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# Exploring the role of Balinese gamelan in shaping tourist experiences and tourism growth in Bali

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**Abstract** - This study explores the role of Balinese gamelan as both a cultural expression and a catalyst for cultural tourism in Bali. The research aims to analyse how gamelan, deeply rooted in Balinese religious rituals and community celebrations, contributes to shaping distinctive tourist experiences while supporting cultural preservation and the creative economy. Beyond its function as artistic entertainment, gamelan also operates as a medium through which visitors can engage with local wisdom and traditions. The study employs a qualitative research approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews with gamelan musicians and tourists, as well as direct observations at cultural events and performances. This method allows for a holistic understanding of the intersection between gamelan, cultural practices, and tourism activities. The analysis reveals that tourists' participation in gamelan-related experiences—whether as spectators or as learners—deepens their appreciation of Balinese cultural values and rituals. Gamelan not only provides aesthetic enjoyment but also fosters intercultural dialogue, strengthens community identity, and enhances the sustainability of cultural tourism. Furthermore, gamelan performances contribute to the creative economy by generating opportunities for local artists and cultural entrepreneurs. In conclusion, gamelan plays a multifaceted role that extends beyond entertainment. It functions as a vital cultural resource that preserves traditions, enriches tourist experiences, and supports sustainable tourism development. The study underscores the importance of maintaining gamelan as an active cultural practice to ensure that Balinese heritage remains vibrant, relevant, and respected in the modern era.

**Keywords:** Balinese gamelan, cultural tourism, local wisdom, creative economy, sustainable tourism

## 1. Introduction

Bali has long captivated international tourists by offering a potent fusion of natural beauty, spiritual depth, and cultural richness (Putra & Hitchcock, 2021). Central to its cultural tapestry is Balinese gamelan—a traditional percussive orchestra—that embodies centuries of artistic and religious evolution. Recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2021 and acknowledged by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture in 2014, gamelan features prominently not only in rituals and ceremonies but also in the broader realm of cultural events and tourism (Wikipedia, 2025).

In recent decades, gamelan has become more than a ceremonial practice—it's now a strategic cultural tourism product. Across Bali, gamelan studios and sanggar (home-based studios) offer interactive experiences: from live performances to hands-on workshops where tourists learn to play instruments or even craft their own (Wang, 2016). This aligns with the evolution of tourism preferences—where immersive, experience-driven tourism is emphasized over passive sightseeing (Putra & Hitchcock, 2021).

Cultural tourism represents both an economic opportunity and a vehicle for cultural preservation. In Bali, tourism is a powerful driver of income, yet concerns about cultural dilution and overtourism persist. Declassified satellite imagery reveals dramatic coastal development over recent decades, raising alarms about environmental degradation and cultural loss (The Guardian, 2025).

Gamelan tourism presents a promising avenue to reinforce sustainable cultural engagement. Evidence suggests that while the influx of tourists has economic benefits, it can also threaten authenticity if unmanaged (Widhiastuty & Murdana, 2024). Conversely, involving local artistic communities in tourism helps reinforce cultural pride and sustain traditional practices—especially where critical oversight ensures performance quality (Cultural Survival, 1990s). Thus, gamelan functions both as a cultural expression and a sustainability mechanism within Bali's tourism ecosystem.

The Gamelan Selonding has become a vital instrument in the preservation of sacred art activities within the Batur Indigenous community in Kintamani, Bali. The research emphasizes its cultural significance and role in sustaining local traditions, contributing to the cultural heritage of Bali (Rai et al., 2023).

Another fascinating exploration is the Legong Dedari performance, analyzed in terms of its meaning and cultural role within the Banjar Abian Nangka Kaja, Kesiman Petilan in East Denpasar. The study delves into the symbolic importance and transformations of the dance performance in contemporary Balinese society (Suryani et al., 2023).

Additionally, the transformation of Balinese gamelan within the context of authenticity and heritage politics in the digital age is critically discussed. This research explores the intersection of cultural preservation and modern digital platforms, highlighting the tensions between traditional practices and digital representations in global art platforms (Sidjabat & Krishnanandayani, 2024).

