Tri Hita Karana as a Communication Strategy of Bali Tourism

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**ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** The main objective is to demonstrate the utilization of Tri Hita Karana as a communication strategy in Bali tourism for the purpose of preserving cultural tourism destinations. The background research is the phenomenon of Bali tourism industry that prioritizes the mass tourism compared to the cultural tourism.

**Methodology:** This research adopts a constructivist paradigm and employs a descriptive approach, with the primary theoretical framework is social construction of reality by Berger and Luckmann.

**Results:** The findings indicate that Tri Hita Karana serves as the most effective message for managing communication in the tourism. It addresses the challenges posed by the intrusion of western cultures and the dominance of infrastructure that undermines the unique Balinese identity. Failure to embrace the principles of Tri Hita Karana creates a crisis. Therefore, to avoid succumbing to the populism of culture, the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana must be embraced and integrated into the marketing of the tourism industry. This research finds the Balinese tourism communication is a product of a balanced synthesis of openness while maintaining the transcendental elements that visitors must comprehend and embrace.

**Implications:** Additionally, the study highlights the need for policy changes within Bali’s tourism industry to prioritize cultural preservation and address the challenges posed by mass tourism.

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**Introduction**

Bali is the tourism icon of the archipelago, even the world. Thus, Bali is a text, a tourism text that continues to lead to derivative meanings, namely symbols, cultural, narration, connotations or even question mark triggers. It means, Bali has codes, as plural codes in a text (Bagus & Wicaksana, 2022).
As a place, location or destination, Bali is more than just a popular destination. This case can be considered as synonymous with tourism itself. For those familiar with the tourism industry, the name "Bali" has become synonymous with it. Whether or not someone has visited the island, Bali is often cited as a reference when it comes to tourism. It is not surprising that Bali is better known to Westerners than Indonesia, given its reputation as a top tourist destination.

Bali's differentiation always makes people ask and act, even the most significant one is advocate. At the world level, the accumulation of word of mouths has not only made Bali a world destination, but under certain conditions has made Bali a bigger name than Indonesia. Bali stands out as a unique place due to its distinct culture. Indonesia is recognized as having the world's largest Muslim population, while Bali is renowned as the "Gods islands" (Dewata). It symbolizes the unique identity that sets it apart from the rest of Indonesia. Thus, it is only natural to admit that Bali is Indonesia's advantage (Jayaningsih & Anggreswari, 2019).

From the reality side, of course Bali creates a big question mark, is it because the crystallization of the minority actually makes Bali very attractive, or is Bali a symbol of "freedom" so that Westerners consider Bali "not as difficult as" Islamic culture in accepting Western culture. This connotation certainly exists for consumers with certain perceptual segments. This means that Bali as a currency coin in tourism terminology has a narrative or, more precisely, as a narrative code that continues to branch out, so that the Bali tourism industry. The positive side of the industry is very helpful in increasing economical aspects, while the negative is the local Balinese wisdom and culture distortion, especially the aspects of sacredness (Mudana et al., 2017). The phenomenon of Bali’s most famous coastal area was the first to be affected by tourism, so that the rapid acceptance of change has caused a lot of concern, especially for tourism observers, because the direction of the industry is towards popularism motives.

The global tourism industry has significantly shaped this case. It has commercialized and secularized the culture, disregarding its sacred roots. The tourism sector seems to only prioritize short-term profits and overlooks the cultural values of society. Balinese culture is losing its authentic heritage under the pressure of Western tourists. Tourism policies should balance economic benefits with preserving the sacredness of Bali, which is based on a long narrative about the gods (Susiani et al., 2022). This is the reality that the Balinese people face. The global tourism industry has desecrated their temples, which affects their worship and beliefs. The culture is being defamed, and its values, forms, and meanings are changing. Temples are no longer as sacred as they were originally intended. They are now open and free tourist attractions.

