



# THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (A CASE STUDY IN UBUD, GIANYAR REGENCY, BALI)

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## Abstract

*Ubud, one of two sub-districts in Gianyar Regency, Bali, has been designated as a Tourism Area under the Regional Regulation of Bali Province. However, it is facing significant environmental challenges. It is of the utmost importance to address these issues in order to achieve sustainable tourism. The government is pivotal in establishing an environment conducive to the growth and sustainability of the tourism industry. This study empirically examines the role of the Ubud government in supporting sustainable tourism. A qualitative approach was employed, incorporating triangulation in the data collection process. Techniques such as interviews, observations, field notes, document analysis, and a literature review were used, and the data was analysed using thematic analysis. The findings suggest that the local government has implemented a top-down management system for sustainable tourism, with its roles encompassing public infrastructure acquirer, strategic collaborator, policy regulator, and security and safety maintenance.*

**Keywords:** *Fieldwork, Government role, Sustainable Development, Sustainable Tourism, Ubud*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of sustainable tourism policies has become increasingly urgent as Indonesia strives to achieve its 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in key tourism destinations such as Ubud, Bali. In line with this effort, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy introduced the Minister of

Tourism Regulation Number 14 of 2016, which provides comprehensive guidelines for the development of sustainable tourism destinations. While Ubud has made significant progress in implementing these guidelines, the rapid growth of tourism continues to pose challenges. Some initiatives have successfully addressed aspects of sustainability, including the promotion of environmentally friendly practices and the empowerment of local businesses. However, increasing tourism pressures and environmental concerns in regions such as Ubud highlight the need for a critical assessment of the effectiveness of these policies. This study seeks to empirically evaluate the implementation and impact of these policies in Ubud, focusing on how they contribute to Indonesia's broader sustainability goals, with particular emphasis on the role of local government in promoting sustainable tourism practices.

Ubud is one of two sub-districts in Gianyar Regency, Bali which is designated as a Tourism Area based on Regional Regulation of Bali Province Article 25 Year 2005 (Pemerintah Provinsi Bali, 2005). The planning and implementation of Ubud as a sustainable tourist destination has contradictory effects on the region. On one hand, Ubud's popularity as a sustainable tourism destination is representative of the government's successful promotion of the area. On the other hand, the region is facing environmental degradation (Ina, 2023; Lennon, 2018), traffic congestion (Raharjo et al., 2022; Suardana, 2019), and socio-cultural issues. In this article we argue that these issues are due to the inadequacy of the government in addressing the implication of Ubud increasing tourism activities. The aim of this research is to empirically examine the extent of local government involvement in implementing sustainable tourism in Ubud, a popular sustainable tourism destination, amidst growing overtourism activities (Pusparisa, 2024).

Sustainable tourism is defined as tourism activities that provide long-term economic, social, and cultural benefits without harming the environment (Kurniawati, 2013). The government plays a crucial role in creating a conducive environment for the growth and sustainability of the tourism industry (Safitri et al., 2023). Recognised as one of Bali's sustainable tourism destinations, the Tri Hita Karana philosophy has a significant influence on the implementation of sustainability in the region. The practice of sustainable tourism in Bali is further strengthened by the government policy such as developing the region as part of tourism strategic areas. The ULAPAN National Tourism Strategic Area (Ubud, Tegalalang, and Payangan) Master Plan or Integrated Master Plan, published by the Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas in 2021, serves as an example (Kementerian PPN/BAPPENAS, 2021). Regardless of these active involvement, negative impacts of tourism remain observed in Bali (Pusparisa, 2024).

Ubud has significant potential for sustainable tourism. Ubud is a village and sub-district located within the administrative area of Gianyar Regency. Ubud's nature, social, customs, cultural and environmental characteristics provide many tourist attractions. Some popular sustainable tourist destinations in the region include the Monkey Forest Area, Ubud Agung Palace, and Ubud Art Market. Nevertheless, potential negative impacts of sustainable tourism observed in Ubud. Given the abundance of tourism-related activities in the region, the article's research question is: What are the government's roles and responsibilities in regard to sustainable tourism?

