IJOSS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIAL STUDIES

SAMĀ JIVA JNĀNAM

Vol. 04, No. 2, October 2026, e-ISSN: 3062-9829

PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON EXPERIMENTAL TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT TRIALS IN UBUD, BALI: A NETNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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DOI: doi.org/10.25078/ijoss.v4i2.7525

ABSTRACT

This qualitative netnographic study investigated public discourse surrounding the 2026 experimental traffic management trials in Ubud, Bali. Analyzing 1,095 public comments collected from official municipal social media posts across Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok (21 August – 15 September 2026) using reflexive thematic analysis by two independent coders, the study tracks how digital responses evolved across three temporal phases. Findings reveal a dynamic shift: Phase I generated localized spatial confusion and detour complaints; Phase II was evaluated as manageable relative to subsequent paralysis; while Phase III's comprehensive one-way scheme triggered widespread gridlock (1.5–4-hour travel delays), severe socio-economic disruptions for commuters and tourism drivers, pedestrian hazards, and criticism over low-resolution map communication deficits. Public frustration was vividly expressed through local Balinese idioms (*benyah latig* [total breakdown]) and spatial metaphors (*care nyelepin bubu* [like entering a bamboo fish trap]). This real-time digital outrage functioned as a bottom-up civic feedback loop that signaled breached community tolerance thresholds, directly compelling municipal authorities to execute an emergency policy rollback reverting traffic flow to the Phase II scheme. Utilizing anonymized public data, this research demonstrates how social media discourse serves as an unmediated policy evaluation mechanism and highlights the necessity of pre-trial digital traffic simulations, multi-channel transparent communication, and structured stakeholder consultations in historic tourism hubs.

KEYWORDS: Experimental traffic management, Netnography, Digital public discourse, Digital governance, Sustainable tourism mobility.

INTRODUCTION

Ubud, an internationally renowned cultural tourism destination in Bali, faces persistent transportation challenges caused by the structural mismatch between its narrow historical road network (typically 5 to 7 meters wide) and heavy volumes of tourism-induced traffic. Driven by Bali's annual influx of over 5 million foreign visitors alongside tens of thousands of daily excursion trips into central Ubud, vehicle accumulation regularly exceeds physical road carrying capacities, placing the cultural core on the brink of perpetual gridlock (Pramudya & Arida, 2016). Unmanaged traffic congestion in tourism destinations is known to generate severe community dissatisfaction, disrupt local livelihoods, and intensify pressure on destination management authorities to execute corrective interventions (Bausch et al., 2024). In response to escalating gridlock, the Department of Transportation of Gianyar Regency (Dishub Gianyar) executed a

Submitted : 03-10-2026
Revised : 07-10-2026
Accepted : 15-10-2026

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series of experimental, multi-phase traffic engineering trials in central Ubud between August and September 2026.

The intervention was deployed across three distinct temporal phases: Phase I (3 days: 24–26 August 2026) introduced initial intersection adjustments around Jalan Made Lebah and Jalan Sugriwa, which local media reported as merely shifting congestion onto adjacent residential connectors (Kilas Bali, 2026a [Traffic Engineering in Ubud Shifts Congestion to Sugriwa Street]). Phase II (12 days: 27 August – 7 September 2026) reversed directional flows along key connecting roads to split traffic toward Peliatan (Kilas Bali, 2026b [Dishub Implements Phase II Engineering, Ubud Main Road Congestion Split to Peliatan]). Phase III (8 days: 8–15 September 2026) enforced an expansive one-way loop across major corridors (Jalan Raya Pengosekan, Jalan Raya Ubud, Jalan Sukma Kesuma, Jalan Jatayu), resulting in severe gridlock with vehicle standstills lasting up to four hours (Detik Bali, 2026 [Traffic Engineering in Ubud Severe Congestion Up to 4 Hours]). Following an emergency public evaluation, Dishub Gianyar formally canceled Phase III and reverted traffic arrangements to the Phase II configuration (Instagram @dishub.gianyar, 2026 [Evaluation of Traffic Engineering in the Ubud Area]).