This shows a lack of supervision and enforcement of local regulations, particularly regarding the temples. It also demonstrates the influence of global tourism and information technology on the mindset and views of local people. They are becoming more receptive to the values of freedom. If this is not seriously addressed, the Bali tourism industry will undermine the Balinese cultural philosophy of Tri Hita Karana, which emphasizes three relationships: with God, with humans, and with nature. In many places, people's lifestyles, especially in cities, are becoming more individualistic. The values of kinship, solidarity, and mutual cooperation are fading away. Political practices are also more focused on material interests, clans, and groups, which endanger social organizations such as Pekraman villages, banjars, or subaks.

Furthermore, the role of capitalism has created new discourses in the Bali tourism industry. Investors can manipulate everything for their own benefit. They clear sacred lands and rebuild them for economic development. Green plants are replaced with shop houses, malls, apartments, and villas. The subak system, which is a socio-cultural force for the Balinese people, is neglected and abandoned. This causes anxiety among many groups as the concept of sad kerthi, reflecting Tri Hita Karana, is disregarded. It appears that the spatial utilization of Bali Island now aligns more
with capitalist desires and the satisfaction of Western tourists rather than Bali’s own uniqueness. “There is positive momentum between the two, but weak support. It is quality tourism, a way of conveying a tourist message by limiting the number of tourists. It aims to attract respectful and quality tourists.” Social and cultural interaction with locals is encouraged to create mutual understanding, friendship and acculturation. In this way, tourism can develop as cultural tourism. This important idea has been much debated at the conceptual level, but the reality is different. Locals are unable to deliver a compelling tourism message and are susceptible to tourist influence. This is a phenomenon of Bali tourism that has no cultural filter or local intelligence at all, even though people already know they come to Bali for the cultural tourism differentiation.

A communication strategy is therefore very urgent. The development is an urgent not only at the front-line public, but also for intellectuals, bureaucrats, businessmen, and without exception, tourists. The philosophy of Hita Karana theory needs to be not only preserved in a ritual and symbolic way, but further developed in a coherent and sustainable way of tourism communication. The Tri Hita Karana should not only be used as an ‘important’ text, but should also be ‘cherished’ and embody the spirit of trust and confidence. However, a problem arises. How can the concepts and principles of tourism communication be constructed to maintain the foundation of the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana? Motivated me to choose a theme. At least the Baltic concept belongs to the cultural norms of message management in communication. ”

The problem at hand is how Balinese tourism communication can uphold the Tri Hita Karana principle to ensure its sustainability. The key players involved in this endeavor include government officials, traditional leaders, and intellectuals who work as practitioners or activists in promoting the Tri Hita Karana principle in the Bali tourism industry's strategic implementation.

**Literature Review**

The first is from a paper titled "Implementation of Tri Hita Karana as a Strategy for Bali Tourism Based On Environmental Security" by I Putu Arya Aditia Utama and Muhammad Yamin from Jenderal Soedirman University. The abstract discusses the impact of tourism development on the environment in Bali and proposes the implementation of Tri Hita Karana as a solution. The researchers used the concept of environmental security and Tri Hita Karana to conduct qualitative research using library research techniques and secondary data sources such as books, journals, and websites. The results of the study suggest that the problem of tourism in Bali has negatively affected the natural beauty of the area. However, the implementation of Tri Hita Karana - which emphasizes human relationships with God, humans, and nature - is proposed as a strategy for developing environmentally sustainable tourism (Putra Aditya et al., 2016).

The second source is an article titled "Tri Hita Karana as a Key Factor in Bali's Sustainable Tourism" by Naufal Fikri Yusuf, published in ANTARA News. The abstract provides an overview of the historical background of tourism development in Bali, which originated in the 1930s and received support from the tourism office of the Dutch East Indies government. Bali’s natural beauty and cultural richness attracted foreign tourists, and after Indonesia gained independence, Balinese people began to start and own businesses. Despite political and natural challenges, tourism in Bali continued to thrive, but the growth of tourism-based industries has had negative effects on the local society, culture, and environment (Mahautama, 2014). One of the steps that must be taken is to realign Bali's tourism with its roots, which are based on the local philosophy of Tri Hita Karana and the way of life in Bali. (Gorda & Anggria Wardani, 2020).