Byrd (2007) explains that tourism has both positive and negative impacts on society, the economy, and the environment. One particular case in this regard is Ubud region. Sitohang & Purnomo (2023) argue that sustainable tourism in Ubud has two sides. Specifically, there are environmental concerns such as waste pollution and the gap between the local community and the condition of the tourist destination (Benge

& Neef, 2018; Chong, 2020). It could be said that the sustainable development of tourism is a compound issue because of these impacts.

Sustainable tourism has long been a concern in the planning of tourist destinations, as well as in regional and national policies (Widari, 2020). Sustainable tourism is a process and system of tourism development that aims to ensure the long-term sustainability of natural resources, socio-cultural aspects, and economic life for future generations (Streimikiene et al., 2021). Sustainable tourism involves the development of tourism that caters to the needs of tourists while also taking into account environmental sustainability and providing benefits both in the present and the future (Lyon et al., 2017; Streimikiene et al., 2021). The government's role in facilitating the success of sustainable tourism development is inevitable.

A number of studies recognise the crucial role of government in sustainable tourism. Widiati & Permatasari (2022) emphasise the crucial role of the government in supporting sustainable tourism development strategies. This role includes maintaining a long-term balance between environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects, as well as playing a strategic role in tourism development. The government role ranging from policy formulation in the national level to the policy implementation in the local level. According to (Dewi et al., 2021), the government has four roles including facilitator, planner, evaluator, and implementer. We argue that these roles are compatible with four crucial areas of the government in the tourism industry. Putra (2020) elaborates the four main areas of tourism fall under government responsibility are tourism development, which includes the acquisition of public infrastructure and acting as a guarantor and regulator of investors; tourism planning, which includes economic planning, land use, infrastructure, social services and security; and tourism strategy. Regarding tourism strategy, the government implements long-term plans that address the objectives of tourism development, including political relations, economic factors, and employment prospects. Additionally, the government is responsible for ensuring the safety of visitors by enforcing laws related to food safety, fire safety, protection, and the competency requirements for tourism workers.

Kusumawardhana (2023) argues that sustainable tourism development can be facilitated by the government's involvement as a tourism stakeholder. The government can collaborate with the private sector, tourists, and other stakeholders to address sustainability issues. Like elsewhere in Bali, the government actively encourage and implement the Tri Hita Karana concept to achieve development in line with overall expectations. This approach can help to minimize negative impacts on the environment and empower communities in tourism development. As stakeholder, the government may enhance the quality of human resources by providing training and technical guidance on managing tourist attractions and supporting craft businesses run by local communities. In this case, the government involves the community in sustainable tourism development by providing various facilities and accessibility, offering training and outreach, forming a Tourism Awareness Group (*POKDARWIS*), and engaging stakeholders (Safitri et al., 2023). Conversely, Padabain & Nugroho (2018) expounds that for sustainable tourism, the government must have coherent management from the top to the bottom, from the Ministry of Tourism to the *Pokdarwis* in all the *banjars*. The government's carrying capacity can serve as a crucial factor in ensuring positive impacts from tourism. The policies implemented by the government on the ground reflect its carrying capacity. The success or failure of government policies depends on the complexity of the organization and the parties involved (Pratiwi et al., 2019).

