# Understanding the Tourism Area Life Cycle and Sustainability Perceptions in the Rural Destination of Kintamani, Bali

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Article History	Abstract
	This study examines the dynamics of tourism development and sustainability perceptions in Kintamani, Bali, using the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model. Kintamani, a rural highland destination, has experienced rapid growth in tourism activities, from mass visitation to niche experiences such as glamping and coffee tourism. Despite its popularity, limited research addresses its current life cycle stage and visitors' sustainability views. A mixed-method approach was applied, combining surveys of 100 domestic and international tourists with in-depth interviews involving six key stakeholders, including local business owners, community leaders, and government representatives. Findings reveal that Kintamani is transitioning from the development to consolidation stage, marked by increasing infrastructural pressures and socio-environmental challenges. While visitors value the area's natural and cultural assets, they express concerns over waste management and overcrowding. The integration of TALC and sustainability perceptions offers a framework for adaptive destination in rural Bali.
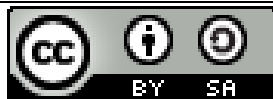
INTRODUCTION

Tourism destinations, particularly in rural settings, are undergoing rapid transformations driven by growing visitor demands, changing market preferences, and increasing sustainability challenges. Rural areas often represent unique cultural and natural landscapes that attract diverse tourism markets, yet they face significant environmental pressures, infrastructure limitations, and unequal distribution of benefits. Understanding how these destinations evolve and respond to changing dynamics is essential for informing sustainable tourism policies, especially in developing economies.

Bali, Indonesia, is one of the world's most prominent tourism regions, but its development has been uneven across areas. While coastal zones such as Kuta, Seminyak, and Nusa Dua are characterized by mass tourism, upland areas like Kintamani represent a contrasting rural landscape where volcanic scenery, cultural heritage, and emerging niche tourism coexist. In recent years, Kintamani has experienced a rapid rise in visitation alongside the expansion of glamping, coffee tourism, and agritourism experiences. These shifts have intensified concerns related to carrying capacity, waste management, landscape degradation, and the preservation of local cultural identity.

Kintamani represents a particularly unique case study for examining tourism evolution and sustainability in Bali due to its dual designation as both a major volcanic landscape attraction and a UNESCO Global Geopark. Unlike coastal destinations with relatively unified administrative structures, Kintamani is governed through overlapping authorities, including the Geopark Management Board, the Bangli Regency Tourism Office, traditional villages, and community-based organizations. This multi-layered governance arrangement produces complex interactions shaping visitor management, environmental protection, and tourism product development. The destination's simultaneous exposure to mass tourism flows and rapidly expanding niche markets makes it an ideal setting to assess whether classical Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) assumptions adequately capture contemporary rural tourism dynamics.

Comparable transformations in rural Bali have been documented by recent scholarship. Arida, Saputra, and Sanjiwani (2025) highlight community capacity constraints, digital readiness issues, and political influences affecting rural tourism governance, while Saputra and Pitanatri (2023) emphasize the role of digital acceptance and resilience in shaping rural destination performance. Meanwhile, studies on the Batur UNESCO Global Geopark indicate rising concerns about infrastructure strain, environmental impacts, and cultural integrity. However, few studies have systematically connected these sustainability concerns with the evolutionary trajectory of a rural destination within the TALC framework.

The Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model (Butler, 1980) remains one of the most widely applied frameworks for assessing destination evolution, tracing stages from exploration to potential stagnation or decline. Applying TALC to Kintamani enables an examination of how tourism growth intersects with socio-environmental pressures and governance complexity. While prior studies emphasize the need to manage transitions to prevent ecological and social degradation (Agarwal, 2002; Lane & Kastenholz, 2015), the current stage of Kintamani within the TALC cycle remains empirically underexplored, particularly in relation to visitor sustainability perceptions.

Kintamani's ongoing transition from mass sightseeing tourism, dominated by panoramic views of Mount Batur, to niche tourism segments such as glamping, coffee tourism, and agritourism further necessitates evaluating TALC and sustainability perceptions concurrently. These niche markets often disrupt linear assumptions of the traditional TALC model, creating accelerated growth paths, parallel sub-markets, or heightened environmental pressures. Integrating sustainability perceptions, therefore provides a more nuanced assessment of whether Kintamani's current development aligns with principles of ecological resilience and long-term destination viability.

