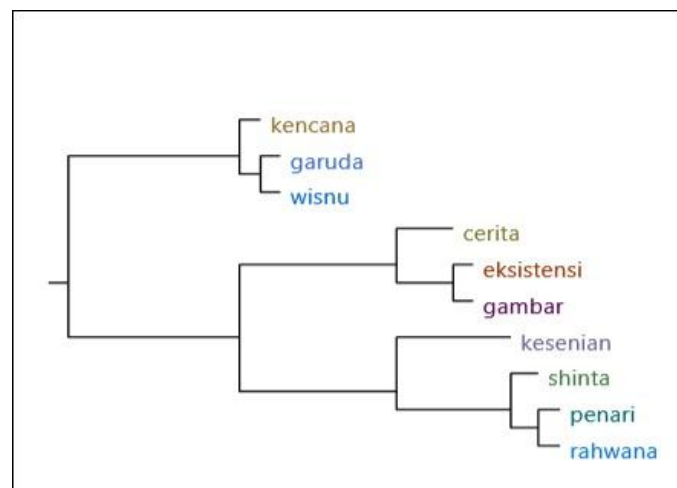


Figure 3. Cluster analysis of secondary data

The cluster analysis in Figure 3 supports that the Kecak Dance is a very unique dance (according to the results of an interview with I Wayan Eka Adnyana). The uniqueness of the Kecak Dance which combines elements of movement in the dance as well as sound elements from the vocals by the dancers adds to the uniqueness of the Kecak Dance. The results of the cluster analysis confirm that the Kecak dance is unique, because it not only displays a rhythmic movement, but a dance with a strong story concept, several related words namely "kencana" which has a relationship with the

words "garuda" and "wisnu" which are the main story character in the Kecak dance, as well as "shinta" and "rahwana" which refer to one of the characters also in the Kecak Dance.

Based on its distinctive nature, the Kecak Dance was performed entirely without the use of musical instruments, relying solely on the rhythmic chanting of "cak, cak, cak" by the dancers. This captivating feature led to the consideration of the Dance as a symbolic representation of Indonesia on global stage. According to Picard (1996), the Kecak Dance embodied cultural identity and internationally served as a means of Indonesian cultural diplomacy (Picard, 1996).

Derived from the Sanghyang Dance, the Kecak Dance was developed in the 1930s by Wayan Limbak, Balinese artist from Bedulu Village in Gianyar Regency, and Walter Spies, a Western performer (Antari, 2018; Ekaputra et al., 2019; Erawati, 2019). Also known as the Kera Dance (Monkey Dance), the Kecak Dance commonly featured the dancers portraying the troops of Rama, with a monotonous yet highly aesthetic vocal chant of "cak, cak, cak." This was a special entertainment for tourists due to its uniqueness. Despite its consideration as a profane art, the Kecak Dance still contained nuances of its sacredness. One of the sacredness of the dance also depended on the game of fire attraction, leading to a Kecak-Fire Dance. According to I Wayan Dibia, a dance professor from the Denpasar Indonesian Institute of Art (interview, 12 June 2023), Fire Dance in the Kecak Dance was an additional activity, where the dancers acted by trampling on a burning flame without injuring their feet. This dance was different from the original Kecak Dance, where fire activity was not portrayed.

Based on these explanations, the boom in global and modern tourism in Kuta was supported by the presence of Balinese art and culture, which was actively preserved and promoted by local communities. This village comprised 13 hamlets (sub-villages), namely Banjar Plasa, Banjar Temacun, Banjar Pemoran, Banjar Pengabetan, Banjar Pering, Banjar Tegal, Banjar Buni, Banjar Teba Sari, Banjar JabaJero, Banjar Anyar, Banjar Mertha Jati, Banjar Pande Mas, and Banjar Segara. In these hamlets, various *seka* (groups) were observed, such as *seka* Barong and Rangda, which were regularly performed during significant religious ceremonies. The active involvement of Kuta residents in global tourism industry was also evident through their artistic and cultural capital (Astara, 2011). For example, the *ogoh-ogoh* parade showcasing art and cultural performances similar to those observed in non-touristy villages in Bali (Prabandari & Sonder, 2021). From this context, Young Kutanese individuals proudly displayed and paraded the *ogoh-ogoh* throughout Kuta, culminating in Beach, a day before Bali largest holiday, Nyepi (Silent Day). This spectacular event served as a captivating art and cultural attraction for tourists visiting the region. Apart from that, The Young Kutanese actively display traditional Balinese arts even though they are not related to tourism activities.



Figure 4. Word cloud of secondary data

The results of the word frequency analysis in Figure 4 showed that all the literature reviews used support that Kuta continues to present art and culture as important products in the midst of the globalization. Some of the words that make up the top 5 are "culture", "balinese", and "people".