Sustainable tourism development involves several aspects, including environmental, economic, and socio-cultural considerations. Governments play a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism through their role in facilitating, planning, evaluating and implementing. This is reflected in the management of existing tourist attractions. The government's management system for achieving sustainable tourism must be coherent from top to bottom, also known as a 'top-down' approach, with a flow of information from the highest authority, such as the Ministry of Tourism, to the lowest, such as village officials. Having discussed the role of government in sustainable tourism, it is noted that the role of government in supporting sustainable tourism is that the government is associated with policy regulator, public infrastructure acquisition, strategic collaborator, as well as safety and security maintenance.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODS**

The study employed a qualitative approach, incorporating triangulation in the data collection process. As defined by Abdussamad (2021), triangulation constitutes a data collection technique that combines diverse methods and data sources with the objective of enhancing credibility. Triangulation serves to enhance the credibility of the data by cross-checking it with multiple data collection techniques and sources. The qualitative triangulation techniques employed in this research comprise interviews, observations, field notes, document analysis and a literature review. A semi-structured interview format was employed, with a pre-determined set of questions. The research team conducted direct observations of tourist destinations in Ubud, with a particular focus on waste management, contributions from local institutions, and local government programs. The documentation collected includes information from government-published sources, such as posters, banners, and information boards, which help to address the potential limitations that may arise from relying solely on interviews.

The study employed convenience sampling, a technique whereby individuals who happen to meet the researcher are selected as participants if they are deemed suitable (Miles et al., 2014). The selected individuals were then designated as key informants or sources. The participants in this study included the tourist managers, the proprietor of a homestay in Ubud and a security personnel. Data processing techniques involved data editing, which, according to Tika (2005), is the process of reviewing collected data to assess its quality and relevance for further analysis. This research focused on the relevance of key informants' responses regarding the government's role in sustainable tourism, cross-referenced with field observations.

On the basis of the consistency of the data, the thematic analysis was established. The results of the analysis were compared and discussed to resolve any discrepancies until a consensus was reached (Liu & Li, 2021). The analysis carried out is a theme analysis on the role of the government in promoting and implementing sustainable tourism in Ubud. The initial coding process identifies references to key aspects, including knowledge of sustainable tourism, stakeholder engagement, the government's role in sustainable tourism, and the implementation of government-led initiatives. Subsequently, the codes are grouped into specific themes reflecting on the government roles as defined by Dewi et al., (2021), including facilitator, planner, evaluator, and implementer. The researchers then refine and review these themes to ensure consistency with the research objectives. Consequently, theme analysis is categorized as public infrastructure acquirer, strategic collaborator, policy regulator, and safety maintenance. Each theme is defined according to the existing government programs and the purpose of the program, clearly explaining how it reflects government policies and practices in Ubud. Finally, the themes are presented in the analysis table that provides

insights into the comprehensiveness of government efforts to achieve sustainable tourism, highlighting the ongoing programs in Ubud touristic destination areas.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ubud Village is an area with a variety of tourist destinations that combine natural, social, customary and cultural (MacRae, 2016), art (Dunbar-Hall, 2003), and environmental attractions. The tourism industry in Ubud is managed in a structured manner, with development programs that incorporate local wisdom. Ubud applies the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana, which consists of three relationships that need to be managed properly: the relationship between humans and God or the spiritual world (*parahyangan*), the relationship between humans (*pawongan*), and the relationship between humans and their environment (*palemahan*). The philosophy emphasises the importance of managing these relationships in a balanced and harmonious way.

Tourism in Ubud is an international standard tourist destination, this is evidenced by the large number of foreign tourists visiting Ubud. In this study, the foreign tourists are defined as visitors who travel outside the country as indicated by crossing national borders, languages, and fulfilling various documents such as passports and visas. Tourists visiting Ubud have diverse purposes such as to fill spare time because it can refresh one's physical and mental. For recreation as well as a means of education and travel for business purposes. Tourism activities in Ubud have the potential to have a negative impact on the environment. Related to this, it needs the role of all parties, especially the role of the government in preserving tourism and the environment. The Ubud government has implemented various policies that support sustainable tourism. In this study, we identified several ways in which the government supports sustainable tourism during our fieldwork.

