



An Analysis of Taman Ayun Temple as a Tourist Attraction Based on the 4A Concept

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Abstract—Taman Ayun Temple is one of the grandest temples in Bali, which has been designated as a World Cultural Heritage site by UNESCO since 2012. This designation significantly influenced the tourist attraction dynamics based on the 4A components: attraction, accessibility, amenities, and ancillary services. This study aims to analyze the existing condition of these components within and around the site using a descriptive qualitative methodology. Data were collected through direct field observations and comprehensive surveys conducted by the researcher, alongside literature reviews and in-depth interviews with the temple management. The findings indicate that while the historical attractions, layout, and structural authenticity remain highly appealing and deeply rooted in the Tri Mandala spatial concept, certain challenges exist. Based on the primary survey, issues such as material weathering from natural aging, uneven paving on pedestrian access roads, a lack of comprehensive localized informational signage for facilities, and English communication limitations among local vendors and staff were identified. Continuous periodic maintenance, strategic infrastructural upgrades, and language capacity building are essential to sustaining the site's global prominence and preserving its architectural heritage.

Keywords: tourism attraction; cultural tourism; Taman Ayun Temple; 4A concept; Bali

1. Introduction

The island of Bali has long been recognized as the jewel of Indonesian tourism, positioning itself as one of the most popular travel destinations worldwide. The primary appeal of the "Island of the Gods" lies not only in its stunning natural beauty such as pristine white sand beaches, lush mountainous landscapes, and scenic terraced rice paddies but also in its rich arts, culture, and Hindu religious traditions that are deeply rooted in every facet of community life. These authentic characteristics generate a cultural landscape that distinguishes Bali from other global tourist destinations. Concurrently, this unique identity has triggered an exponential year-over-year growth in domestic and international tourist arrivals. Alongside this rising volume of visitors, Bali's tourism industry is confronted with a major ongoing challenge: how to continuously improve infrastructure, upgrade service quality, and balance

the preservation of tourist attractions to ensure visitor comfort and safety without compromising the sustainability of the cultural heritage itself.

Within the discourse of regional tourism development and landscape architecture, destination growth can be evaluated holistically through the implementation of the 4A framework, which comprises attraction, accessibility, amenities, and ancillary services (Marpaung, 2002). As a complex, multidimensional system, these four fundamental tourism components are interconnected, interact dynamically, and heavily dictate the long-term spatial success and appeal of a tourism area (Cooper, 1995). Theoretically, the comprehensive implementation of the 4A components can be delineated as follows:

- a. Attractions: Refer to anything possessing distinct appeal, uniqueness, and value that serves as the primary driver for tourists to visit

a specific region (Inskeep, 1991). These attractions can be classified into natural, cultural, or man-made categories (Yoeti, 1996).

- b. **Accessibilities:** Encompass all transportation infrastructure and facilities, road conditions, and the relative ease with which tourists can travel to the destination from their points of origin.
- c. **Amenities:** Connote the support facilities required by tourists during their stay at the destination, including accommodation, restaurants, public restrooms, parking areas, and medical centers.
- d. **Ancillary Services:** Relate to the availability of organizations, institutional bodies, or management entities that govern the tourist destination, including informational services, tour guides, security, and local government policies (Soekadijo, 2000).

Maintaining a balance across all these aspects is highly crucial; if even a single component suffers from deficiencies, the overall tourist experience will decline, ultimately threatening the long-term sustainability of the destination (Soekadijo, 2016).

One premier tourist destination that flawlessly represents the richness of Balinese traditional architecture and the water management systems of a cultural landscape is the Taman Ayun Temple. Geographically, this temple is situated in Mengwi Village, Mengwi District, Badung Regency, Bali. This highly historic temple was constructed in the 17th century, specifically around 1634 AD (or Saka year 1556), by the first King of Mengwi, I Gusti Agung Putu (Widiarta, 2016). The Location Map of Taman Ayun Temple can be observed in the figure below.