Throughout these trials, road users, residents, and business operators actively reacted to the changing traffic configurations on the agency's official social media channels and local digital news portals. This phenomenon can be conceptualized at the intersection of three theoretical domains: (1) policy experimentation and tactical urbanism, (2) e-participation and digital governance, and (3) sustainable tourism mobility in historical destination cores. In urban governance, temporary rerouting schemes function as street experiments and forms of tactical urbanism—short-term, low-cost policy interventions designed to test spatial reconfigurations in real-time (Bertolini, 2020). However, when implemented without participatory consensus, such trials often trigger conflictual governance dynamics and spatial bottleneck displacements (Gössling et al., 2024; Verlinghieri et al., 2024). Concurrently, the digital governance literature emphasizes that local governments increasingly use social media platforms as interactive channels for communicating with citizens (Criado et al., 2013; Haro-de-Rosario et al., 2018; Nuryananda & Al Fitriani, 2023). Social media platforms function as informal digital public spheres where citizens engage in unmediated, real-time e-participation, transforming public discourse into a recognized arena for contesting controversial traffic policies (Lambert et al., 2026; Nadal, 2026). In tourism destinations, unannounced traffic disruptions directly threaten daily hospitality operations, tour schedules, and resident livelihoods, escalating public opposition and driving rapid digital mobilization (Pritchett et al., 2024; Song & Wondirad, 2023)

While empirical studies have investigated social media discourse surrounding long-running low-emission zones or cycle lanes in European contexts (Gössling et al., 2024; Lambert et al., 2026; Pritchett et al., 2024) or automated sentiment classification of urban traffic in Indonesian cities (Asa et al., 2023; Sukemi et al., 2026), important research gaps remain. A systematic search across academic databases (Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Garuda/Sinta, covering 2015–2026; keywords: "traffic engineering", "social media public perception", "netnography", "tactical urbanism", "rekayasa lalu lintas") reveals that limited qualitative research has examined how public perceptions evolve across successive, short-term phases of an experimental traffic trial in a cultural tourism destination. Short, multi-phase trials generate distinct discourse dynamics compared to static, long-term policies; the rapid succession of route changes induces acute spatial uncertainty, compounding delay frustrations, and immediate online mobilization. Understanding these dynamic feedback loops is critical for

destination management organizations seeking to balance mobility interventions with community acceptance.

This study addresses these gaps through a qualitative research design combining reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) with an unobtrusive observational netnographic approach (Kozinets, 2002; Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024) to examine publicly available digital commentary across Dishub Gianyar's social media posts and local news channels. It addresses three central research questions: (RQ1) What primary themes characterize digital public discourse across each phase of the traffic trial? (RQ2) How do public evaluations of policy effectiveness, spatial accessibility, and daily-life socio-economic impacts vary across the three temporal phases? (RQ3) How did the timing, content, and sociolinguistic expressions of digital public discourse align with the transportation agency's subsequent trial evaluations and policy adjustments?

By examining the temporal evolution of public discourse rather than treating comments as static sentiment data, this study contributes to research on digital governance, participatory urban planning, and sustainable tourism transport. Furthermore, it demonstrates how local sociolinguistic resources, including Indonesian Balinese code-mixing, cultural metaphors (e.g., *care nyelepin bubu*), vernacular crisis idioms (e.g., *benyah latig, uwug*), and satire, serve as rich qualitative indicators through which citizens articulate mobility disruptions and evaluate technocratic public policy.

Research Ethics Statement: Data collection strictly followed internet research ethics guidelines for netnography (Kozinets, 2002; Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024). Only publicly accessible posts and comment threads from unrestricted public feeds were collected without entering private groups or interacting with users. All personal identifiers, social media handles, and profile names were completely anonymized. Representative verbatim quotations were translated from Balinese/Indonesian into English with contextual fidelity, and the study operated under institutional research ethics exemption standards for non-intrusive analysis of public digital data.

METHODS

Research Design and Methodological Approach

This study adopts an unobtrusive observational netnographic design (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024) integrated with reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) to investigate online public responses, civic engagement, and community perceptions regarding the experimental traffic engineering trials in Ubud, Bali. Netnography is an adapted qualitative methodology specifically suited for examining communicative interactions, cultural dialectics, and public sentiment within digital networked environments without disrupting natural online discourse (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024). Given that social media platforms function as contemporary digital public spheres for real-time civic feedback (Song & Wondirad, 2023), this approach provides an ecologically valid lens to capture authentic public responses to urban mobility policies.

Corpus Transparency, Data Sources, and Data-Flow Filtering

Data were collected longitudinally across three traffic-trial phases implemented by the Gianyar Regency Transportation Agency (Dishub Gianyar) between August and September 2026. Public comments were manually collected from 10 official posts across Facebook (Pemerintah Kabupaten Gianyar), Instagram (@dishubgianyar), and TikTok (@dishub.gianyar). Manual

extraction was used to preserve contextual features, including emoji, spelling variations, and Balinese–Indonesian code-mixing.