According to various investigations, Kuta had a great artist that was highly popular in Bali, known as I Wayan Lotring (1887-1983). This artist was a dancer, musician, and the most influential Balinese music composer in the 20th century. The *palegongan*-style *gamelan* master was also known as an important figure in Bali *gamelan* (Dunbar-Hall, 2001, 2013; Lewis, 2016), whose noble traditional dance and music (*gamelan*) were presently enjoyed. Based on the great fame, I Wayan Lotring was used as a building and street name in Banjar Tegal Kuta. At the Indonesian Art Institute in Denpasar, the works of artist also became an everlasting inspiration and study field. Subsequently, the name was enshrined in one of the performing art buildings in the art institute.

In cultural studies, the characterization of Kuta tourism by traditional art and culture was categorized as "globalization" by Robertson (1992) and Robertson (1995). In this globalization era, localization was observed and vice versa, emphasizing the inseparability of "global" and "local" (Robertson, 1992; Robertson 1995). However, in the tourist region in Bali, such as Kuta, commodification was inevitable with the increasingly inseparable art and tourism (Darmiati et al., 2022; Mudana et al., 2021; Seriasih, 2019). In Piliang (2004, 2011, 2012), commodification was a process when a non-commodity became a sellable commodity in the market. This indicated that the commodification of art and culture was unique to Kuta, other Bali tourist spots, Indonesia, and the world.

Kuta Beach was always one of the favorite locations to celebrate the coming of the New Year besides from being a great area for three S, as well as sunset view activities. This was due to the performance of various interesting traditional (daytime) and modern (night time) attraction every New Year's Eve. From this context, several international and domestic tourists often spilled over to beach before the turn of the year. In this area, New Year celebrations with contemporary touches, including the latest dance and music performances, typically commenced at 16:00 WITA. Before 16:00 WITA, even from the early morning hours, traditional art performances were consistently held, featuring Balinese dances performed by Kuta artists and young children from various parts of the area.

After facum due to the Covid-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022, the 2023 New Year celebrations on the night of December 31 2022 were managed by the Badung Regency Tourism Office and various performing art managers. The colossal event entitled, "Celebration by The Sea Old and New 2022-2023", was enlivened by the magic acts from magician Wix Ambara and several well-known guest stars in Bali, such as Pongki Barata, DJ Gween, Joni Agung & Double T, The Hydrant, Crazy Horse, Hydra feat Putu Sutha, The Small Ax, Bobi Dinar, DJ War, as well as the Bintang, Majegau, and Artha Bands (Tribun-Bali.com, 2022). This celebration was conducted to cure the longing of the public and tourists after being paralyzed by the pandemic for a long time through PPKM (Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat or Implementation of Restrictions on Community Activities). According to the leader of McastPregine Showbiz, I Gusti Agung Bagus Mantra (interview, 30 December 2022), the event was performed to celebrate New Year's Eve by organizing a people's party and reintroducing Bali tourism, especially Kuta Beach, with a new face, namely restructuring Seminyak, Legian, Kuta (Samigita) area.

Every Saturday night at Kuta Beach, Balinese performing arts were presently conducted, accompanied by modern activities. These traditional performances showcased artistic creativity, with Bali artists developing dances categorized as *balih-bali* (entertainment), compared to *wali* (most sacred) or *bebali* (sacred) activities. On Saturday night, June 17, 2023, the Rejang Dance, originally a sacred dance (*wali* or *bebali*), was presented in a new rendition, with the performance conducted outside the realm of religious ceremonies. Based on I Ketut Astawa, tourism expert and Kuta community leader, Balinese performing arts, regardless of the type, played a crucial role in showcasing Kuta as an integral part of Bali province and cultural tourism (interview, 21 June 2023). Astawa provided the following opinion,

"Maybe the beauty of beach can be found in many places in Indonesia and the world, but there are not many regions with natural beach tourism that have artistic and cultural wealth like Kuta. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that Balinese art and culture to continue developing, for Kuta



to have more value than beach tourism. This should be regulated with art and culture being authentic and provided to tourists."

Due to the tourism regulations in Bali, in the field of cultural tourism, the concepts of the street and staged culture emerged from "Kadi Din's discourse on Malaysian traditional attraction in 1997". This indicated that the performing arts, such as dance and music, were generally categorized as staged culture. The tradition was also commonly performed on stages, detached from their original and authentic contexts (Putra, 2015). From this context, staged culture was closely associated with the performances serving tourism purposes in Bali, especially Kuta. However, outside the realm of tourism, the existence of the original Barong and Sanghyang Dances was observed, forming an integral part of Balinese religious ceremonies. These dances were performed at specific venues and times, according to the religious traditions observed in Bali. Based on these descriptions, the performances with traditionally dressed Balinese artists in Kuta continuously attracted tourists.