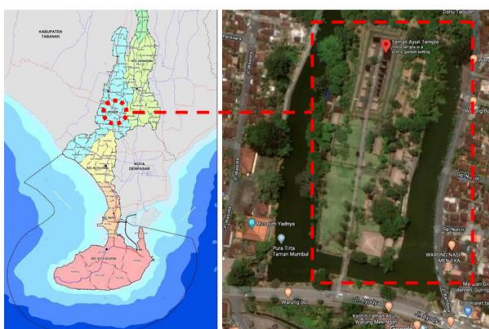


Figure 1. Location of Taman Ayun Temple
Source: Google Maps, 2026

The temple was initially utilized as a *paibon* or ancestral family temple for the royal family of the Puri Ageng Mengwi kingdom to venerate ancestral spirits and the deities enshrined across various major temples in Bali (Phalgunadi, 1991). Encircled by an expansive moat representing the cosmic ocean, the architecture of Taman Ayun Temple reflects high

aesthetic values, traditional civil engineering prowess, and the religious philosophy of the Balinese people during the golden age of the Mengwi Kingdom (Gelebet, 1986). The general visual layout of Taman Ayun Temple is shown in the figure below.



Figure 2. Aerial View of Taman Ayun Temple
Source: <https://kebudayaan.kemdikbud.go.id/bpcbbali>

The physical structures of traditional architecture in this temple are not mere structural designs, but rather concrete manifestations of the Balinese Hindu belief system and cosmology (Gelebet, 1986). The foundational spatial layout of this sacred complex adopts the Tri Mandala concept, which strictly segregates the area into three tiered hierarchies of sanctity (Purvia, 2018; Asnawa, 2014).

Nista Mandala (Jaba Pisan): The outermost zone, occupying the lowest level of sanctity (Purvia, 2018). This area serves as a transitional zone between the profane (outer) world and the sacred (inner) domain, and is frequently used for activities supporting ceremonies and daily preparations. Within this *Nista Mandala* area, there is a *wantilan* (large open pavilion) that historically served as a venue for ritual cockfighting. This structure can be seen in the figure below.

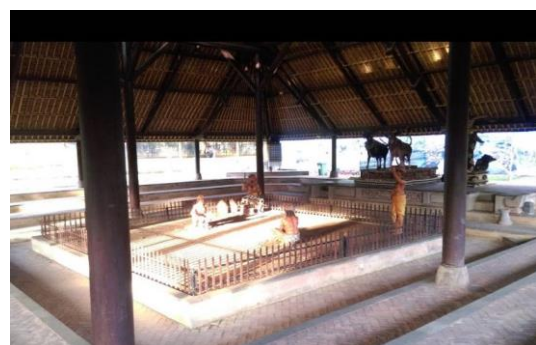


Figure 3. Wantilan of Taman Ayun Temple
Source: <https://www.thebalibible.com/details/tamanayuntemple>

Madya Mandala (Jaba Tengah): The middle zone, possessing an intermediate level of sanctity. This area typically hosts several pavilions (*bale*) used for sacred art performances that support ceremonies, as well as spaces where worshippers prepare ritual offerings (Asnawa, 2014). **Utama Mandala (Jeroan):** The innermost and most sacred zone, occupying the highest elevation. This zone is

exclusively utilized for core worship and prayer rituals. Inside, the principal shrines, such as the tiered Meru structures and the Padmasana (lotus seat) are erected. A visual representation of the *meru* and *padmasana* in this area is provided in the figure below.



Figure 4. Meru and Padmasana at Taman Ayun Temple
Source : Suryada, 2026

The Outstanding Universal Value embedded within the cultural landscape philosophy of the subak water management system and the Tri Mandala spatial structure prompted UNESCO to designate Taman Ayun Temple as a World Cultural Heritage site on June 29, 2012 (UNESCO, 2012). The temple is integrated into the cultural landscape network of Bali Province, which represents the Tri Hita Karana philosophy (the harmonious relationship between humans and God, humans and fellow humans, and humans and nature).