As shown in Table 1, the selected posts yielded 1,095 retained comments for qualitative analysis. Individual comments served as the analytical units, while the official posts provided the contextual and chronological basis for the corpus.

Table 1 Distribution of Social Media Primary Source Dataset Across Platforms

Platform	Official Account / Page	Date	Official Post Title / Caption Summary	Raw/Retained Comments
Facebook	Pemerintah Kabupaten Gianyar	7 September 2026	*Rekayasa Lalu Lintas Kawasan Ubud Tahap III Mulai Berlaku*	35
Instagram	@dishubgianyar	21 August 2026	*Info Penting: Rekayasa Lalu Lintas Baru Kawasan Ubud*	36
Instagram	@dishubgianyar	22 August 2026	*Uraian Rekayasa Lalu Lintas Kawasan Ubud*	36
Instagram	@dishubgianyar	26 August 2026	*Update Rekayasa Lalu Lintas Tahap 2 (Dua)*	46
Instagram	@dishubgianyar	7 September 2026	*Evaluasi & Penyempurnaan Rekayasa Lalu Lintas Tahap III*	358
Instagram	@dishubgianyar	8 September 2026	*Evaluasi Rekayasa Lalu Lintas Kawasan Ubud*	178
TikTok	@dishub.gianyar	21 August 2026	*Info Penting: Rekayasa Lalu Lintas Baru Kawasan Ubud*	3
TikTok	@dishub.gianyar	22 August 2026	*Uraian Rekayasa Lalu Lintas Kawasan Ubud*	104
TikTok	@dishub.gianyar	26 August 2026	*Update Rekayasa Lalu Lintas Tahap 2 (Dua)*	22
TikTok	@dishub.gianyar	7 September 2026	*Evaluasi & Penyempurnaan Rekayasa Lalu Lintas Tahap III*	277
Total		**10 official posts / 3 platforms**		**1,095**

Source: Author's compilation from official social media posts (2026).

For corpus transparency, comments underwent three stages: raw collection, relevance screening, and corpus retention. Duplicate or spam comments, emoji-only responses, promotional content, and off-topic commentary were excluded. Of 1,180 raw comments, 85 were excluded, resulting in a final corpus of 1,095 comments. The phase-level filtering and retention are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Corpus Data-Flow Filtering and Sample Retention Across Trial Phases

Trial Phase	Temporal Window	Raw Comments (N)	Excluded (N)	Retained (N)	Retention Rate
Phase I	24–26 August 2026	190	11	179	94.2%
Phase II	27 August–7 September 2026	72	4	68	94.4%
Phase III & Rollback	8–15 September 2026	918	70	848	92.4%

Trial Phase	Temporal Window	Raw Comments (N)	Excluded (N)	Retained (N)	Retention Rate
Total	21 August–15 September 2026	1,180	85	1,095	92.8%

Source: Author's data processing (2026).

Data Coding and Qualitative Analytical Procedure

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis framework, informed by netnographic analytical sensibilities (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024). The qualitative coding procedure involved five systematic stages:

1. Data Familiarization: Immersive, repeated reading of textual comments and post transcripts to establish holistic contextual understanding.
2. Initial Open Coding: Generating initial codes capturing explicit complaints, spatial locations, socio-economic impacts, and linguistic expressions.
3. Axial Coding and Category Building: Grouping open codes into broader conceptual categories relating to policy evaluations, spatial accessibility, and governance critiques.
4. Data Triangulation: Cross-verifying public commentary across Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok against official agency announcements and local news media reports to ensure analytical validity.
5. Thematic Refinement and Mapping: Structuring categories into overarching qualitative themes that explain the longitudinal evolution of public sentiment leading to the emergency policy rollback.

Ethical Considerations and Trustworthiness

Ethical standards for internet-based research were strictly maintained in accordance with netnographic principles (Kozinets, 2002; Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024). Data extraction was restricted to publicly available, unrestricted posts and comment threads. To safeguard individual privacy, all user handles, profile names, and personal identifiers were completely anonymized during data processing.

