

HINDU MARRIAGE RITUALS IN DENPASAR: COMMODIFICATION IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

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Received Date : 17-07-2025
Accepted Date : 24-08-2025
Published Date : 31-08-2025

ABSTRACT

A prominent example of globalization's effect on local traditions can be seen in Denpasar's marriage rituals, where modern global culture often vies with a rich local heritage. This phenomenon has implications for transforming values in society's culture to the private realm in the marriage ceremony as a religious practice, which is now one of the economic potentials through commodification. This study focuses on the commodification of Hindu marriage in Denpasar City in the global era. This study aims to find out what forms and how it occurs. This study is a qualitative study with a cultural studies paradigm. Data is collected through observation, interview, and document study methods. The theory of Commodification and social practices are used to analyze the problems of the study. Data analysis is carried out descriptively and interpretatively by describing the phenomena that occur critically. The study results show that the forms of commodification found in marriage in the global era in Denpasar City are socio-cultural and economic. The factors underlying these forms are globalization, consumer culture, media, and individualism.

Keywords: *commodification, tradition, Hindu marriage, Denpasar City*

INTRODUCTION

The Hindu community in Bali has a unique and diverse religious culture, one of which is that they are bound by customary obligations, from the family, *banjar* (small residential neighborhoods), to the traditional village. The customs inherent in the Hindu community in Bali are the consequences of being a citizen (*krama*) in a *banjar* or traditional village. Traditional villages have rules (*awig-awig*), which regulate the etiquette of social interaction in society to realize a stable order of life (Surpha, 2002: 50). The life of the Balinese Hindu community is essentially communal, so carrying out religious activities always involves many people in cooperation.

Community life in Hinduism begins when the household life period (*grahasta*) is entered after the teenage period (*brahmacari*) has ended. If studied from Hindu literature, marriage is known as *pawiwahan*, which comes from the word *wiwaha* or increasing holiness and spirituality (Sudarsana, 2005: 2). According to the Hindu view, marriage is a sacred obligation (*yadnya*) or human nature that must be lived. The purpose of marriage is to form a happy family and to obtain offspring as the successor to the family lineage and as the savior of the parents' spirits if they later die.

In its development, religious marriage rituals have undergone a process of globalization. Globalization is a process of global economic, social, cultural, and political connections increasingly moving in different directions worldwide and penetrating human consciousness (Barker, 2004: 76). The impact of globalization has brought commodification to Hindu marriage ceremonies in Bali by making sacred ceremonies into commodities. Marriage ceremonies become a source of family prestige, an event to display abilities or social status. Marriage ceremonies have also developed into commodities that are consumptive and hedonistic.

Denpasar city is the capital of Bali Province. Its society is an urban society that has high work productivity and is competitive. In a study of urban sociology, Simmel (1903) noted several characteristics of urbanism that occur in urban society. The existence of an indifferent attitude (*blasé attitude*) that appears in urban society shows that they lack sensitivity and concern, an increase in the quantity of labor working time, large money exchanges, and rational calculations in meeting the community's needs. Indirectly, this describes the Denpasar city society in carrying out religious ceremonies.

Denpasar City, as an autonomous city, makes it an economic center. However, Denpasar City also has strong religious customs amidst the modernity that occurs. The community is required by circumstances to carry out ceremonies effectively and practically within the limited time in the world of work. In addition, costs are required to be as efficient as possible because of the high need of urban society to live in the city.

In the last decade, the Hindu community in Bali has been implementing wedding ceremonies outside the home, such as in a *griya* (houses of the nobility in Bali) or a specific place. The convenience offered is that the bride and groom's families do not need to bother carrying out a conventional wedding ceremony at their home because everything has been prepared professionally. The wedding ceremony industry is also growing rapidly with the proliferation of *griya*, which offers wedding packages in Denpasar City. *Griya* are

the residences of Brahmins (nobility in Bali) or Hindu priests, and they are also places for Hindus to ask for guidance to understand religious teachings.

In its development, the *griya* experienced commodification, namely a change from their use value or function to exchange or sale value. Commodification, according to Vincent Mosco (2009: 129), is the process of changing the value of a product/service from its use value to sale value. Commodification sees the religious ritual of marriage as a commodity where the commodification process that occurs is marked by the process of production, distribution, and consumption. Production is forming a new tradition: the marriage ritual in the *griya* by selling the cheap and practical packages for marriage rituals. Consumption is society becoming an audience, namely a group of people with the same ideology/interests and becoming the target.