According to the Bali Provincial Tourism Office (2016), following this prestigious international designation, tourist arrivals to Taman Ayun Temple experienced a highly significant surge. Statistical data revealed an increase in visits ranging between 20% and 30%. Whereas the average daily visitor count prior to 2012 hovered between 500 and 600 people, the numbers consistently climbed post-UNESCO declaration to a range of 800 to 1,000 tourists per day, spiking even higher during peak holiday seasons (BPS Badung, 2020).

An increasing volume of human activity within and around this cultural heritage site naturally brings dual implications that must be managed with extreme caution (Giri, 2019). On one hand, the tourist surge successfully bolstered the local community's economy through the trade, transportation services, and accommodation sectors. On the other hand, exceeding the carrying capacity of the region can accelerate the physical degradation of traditional architectural materials due to both anthropogenic (human-induced) factors and natural elements such as weather conditions and structural aging (Jokilehto, 1999).

This underscores the critical importance of heritage conservation management—a structured effort to protect, maintain, and utilize historical remnants so that their values endure from generation

to generation (Jokilehto, 1999). Architectural conservation at a World Cultural Heritage site does not imply freezing a building in its original state without any human contact; rather, it involves maintenance, restoration (returning a structure to its original state using identical materials), or controlled adaptation, while adhering strictly to rigorous UNESCO guidelines regarding the authenticity of materials, design, location, and function. Any physical intervention on the site must thoroughly evaluate the long-term impacts on the historical and spiritual value of the structures.

Consequently, given the dynamic tension between the demands of physical preservation based on the Tri Mandala concept and massive tourism activities centered on the 4A framework, a comprehensive analytical study regarding the tourist attraction elements at Taman Ayun Temple is both timely and essential. This study aims to map out the strengths and weaknesses of each attraction component (attraction, accessibility, amenities, and ancillary services) through empirical field observations, as well as to formulate a heritage space preservation strategy and tourism quality enhancement plan aligned with its status as a World Cultural Heritage site.

2. Methods

This study used a descriptive qualitative methodological approach. This approach focuses on delineating empirical facts objectively based on real and actual conditions in the field without manipulating numerical variables (Sugiyono, 2010). The selection of a qualitative method rests on the fundamental assumption that spatial phenomena, architectural configurations, cultural settings, and social dynamics within a tourism ecosystem carry a high degree of complexity and overlap; hence, their meanings and conditions cannot be reduced merely to statistical figures, but instead require deep narrative elaboration (Moleong, 2008).

The data sources for this research rely fully on comprehensive primary data collection. Primary data were gathered directly at the Taman Ayun Temple study area using two primary techniques:

1. **Field Observation and Independent Survey:** The researcher conducted direct mapping, visual observations of the architectural conditions, tracking of tourist circulation flows, and inspections of available public amenities. This field survey was carried out intensively to document building material degradation, access conditions, amenity availability, and interaction patterns between tourists and local vendors.
2. **In-depth Interviews:** Structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted with key

informants, particularly the management team of Taman Ayun Temple (such as Mr. I Made Suandi and other operational staff). These interviews aimed to extract detailed data regarding the institutional governance system, historical tourism management, daily operational hurdles, and site maintenance strategies following the UNESCO designation.

All raw data collected from observations, architectural photographic documentation, and interview transcripts were systematically organized and analyzed interactively. The data analysis process followed the stages of data reduction (sorting data relevant to the 4A focus), data display (structuring and describing findings), and conclusion drawing linked to tourism and architectural conservation theories.