To address the risk of quotation traceability—wherein verbatim digital comments may be reverse-searched via commercial search engines or social media search algorithms—a light paraphrasing and semantic-preserving alteration protocol was applied to comments containing highly distinctive phrasing, idiosyncratic typing patterns, or specific workplace details (Kozinets, 2002). This protocol modified unique syntactic identifiers while strictly preserving the sociolinguistic nuance, emotional tone, and core semantic meaning of the original Balinese–Indonesian expressions. All sociolinguistic interpretations, vernacular terms, and English translations were cross-verified and validated by native Balinese-speaking qualitative researchers (the authors) in consultation with local cultural-linguistic experts.

Methodological trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, and dependability criteria. Credibility was supported by investigator triangulation and prolonged engagement with the digital discourse throughout the trial continuum. Transferability is facilitated by thick contextual descriptions of Ubud's spatial and socio-economic landscape. Dependability was maintained through a detailed audit trail documenting collection timelines, data-flow filtering metrics (Table 2), and qualitative coding procedures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Roadmap of Results and Discussion: This section presents the empirical findings and theoretical interpretation of public discourse surrounding the 2026 Ubud traffic engineering trials. Section 3.1 analyzes the temporal evolution of public discourse across the three trial phases, explicitly distinguishing contemporaneous comments from retrospective evaluations. Section 3.2 details route inefficiencies and travel delay inflation (Theme 1). Section 3.3 examines sectoral socio-economic disruptions and information clarity (Themes 2 & 3). Section 3.4 analyzes methodological critiques of top-down technocratic planning and perceived root causes (Themes 3 & 4). Section 3.5 provides a theoretically grounded sociolinguistic analysis of Balinese idioms, code-mixing, and satire (Theme 5). Finally, Section 3.6 presents the integrative Discussion, connecting empirical findings with literature on street experiments, digital governance, and tourism mobility.

Temporal Evolution of Public Discourse Across Trial Phases

The analysis of 1,095 retained comments across Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok reveals marked temporal shifts in comment volume, sentiment intensity, and thematic focus across the trial continuum (Table 3 and Table 4).

The initial traffic arrangement was announced through the official Dishub Gianyar social media channel, establishing the policy context for the first phase of public responses (Figure 1). The announcement is important as contextual evidence because the public comments analyzed below responded to a specific traffic configuration rather than to traffic congestion in general.



Figure 1 Official traffic-management announcement for the initial Ubud trial phase
Source: Official Dishub Gianyar Instagram post, 7 September 2026.

A. Phase I (August 24–26, 2026): Initial Spatial Confusion and Local Detour Complaints

During Phase I (N=179 comments), public discourse focused predominantly on spatial confusion (22.9%) and immediate detour inefficiencies (32.4%). Official announcements posted on August 21–22 generated early apprehension regarding narrow residential connectors. When

Phase I took effect on August 24, residents commuting between Nyuh Kuning, Teges, and central Ubud reported unexpected detour lengths:

"Dari Nyuh Kuning mau ke Br. Kalah harus jauh ke Utara dulu sampai Jl. Raya Ubud"
From Nyuh Kuning to Br. Kalah, one must go far north to Jl. Raya Ubud first
[IG-P1-014, Instagram, Phase I, 24 Aug 2026].

Deviant / Supportive Cases in Phase I: While 82.1% of Phase I comments expressed dissatisfaction with rerouting, a minority of commenters (17.9%, N=32) welcomed early efforts to regulate gridlock, noting that specific intersections like Made Lebah required directional discipline:

"Baguslah kalau Made Lebah diatur, biasanya mobil saling kunci di sana"
It's good if Made Lebah is regulated, usually cars lock each other up there
[TK-P1-008, TikTok, Phase I, 22 Aug 2026].

B. Phase II (August 27 – September 7, 2026): Contemporaneous Critique vs. Retrospective Re-Evaluation

A critical methodological distinction emerges when analyzing Phase II discourse. Contemporaneous comments posted during Phase II (N=68) were not overwhelmingly celebratory; rather, 48.5% of commenters highlighted ongoing traffic congestion caused by fundamental volume limits and illegal street parking:

"Tahap II ini tetap saja macet di jam pulang kerja karena mobil parkir di badan jalan masih dibiarkan"
Phase II is still congested during evening rush hour because roadside parked cars are still tolerated
[IG-P2-019, Instagram, Phase II, 28 Aug 2026].

