

THE ROLE OF THE VILLAGE AND LOCAL COMMUNITY IN PRESERVING NATURE IN THE ULU PETANU WATERFALL AREA, GIANYAR REGENCY, BALI

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ABSTRACT

Ulu Petanu Waterfall has become one of the emerging natural tourist attractions in Gianyar Regency. The pristine nature of this waterfall serves as a unique appeal compared to similar locations within the Gianyar area. Based on the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), this attraction is currently in the second stage, namely the development phase. At this stage, several challenges have begun to emerge, including the development of supporting facilities around the site, road access, and potential conflicts among local communities regarding the tourism attraction's development. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method through in-depth interviews with the attraction's managers, local residents, and nearby vendors. The main focus of this research is to identify the development boundaries and sustainable development plans, particularly the needs of the Kedisan Village community in Gianyar Regency, Bali. The research findings indicate that the village management, under the supervision of Kedisan Village, still demonstrates enthusiasm for independent management in line with the destination life cycle. The self-managed development of the tourist attraction continues to progress well, as the community affected by the waterfall's presence is still able to cooperate effectively, supported by the influence of local community leaders who play a significant role in Kedisan Village's social life. However, in the future, attention should also be given to the continuity of these community leaders' roles, especially since the advancement of information technology will lead the younger generation to become more open and influenced by external factors.

Keywords: waterfall, tourist attraction, community based

INTRODUCTION

Ulu Petanu Waterfall is one of the natural tourist attractions in Gianyar Regency, attracting both domestic and international tourists. Its appeal lies in the waterfall's pristine beauty and its strong flow. Located in Manik Sawang, Kedisan Village, Tegallalang, Gianyar Regency, the waterfall is managed directly by the local community. Based on an interview with Mr. Kadek, the manager of Ulu Petanu Waterfall, visits during the last three months, from July to September 2025, were very promising. The average daily number of visitors was 100, with an entrance fee of 20,000 rupiah for domestic tourists. This figure aligns with data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), which showed a surge in visitor numbers to 1.5 million by August 2025. (BPS Bali, 2025). The increasing number of visits presents a potential opportunity for both the village and the management to develop this natural tourist attraction. This potential for visits serves as a way to maximize the essence of tourism: the existence of attractions that attract tourists (Lemy, 2018). Managing such communities for sustainable long-term success in environmental, social and economic

terms is simply commonsense and essential for the future well-being of those destinations for both residents and visitors (Butler, 2024).

When examined in the tourism life cycle (Butler, 1980), the characteristics of this natural tourist attraction fall into the second stage, involvement, due to high community involvement and the provision of supporting facilities fully supported by the village (Wiweka et al., 2021). Following the destination life cycle theory, the next stage is involvement, characterized by community involvement due to increased visits. This situation leads local communities to offer facilities to visitors. This situation requires attention and vigilance from both the village and waterfall managers. Anticipating emerging issues is one step, as was taken for Tegenungan Waterfall (Putra et al., 2019). Based on these conditions, this research is expected to identify the role of the village and local community in maintaining the tourist attraction as a destination control. This research is also expected to provide suggestions regarding potential disruptions that arise during the involvement stage.

METHODS

This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with informants (Sugiyono, 2018). The informants in this study were the manager of the tourist attraction, the local people who trade in the parking area, and one of the jro mangku who provided information regarding the understanding of Ulu Petanu. The interviews were conducted in an unstructured manner, where the researcher was free to ask questions and follow the flow of the conversation, developing from the interview guide that had been created. (Kasim et al., 2020). This research location is in Kedisan Village, Tegalalang District, Gianyar Regency. Observations at the research site revealed that the carrying capacity of tourist attractions is still under control, with tourists not crowding the area.

FINDINGS

Ulu Petanu Waterfall is one of the developing tourism sites located in Kedisan Village. The waterfall is formed by the confluence of two rivers: Ulu Petanu Kanan (Tukad Payang) and Ulu Petanu Kiri (Tukad Dapdap)(Ulu Petanu Waterfall, 2024). Development of the site began around 2023 as part of the village's initiative to explore and utilize its tourism potential. In the context of rural development, the establishment of a tourist attraction is essential to attract both domestic and international visitors (Istanti et al., 2023). According to the theory of tourist attractions proposed by Marrioti (Yoeti, 2003), there are three main types of attractions that can be developed. In the case of Ulu Petanu Waterfall, these include:

a. Natural Ameities

As a nature-based tourist attraction, the primary appeal of Ulu Petanu Waterfall lies in its strong and continuous water flow. This natural feature draws both domestic and international tourists—some visit to enjoy the scenery, while others come for photography purposes. According to Mr. Kadek, the site's manager, domestic tourists have remained dominant over the past three months. International visitors, though fewer, typically visit with the assistance of tour guides or after learning about the destination through social media managed by the site administrators.



Figure 1. Ulu Petanu waterfall
Source: Research , 2025

The development of the attraction has involved collaboration with several institutions, including Gadjah Mada University (UGM), which contributed by producing a site map and digital information materials presented in the form of QR codes.