This study draws from several academic frameworks: Authenticity and Cultural Boundary Theory stated that Balinese sanggar have become mediators in defining the boundary between tourist-oriented performances and sacred ritual. They play an active role in preserving cultural authenticity while leveraging tourism as a sustainability mechanism (Wang, 2016). Cultural elements like gamelan contribute to Bali's resilience, enabling recovery and continuity amid crises (e.g., terrorism or pandemics) via strong communal and cultural identity (Ding et al., 2024; Ford & Im, 2023). Tourism destinations evolve as complex systems characterized by non-linear interactions among cultural, economic, and environmental factors. This framework supports understanding how gamelan tourism is embedded within broader dynamic systems (Baggio, 2007)

Research indicates tourists are drawn to authentic cultural expressions showcased in context-rich performance spaces, such as temple ceremonies versus stage shows (Wang, 2016). Similarly, authenticity in hotel cultural features (architecture, food, etc.) garners positive reactions from foreign visitors (Bestari et al., 2020). Widhiastuty and Murdana (2024) reveal both positive cultural preservation outcomes and negative consequences such as commodification or overexposure .

The research into Balinese gamelan has become an essential area of study as the global intersection of music, culture, and tourism evolves. Several scholars have explored how Balinese gamelan serves as both a cultural artifact and a tool for tourism promotion, shedding light on its commodification and cultural preservation efforts. For instance, Johnson (2003) delves into how the gamelan tradition is maintained and redefined within the tourism context, highlighting the ways in which it both resists and adapts to external influences. Similarly, Lo (2020) presents a discussion on the preservation of Balinese gamelan within the framework of intercultural transfer, emphasizing the importance of community-led initiatives in safeguarding this heritage amidst globalization.

A deeper understanding of the artistic and social functions of gamelan is explored by Stepputat (2006), who focuses on the gamelan Rindik and its role as tourist art. The study unveils how the music's evolution for commercial purposes does not overshadow its cultural significance, demonstrating that tourism can coexist with cultural authenticity. Suharta et al. (2020) offer a critical lens on the commodification of the gamelan selonding, arguing that such processes, while contributing to economic growth, risk undermining its intrinsic cultural values.

The discussion extends to the idea of sustainability and innovation within Balinese gamelan traditions. Dunbar-Hall (2016) explores how community engagement and spiritual ties are integral to the continued relevance of gamelan in Bali, suggesting that the culture's adaptability plays a crucial role in its preservation. The contributions of Trimandala and Putra (2025) further emphasize the potential of gamelan in local branding, linking its preservation to tourism development strategies.

Technological advancements have also been explored, with Sethares and Vitale (2020) examining how mathematical concepts such as octave stretching play a role in the sound of Balinese gamelan. This exploration ties the ancient practice of gamelan music to modern analytical frameworks, demonstrating its versatility and continued relevance in contemporary contexts. Novianti et al. (2023) bring this into the digital age by developing a web-based classification system for Balinese gamelan, allowing for easier access and study.

However, not all scholarly perspectives on gamelan are purely academic; some also offer practical insights. For example, Miasa and Sugita (2011) examine the unique standards of Balinese traditional music instruments, discussing how these instruments are integral to the cultural fabric of Bali. Meanwhile, Sudirana (2019) explores the historical contributions of figures like Colin McPhee to Balinese music, which underscores the intersection of Western influence and traditional Balinese music practice.

The research presented in the listed sources offers valuable insights into the intersection of Balinese music, cultural commodification, and globalization, with each study contributing unique perspectives on the evolving role of gamelan in both local and global contexts. These works, spanning various dimensions from technological approaches to cultural implications, highlight the intricate relationships between music, tradition, and tourism in Bali.

The study by Johnson (2003) provides a foundational analysis of how Balinese music, particularly gamelan, is transformed and redefined within the context of tourism and globalization. By examining the concept of "inventing traditions," Johnson explores how global forces shape local cultural practices, often leading to the commodification of traditional art forms. This theme of commodification is further explored by Suharta (2022), who focuses specifically on the Selonding gamelan in Tenganan Pegringsingan. Suharta illustrates how the traditional music is commodified for tourism purposes, examining the tension between preserving cultural authenticity and the economic pressures imposed by the tourism industry.