This study explicitly contributes to the literature by integrating the TALC framework with tourists' sustainability perceptions, an analytical combination rarely applied in rural Asian destinations. While TALC offers a structural understanding of destination evolution, sustainability perceptions reflect how tourists evaluate environmental quality, cultural authenticity, and governance effectiveness. By examining these dimensions simultaneously, the study advances a more comprehensive understanding of rural tourism dynamics and challenges the classical assumptions of TALC in rapidly diversifying destinations such as Kintamani. This study aims to identify Kintamani's current position within the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) and to assess both tourist and stakeholder perceptions of sustainability. By

integrating TALC with community-based governance perspectives, the study provides a conceptual bridge that links destination evolution with socio-environmental accountability in rural tourism settings.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to analyze tourism development and sustainability perceptions in Kintamani, Bali. A structured survey was used to collect quantitative data from tourists, while semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders to capture qualitative insights. This approach enables a deeper understanding of both visitor perceptions and local governance dynamics within the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) framework.

2.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in Kintamani sub-district, a rural highland region in Bangli Regency, Bali, Indonesia. The area is renowned for its scenic volcanic landscapes, coffee plantations, and emerging niche tourism activities such as glamping and agritourism. Over the last decade, Kintamani has experienced rapid tourism growth, creating opportunities for rural economic development while posing challenges related to environmental management, cultural preservation, and infrastructure pressures.

2.2 Data Collection
a. Tourist Survey

A structured questionnaire was distributed to 100 tourists (52 domestic and 48 international) visiting Kintamani between March and May 2025. The survey captured information on respondent demographics, travel behavior, perceptions of environmental quality, cultural authenticity, and tourism services, as well as their views on Kintamani's position within the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) framework and attitudes toward sustainability and destination governance. Data were collected using both on-site distribution and digital forms to ensure broader reach and response diversity.

b. Stakeholder Interviews

Six key stakeholders were selected through purposive sampling to ensure balanced representation of the institutional, community, and business actors shaping tourism development in Kintamani. This approach allows the study to capture multi-level perspectives that are essential for assessing the destination's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) stage and sustainability issues. The first informant was an official from the Bangli Regency Tourism Office, providing insights on tourism policy, regulatory enforcement, and government responses to environmental and infrastructural pressures. The second was the owner of a major glamping and coffee enterprise, representing private-sector investment, niche tourism expansion, and product innovation. A third stakeholder, the manager of a community-based tourism group (Pokdarwis), contributed perspectives on community participation, benefit-sharing, and local governance practices.

The fourth informant, a traditional village leader (Kelian Adat), offered views on cultural governance, land-use decisions, and the role of customary institutions in maintaining sociocultural sustainability. The fifth stakeholder was a small coffee shop operator representing SMEs involved in everyday visitor interactions and emerging coffee tourism. Finally, a local tour operator provided frontline insights into visitor flows, operational challenges, and on-site sustainability concerns. Together, these six stakeholders represent the key governance, cultural, business, and operational dimensions that influence Kintamani's tourism trajectory. Their combined perspectives strengthen the study's ability to evaluate TALC progression and sustainability challenges through a comprehensive, multi-actor lens.