Government plays a crucial role in developing sustainable tourism, with a systematic approach that follows a top-down structure. The government has implemented a top-down approach, meaning decisions are made at the highest level and trickle down to lower levels. This study specifically refers to this government tiers at which this approach is employed. This refers to the levels of government, which include ministries, provincial governments, district/city governments, sub-districts, and villages. At the lowest level are the villages or *kelurahan*. This study highlights the role of the Ubud government in implementing government programs directly in the field, particularly in sustainable tourism development. The government supports this strategy by focusing on environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects (Widiati & Permatasari, 2022). The study also covers the government's involvement in transportation program, environmental management, and the security of tourist destinations.

On the basis of the data collected, it was found that the government has a crucial role to play in sustainable tourism. In the next section we will look at the role of the government in this.

#### 3.1 Policy Regulator

This section contains a discussion of the research data that has been presented. Related to the environment, the Ubud government plays a role in integrated waste management. The Ubud government implements a policy by requiring the community to sort waste according to its type before being transported by officers. This sorting aims to facilitate waste processing so that waste can be utilized. Inorganic waste such as used bottles can be recycled and organic waste from households can be processed into compost. With this, waste can be controlled so that it can avoid waste pollution that can

damage the environment. According to the interview results, it can be inferred that the government is committed to protecting the environment by implementing waste processing policies. As stated by our interviewee,

*'The village has the responsibility to independently sort the waste, and later a transport fleet will be provided by the local government (Mr. D, 2023).*

Mr D's explanation represents the community's compliance with the local government policy in Ubud. The government has implemented a waste sorting policy that requires households and restaurants to sort their waste according to its type. Waste is then collected by officers, and the best waste sorters are rewarded. Additionally, the government has established BUMDes (village-owned enterprises) to support sustainable tourism and strengthen the community's economy.

Regarding the government's role in waste management, the government also acts as a waste management service provider in Ubud Village. Literally waste is waste generated from a production process both domestic (household) and industrial. The volume of waste produced is also equivalent to the level of public consumption of materials used in daily life. Waste management is a form of government service that aims to facilitate, develop, carry out the handling and utilization of waste. This is as conveyed by Mr. D, as follows.

*"...The obligation of the village is to sort the waste independently, later there will be a transportation fleet from the village. If the waste is not sorted, they will not transport it and are given the words 'garbage is not transported because it is not sorted' This is the punishment, the reward if there are certain events will be given this reward is the best waste sorter..." (Mr. D, 2023)*

Based on Mr. D's statement, the government requires all communities to sort waste based on organic and inorganic waste categories before throwing it into the trash. Then the government also gave awards in the form of *rewards* to the best waste sorters. Figure 1 depicts dumpsters that serve as receptacles for both organic and inorganic waste in front of the community residence in Ubud.



Figure 1. Private garbage sorting site  
Source: (field observation, 2023)

### 3.2 Public infrastructure acquirer

In terms of public infrastructure acquirer, the government of Ubud played an important role in providing the Electric-based Transportation. This electric based

transportation has been implemented in the form of SMART shuttle bus program for tourists visiting the arts and culture capital of Bali. The government provides the shuttle as a means of transport for tourists and the general public. The aim of the program is reducing congestion and facilitating mobility between destinations. Tourists can access information on how to use the SMART Shuttle online or on banner boards located at each tourist destination. This transportation option can help reduce air pollution by decreasing the use of private vehicles. The Smart Shuttle Ubud is an on-demand shared shuttle service application introduced by the Toyota Mobility Foundation, which enables residents and tourists to travel around Ubud, Bali. This service is part of the Sustainable Mobility Advancing Real Transformation (SMART) program. During our field observation, we discovered that a shuttle service is available through the SMART Shuttle Ubud app. The app can be downloaded from the Apple, Google, and Huawei app stores. Currently, the service is free for a trial period from November 2023 until April 2024, after which it will become chargeable.

We observed three tourist destinations in Ubud Village: Monkey Forest, Puri Ubud Agung, and Ubud Art Market. Information boards regarding SMART Shuttle are present in all destinations, indicating the availability of the bus for all. The service can be utilized by the community to alleviate traffic congestion and reduce air pollution.