The marriage ritual has been commodified with the emergence of the marriage ceremony industry, starting from its implementation using professional agents to the place to carry it out. This phenomenon changes something initially valued based on its utility value into something valued based on its exchange value. In addition, the marriage ritual industry has become a new tradition growing rapidly. Therefore, how and why the commodification of the Hindu marriage rituals in Denpasar needs to be studied.

METHODS

In this study, the approach used is qualitative because this study is to describe and analyze phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts of a person or group. The snowball sampling technique is applied to determine the location and informants. The location of the study will be carried out in three *griya* in Denpasar City. First, Griya Gana Mandala located in Padang Sambian Sub-district, West Denpasar District. Second, Griya Padukuhan Wanasari located in Panjer Sub-district, South Denpasar District. Third, Pasraman Gases Bali, Sesetan Sub-district, South Denpasar District. The informants in this study include *sulinggih*, *kelian adat* (the traditional head of a Balinese village), the head of the *griya* foundation, and people who get married in the *griya*.

This study focuses on aspects of commodification that occur in Hindu marriage rituals in Denpasar City. The data sources that will be used are descriptions of the observations and interviews' results, recorded oral speech transcripts, and images obtained at the research locations. The method used in data collection is descriptive, with

observation techniques (listening), recording techniques, and field informant notes. After all the data has been collected, a descriptive-analytical method is used to analyze the data to provide a detailed picture of the phenomenon being studied. In analyzing the data, the commodification theory of Vincent Mosco (2009) and the social practice theory of Pierre Bourdieu (1990) explain the form of commodification and the reasons behind it in Hindu marriage rituals in Denpasar. After the data is processed and analyzed, it is continued with the presentation of the results of the data analysis written descriptively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Denpasar City is the capital of Bali Province, located in the middle of the island of Bali, which is also the center of government, education, and economy. This strategic location is very profitable both in terms of economy and government because it is the central point or center of various activities and a link with other districts.

The commodification of wedding ceremonies in Denpasar City is manifested in various forms, changing traditional practices and giving rise to new market-driven services. Commodities are products of production made to be exchanged in the market. In other words, commodities are anything produced to be sold. Commodification can lead to eliminating cultures with distinctive qualities in a region.

In Hinduism, the marriage ceremony is part of the *Catur Asrama* (the four stages of human life), which means *brahmacari* (study period), *grastha* (family period), *wanaprastha* (seclusion period), and *bhisuka* (release period). The marriage ceremony in Hinduism in Bali is very sacred because it is a change in status from the *brahmacari* period to *grahasta asrama*. The change in social status in the marriage ceremony gives the bride and groom social responsibility because they become part of the *Krama* in the community. *Krama* are members of traditional communities such as *banjar* or *pengempon pura*, and their ways of life include rights and obligations regulated by customary rules (*awig-awig*). *Krama* is very attached to the activities of *ngayah* and *menyame braya*, which are cooperation activities in traditional and religious activities. The concept of *ngayah* and *menyame braya* in Balinese society has a deep meaning of cooperation because the activities do not demand compensation but become a tradition of reciprocity.

Social and Cultural Commodification

Traditional wedding ceremonies in Hinduism in Bali have a long series of ceremonies. Starting from finding *dewasa ayu* (the best time to get married) by asking the

sulinggih. Then, *nyedek*, or when the groom's family comes to the bride's family to explain and provide information about the time and series of wedding ceremonies. Next, the *ngidih* is a ceremony for the groom to pick up and propose to the bride, followed by the groom inviting the bride to the house that will be used as the place where the wedding ceremony will be held. Then, *the mekalan-kalan* ceremony, where the bride and groom carry around agricultural products as a form of life of an agrarian society in starting a household life.