However, when Phase III caused total gridlock on September 8, a wave of retrospective comments (N=142) re-evaluated Phase II as the "least disruptive" option by comparison:

"Rekayasa II kemarin sudah paling masuk akal dibanding tahap 3 yang bikin lumpuh total"
Trial II was actually the most logical compared to Phase 3 which caused total paralysis
[IG-P3-204, Instagram, Retrospective during Phase III, 8 Sept 2026].

This demonstrates that public acceptance of Phase II was largely relative and retrospective, produced by the severe contrast with Phase III paralysis rather than complete satisfaction during Phase II itself.

C. Phase III (September 8–15, 2026) and Policy Rollback: Digital Outrage Surge

Phase III triggered an unprecedented surge in digital engagement, accounting for 77.4% of the total dataset (N=848). Enforcement of the comprehensive one-way loop (*Jalan Raya Pengosekan, Jalan Raya Ubud, Jalan Sukma Kesuma, Jalan Jatayu*) resulted in immediate standstill gridlock lasting between 1.5 and 4 hours. Digital outrage reached peak volume on September 7–8, directly compelling Dishub Gianyar to execute an emergency policy rollback reverting traffic flow to the Phase II scheme.

Route Inefficiency, Travel Time, and Fuel Inflation (Theme 1)

Theme 1 represented the largest single category of public complaint across the corpus (35.4%, N=388). During Phase III, compulsory circuitous routes increased fuel consumption and multiplied travel times by factors of three to four:

"Jln pulang cuma 5 menit jadi 30 menit Karana harus mutar jalan"

The trip home took 30 minutes instead of 5 minutes because of required circuitous detours [IG-P3-088, Instagram, Phase III, 7 Sept 2026].

Tourism transport operators reported extensive detour loops across regional connectors:

"Ling bongkasa ke tampaksiring biasane 40 menit ked, jani 2 jam melincer ke gumin lodtunduh bin ngajanan tembus teges"

From Bongkasa to Tampaksiring usually takes 40 minutes, but now it takes 2 hours looping through Lodtunduh and heading north to Teges

[TK-P3-112, TikTok, Phase III, 7 Sept 2026].

Sectoral Socio-Economic Disruptions and Information Clarity (Themes 2 & 3)

Socio-economic disruptions (Theme 2: 26.1%, N=286) affected four main stakeholder groups: local commuters, tourism drivers, street vendors (PKL), and pedestrians. Local workers reported employment reprimands *Surat Peringatan/SP* due to involuntary tardiness:

"Wugg wugg, kene SP ake ulian telat megae, beneh ne 15menit ake be ked, ne jeg 1jam mare kedd"

Ruined, I got a warning letter (SP) for being late to work; usually it takes 15 minutes, now it took an hour

[TK-P3-045, TikTok, Phase III, 7 Sept 2026].

Information Clarity and Communication Transparency (RQ2): Analysis of Theme 3 (16.8%, N=184) reveals that public frustration was exacerbated by perceived deficits in information clarity. Citizens criticized the agency for publishing complex, low-resolution map graphics without clear directional arrows or adequate lead time:

"Peta peta saja diupload tapi panah arah jalurnya tidak jelas, orang lokal saja bingung apalagi wisatawan"

You just upload maps, but directional arrows are unclear; even locals are confused, let alone tourists

[FB-P1-011, Facebook, Phase I, 21 Aug 2026].

Methodological Critiques of Top-Down Planning and Root Causes (Themes 3 & 4)

Netizens engaged in sophisticated policy critiques (11.5%, N=126), arguing that rerouting failed to address fundamental root causes: severe vehicle overcapacity, narrow historical road dimensions, and unenforced illegal street parking. Comments characterized the trial as desk-bound planning:

"Rekayasa lalulintas dari manusia dibelakang meja... arsitekne hanya diatas kertas manten, pak"

Traffic engineering by people behind desks... the architects only work on paper, sir

[IG-P3-311, Instagram, Phase III, 8 Sept 2026].

Citizens demanded digital pre-trial traffic modeling rather than live trial-and-error:

"Yen kel ngubah jalur riset malu simulasikan mlu lewat digital. Yen kene jni kije kel laku?"

If you want to change route directions, do research first, simulate it digitally first; if it's like this, where are we supposed to go?

[TK-P3-089, TikTok, Phase III, 7 Sept 2026].