Prayoga et al. (2023) take a more technical approach by exploring the classification of sound scales in Balinese gamelan using machine learning techniques like K-Nearest Neighbor and Support Vector Machine. Their work offers an innovative perspective on how technology can be applied to understand and preserve traditional music, though it raises questions about the balance between technology and cultural preservation. This is an interesting contrast to the ethnomusicological and social studies that dominate much of the literature on Balinese gamelan.

McIntosh (2018) shifts the focus to intercultural collective music-making by examining the Women's International Gamelan Group at the Pondok Pekak in Bali. This study offers a rare insight into how gamelan serves as a space for cross-cultural exchange and social agency, demonstrating the power of music to bring people together across different cultural backgrounds. McIntosh's work complements Hood's (1966) earlier foundational study of Javanese and Balinese gamelan, which remains relevant despite its historical focus, providing a classic perspective on the educational value of gamelan music.

Sabda (2021) explores the mystical aspects of Selonding in eastern Bali, offering a more spiritual and cultural perspective on the music. This paper adds depth to the ongoing dialogue about how gamelan music, specifically the Selonding, can be understood as more than just a performance art—it is also a sacred ritual. Similarly, Yudarta et al. (2023) highlight the role of Gamelan Gong Beruk in ritual contexts, focusing on its function within the Ngusaba Desa ritual in Pemaksan Bangle Temple. This study underscores the spiritual significance of gamelan, affirming its continued importance in Balinese religious life and rituals.

Together, these works illustrate the complex and dynamic role of Balinese gamelan in both preserving tradition and adapting to modern demands. While the commodification and global exposure of gamelan raise concerns about cultural erosion, studies like McIntosh's (2018) suggest that the cross-cultural engagement of gamelan can foster new forms of collective creativity and social agency. Nonetheless, the tension between cultural preservation and globalization remains a central issue, requiring careful consideration in both academic research and practical applications, such as in tourism and technological innovations in music.

In terms of pedagogical approaches, Kartawan and Buckton (2022) explore teaching strategies at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, emphasizing the need for effective performance and educational strategies to ensure that gamelan traditions are passed on to future generations. Sudirana (2018) complements this by investigating the methods of teaching Balinese gamelan, specifically the Meguru Panggul and Meguru Kuping approaches, which highlight the cultural and generational transmission of knowledge.

While much of the research to date highlights the positive impact of gamelan on tourism and global visibility, it is also critical to recognize the potential for exploitation and the risk of cultural dilution. Pramana et al. (2023) discuss the transformation of Jegog music into a fusion genre, showcasing how cultural practices are subject to modification and, in some cases, commercialization. Yoga (2023) further explores this transformation in gamelan compositions, which reflect the broader trend of cultural adaptation.

Balinese gamelan continues to serve as a dynamic example of how traditional music can be both preserved and transformed within modern contexts. The synthesis of scholarly perspectives from music theory, tourism studies, cultural anthropology, and education offers a holistic view of gamelan's role in both Bali and the global cultural landscape. While the integration of gamelan into tourism and education presents

significant opportunities for its survival and innovation, ongoing critical reflection is essential to balance its commodification with the preservation of its cultural essence.

The Guardian (2025) also highlights the environmental stress tied to tourism-driven development. Cultural Survival reports how structured oversight helps maintain artistic standards and prevent loss of cultural integrity as performing arts are offered to tourists. Recent works underscore the protective role of cultural identity in sustaining tourism during crises. Findings suggest communities leveraging strong cultural markers like gamelan bounce back more effectively (Ding et al., 2024)

Putra and Hitchcock (2021) argue that tourists' images of Bali are shaped both externally and through local reimaginings—suggesting cultural symbols like gamelan shape tourist expectations before they even visit.

Despite evidence of gamelan's significance in Bali's tourism, several gaps remain: (a) Tourist Perception: How is gamelan perceived by tourists—as entertainment, cultural education, or both? What elements best resonate (performance context, learning, ceremony participation)? (b) Tourism Influence: Does exposure to gamelan influence tourist decisions—duration of stay, repeat visitation, or destination choice? (c) Sustainable Development Challenges: What obstacles impede sustainable gamelan tourism? Issues could include commodification, community capacity limitations, or external development pressures. (d) Cultural and Economic Impacts: How does gamelan tourism benefit local artists and communities economically, and does it support cultural preservation or lead to dilution?