2.3 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation to identify patterns in tourist demographics and perceptions of sustainability. Qualitative interview data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic coding to uncover common themes and insights from stakeholders. The findings from both datasets were integrated to triangulate results and enhance validity.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study uses the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model (Butler, 1980) as its main theoretical foundation. TALC explains how destinations evolve through different stages of tourism development and provides a framework to evaluate Kintamani's current position within this cycle. By combining TALC with sustainability perception studies, the research explores the interplay between tourism growth, socio-environmental pressures, and community involvement in destination governance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The survey results and stakeholder interviews suggest that Kintamani is progressing from the growth phase to the consolidation phase in Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model, as seen in Figure 1. Enhanced tourism infrastructure, such as glamping sites, coffee shops, and observation platforms, along with an increase in visitor numbers, mark this shift. Approximately 64% of polled tourists regarded Kintamani as a "developing rural destination," whereas 22% considered it to have attained a "mature stage," attributing the latter outcome to the swift commercialization of natural features.
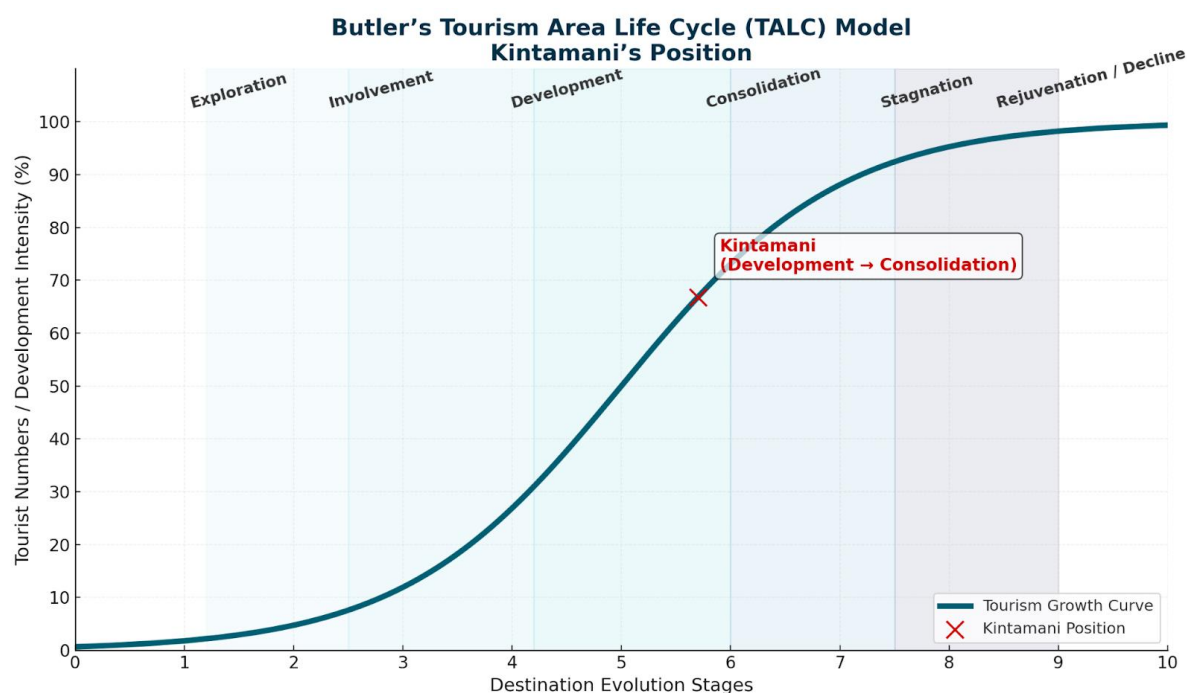
Figure 1. Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) Model showing Kintamani's position between the Development and Consolidation stages.

Stakeholder interviews validate our findings, emphasizing the increasing investments in lodging and tourism infrastructure. Respondents identified considerable obstacles, such as environmental strain, congestion in prominent areas like Penelokan and Pinggan, and inadequate presentation of local traditions. These results correspond with TALC applications in many rural tourism locales, where unregulated growth may hasten stagnation or deterioration (Agarwal, 2002; Lane & Kastenholz, 2015). The findings indicate that although Kintamani is appealing to both domestic and international markets, strategic measures are necessary to regulate visitor traffic, equilibrate supply and demand, and avert resource overexploitation.

3.1 Sustainability Perceptions of Tourists

The analysis of the visitor survey indicates a varied array of sustainability perceptions among participants. A majority (71%) valued Kintamani's natural landscape and volcanic scenery as its primary attractions, yet 55% expressed concerns regarding waste management and pollution control, especially around Lake Batur and public facilities. Moreover, 48% of visitors noted overcrowding at key viewing points during peak hours, affecting overall satisfaction levels. Discussions with local tourism stakeholders revealed that inadequate regulation enforcement and a lack of integrated governance initiatives intensify waste accumulation and congestion. Respondents highlighted that Kintamani's tourism growth has surpassed the advancement of supporting infrastructure, especially in areas like parking facilities, signage, and safety measures. These findings are consistent with prior studies showing that sustainability perceptions are strongly correlated with destination loyalty, visitor satisfaction, and governance efficiency (Lee, 2013; Stylidis, 2016; Gössling & Hall, 2019).

Negative visitor perceptions, if left unaddressed, may reduce Kintamani's competitive advantage relative to emerging destinations in Bali, such as Sidemen and Munduk.