Sociolinguistic Expressions, Satire, and Cultural Dialectics (Theme 5)

Accounting for 10.1% of the corpus (N=111), Balinese sociolinguistic expressions provided rich qualitative indicators of community emotional distress. Grounded in digital vernacular theory and informal civic resistance, local code-mixing operated as a culturally embedded mechanism for public policy evaluation. All vernacular terms across the text and tables have been standardized to canonical Balinese orthography *(uwug, nyag, nyag latig, benyah latig)*, with informal digital typing variations *(wug, wugg)* noted in Table 3. All sociolinguistic interpretations and English glosses were independently verified by native Balinese-speaking qualitative researchers.

Table 3 Sociolinguistic Matrix of Vernacular Terms, Translations, and Discourse Contexts

Vernacular Term	Literal English Translation	Cultural & Pragmatic Gloss	Sample Context & Attributed Citation
Benyah latig	Totally crushed / broken	Expresses total systemic collapse or physical destruction	*"Tahap 3 benyah latig wkwkwk" [IG-P3-142, Sept. 8]*
Uwug / wug	Ruined / destroyed	Signifies failed policy execution or severely disrupted conditions	*"Be nyak wug pak" [TK-P3-067, Sept. 7]*
Nyag latig	Shattered into pieces	Conveys extreme gridlock and emotional fragmentation	*"Nyag latig macet e" [IG-P3-091, Sept. 7]*
Care nyelepin bubu	Like entering a traditional bamboo fish trap	Metaphor for spatial entrapment in one-way grids, emphasizing easy entry but limited exit routes	*"Care nyelepin bubu jani ke Ubud" [TK-P3-102, Sept. 7]*

Source: Author's qualitative interpretation of public social media comments collected from official posts (2026).

Irony and Sarcastic "*Suksma*" (Thank You): Satire served as a subversive feedback mechanism. Netizens used ironic gratitude *"Suksma"* to highlight policy failure:

"Suksma pak tyang telat 30menit megae"
Thank you sir, I was 30 minutes late for work
[IG-P3-055, Instagram, Phase III, 7 Sept 2026].

Discussion

The empirical findings of this study provide important theoretical insights into street experiments, digital governance, and tourism mobility in historic destination cores.

Tactical Urbanism and Conflictual Street Governance

The multi-phase Ubud trials reflect the inherent friction of tactical urbanism and street experiments in constrained urban spaces (Bertolini, 2020). While street experiments aim to test mobility reconfigurations rapidly, the Ubud case demonstrates that when temporary rerouting is implemented without prior agent-based digital simulations or stakeholder consensus, it risks precipitating "conflictual governance" (Verlinghieri et al., 2024). In physically constrained historic corridors (Pramudya & Arida, 2016), one-way rerouting does not eliminate congestion; rather, it redistributes overconcentrated traffic volume onto unprepared residential secondary roads (Gössling et al., 2024).

Social Media as a Real-Time Civic Feedback Loop in Digital Governance

In line with recent digital governance literature (Criado et al., 2013; Mathews et al., 2025), this study illustrates how social media platforms function as real-time, bottom-up civic feedback loops. Unlike formal public consultations, which often suffer from low participation, unmediated social media commentary provided immediate, ecologically valid documentation of traffic collapse. The sheer volume (N=848 in Phase III) and intense emotional tone of public commentary created a digital mandate that directly drove municipal policy responsiveness, compelling Dishub Gianyar to execute an emergency policy rollback.

Sociolinguistic Satire as Informal Civic Evaluation in Tourism Mobility

Finally, this study extends tourism mobility research (Bausch et al., 2024; Song & Wondirad, 2023) by demonstrating the utility of sociolinguistic netnography. In Asian cultural tourism contexts, public opposition to government policy is frequently expressed through vernacular code-mixing, cultural metaphors *care nyelepin bubu*, and satirical irony rather than formal legal petitions. Recognizing these localized linguistic expressions as qualitative indicators of public service evaluation enables urban planners to gauge community tolerance thresholds before policy failure occurs.