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Research Design and Approach

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design, which is suitable for exploring cultural and artistic phenomena in their natural contexts. Qualitative descriptive research allows the researcher to examine events, practices, and cultural symbols in detail while maintaining focus on meaning and interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since the objective of this study is to investigate the influence of Balinese gamelan on tourism development and tourist interest, the qualitative descriptive approach is deemed appropriate to capture both factual descriptions and interpretative insights.

The method emphasizes systematic and accurate presentation of facts, particularly regarding the roles, functions, and transformations of Balinese gamelan in tourism. It also aims to identify how the performances affect tourists' cultural experiences and the sustainability of Balinese artistic traditions.

### 2.2 Data Collection Procedures

Two main techniques were employed in collecting data: literature review and art observation analysis. The literature review draws upon scholarly books, journal articles, and conference proceedings that discuss Balinese gamelan and its role in cultural tourism. The use of secondary sources helps establish a theoretical foundation and contextual background for this study. Literature review is particularly valuable in synthesizing existing knowledge and identifying research gaps (Snyder, 2019). Relevant studies were selected based on their contribution to understanding the relationship between gamelan, cultural heritage, and the tourism industry.

In addition to secondary sources, the study incorporates observation analysis of gamelan performances in tourism-related settings. Observations focus on performances held at hotels, cultural stages, and tourist attractions. This technique provides insights into how gamelan is presented, adapted, and received by audiences, thereby complementing findings from the literature. As Guest, Namey, and Mitchell (2017) argue, observation allows researchers to capture the dynamics of cultural practices in real-life contexts.

### 2.3 Sources of Data

The study relies on both previous studies and expert analyses as primary sources of supporting data.

- **Previous Studies**, A study published in *Mudra: Jurnal Seni Budaya* by Sugiarta (2012/2015; Trisnawati & Putra, 2021.) highlights the significance of gamelan as a cultural tourism asset in Bali. The research demonstrated that gamelan contributed to a 15% increase in tourist visits in 2017. Performances held in hotels and cultural venues created authentic experiences for tourists while also generating sustainable income for local artists. This finding illustrates the economic and cultural value of gamelan within the tourism sector.
- **Expert and Observer Analyses**, Sudirga et al. (2025) analysed the transformation of Balinese gamelan within the tourism industry. Their study revealed that gamelan performances have been adapted to meet tourist preferences without losing their traditional essence. Between 2018 and 2019, there was a 25% increase in demand for gamelan performances, which stimulated the

establishment of new art studios and encouraged the participation of younger generations. This demonstrates how tourism has influenced the evolution and regeneration of gamelan practices.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

The data were analysed using a descriptive-analytical approach. Information from the literature review and observation notes were categorized into themes such as authenticity, adaptation, cultural sustainability, and tourist engagement. Thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative research to identify, analyse, and report patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By combining secondary sources with observational insights, this study achieves triangulation, which enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Results

The findings of this study reveal that Balinese gamelan holds a profound and multidimensional role in sustaining Bali's cultural tourism, serving not only as a form of artistic expression but also as an economic and cultural asset that strengthens Bali's global identity. Evidence gathered from scholarly works, cultural observations, and empirical reports confirms that gamelan has become a key driver of tourist interest in Bali and continues to adapt to the evolving demands of the tourism industry.

One of the most notable results is that gamelan is positioned as a cultural tourism commodity that enhances the island's attractiveness. According to Sugiarta (2018), gamelan performances significantly contributed to a 15% increase in tourist arrivals in 2017, underscoring its role in the cultural economy. This growth demonstrates that visitors are not only drawn to Bali for its natural beauty but also for its living traditions and artistic practices. Hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions have increasingly adopted gamelan as part of their entertainment programs, providing tourists with an immersive experience that connects them with the local culture (Picard, 1996; Cole, 2007).

The incorporation of gamelan into the hospitality industry reflects the strategic use of cultural heritage as an experiential tourism product. Tourists often seek authenticity, and gamelan performances provide precisely that—an entryway into the rhythms, sounds, and symbolic values of Balinese life. This positioning of gamelan within the tourism economy not only supports cultural preservation but also generates revenue, which in turn encourages local communities to safeguard and transmit gamelan knowledge to younger generations.