Beyond these general perceptions, a deeper examination of waste management reveals that tourists typically focus on visible litter in high-use public spaces, yet most remain unaware of the community-based waste systems operating behind the scenes, such as village-level segregation efforts and *Bank Sampah* initiatives. Interviews indicate that waste problems persist not due to a lack of local effort, but because these systems remain fragmented and poorly communicated to visitors. A similarly complex pattern emerges in relation to overcrowding. Survey responses often refer to congestion at iconic viewpoints, particularly the *Penelokan* restaurant cluster, where peak-hour crowds, traffic bottlenecks, and limited parking reduce visitor comfort. However, interviews show that this congestion is highly spatialized: niche tourism zones such as glamping sites and coffee plantations experience milder and more time-specific crowding, usually during sunset or weekends. Residents, meanwhile, feel the pressures more severely than tourists, especially on narrow village roads and during peak visitation periods. A tour operator noted that "*Penelokan* can feel full by 9 a.m., but the coffee farms remain calm until later in the day," highlighting the uneven temporal and spatial distribution of visitor flows. Understanding these layered differences is essential to designing targeted management interventions that address both tourist satisfaction and community well-being.

3.2 Governance and Community Participation

Stakeholder interviews highlight fragmented governance structures and limited community participation as key barriers to sustainable tourism in Kintamani. Although village-owned enterprises (Badan Usaha Milik Desa / BUMDes) and local community organizations manage several tourism sites, their involvement in broader strategic planning remains minimal. One community leader stated that:

"*Pariwisata di Kintamani berkembang cepat, tapi tanpa aturan yang jelas dan kerja sama dari semua pihak, kami khawatir lingkungan dan budaya akan tertinggal. (Tourism in Kintamani is growing rapidly, but without clear regulations and cooperation among all stakeholders, we worry that the environment and culture will be left behind) (Interview with Pak Jero, 27 August 2025)*"

Despite these challenges, several positive initiatives have emerged. Community-driven waste segregation programs and coffee tourism cooperatives, for example, have begun to involve farmers more directly in product branding and visitor engagement. However, stakeholders consistently emphasized that these efforts remain fragmented without stronger coordination. As one community leader stated, "Tourism in Kintamani is growing rapidly, but without clear regulations and cooperation among all stakeholders, we worry that the environment and culture will be left behind." This sentiment underscores the need for deeper collaboration between village authorities, the Bangli Regency Government, and tourism practitioners to achieve integrated destination management. These insights align with evidence from Penglipuran Village and similar rural destinations in Bali, where community-led governance and revenue-sharing systems have proven effective in balancing economic development with cultural preservation and environmental stewardship (Sudiarta et al., 2014).

Strengthening Kintamani's governance structure is therefore essential for ensuring equitable benefit distribution, improving visitor experiences, and securing the destination's long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

3.3 Integrating TALC, Sustainability, and Governance

Synthesizing findings from the TALC assessment, tourist surveys, and stakeholder interviews, this study underscores the interdependence between destination development, visitor perceptions, and governance effectiveness. Kintamani's position between the development and consolidation stages highlights both opportunities and risks. Opportunities: expanding niche tourism markets, including coffee-based tourism, glamping, and rural homestays. Risks: rising infrastructural pressures, unmanaged visitor flows, and environmental degradation. Integrating the TALC framework with sustainability perceptions demonstrates that tourist experiences are increasingly shaped by environmental quality, authenticity, and access to amenities. At the same time, the application of community-based governance principles suggests that empowering local actors, enforcing zoning regulations, and prioritizing participatory planning are essential for balancing economic aspirations with ecological and cultural resilience.

Tourism development in Kintamani demonstrates a distinctive evolutionary trajectory that aligns with Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), currently positioned between the Development and Consolidation stages. Statistical evidence reveals that Bali recorded 16.45 million total visitors in 2024, comprising 6.3 million international arrivals and 10.12 million domestic tourists (Bali Tourism Board, 2025). Among these, Kintamani consistently attracts a substantial share, with over 2.1 million visitors recorded between 2017 and 2021, averaging approximately 422,000 visits annually (Bali Tourism Office, 2023). This steady inflow highlights Kintamani's resilience as a key highland destination, underpinned by its iconic natural assets, Mount Batur, Lake Batur, and UNESCO Global Geopark status which collectively drive continued tourist interest. The consistent visitor retention illustrates that Kintamani has not yet entered the Stagnation phase, but it faces mounting pressures to diversify its offerings while maintaining ecological and socio-cultural balance.