The third is from "Communication Strategy for Tri Hita Karana Tourism Awards & Accreditation Event in Building Bali Tourism Image" by I Dewa Ayu Harini Putri from Satya Wacana Christian University. This research identifies the Bali tourism image through the Tri Hita Karana Tourism Awards & Accreditation event. The researcher utilized a descriptive qualitative methodology,
collecting data through observation, interviews, and document analysis. The findings revealed that the Tri Hita Karana Tourism Awards & Accreditation event serves as a means to recognize and appreciate tourism stakeholders who implement the Tri Hita Karana concept in their management of tourism accommodation facilities. The event also becomes a means to increase awareness and participation of the community in preserving Bali’s culture and environment. The communication strategy for the event consists of four stages, namely: planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. The communication activities include: socialization, promotion, publication, documentation, and reporting. The communication media used are: print media, electronic media, online media, and interpersonal media. The communication messages conveyed are: the importance of applying Tri Hita Karana in tourism activities, the benefits of participating in the event, the appreciation and recognition of the winners, and the invitation to join the next event (Ayu & Putri, 2016).

**Theoretical Framework**

Peter L. Berger's theory of dialectical thinking proposes a framework consisting of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, which highlights society's role in shaping individuals and their subsequent outcomes. Berger explores the nature of both objective and subjective reality through the processes of dialectical objectification, internalization, and externalization. This theoretical perspective elucidates the reciprocal relationship between knowledge and the sociocultural context in which it is constructed. The process involves the simultaneous activation of three impulses: 1) externalization (the adaptation of individuals to the institutionalized products of the socio-cultural world), 2) objectification (the external manifestation of human reality), and 3) internalization (the identification of individuals with the social systems and organizations to which they belong). From these theoretical assumptions, we can infer that communication is a construct, since it always takes place at a rudimentary level message, communicator, medium, communicator, context, motive.

The practice of tourism communication, if it relates to Berger and Lachman's construction of reality, is a simultaneous process within the cycle of the three simultaneous moments mentioned. The construction of tourism communication begins with institutionalization, and the construction process begins with institutionalization, institutionalized. When individuals or groups attempt to establish a set of role-playing guidelines for collective purposes, the concept of tourism communication must meet the needs of the group. Otherwise, the externalization of norms, rules, ethics, and cultural assimilation will not be achieved. Without successful externalization, tourism communication will not achieve the level of objectivist intersubjectivity (Putri & Suyanto, 2021). Tourism communications require approval by rationale, where the justification process is applied with all rationale so that each institution can maintain its existence and ensure safety in the justification process. From a socialization point of view, tourism communication continues to be built as an embassy, an institution that logically explains tourist interests to the whole community. The aim of this process is to reach a level of internalization so that tourism communication exists not only at the level of knowledge but also at the level of practical practice.

**Methodology**

The research in this study is grounded in the constructivist paradigm. Guba (1990) and Salim (2001) define constructivism as a paradigm that challenges the limitations of positivism by emphasizing the importance of direct observation skills. Ontologically, this paradigm is classified as "critical realism" because it believes that reality exists within the laws of nature. To overcome the limitations of methodological correctness, this approach requires triangulation using different methods, data sources, researchers, and theories.

The choice of constructivism as the research approach was motivated by the need to explore phenomena that cannot be easily quantified. Likewise, Sugiono (2012) argues that qualitative descriptive research, rooted in the philosophy of post-positivism, is suitable for examining the characteristics of natural objects, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument. Hence,
triangulation becomes crucial to ensure data validity. Regarding data analysis, an inductive approach is employed, prioritizing the interpretation of meaning over generalization in the research findings. (Sulaiman & Ahmadi, 2020).

Descriptive research focuses on capturing the essence of a phenomenon, emphasizing its qualities and the relationships between them. Unlike experimental research, descriptive research does not involve manipulating variables, but rather presents a natural condition as it exists. The only intervention in the study was the data collection process, which involved observation, interviews, and documentation (Pranawukir, 2021).