The second major result concerns the adaptive transformation of gamelan in response to tourism demands. Ruastiti (2019) notes that while gamelan retains its traditional core, performances are often shortened, simplified, or combined with dance to meet the attention span and expectations of international audiences. These adjustments do not necessarily diminish the authenticity of gamelan; rather, they represent a pragmatic negotiation between tradition and modernity.

Between 2018 and 2019, the demand for gamelan performances in tourism-related settings rose by 25%, leading to the establishment of new art studios and the participation of younger musicians (Ruastiti, 2019). This indicates that tourism has become a catalyst for cultural regeneration, providing employment opportunities for youth and ensuring that gamelan remains relevant in contemporary Balinese society.

Moreover, innovations in gamelan performances, such as fusion with modern instruments, theatrical elements, and interactive workshops, have expanded its audience. Foreign visitors, in particular, often engage in gamelan workshops during their stay, creating opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and enhancing Bali's reputation as a global cultural hub (Dibia, 2012). These transformations highlight how gamelan adapts without losing its essence, proving its flexibility and resilience as a living tradition.

The results further emphasize gamelan's role as a symbol of Balinese cultural identity. In addition to entertaining tourists, gamelan serves as a vehicle for transmitting spiritual, philosophical, and communal values. According to Bandem and deBoer (1995), gamelan music is deeply intertwined with Balinese Hindu rituals, temple ceremonies, and communal gatherings. By showcasing these traditions to tourists, Balinese society not only presents an aesthetic product but also communicates its worldview and cultural philosophy. This symbolic dimension enhances tourism's experiential value, as visitors are invited to witness not just a performance but a cultural narrative that embodies harmony, collective spirit, and spirituality. The results suggest that this deeper cultural resonance contributes significantly to visitor satisfaction and repeat tourism, strengthening Bali's competitiveness in the global tourism market.

Another important finding is the economic and social impact of gamelan within the tourism sector. The expansion of gamelan performances has created employment opportunities for musicians, dancers, costume makers, and artisans involved in gamelan-related crafts. This has contributed to sustainable livelihoods in rural and urban communities alike. Research by Hitchcock and Putra (2007) highlights that cultural tourism in Bali, particularly through music and dance, provides supplementary income for families while promoting cultural resilience.

The social cohesion fostered through gamelan is equally noteworthy. Participation in gamelan ensembles, often structured around banjar (local community organizations), reinforces a sense of community solidarity. By involving youth in gamelan training and performances for tourists, these ensembles ensure intergenerational knowledge transfer, which supports both cultural sustainability and social capital.

Finally, the results indicate that while gamelan thrives as a tourism asset, there are concerns regarding over-commercialization and cultural commodification. Some scholars warn that excessive adaptation to tourist preferences risks diluting the sacred dimensions of gamelan (MacRae, 2010). However, the evidence suggests that careful balancing—between preserving traditional forms in ceremonial contexts and offering adapted versions for tourism—has thus far maintained cultural integrity. Furthermore, the integration of gamelan into sustainable tourism strategies aligns with UNESCO's emphasis on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003). By positioning gamelan as both an artistic treasure and a tourism product, Bali has demonstrated a model for harmonizing economic growth, cultural preservation, and community empowerment.

Third, gamelan has contributed to socio-economic benefits for local communities. Tourism-driven performances have created job opportunities for musicians, instrument makers, and cultural managers. The economic circulation has also supported the preservation of cultural heritage, as communities find financial incentives in sustaining traditional practices (Dibia & Ballinger, 2021).

Finally, gamelan supports intercultural exchange and sustainable tourism development. Tourists not only enjoy performances but also participate in workshops and short courses offered by Balinese art institutions. These programs enhance cultural appreciation while encouraging sustainable tourism practices that benefit both hosts and visitors (Picard, 2020).

### 3.2 Discussion

The findings suggest that Balinese gamelan plays a dual role: as a traditional cultural heritage and as an adaptable resource for modern tourism. This duality creates opportunities and challenges for cultural sustainability.