Figure 2. SMART Shuttle Information Board  
Source: (field observation, 2023)

Figure 1. shows the SMART Shuttle routes in the Ubud area. There are 21 pick-up and drop off locations in downtown Ubud. All locations have been strategically selected and are within a 10-minute walk of Ubud's most popular attractions, from historical sites to markets, shops, cafes and accommodation centres. Pick up and drop off locations are as follows: Pura Dalem Peliatan (Main Bus Exchange) – Ubud District Office – Lan Puseh Village Temple – Cafe on Jalan Hanoman – Monkey Forest Entrance – Cafe on Jalan Monkey Forest – Cafe at Monkey Forest Street 2 – Astina Field – Ubud Art Market Building. The route continues to Puri Dalem Ubud Temple – Cafe on Jalan Raya Ubud – Bintang Supermarket – Cafe on Jalan Raya Ubud 2 – Neka Art Museum – Ubud Park – Tjampuhan Hotel (Penestanan Staircase access) – Puri Lukisan Museum – Taman Kaja Village Temple – Hotel on Jalan Sri Wedari – Ubud High School – Ubud Central Parking.

### 3.3 Strategic collaborator

In sustainable tourism in Ubud Village, the role of the government finds vital support through the existence of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes – Badan Usaha Milik Desa) in each village. This information was obtained from resource persons who provided explanations about how BUMDes are expected to be the main pillar in improving the economy of rural communities. The main goal is to provide villages in Ubud Village with independence in managing village finances, so that they can have a positive impact on sustainable tourism development. The active role carried out by village institutions, as conveyed by D, is as follows.

*"... To strengthen the village, every village under the village must have BUMDes (Village-Owned Enterprises) that can strengthen the community's economy..."*  
(Mr. D, 2023)

Based on the information of our informant, the government's role in sustainable tourism is supported by the existence of BUMDes (Village-Owned Enterprises) in every village in Ubud Village. The existence of BUMDes here is expected to fully contribute to improving the economy of rural communities, so that villages have independence in managing village finances.

The contribution of BUMDes (Village-Owned Enterprises) to the development of tourism in Ubud can be observed through the various activities and projects they have undertaken. For instance, BUMDes have played a significant role in the development of creative products, such as arts and cultural crafts, which have had a positive impact on the regional economic growth.



Figure 3. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Ubud Art Market  
Source: (field observation, 2023)

Figure 3 displays an example of handicrafts marketed at Ubud Art Market. Our informant reports that BUMDes aid in marketing local products, including traditional culinary products and handicrafts, to both local and international markets. Furthermore, BUMDes in Ubud manage sustainable tourism in the village, which includes homestays, traditional culinary experiences, handicrafts, and more.



Furthermore, in Ubud Village, the local government has established the Bina Wisata Foundation. This foundation collaborates with private transportation companies, such as Gojek, to enhance the tourism experience in the area. The foundation also supports the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that can directly benefit from the influx of tourists.

According to our informant, the local government's role is associated with technical training or coaching, which the government applies through the existence of BUMDes (Village-Owned Enterprises) and the Bina Wisata Foundation. As the driving force behind tourism, the villages need to be economically strong. BUMDES was created to strengthen economic aspects of villages and communities. It is hoped that both the government and the community will benefit from this BUMDES in a positive way. The Ubud government also has the Bina Wisata Foundation, which is a partnership between the government and the private sector. This is a partnership between the government and the private sector for the development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). One of its partners is Gojek, a transport company that facilitates direct links between business owners and tourists, thereby supporting the growth of MSMEs.



Figure 4. Bina Wisata Foundation banner  
Source: field observation, 2023

Figure 4 shows the Bima Wisata Foundation as an extension of government roles in collaboration with the local community to promote an eco-friendly transportation system in Ubud. Gonsalves (1987) notes the existence of Bina Wisata, a tourism guidance program run by volunteers with the objective of preserving Ubud and its culture. The organization operates a small information centre on Ubud's main street, where visitors can purchase cards. The partnership between the Bina Wisata Foundation and the local government in Ubud demonstrates Ubud's long-standing commitment to sustainability.