Results and Discussion
The people of Bali possess a strong awareness of the abundant natural resources that make the island an appealing tourism destination. These resources include breathtaking mountain landscapes, distinctive village characteristics, diverse flora and fauna, picturesque beaches, marine attractions, mangrove forests, and more. This natural allure forms the essence of Bali's tourism appeal. Moreover, the Balinese people recognize the immense socio-cultural resources that contribute to the island's uniqueness. These resources include religious practices, customs, amicable locals, arts, and traditional norms. Leveraging these resources strategically can create a distinctive image of Bali.

There exist contrasting perspectives between bureaucrats and intellectuals regarding tourism development in Bali. Bureaucrats perceive tourism as a rapidly-growing industry that competes with the once-dominant agricultural sector, which used to be the primary source of income for the Balinese people. On the other hand, intellectuals argue that the influx of visitors to Bali has brought about a significant transformation in the perspectives of the local population. This shift is a consequence of the rapid development and increased mobility of people from around the world towards the island.

Intellectual circles suggest that the agricultural sector is no longer considered the top priority in terms of economic potential. This has resulted in a shift in which more people are employed in the tourism service sector than in agriculture. In contrast, bureaucrats view the potential for tourism development as an opportunity for regional growth and development. Accordingly, the government should make a conscious and continuous effort to develop tourist attractions and facilities.

The Bali Provincial Government has been actively making improvements to areas and sites that are deemed to have potential as tourist destinations. In response to the increasing number of tourists visiting Bali, the local community is motivated to develop businesses related to tourism services.

As Bali continues to gain popularity as a global tourist destination, there is a need to enhance the quality of services and accommodations that are available to visitors. The aim is to provide sustainable international standard services, and to attract investors to invest in various forms of tourism infrastructure development.

Intellectuals emphasized that there is no reason to stop the development of the tourism industry, but a planning pattern that is continuously disciplined based on an awareness of cultural differentiation is still needed. This means that behavior towards ecology is a very serious challenge, there must be a universal Balinese philosophy that remains sustainable, or the extreme term is to keep Bali "different" from any other region.

Both bureaucrats and intellectuals agree that tourism has the potential to contribute to per capita growth and foster artistic creativity, which can lead to cultural revitalization and the strengthening of local cultures. However, intellectuals have also pointed out the many challenges that arise in
implementing the concept of cultural tourism. Deviations still occur, particularly due to the commercialization of tourism and the exploitation of natural resources such as water, beaches, cliffs, and mountains. This has led to a permissive attitude and tolerance towards tourism, which has significantly impacted the Balinese way of life. Consequently, Bali has undergone an evolution that has resulted in a cultural crisis and distortion.

Intellectuals have also raised concerns about the ethical distortions that arise from cultural distortions, including environmental, human, moral, and economic ethics. Additionally, the implementation of the concept of cultural tourism, which is intended to promote quality and sustainable tourism, is often viewed as merely a matter of discourse and rhetoric. The cultural crisis in Bali has been exacerbated during the era of autonomy, where the interests of individual districts and cities have led to the fragmentation of cultural tourism. This has resulted in the tourism industry viewing Bali as a strategic capital investment, which has had negative impacts on the ecological, cultural, and demographic unity of the island's integrated tourism targets. The main talk about Bali is only about profit. This is inconsistent with the Tri Hita Karana (THK) sustainability movement.

The interpretation of the Tri Hita Karana (THK) concept can vary depending on an individual's social status, stratum, or caste. The intellectuals involved in this study are advocates who have consistently promoted "cultural tourism" through organizations like the Tri Hita Karana Foundation and the THK Study Center led by Jan Hendrik Peters and Wisnu Wardana. Their objective is to integrate THK principles into all aspects of tourism development, including the overarching structure, rather than solely focusing on infrastructure. They believe that tourism should be grounded in a philosophical message that embodies the principles of THK. They are striving to contextualize the intrinsic cultural sanctity that was originally unique to Bali by challenging bureaucrats, custodians of tradition, and certain segments of society who view THK as invulnerable to the influence of global culture and the profit-driven desires of investors. Instead, they believe THK should be harmonized with the mission of preserving Bali's universal culture alongside pursuing economic growth and benefits.