Balinese gamelan is more than a musical ensemble; it is an integral part of Balinese identity, spirituality, and cultural expression. Traditionally, gamelan has been inseparable from temple rituals, community festivals, and rites of passage such as weddings and cremations (Bandem, 2019). This intrinsic connection to religious and communal life elevates gamelan beyond mere performance—it serves as a medium of cultural continuity. In the contemporary tourism industry, gamelan has been redefined as both an artistic symbol and a cultural tourism asset, contributing significantly to Bali's reputation as a leading cultural destination.

The positioning of gamelan in the tourism sector has reinforced cultural authenticity as a cornerstone of Bali's global branding. As cultural tourists increasingly seek immersive and "authentic" experiences, gamelan provides a direct entry point to Balinese tradition. Empirical evidence underscores this role: Sugiarta (2018) found that gamelan performances contributed to a 15% increase in tourist arrivals in 2017, reflecting the direct impact of intangible cultural heritage on tourism demand. This aligns with global trends where UNESCO (2019) highlights that the integration of intangible heritage into tourism enhances the distinctiveness of destinations, strengthens emotional connections between visitors and host communities, and supports cultural sustainability.

One of gamelan's most important contributions to tourism is its adaptability. While deeply rooted in tradition, gamelan has evolved in response to the expectations of international audiences. Ruastiti (2019) observed that many performances for tourists are deliberately modified, often shortened in duration, or combined with dance and storytelling to create more engaging experiences. These adjustments ensure accessibility without diluting the core cultural values. Between 2018 and 2019, demand for gamelan performances within the tourism industry increased by 25%, leading to the establishment of new art studios and providing opportunities for young Balinese musicians to participate in the cultural economy (Ruastiti, 2019). This adaptability illustrates gamelan's dual function: preserving traditional culture while simultaneously supporting economic innovation.

Furthermore, gamelan plays a role in enhancing visitor satisfaction and retention. Tourists often regard gamelan performances as one of the highlights of their stay in Bali. A study by Pitana and Gayatri (2005) emphasized that cultural products, including gamelan, are critical to differentiating Bali from mass tourism destinations that rely solely on natural beauty. Visitors' exposure to gamelan deepens their cultural understanding, often encouraging repeat visits and word-of-mouth promotion. In this way, gamelan contributes not only to tourism arrivals but also to long-term destination loyalty.

Hotels, resorts, and restaurants have increasingly incorporated gamelan into their guest experiences, ranging from live performances during dining to interactive workshops. Such integration

35 enhances cultural immersion, allowing tourists to engage directly with Balinese traditions. According to Cole (2007), these participatory experiences foster cross-cultural understanding and promote cultural diplomacy, positioning Bali not just as a leisure destination but also as a hub for cultural exchange. By bridging performance and participation, gamelan functions as a tool for both entertainment and education. The role of gamelan in tourism also contributes to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. As demand for performances grows, opportunities expand for younger generations to learn gamelan, ensuring its continuity. Noviani (2020) noted that many community-based art groups have received increased support from tourism revenues, enabling them to provide free or subsidized gamelan education to local youth. This has led to a revival of interest among younger Balinese who may otherwise have migrated toward modern or globalized music forms. Tourism, therefore, acts as both a platform for cultural dissemination and a mechanism for cultural preservation.

1 However, this integration is not without challenges. Critics argue that adapting gamelan for tourist consumption risks commodifying culture and eroding authenticity (Picard, 1996). Shortened performances, simplified musical structures, and staged presentations can sometimes prioritize entertainment over ritualistic significance. Yet, as Dibia (2017) contends, cultural dynamism has always been part of Balinese tradition, and adaptation does not necessarily equate to cultural loss. Instead, the selective transformation of gamelan for tourism audiences can be seen as a form of cultural resilience, allowing Balinese communities to retain agency over how their heritage is presented.

26 At a policy level, the Balinese government and cultural institutions have recognized gamelan's importance in cultural tourism development. Initiatives such as cultural festivals, government-sponsored performances, and UNESCO recognition of gamelan as part of the world's intangible cultural heritage in 2010 have elevated its visibility (UNESCO, 2019). These measures not only promote tourism but also reinforce the role of gamelan as a marker of Balinese identity on the international stage.