### 3.4 Security and Safety Maintenance

The government's efforts towards achieving sustainable development also encompass the welfare and security of animals. A policy is posted at the entrance to guide visitors to the Monkey Forest tourist attraction. The guideline requests visitors not to feed the monkeys in order to maintain their health.

Ultimately, governments have an important role to play in achieving sustainable tourism, including ensuring the security of visitors. The security personnel contribute to promoting sustainable tourism by dealing with troublesome tourists and providing 24-hour security. This has impacted the sense of safety and security of tourists in Ubud.

Table 1 summarises the programmes implemented by the local government as identified and observed in the field. The programmes implemented by the local government as identified and observed in the field. The government's role in supporting sustainable tourism in Ubud includes providing electric-based transportation for both tourists and the public, collaborating with community initiatives, implementing policies that extend beyond the environment to protect animal welfare in tourist destinations, and ensuring tourist security.

Table 1. Local government programs in supporting sustainable tourism

No	Theme Analysis	The government programmes	The purpose of the programmes
1.	Public infrastructure Acquisitor	Electric-based transportation.  SMART Shuttle Ubud or <i>Sustainable Mobility Advancing Real Transformation</i> (SMART)	is provided by the government for the mobility of tourists to tourist attractions in Ubud for free  to overcome congestion and prevent air pollution.
2.	Strategic collaborator	Collaboration with Village Institutions Bina Wisata Foundation	is formed by Ubud Village, where this Foundation collaborates with private parties for example (Gojek) engaged in transportation in Ubud tourism, thus making Ubud the best destination for solo travellers  to support the development of MSMEs that can be directly connected to tourists through Gojek.
3.	Policy regulator	Taking Care of Animal Welfare through providing a clear <i>Guideline</i> in Monkey Forest	contains an appeal not to feed the monkeys that are there, this aims to maintain the health of the apes.  to maintain the preservation of macaques and maintain the safety of tourists.
4.	Safety Maintenance	Maintaining tourists' security	Help deal with troubling travellers, and take turns with 24-hour security.  to foster a peaceful and safe area so that people and tourists feel comfortable.

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Source : Data Analysis, 2023

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Tourism in Ubud has an unavoidable negative impact on the environment. Sustainable tourism requires the involvement of all parties, particularly the government, in preserving both the tourism industry and the environment. The study's findings demonstrate the government's role in supporting sustainable tourism in Ubud village.

The study concludes that the government of Ubud actively supports sustainable tourism through various policies that promote tourism while prioritising environmental sustainability. These policies apply to all forms of tourism activities and are designed to ensure sustainability in the long term. The sustainable tourism development strategy in Bali is based on environmental considerations and follows the Tri Hita Karana principle, which takes into account socio-cultural, economic, and environmental sustainability aspects. The government's approach to sustainable tourism in Ubud is characterized by a top-down management system, with decisions flowing from the highest to the lowest levels of the government hierarchy. At the bottom level, government policy is implemented by requiring the community to sort waste, creating village-owned businesses that are managed by the community, and providing transport facilities that can be used by tourists. In addition to the active role of the Ubud government in implementing various policies that support sustainable tourism, community participation is necessary. The local community contributes directly to supporting sustainable tourism development. Therefore, the government must involve them from the start. This means that they should be involved in the planning process of tourism development right through to the management, monitoring and evaluation process. So that people can understand the program well and develop a sense of ownership of the program.

Two recommendations are made based on the study's findings: one is pragmatic and the other is academic. Pragmatically, the study's conclusions reinforce the proactive role that local government can play in promoting sustainable tourism practices. However, it is noteworthy that the role of other tourism stakeholders is not considered in this article. Therefore, it is recommended by academics that more research be done to examine the roles of other tourism stakeholders, such as the community and destination managers.

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