Figure 1. The *Mekalan-kalan* process of the bride and groom carrying the agricultural products

The next ceremony is *the widi widana*, where the bride and groom do *natab* (waft hand to their bodies) in the *bale* (gazebo where the ceremony takes place) to ask for blessings from the ancestors and God. There are requirements for the validity of the marriage ceremony, namely Tri Upasaksi, which is a form of implementation that the marriage ceremony is valid in *sekala* (the visible, tangible world) and *niskala* (the invisible, spiritual world). *Tri upasaksi* consists of *Dewa Saksi* (asking for blessings from God and the ancestors), *Manusa Saksi* (the presence of customary and civil servants, family, and invitations to witness the ceremony), and *Bhuta Saksi* (lighting a fire on the *penimpug* (a series of 3 bamboos tied together) as a sign of asking Bhuta kala (evil spirit) not to disturb the ceremony procession).

Marriage is seen as *dharma*, a sacred obligation to live according to religious teachings. This concept includes the obligation to form a harmonious family, continue the lineage, and contribute to society. In the marriage ceremony, men and women have

complementary roles. Although Balinese society adheres to a patrilineal system, the role of women in the family and society is vital. The marriage ceremony is not only a personal event but also a communal event. Family, relatives, and the community participate in the ceremony, providing the bride and groom support and blessings. This support shows that marriage strengthens social ties and harmony in society.

Wedding ceremonies, especially in the Hindu tradition in Bali (*pawiwahan*), have profound religious meanings and are rich in socio-cultural values that are important to the community. Socio-cultural values contained in wedding ceremonies are important moments to strengthen relationships between extended families. The bride and groom's families gather, get to know each other, and create kinship bonds. This relationship reflects the values of cooperation and togetherness highly respected in Balinese society. Wedding ceremonies involve the active participation of community members, both in preparing and implementing the ceremony. This contribution strengthens social cohesion and a sense of togetherness in the community. The community helps and supports each other, creating a harmonious and familial atmosphere. Wedding ceremonies are a means to preserve traditions and customs passed down from generation to generation. The rituals, traditional clothing, and symbols used in the ceremony have deep philosophical and cultural meanings. By carrying out wedding ceremonies according to tradition, the community maintains the continuity of their culture. Wedding ceremonies change a person's social status from single to married. In traditional societies, family status plays an important role in social life and gives new responsibilities to individuals.

As an urban society, Denpasar City Society has customs amid modernity. The life of the city community in carrying out ceremonies still applies to the life of an agrarian society. All processes use agricultural products and are carried out communally. In the wedding ceremony in the traditional era in Denpasar City, various traditions involve the surrounding community and extended family.

Nanceb Tetaring is a tradition of building tents with cooperation by the community as a sign of starting a series of wedding ceremonies. *Tetaring* is a bamboo tent with a *klangsah* roof (woven coconut leaves). It aims to make the community feel ownership of the ceremonial activities that will be carried out together.

Figure 2. Nanceb Tetaring Tradition



Then, *mebat* tradition is a cooking activity from slaughtering animals to cooking together, which will be used for food during the wedding ceremony procession. After *mebat*, the cooked food is divided per *tanding* (portion). Then, the food is distributed to relatives and the community, and verbal invitations are made regarding the wedding ceremony that will be held. This tradition is called *ngejot*. The *mejenukan* tradition is the presence of the community at the bride's house, bringing *aban-aban*, namely basic ingredients such as rice, sugar, coffee, and other ingredients used in the wedding ceremony.

Continued with *mejejaitan* is a community activity that prepares *banten* and *upakara*, or the offerings used during the wedding ceremony procession. At the same time, the men decorate the bride's house with leaves and flowers. Then, the *medelokan* tradition is the presence of the banjar community as *manusa upasaksi*, and the wedding ceremony is carried out legally.

Figure 3. Mejejaitan Tradition



Overall, the wedding ceremony in the traditional era is not only a religious event but also an important socio-cultural event for society—the need for broader community participation involving various roles in carrying out the wedding ceremony. The values include social ties, preserving traditions, and inheriting noble values.

In its development, globalization has brought significant changes to various aspects of life, including Hindu wedding ceremonies. Globalization brings the values of modernity, individualism, and consumerism that can influence how Hindu society views wedding ceremonies. Wedding ceremonies are increasingly seen as an event to show power and social status and wealth rather than just a sacred bond.

Consumerist lifestyles and global trends promoted by the mass media influence individual expectations and desires for wedding ceremonies. Global trends can shift individual preferences from local traditions to profane activities, causing the loss of unique cultural practices. Globalization can increase access to information and resources, allowing couples to plan more diverse and creative wedding ceremonies according to their wishes. Overall, globalization has brought complex changes to Hindu wedding ceremonies.