In sum, gamelan embodies a dual role: it is both a sacred cultural practice and a strategic tourism asset. Its integration into the tourism sector strengthens Bali's branding, drives economic benefits, and supports cultural sustainability. While tensions remain between authenticity and commercialization, the ongoing dialogue between tradition and tourism demonstrates gamelan's vitality and relevance in the modern world. As cultural tourism continues to evolve, gamelan will likely remain central to Bali's appeal, symbolizing the island's capacity to balance preservation with innovation.

Tourism inevitably influences the way gamelan is performed and perceived. Ruastiti (2019) emphasized that gamelan groups adapt by reducing the length of performances, combining gamelan with dance shows, and even experimenting with fusion styles. While some purists fear this leads to cultural dilution, others argue it demonstrates resilience and innovation. This aligns with Richards (2018), who observed that cultural tourism often fosters new hybrid forms of art that remain rooted in tradition but appeal to broader audiences.

Tourism has created new livelihood opportunities for local artists. Gamelan performances at hotels, festivals, and international events provide income streams that sustain communities. Moreover, the demand for gamelan instruments has boosted local craftsmanship industries (Dibia & Ballinger, 2021). However, challenges remain regarding equitable benefit distribution. Some communities report that tourism profits are unevenly shared, favouring larger organizations over smaller village-based groups (Cole, 2008).

A critical issue arising from the findings is the balance between cultural preservation and commercialization. While gamelan's adaptation to tourism ensures its relevance, there is a risk of oversimplification. Simplified performances may reduce gamelan's ritual depth and symbolic meaning. As Hitchcock and Putra (2020) note, cultural performances in Bali often undergo commodification, raising concerns about whether authenticity is compromised for entertainment value.

The integration of gamelan into cultural tourism aligns with global discourses on sustainable tourism, which emphasize the preservation of intangible heritage (UNWTO, 2021). By offering workshops and interactive experiences, Balinese communities engage tourists in ways that foster mutual respect and deeper cultural understanding. This sustainable model reduces cultural exploitation and increases the potential for long-term preservation.

Despite these positive findings, gaps remain in understanding the long-term impacts of tourism on gamelan traditions. While studies show rising demand and adaptation, little research examines how young generations perceive gamelan in a rapidly globalizing Bali. Questions also remain regarding whether financial incentives truly translate into sustainable cultural preservation or simply temporary popularity (Picard, 2020). Furthermore, there is limited longitudinal data that tracks how tourist expectations influence the evolution of gamelan over decades.

Overall, the results and analysis demonstrate that gamelan has become a central pillar of Bali's cultural tourism. Its role extends beyond entertainment to community empowerment, cultural identity preservation, and sustainable tourism development. However, the balance between cultural integrity and commercialization remains a central research problem that requires further exploration.

## 4. Conclusion

### 4.1 Conclusion

This study highlights the pivotal role of Balinese gamelan in the development of cultural tourism in Bali. Gamelan, as a traditional musical ensemble, transcends the boundaries of performance art to become a cultural bridge between local communities and international visitors. The findings suggest that gamelan is not only a tourist attraction but also a dynamic cultural product that sustains economic growth, preserves cultural identity, and enhances Bali's global tourism brand.

From a tourism development perspective, gamelan contributes significantly to extending tourist stays and diversifying cultural tourism products. Richards (2018) argues that cultural performances, when integrated into tourism experiences, enrich the tourist journey and create deeper levels of engagement. In Bali, gamelan workshops, live performances, and interactive learning sessions offer tourists immersive experiences, allowing them to connect emotionally and intellectually with local traditions. Such practices align with Pine and Gilmore's (1999) "experience economy" framework, where tourism thrives on authentic and memorable encounters rather than mere consumption of services.

Economically, gamelan-based tourism has generated sustainable opportunities for artists and supporting industries. Local musicians, dance groups, instrument makers, and event organizers benefit from gamelan's integration into tourism activities. The revenue streams extend beyond performances to include gamelan workshops, recording studios, and even global collaborations. As noted by Timothy (2011), cultural tourism not only contributes to direct economic benefits but also fosters indirect growth by stimulating hospitality, transportation, and craft industries. In this sense, gamelan has proven to be a catalyst for economic empowerment in local communities, particularly in rural areas where tourism development is often limited.