Within this context, coffee tourism has emerged as a pivotal driver in reshaping the experiential dimension of Kintamani's tourism economy. Empirical evidence from Radita et al. (2023) reveals a significant positive effect of place attachment on both tourist satisfaction and loyalty (t-statistics > 1.98; $p < 0.05$), suggesting that the emotional bonds created through coffee-related experiences substantially enhance revisit intentions. Over the past decade, Kintamani has transformed into a leading coffee tourism hub in Southeast Asia, with a surge of boutique coffee shops and roastery-based experiences framing Mount Batur as an iconic backdrop. This phenomenon aligns with the broader transition towards experience-driven tourism, positioning coffee consumption not merely as a culinary activity but as an immersive engagement with local identity, terroir, and storytelling.

Parallel to this development, glamping tourism has become a rapidly expanding niche, particularly appealing to millennial travelers and digital nomads seeking premium yet nature-oriented escapes. Media reports highlight that glamping in Kintamani has become a "tourism hit," driving diversification of the destination's product portfolio and strengthening its

competitiveness in the regional tourism landscape (The Bali Sun, 2024). Integrating glamping with coffee tourism has produced bundled offerings, combining luxury, sustainability, and local authenticity, which align closely with global trends in slow tourism and regenerative tourism.

From a sociocultural perspective, Doxey's Irridex model provides critical insights into community dynamics amidst this tourism expansion. Although residents currently exhibit attitudes reflective of the "Euphoria" and "Apathy" stages, characterized by initial enthusiasm and passive acceptance of tourism benefits, there are early signs of potential "Annoyance" emerging due to increased traffic congestion, waste management challenges, and environmental pressures in sensitive areas around Lake Batur. If unregulated, these stressors could escalate resident attitudes towards the "Antagonism" stage, posing risks to social cohesion and destination reputation.

Synthesizing insights from TALC and Irridex frameworks, Kintamani stands at a strategic crossroads. Sustained growth in visitor arrivals, coupled with the rise of coffee-based experiences and glamping tourism, provides opportunities to accelerate destination development. However, without adaptive governance and sustainable planning, Kintamani risks environmental degradation, community dissatisfaction, and eventual stagnation. Leveraging digital platforms, visitor management strategies, and participatory destination governance will be crucial to balance growth with long-term sustainability, thereby ensuring Kintamani evolves as a model for integrating heritage preservation, community empowerment, and experiential innovation within Bali's tourism ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Kintamani is positioned at a critical transition point between the Development and Consolidation stages of the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), driven by rapid niche tourism expansion such as glamping, coffee tourism, and agritourism. By integrating TALC with tourists' and stakeholders' sustainability perceptions, the study offers a theoretical contribution that enriches classical TALC modeling with socio-environmental dimensions. The findings demonstrate that destination evolution in rural highland contexts cannot be interpreted solely through patterns of market growth, but must also account for governance capacity, environmental pressures, and community expectations. This integrated analytical approach strengthens the applicability of TALC for contemporary rural destinations experiencing accelerated diversification and increasingly complex governance dynamics.

On a practical level, the findings highlight two immediate policy priorities. First, stricter enforcement of environmental management, particularly in waste governance, regulatory clarity, and consistent monitoring, is essential to prevent ecological degradation and declining visitor satisfaction. Second, product diversification beyond congested core zones such as Penelokan is needed to distribute visitor flows more evenly and reduce pressure on dominant viewing corridors. Strengthening niche tourism clusters, including coffee plantations, glamping areas, and rural cultural sites, will be crucial for mitigating crowding and delaying potential stagnation in core areas while enhancing resilience across the broader Geopark landscape.

As a UNESCO Global Geopark transitioning toward more specialized forms of tourism, Kintamani requires an integrated, community-aligned governance framework to maintain equilibrium between environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, and economic

development. Improved coordination among local communities, government institutions, and tourism businesses will be vital for sustaining Kintamani's long-term competitiveness as a rural highland destination. Future research should incorporate longitudinal monitoring of TALC transitions and empirically test policy interventions related to environmental enforcement and product diversification to support adaptive and sustainable destination management.

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