Figure 2. QR Code and Tourism Map
Source: Research and management document, 2025

Although the site is primarily nature-based, technological elements have been integrated along the pathway leading to the waterfall. Information about the site is presented digitally and can be accessed through mobile devices. This integration of technology and natural tourism reflects the village's efforts toward developing a smart village model(Hassan & Arista, 2025).

b. The Way Life

Cultural aspects have also been incorporated into Ulu Petanu Waterfall as part of its tourism appeal. Although the main focus remains on its natural beauty, local traditions and community customs continue to play a significant role. One of the cultural elements practiced here is the Melukat ritual, a Hindu purification ceremony performed to cleanse oneself of negative energies (Arta Widana, 2023).

The integration of culture and tourism is a common phenomenon in many Asian destinations (Maryani, 2019). At Ulu Petanu Waterfall, there is a sacred pancoran (water spout) used for Melukat or purification rituals.



Figure 3. Melukat Place
Source: Research, 2025

This purification site is unique due to its sulfur-containing spring water, which is scientifically recognized for its benefits to skin health. This sulfur-containing spring water can be used with permission from the owner (Ulu Petanu Waterfall, 2024).

c. Man-made supply

This category includes historical artifacts, art and handicrafts, traditional performances, and architectural features. At Ulu Petanu Waterfall, man-made attractions include locally crafted clothing and souvenirs sold in the gift shop. Additionally, the Batu Taled Pitu site serves as a sacred object within the attraction area. Several bamboo and wooden structures have also been built near the parking area to maintain the natural aesthetic and promote eco-friendly design.

Involvement Stage

Based on field observations, Ulu Petanu Waterfall currently demonstrates the characteristics of the Involvement Stage in the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC). Interactions between tourists and local residents occur regularly, such as when visitors ask for directions or engage in buying local products. Most facilities at the site have been developed and managed by the local community under the coordination of the village administration.



Figure 4. Bamboo Stall Prepared for Tourists
Source: Research, 2025

Local residents independently manage food stalls and souvenir shops, and the growing number of visitors has increased community enthusiasm. As noted by a local vendor, Dewa Ayu, the rise in visitor numbers has positively affected small businesses, with domestic tourists often asking about dining options and local products.

Upon closer examination, this phase shows signs of transitioning toward the Development Stage. According to a local community leader, Jro Mangku Gunung Sari, some villagers have expressed interest in selling their land for further tourism development, hoping to benefit from the growing visitor numbers. However, this situation has raised concerns among local religious leaders and the village government, as similar developments elsewhere have led to land-use changes, ownership transfers, and eventual destination decline. Consequently, site managers have emphasized the need for stricter regulations on land sales around the Ulu Petanu area.

Research observations indicate that both the site management and the traditional village authorities play key roles in establishing and enforcing these regulations. Issues such as land ownership, community participation, and tourism activities are managed locally within Kedisan Village. The strong enthusiasm and active participation of residents remain defining features of the Involvement Stage (Pitana & Gayatri, 2005).

The community's enthusiasm in managing the attraction has been one of the main reasons why the Involvement Stage has remained dominant during the three years since the establishment of the Ulu Petanu Waterfall tourist attraction. The ongoing development of this site tends to strengthen over time, in line with findings from other destinations in Indonesia, which indicate that the impact of infrastructure development and tourism promotion on the dynamics of the destination life cycle varies depending on its stage of development. At the exploration stage, the influence tends to be relatively weak, whereas at the development stage, the impact becomes more significant or stronger. (Damanik et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

The development of Ulu Petanu Waterfall in Kedisan Village illustrates a dynamic example of community-based tourism that integrates natural, cultural, and technological elements. Originating from the confluence of two rivers—Ulu Petanu Kanan and Ulu Petanu Kiri—the waterfall serves not only as a natural attraction but also as a catalyst for local economic and social development. Since its initiation in 2023, the site has shown progressive growth, supported by both community participation and institutional collaboration.

The findings indicate that Ulu Petanu Waterfall encompasses three core components of tourist attraction as defined by Marrioti (in Yoeti, 2003): natural amenities, cultural expressions, and man-made creations. The site's primary allure lies in its natural waterfall and scenic environment, complemented by the integration of local traditions such as the Melukat purification ritual, which adds cultural depth and spiritual significance to the attraction. Additionally, the introduction of digital features such as QR codes and information systems demonstrates a successful blend between traditional tourism and modern technology, aligning with the concept of a smart village.

From a developmental perspective, Ulu Petanu Waterfall is currently in the Involvement Stage of the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC). This phase is characterized by strong community engagement, particularly through small-scale enterprises such as food stalls, souvenir shops, and other locally managed facilities. The high level of enthusiasm among residents has played a crucial role in maintaining this stage, ensuring that tourism remains locally driven and culturally grounded.

However, the study also reveals emerging challenges as the destination gradually transitions toward the Development Stage. Issues related to land sales, ownership changes, and potential over-commercialization have begun to surface, echoing patterns observed in other destinations across Indonesia. These conditions highlight the urgent need for regulatory reinforcement and sustainable management to prevent negative consequences such as land-use conflicts and destination decline.

Overall, the case of Ulu Petanu Waterfall underscores that the success of rural tourism development relies on the synergy between community participation, institutional support, and sustainable planning. The site demonstrates that when natural beauty, cultural authenticity, and modern innovation coexist harmoniously, they can create a sustainable tourism model that benefits both the local community and the broader regional economy. In line with Damanik et al. (2018), the study reaffirms that the effects of infrastructure development and tourism promotion vary depending on the destination's life cycle stage—being relatively weak during the exploration phase but increasingly significant during the development phase.

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