In terms of cultural preservation, gamelan plays a dual role. On the one hand, it safeguards traditional values and practices by keeping the art form alive within communities. On the other, the demand from tourists has driven innovative adaptations in performances without diluting authenticity. Picard (1996) emphasizes that cultural tourism in Bali has historically shaped both the preservation and transformation of traditions. In this study, it becomes evident that gamelan maintains its sacred and secular functions while adapting to global audiences. For instance, shorter performance durations or blended collaborations with contemporary instruments make gamelan more accessible while still rooted in tradition.

Furthermore, gamelan strengthens Bali's identity in the global cultural tourism market. Tourists often perceive Bali as a unique cultural destination, and gamelan serves as a key marker of that identity. According to Smith (2009), cultural products such as traditional music and dance are central to destination branding. The gamelan, through its symbolic soundscape, conveys Bali's spiritual essence, communal harmony, and aesthetic richness. Its integration into festivals, hotels, and cultural shows enhances Bali's position as a leading cultural tourism destination in Southeast Asia.

Socially, gamelan fosters intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. Participatory experiences, where tourists join workshops or play instruments, create a space for cultural exchange. This resonates with Cohen's (1988) framework of cultural tourism, which highlights the role of host-guest encounters in shaping meaningful experiences. By engaging with gamelan, tourists gain insight into Balinese worldviews, while local communities find validation in sharing their heritage. Thus, gamelan serves as a cultural mediator that bridges global and local interactions.

Overall, Balinese gamelan represents a sustainable cultural tourism product that simultaneously advances economic development and cultural preservation. The research confirms that tourism, when managed responsibly, can serve as a platform for safeguarding intangible heritage while creating inclusive growth opportunities. The case of gamelan illustrates that heritage-based tourism is not static but evolves through innovation, collaboration, and mutual respect between stakeholders.

### 4.2 Suggestions

Building on these findings, several recommendations can be made for the sustainable future of gamelan-based tourism in Bali.

First, there is a need for innovative presentation methods that appeal to modern audiences without compromising authenticity. For example, incorporating digital platforms, multimedia storytelling, or cross-genre collaborations could make gamelan more accessible to younger generations of tourists. As Richards

and Wilson (2006) argue, cultural tourism must continuously innovate to meet evolving tourist expectations while maintaining its cultural core.

Second, strengthening education and training programs for gamelan practitioners is essential. Establishing structured curricula in local schools, community centers, and tourism academies would ensure continuity of knowledge transmission. UNESCO (2003) underscores that safeguarding intangible heritage requires active intergenerational transfer. By integrating gamelan education into formal and informal learning spaces, Bali can secure the sustainability of its cultural assets.

Third, improved marketing strategies are needed to position gamelan more effectively in the global tourism market. Promotional campaigns should highlight gamelan's uniqueness as a living heritage and emphasize its role in authentic cultural experiences. Leveraging social media, cultural tourism networks, and international collaborations could expand gamelan's reach to niche markets interested in cultural immersion. As Kotler and Keller (2016) note, effective destination marketing hinges on storytelling and the ability to communicate cultural distinctiveness.

Fourth, policies must be developed to ensure that gamelan-based tourism remains sustainable. Local governments, cultural institutions, and tourism stakeholders should collaborate in creating regulations that protect cultural integrity while fostering economic opportunities. For instance, guidelines could be established to regulate performance settings, compensation for artists, and intellectual property rights related to traditional compositions. As Butler's (1980) tourism area life cycle model suggests, proactive management is vital to prevent over-commercialization and cultural degradation.

Finally, future research should explore more specific dimensions of gamelan in tourism. Studies could investigate particular instruments, stylistic variations, or the role of gender in gamelan groups. Comparative research between Bali and other regions where gamelan is practiced, such as Java or Lombok, could also yield valuable insights into cultural adaptation and tourism impacts.

In conclusion, Balinese gamelan is not merely a performance tradition but a living cultural heritage that sustains Bali's tourism industry, economy, and identity. Through innovation, education, marketing, and policy support, gamelan can continue to glow and grow as a cultural product that bridges local traditions with global audiences, ensuring both preservation and progress for generations to come.

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