3. Results and Discussion

The analysis of tourist attractions in the Taman Ayun Temple zone was performed by dissecting the four basic tourism components (4As) in detail to determine the readiness of the spatial layout, physical infrastructure, and institutional management in serving a global-tier tourism ecosystem. The following section provides an in-depth explanation of the field survey findings and analysis:

Tourist Attractions (Attractions)

The attraction component serves as the core axis and magnetic force that guarantees the sustainability of Taman Ayun Temple as a priority destination for global tourists. The characteristics of the attractions at this temple are highly complex and multidimensional, encompassing historical value, majestic traditional architecture, and a man-made landscape in the form of a massive water moat surrounding the sacred complex. The temple is not a dead monument but rather a living monument whose spiritual and religious functions remain actively practiced by the local customary (adat) community. A view of the moat at Taman Ayun Temple is provided below.



Figure 5. Pond of Taman Ayun Temple
Source : Suryada, 2026

Architecturally and spatially, the Taman Ayun Temple complex spans an area of approximately four hectares. The zone strictly applies the Tri Mandala spatial philosophy, dividing the compound into three courtyards with stepped elevations that represent Balinese Hindu sacred cosmology, moving from the lower world up toward the seat of the gods at the peak of Mount Mahameru:

1. First Courtyard (*Nista Mandala / Jaba Pisan*): The outermost zone that functions as a public and transitional space. Visitors access this area by crossing a single connecting bridge built over the wide protective moat. Expansive lawns, shady trees, and a large wantilan dominate this zone. Here, visitors frequently relax and enjoy the serene garden landscape before advancing into more sacred spaces. In ancient times, this wantilan was used for ritual cockfights (*tajen*) as part of the *Tabuh Rah* ceremony series.
2. Second Courtyard (*Madya Mandala / Jaba Tengah*): Located at a higher ground elevation than the *Nista Mandala* zone. To enter this middle courtyard, visitors pass through a majestic *Candi Bentar* (split gateway). This courtyard contains several sacred pavilions, including the *Bale Pelik* and *Bale Gong* (a pavilion for housing the gamelan orchestra). The landscape design here is more formal, signaling the transition toward purely sacred ground.
3. Third Courtyard (*Utama Mandala / Jeroan*): The most sacred zone, occupying the spatial position with the highest elevation across the entire complex. This area is enclosed by sturdy red-brick walls (*tembok penyengker*). Its main entrance features a beautifully carved *Kori Agung* (split-pediment gateway) positioned in the center. This *Kori Agung* is closed to the general public and is opened exclusively for major religious ceremonies (*Piodalan*). Inside the *Utama Mandala*, dozens of multi-tiered *Meru* shrines (with layered thatched roofs made of *ijuk* fiber) tower upward, ranging from single-tiered to eleven-tiered structures. These *Meru* structures serve as holy abodes (*sthana*) for the deities residing on Bali's sacred mountains, such as Mount Agung, Mount Batur, and Mount Batukaru.

Field Survey Findings on the Attraction Aspect: Based on direct observations and field surveys conducted by the researcher, the visual and spatial appeal of Taman Ayun Temple remains highly preserved and authentic. The management strictly prohibits tourists from entering the *Utama Mandala* area to preserve its sanctity. Tourists are only permitted to circumvent the *Utama Mandala* via a designated pathway outside the perimeter wall, allowing them to appreciate the full view of the lined *Meru* structures.

Nonetheless, the researcher identified preservation issues requiring extra attention. The age of the traditional architectural materials (such as red brick, teak wood, ijuk fiber, and paras volcanic stone) spanning hundreds of years, combined with Bali's extreme tropical weather fluctuations (heavy rainfall and intense sunlight), has triggered structural weathering on several carved ornaments and the *Candi Bentar*.



Figure 6. Damage at Taman Ayun Temple
Source : Suryada, 2026

Moss growth and erosion on the paras stone materials are quite pronounced in several corners of the shrines. Although the temple management, in cooperation with the cultural heritage preservation bureau, has carried out periodic maintenance, the standardization of restoration techniques for these ancient materials must be constantly and carefully upgraded. This is critical to avoid damaging the essence of authenticity, which remains a mandatory requirement for its UNESCO World Heritage status.