An illustration of the concerns among Balinese intellectuals and intellectuals is constructed in the
following plot:

Figure 1. The Social Construction of Bali Tourism Reality Based on Cultural Tourism
Source: Processed by Researchers

This picture illustrates the existence of a binary opposition in Balinese intellectual thought between efforts to preserve Tri Hita Karana (THK) and government policies, which are seen as a crisis for THK preservation. It also highlights the differences between bureaucrats and institutions. Although economic growth is important, it has led to a situation where the interests of investors are prioritized over the wishes of the local people. Unfortunately, the mission of Bali's cultural tourism industry has become increasingly secularized.

Therefore, the construction of Bali tourism communication should be built in the management of messages about the implementation of THK as an impetus for the government as a policy-making institution. Regrettably, within the government institution, there remains a predominance of formalities in their positioning. The idealism expectations of the government/bureaucrats can be seen from the stages of reality construction as follows:
The figure shows that the construction of message management by the government always takes place in image management that the government seems to always pay attention to efforts to maintain THK in the midst of efforts to support investors. For intellectuals, this has yet to be seen as a real implementation, so there is a great need for communication construction initiated by intellectuals so that the government remains in a parallel channel, development and preservation.

In addition, the local traditional leaders serve as an important link between the government and the community. They are typically elder members of the village who hold bureaucratic positions and play a strategic role in upholding traditions and customs.

The figure shows that the thoughts (constructions) of Balinese traditional leaders who apply THK as a mandate and inner spirit to protect ancestral heritage must be continuously supported, so that the effects of aware, act, appeal, ask and advocate continue to be awakened. In several moments, intellectuals, bureaucrats and traditional leaders met in formal coordination. They discussed about THK according to their point of view. As a result, they formulated an agreement in disagreement about the social construction of THK reality in the application of Bali tourism communication.

Externalization: As bureaucrats, they must be actively involved in campaigns for the preservation of Balinese culture.

Objectivation: Investors tend to develop their business towards popularization, namely building Western style.

Institutionalization: THK Award as the core of the continuity of a culture-based tourism business.

Legitimacy: The government needs to convince the community that it is committed to promoting cultural tourism in Bali. This commitment can be demonstrated by protecting sacred landscapes.

Outreach: As a government, in order to respond to demands for the preservation of Balinese socio-cultural traditions and the application of THK, alignments must be clear, in the midst of the role of investors as a support for regional original income which is really needed.

Internalization: The goal of internalization is to achieve professionalism in facilitating investors, the needs of local people for income opportunities.

Externalization involves recognizing that Tri Hita Karana (THK) is a local wisdom as a universal insight.
The figure shows that the meeting point of agreement between intellectuals, bureaucrats and traditional leaders regarding the social construction of THK remains in an incomplete context, so the commitment to implementing THK has not been fully implemented. However, at least the consensus minimalism has been formed, so it is very possible, policies regarding THK in the implementation of Bali tourism communications can be realized in stages.

The figure presented also indicates that the key challenges in constructing effective communication for Bali tourism are the government and investors. The messaging in tourism communication practices tends to be shaped by the government within an ethical and formal framework. Bali, however, is not solely a static cultural entity, but must evolve in the realm of modernity, constantly seeking to cater to consumer satisfaction by promoting its ancestral local wisdom in a more dynamic manner. This stands in contrast to the perspective of intellectuals who advocate for Bali to align with global cultural trends while utilizing Tri Hita Karana (THK) principles, as a response to the dominant influence of popular tourism. This means that all modern infrastructure that meets the level of consumer satisfaction must develop policies that are in favor of THK implementation. All tourism industry facilities must comply with the implementation of the THK. Therefore, a kind of formal certification is needed regarding their role in THK sustainability. THK is no longer an element of the communication mix of advertising, but a guideline for the development of the Bali tourism industry.