Practical Implications for Trial Design and Communication

The empirical findings offer actionable insights for transportation agencies executing experimental mobility trials in cultural tourism destinations:

1. Mandatory Pre-Trial Digital Simulations: Transportation agencies should replace live trial-and-error rerouting with agent-based digital traffic modeling. Pre-trial computer simulations can identify spatial bottleneck displacements before physical enforcement, preventing live network paralysis.
2. Transparent and Advanced Communication: Policy announcements require a minimum 7-day advance notice window using high-resolution, vector-based map graphics with explicit directional flow arrows, landmark overlays, and clear detour guides distributed across multi-channel digital platforms.
3. Dedicated Digital Civic Response Desks: Municipal agencies should establish dedicated, real-time social media response teams during policy trials to address citizen queries, monitor spatial congestion reports, and provide rapid information clarification.
4. Structural Infrastructure Focus: Mobility management in historic cores must shift from directional rerouting to structural interventions, including peripheral park-and-ride central parking facilities, electric shuttle feeder systems, and strict enforcement against illegal roadside parking.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several methodological limitations that contextualize its findings:

1. Self-Selection and Negativity Bias: Social media commentary inherently reflects self-selected, highly vocal individuals who are more motivated to post during acute disruptions, potentially overrepresenting negative sentiment compared to the silent majority of road users.
2. Platform Visibility Restrictions: Data collection was confined to public posts on official government accounts (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok); private messaging groups, community WhatsApp chats, and offline community meetings were not captured.

3. Absence of Individual Demographic Data: Social media profile data did not permit systematic demographic stratification (e.g., exact age, gender, residency status, or income level), preventing sub-group comparative analysis.
4. Absence of Physical Traffic Performance Data: The study analyzed qualitative digital perceptions and lacked access to objective, physical traffic sensor data (e.g., GPS floating car data, inductive loop counters, or automated video vehicle counts) to correlate reported delays with physical vehicle speeds.

CONCLUSION

This study examined publicly available social media discourse surrounding the multi-phase traffic engineering trials in Ubud, Bali, between August and September 2026. Using qualitative thematic analysis informed by principles of netnographic inquiry, the study identified temporal changes in public responses across the three trial phases. Phase I was characterized primarily by concerns about route changes and access, while Phase II was more frequently described as relatively manageable and subsequently became a reference point for comparison. Phase III generated more critical responses concerning travel-time increases, route inefficiency, everyday mobility, economic activities, and the implementation of the traffic scheme. These findings represent publicly expressed perceptions and experiences rather than independent measurements of traffic performance.

Public responses extended beyond immediate concerns about congestion. Commenters discussed the implications of route changes for commuting, tourism transportation, local businesses, fuel consumption, and access between different areas of Ubud. The discourse also raised broader questions about traffic planning and governance, particularly the perceived gap between policy design and field conditions, the need for prior simulation or calculation, and the involvement of drivers and affected communities. At the same time, the responses did not uniformly reject traffic management. Some users recognized the need for traffic intervention while calling for more thorough assessment, adequate socialization, field-based evaluation, and consideration of stakeholder experiences.

The analysis also highlights the role of local linguistic and cultural resources in digital public discourse. Expressions such as benyah latig, uwug/wug, nyag latig, and care nyelepin bubu, together with ironic expressions of gratitude and hyperbolic phrases such as ngadok helikopter, provided culturally situated ways of communicating disruption and dissatisfaction. These expressions are better understood as contextual discursive resources than as standardized indicators of sentiment. Their interpretation requires attention to linguistic context, surrounding discourse, and the particular phase of the traffic intervention in which they appeared.

Following the evaluation of the three trial phases, the Gianyar Regency Transportation Agency announced that the traffic arrangement would return to the Phase II scheme. Subsequent public responses included expressions of relief and appreciation, alongside continued suggestions concerning parking, vehicle circulation, logistics, and public transportation. The sequence indicates a temporal correspondence between changing public discourse and the subsequent policy adjustment, but the available data do not establish that social media responses directly caused the decision. The adjustment should therefore be understood as part of the agency's broader evaluation of the experimental traffic arrangements.

Overall, the study demonstrates the value of publicly accessible social media discourse as a qualitative source for examining how communities experience and interpret experimental

mobility interventions in culturally and economically active tourism destinations. In the Ubud case, digital discourse captured not only reactions to specific traffic configurations but also broader concerns regarding vehicle concentration, roadside parking, tourism and logistics traffic, alternative routes, and the relationship between technical planning and everyday mobility. The findings indicate the potential value of incorporating systematically documented public experiences into the evaluation of traffic interventions alongside technical assessment.

Future research should integrate social media discourse with independent traffic measurements, spatial data, travel-time observations, and sector-specific economic indicators. Such triangulation would enable a more systematic examination of the relationship between perceived and measured traffic conditions and would provide stronger evidence for assessing the effects of different traffic configurations. Further research could also investigate how local linguistic and cultural expressions shape participation in digital discussions of public infrastructure and urban mobility across other tourism destinations.

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