Accessibility (Accessibilities)

The Taman Ayun Temple tourism zone possesses a highly strategic and superior level of geographic connectivity. The destination sits directly along a main provincial road corridor, specifically on Jalan Ayodya, Mengwi Village. In terms of travel distance, the temple is located roughly 18 kilometers northwest of Denpasar, the administrative capital of Bali Province, or approximately a 60-minute drive from I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport, depending on road traffic density.



Figure 7. Access road leading to Taman Ayun Temple
Source : Google Earth 2026

Following the 2012 UNESCO declaration, the local government of Badung Regency implemented massive infrastructure investments to restructure the accessibility corridor leading to the Mengwi area. This included widening arterial roads, configuring shady landscape vegetation

along the streets (streetscape), and installing clear directional road signs. Transport modes to Taman Ayun Temple are currently highly accessible, including metered taxis, ride-hailing services, private car rentals, and large-capacity tour buses.

Field Survey Findings on the Accessibility Aspect: From the micro-infrastructure observation surveys conducted by the researcher within and around the outermost perimeter of the temple area, it was found that vehicular lanes and the capacity of the staging parking area are highly representative. The parking lot is expansive, neatly segmented for large tour buses, private cars, and motorcycles, and equipped with natural shade from mature trees. However, along the pedestrian paths connecting the outer parking lot to the ticket booth and the main bridge entrance, the researcher noted several uneven and undulating segments of paving blocks.



Figure 8. Damaged paving blocks on Ayodya Streets
Source : Google Earth 2026

This condition poses a potential hazard to pedestrians, particularly elderly tourists, individuals with disabilities, or visitors utilizing wheelchairs and strollers. Enhancing universal design standards on pedestrian pathways is absolutely imperative to guarantee safety and comfort across all visitor demographics.

Tourist Facilities (Amenities)

The presence of supporting tourism facilities (amenities) is vital for extending visitor stay duration and boosting tourist satisfaction within the Taman Ayun Temple area. Generally, amenities around this zone have grown rapidly and are available in sufficient quantities. Public sanitation facilities, such as restrooms, are well-maintained in terms of cleanliness and have an adequate number of cubicles to handle visitor surges. Resting facilities, including pavilions, park benches, and shaded relaxation spots under canopy trees, are abundant. In the culinary and souvenir sectors, the zone is surrounded by various local vendor kiosks retailing signature Balinese handicrafts, clothing, and light snacks or refreshments. Within the buffer zone outside the temple complex, tourists can easily find various local food stalls (*warung*) serving traditional dishes like *babi guling* (roast pig), *lawar*, and *sate lilit*, alongside small-to-medium scale cafes.



Figure 9. Hotels and eateries around Taman Ayun
Source: <https://www.google.com/travel/hotels/TamanAyun>

Field Survey Findings on the Amenity Aspect: Based on the survey and direct interactions between the researcher and small business operators around the area, two operational weaknesses were identified in the amenity sector. First, there is a shortage of integrative local signage systems inside the zone to guide tourists efficiently to specific culinary kiosks or restrooms. The absence of detailed area maps at several strategic intersections frequently leaves tourists confused about the layout of supporting facilities. Second, foreign language communication proficiency—particularly English as the universal language of tourism—remains relatively low among small-scale local accommodation operators, street souvenir vendors, and traditional food stall owners. This language barrier restricts economic interaction potential and limits cultural exchange between local residents and international tourists.

Ancillary Services

The institutional governance structure of tourism at Taman Ayun Temple is managed through a professional collaborative framework. Management is not run monolithically by a single entity; instead, it operates via a synergy among the royal family of Puri Ageng Mengwi (as historical heirs), the Mengwi Customary Village (Desa Adat), and the Badung Regency Government. This integrated management system is tailored to balance economic revenue targets from tourism ticketing with strict preservation mandates for ancestral heritage.