For this reason, tourism communication formulations are needed that are life, love and legal. THK is the orientation of daily life, "loved" and institutionalized at the same time. Bureaucrats perceive custodians of customs and traditions as communicators who act as extensions of the government. They have the ability to engage and educate various segments of society, both local and foreign, who play a significant role in shaping the tourism landscape of Bali. The recipients of this communication include not only tourists but also investors, who have a direct or indirect impact on the overall atmosphere of Bali’s tourism industry.

In the intellectual mind, the government is the most important communicator, and its policies can guide Bali's tourism industry direction. THK must have a program to bring about a change in the sustainability of THK's philosophy. By differentiation and local social empowerment, investors in the strategic cultural heritage of "Bali" by cultural tourism rather than popular tourism. condition. Regarding Communicants, Investors and Tourists, they are considered passive Communicant Elements. They visit Bali because of its uniqueness unlike any other place. Therefore, as long as
Bali can continue to practice THK's ideals in practice, tourists will still "appreciate" Bali. For investors, this factor is overwhelmingly profit-oriented. Their goal is to address the areas of capital that can yield the highest returns. When the government supports them in terms of economic growth, it becomes difficult to control how much investors commit to THK's sustainability philosophy.

As for the content of the message, according to experts, the message of tourism communication is to promote the tourism industry from the perspective of mass tourism orientation. If the government can build this awareness, Bali’s differentiation will not be lost. With mass tourism developing on a large scale, it becomes dangerous when Bali becomes less different from other travel destinations and no longer has its own cultural values."

**Conclusion**

The holistic construction between bureaucrats and intellectuals creates a ‘ternary’ communication model of the information transformation system. This information is relevant to building a tourist message that Bali is open but that all visitors need to understand and practice the transcendental philosophy of local wisdom. Transformation concerns all aspects of Balinese life, and we must strive to maintain the sustainability of THK's values, starting simple and up to the present day. Next, it is necessary to build a system that includes not only the infrastructure implementation but also the superstructure. These actions must be carried out based on the practical side of Tri Hita Karana with a realistic appreciation for investors, entrepreneurs, foundations and organizational movements who practice THK in their daily business. This study describes THK at three levels: philosophical description, normative, and real. On a philosophical level, THK is a legacy of local wisdom that contributes greatly to Bali’s uniqueness. On the other hand, there is a general tendency for bureaucratic and intellectual structures to compete for THK's proportional presence. In fact, the tourism industry in Bali already has the THK infrastructure nuances, but the rapid development of tourism has actually increased the chances of Western culture being born. As a result, a dichotomy exists between philosophical insight and Bali’s real phenomenon. This dichotomy also arises in idealistic and normative views. These two contradictions exist in the concept of Balinese tourism communication, leading to deviant structures, while jeopardizing Balinese differentiation, THK sustainability and other elements of transcendentalism.

Officials and intellectuals acknowledge the importance of upholding Tri Hita Karana (THK) as a local wisdom in Bali. However, the development of foreign cultural influences and the dominance of physical infrastructure projects that do not align with THK's mission of honoring Bali have led to a communication crisis faced by all sectors of society, especially bureaucrats and intellectuals. This realization has prompted intellectuals to critique the government (implicitly) and investors (explicitly) for overlooking many aspects of Balinese spirituality. Developing a tourism communication model in Bali that fully supports THK on a knowledge level is not an easy task.

To address this issue, the author proposes a solution that involves synthesizing these contrasting concepts. Both bureaucrats and intellectuals need to collaborate using the Information-Transformation-System Communication Model (ITS Communication Model) to promote Bali as a leading tourism destination. This model entails sharing information about Bali's unique qualities, particularly its sacred areas, and transforming the community to embrace local-cultural-transcendental wisdom. Additionally, a recognition system such as the THK Awards should be implemented to acknowledge individuals, institutions, and organizations that integrate THK principles into their business practices.

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