Street culture such as *melasti*, did not specifically become a staged culture provided to tourist stages for income or money. At Kuta Beach, *melasti* was commonly carried out by the traditional people, to purify themselves from all previous bad deeds. During this ceremony, people participated in a procession resembling a parade, where sacred objects from the temple were carried and purified through rides in sea water. Similar to other Balinese people, Kuta natives faithfully upheld the *melasti* ritual as a longstanding cultural tradition passed down through generations. The numerous tourists visiting beach also interestingly relished the spectacle of the *melasti* culture during the ceremony. In this context, *melasti* served a dual purpose, functioning as both a religious ritual and tourism attraction for the local community and visitors, respectively. Furthermore, Kuta developed the performing and fine art business. This was due to having several trading points, such as Jalan Kuta Art Market, in addition to many relevant shops and public zones selling souvenirs with Balinese cultural nuances. Even large hotels had their souvenir shops besides from providing space for fine art exhibitions, such as sculptures, paintings, Bali batik and endek clothing, traditional attires, etc. On Kuta Beach, *pedagangacung* or *pedagangasongan* (hawkers) also commonly surrounded sunbathing tourists to sell their products, such as cloth, statues, paintings, key chains, ashtrays, and other small souvenirs.

The implementation of Nyepi Day in Bali was the most fascinating street culture and arguably a paradoxical cultural event, especially when examined from tourism business perspective. This day was observed once yearly and celebrated with great enthusiasm, to commemorate the arrival of the Caka new year. Its primary objective also emphasized the purification of Bhuana Alit (human nature/microcosmos) and Bhuana Agung (universe/macrococosmos) from the Divine (Gateri, 2021; Suwena, 2017). Furthermore, Balinese, including Kuta people, were diligent in carrying out the four types of prohibitions during Nyepi, namely (1) inability to travel (*amatilelungan*), (2) unable to enjoy entertainment (*amatilelanguan*), (3) inability to light a fire (*amatigeni*), and (4) unable to work or carry out activities (*amatikarya*) (Gateri, 2021; Watra, 2016). During Nyepi, all activities on the island of Bali always completely stop within 24 h. To respect the ceremony, all access to the island was often closed, absolutely indicating no entertainment and tourism activities. Balinese people were also strictly confined to their homes, with tourists seeking refuge in hotels without engaging in any fun activities or speaking loudly. This was to avoid encounters with *pecalang* (traditional security officers) and potential fines. Although this street culture was challenging for those seeking socialization solace, Kuta remained a cherished region for tourists. According to Made Ruki, a local hotel owner and travel agent, no issues or disruptions were caused by tourists in their area during Nyepi (interview, 20 June 2023). Ruki subsequently mentioned that tourists were generally aware of Bali exceptional and exclusive observance of Nyepi, with many even relishing the experienced serene and unforgettable tranquility.

The events conducted in Kuta, involving attraction of Balinese art and culture, were relevant to the concept of partial equivalent structure. According to McKean (1973), the structure emphasized a situation in Bali, where the natives and tourists engaged in a reciprocal exchange. In this case, the tourists derived aesthetic satisfaction from Balinese art and cultural products, with the natives economically benefitting from the money and income obtained. Based on cultural tourism in Kuta,

various regional regulations about culture and cultural tourism also contributed to a mutually beneficial relationship between tourism industry and the Bali tradition. These regulations were effectively implemented, ensuring the achievement of positive outcomes for all parties involved.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Kuta which is very popular, renowned for its captivating combination of three S, was a truly complete resort where art and culture flawlessly complemented the existing beach tourism. Despite the introduction of various contemporary cultural practices driven by tourism, the traditional custom of the natives remained unaltered, flourishing in both street and staged performances. Kuta also embodied a harmonious fusion of lived cultures and signifying practices, bridging the gap between globalization and localization.

The events tourists, especially those from foreign countries, sought in Kuta also extended beyond the allure of exotic beach and vibrant nightlife. This prioritized their pleas for the authenticity of traditional and distinctive culture. From this context, most region typically provided natural or cultural tourism aspects. Since countless beach attraction spots provided sun, sand, sea, and nightlife, determining the amalgamation of these three S's with traditional art and culture akin to Kuta proved relatively elusive.

Kuta was also global tourism resort and a traditional village emphasizing Balinese culture. Until the present, the region had managed to combine modern tourism with cultural tourism imbued with Balinese culture. Kuta tourism had also developed by considering cultural preservation and the welfare of traditional supporters, namely the local community. This demonstrated that modern tourism did not destroy Balinese art and culture aspects guiding cultural tourism in Kuta. It means that the implementation of Balinese cultural tourism as stated in the tourism regulations in Bali works very well.

Based on these results, the body of knowledge in tourism was strengthened, especially cultural tourism. Moreover, tourism had been developing since the arrival of globalization era, where local art and culture encountered global challenges. This was an opportunity for global tourism industry managers to develop products by providing artistic and cultural aspects to non-art and traditional tourism commodities, to broaden and deepen their market.

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