Figure 10. Management Structure of Taman Ayun Temple
Source: Widiarta, 2016

Based on empirical data from interviews with Mr. I Made Suandi as a representative of the temple's operational management team, the daily operations and maintenance of this 4-hectare compound are sustained by 22 organic workers. The distribution of this human resource workforce is categorized specifically according to the workload of each division to ensure the tourism site operates at peak performance daily:

No.	Department / Job Position	Number of Personnel
1	Treasurer & Management Coordinator	1 Person
2	Administrative Staff & Ticket Booth Officers	4 People
3	Area Security Officers (<i>Security & Pecalang</i>)	4 People
4	Cleanliness & Landscape Maintenance Staff (<i>Gardeners</i>)	11 People
5	Religious Clergy (<i>Pemangku</i>) & Temple Attendants (<i>Pengayah</i>)	4 People

Sources: Suryada, 2026

The table above demonstrates that the primary focus of management centers heavily on cleanliness and landscape garden maintenance, as reflected by the dominance of gardeners and cleaning personnel (11 people). This allocation is highly logical given that the temple's core identity is "Taman Ayun" (beautiful garden), meaning the exterior aesthetics of lawns, trees, and moat water clarity must be flawlessly maintained at all times.

Field Survey Findings on the Service Aspect: Regarding historical information dissemination and architectural interpretation for independent travelers (FIT - Free Independent Travelers) who do not utilize tour guide services, the management team has taken proactive steps. They have installed static historical information boards and regulation signage at critical points using a bilingual format (Indonesian and English). The management has also instituted strict dress codes (requiring the use of *kamen* sarongs and sashes) to respect the temple's sanctity.

However, the researcher's observations indicate that these information delivery media remain overly rigid and conventional. In the modern era of digitized tourism, there is currently no integration of modern technology such as QR Codes that visitors can scan with smartphones to generate interactive audio-visual guides (Audio Guide System) detailing the specific history of each *Meru* structure or the *subak* philosophy of Mengwi. Furthermore, ground staff—particularly ticket agents and security guards—require regular training to enhance foreign language communication skills and international hospitality standards (*hospitality excellent service*) to interact more fluidly with international tourists.

4. Conclusion

This comprehensive analytical study of tourism elements at Taman Ayun Temple, evaluated through the 4A component framework (Attraction, Accessibility, Amenities, and Ancillary Services), yields one primary conclusion: Taman Ayun Temple possesses an exceptionally strong foundation of cultural attractions, majestic architectural landscapes, and historical legitimacy, fully justifying its status as

a UNESCO World Heritage site. The sustained preservation of the *Tri Mandala* spatial synergy serves as the destination's absolute asset. The institutional management system is also fully functional in handling daily operations.

Nonetheless, based on direct findings from surveys and field observations conducted by the researcher, several basic challenges and weaknesses require tactical and strategic intervention to guarantee sustainable tourism quality. These challenges include:

1. Natural weathering of ancient paras stone materials and traditional architectural ornaments due to extreme weather exposure and structural aging.
2. Suboptimal pedestrian infrastructure in the form of uneven paving blocks along pedestrian paths, which hinders universal accessibility.
3. A lack of spatial guidance sign systems (*signage*) and interactive digital information (such as QR codes) to direct visitor streams toward supporting amenities.
4. Limited foreign language proficiency (specifically English) among local merchants, field operational staff, and small-scale lodging managers, resulting in suboptimal cultural interpretation and premium service delivery.

Therefore, it is recommended that the collaborative management of Taman Ayun Temple, alongside the Badung Regency Government, reformulate the site's maintenance blueprint. Top priority must be directed toward the physical conservation of ancient building materials by involving certified cultural heritage conservation experts, immediate repairs to handicap-accessible pedestrian pathways, the installation of integrated digital information board systems (*smart tourism concept*), and the execution of language capacity building and hospitality-standard service training programs for the local community and internal staff. Through these holistic measures, the authentic values of Taman Ayun Temple will be preserved, and the tourism experience provided will become truly world-class.

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