According to the results of an interview with Ida Pandita Dukuh as the *Sulinggih* of Griya Pakuwana as follows.

"The purpose of yadnya is an offering of how we carry out sacred activities sincerely, but in principle, those media are made to ease the burden on society and make things easier because in this era of globalization, we are chased by time and so on. Communities, foundations, organizations, religious buildings, whatever, *griya* is made to be effective, but now what is happening is a refraction where the aim is to help the community but now many are used for projects." (Interview on September 18, 2024)

Wedding ceremonies in the global era experience a blend of noble traditions and modern influences. Some rituals are adapted to suit a more dynamic lifestyle. For example, some ceremony stages are simplified or combined to save time and money. Ceremonies previously heavily influenced by local and religious traditions are now beginning to adopt more modern elements. They are mixed with elements from various cultures, for example, the emergence of the tradition of exchanging rings as a form of the groom proposing to the bride, then the reception tradition as a party when the wedding ceremony is over. These changes create a dynamic where local and traditional values can collide with global demands that are more commercial, practical, and materialistic.

In the global era, social media plays a significant role in determining the perception

of a wedding. This phenomenon encourages couples to adjust decorations, wedding attire, and other details to fit the popular aesthetic standards on social media. Changes in Hindu wedding ceremonies in the global era, such as Balinese traditional wedding attire (*payas agung*) and ceremonial accessories such as *songket* clothes, kris, and traditional jewelry, refer to the clothes of the Balinese Kingdom (Puri). Decorating the ceremony venue with more luxurious and modern. Then, digital invitations, photography, and videography are used, from pre-wedding to showing the ceremony live (livestream). In the pre-wedding photos, the bride and groom do several sessions according to the themes, such as wearing traditional Balinese clothes and casual clothes. Entertainment in the ceremony and reception is accompanied by a gamelan, dances, modern music, and artist performances. Food catering with stalls ranging from Balinese specialties to foods from various countries, Transportation to pick up the bride by horse-drawn carriage, elephant, or luxury car, and the implementation of the ceremony in a building or commercial place. These are the examples of social and cultural commodification in Hindu's Marriage Rituals in Bali.

Social commodification in wedding ceremonies refers to the process by which social aspects of the ceremony, such as social status, family relationships, and cultural traditions, are transformed into commodities traded or used to achieve specific social goals. Symbols of power make wedding ceremonies often used to demonstrate social status and wealth. A grand and luxurious wedding ceremony can be a symbol of them. The bride and groom and their families try to hold a luxurious and glamorous wedding ceremony that can enhance their image and prestige in the eyes of society. Invitations to the wedding ceremony can signify social recognition and access to certain social circles. These phenomena turn the wedding ceremony into an event to build social capital that can be used for personal or group purposes and interests.

The emergence of the *griya* industry has helped the implementation of wedding ceremonies easily and quickly. *Griya* has become a cultural industry providing places and everything needed for wedding ceremonies and services by professional agents. This transformation reflects the shift in social values from cooperation to dependence on professional services. People now prefer the convenience and efficiency offered by professional services, even though this means the loss of some aspects of togetherness and social interaction that used to be close in preparing the ceremony.

Economic Commodification

Economic commodification is the process by which goods, services, ideas, or people are transformed into marketable items. This process involves assigning economic value to something previously without market value. This process involves assigning exchange or sale value to something with utility, symbolic, or social value. Economic commodification in wedding ceremonies refers to the process by which aspects of a wedding ceremony that are supposed to be sacred and culturally meaningful are transformed into commodities traded for economic gain. Hindu wedding ceremonies are so closely tied to an agrarian culture that uses natural materials and is carried out through cooperation that they have become commercial activities with the emergence of the wedding ceremony industry. Commercialization has penetrated elements of traditional ceremonies. Many traditional elements of wedding ceremonies, which were previously prepared independently or communally, have now become traded commodities, such as equipment. Balinese people shift from making their offerings (*banten*) communally (*ngayah*) to buying ready-made offerings or ordering from service providers. The use of professional workers for various aspects of the ceremony is becoming more common. This shift includes the *pemangku* (ceremony leader), bridal make-up artist (*payas madik*), photographer, videographer, and catering, which replaces the tradition of cooking together (*mebat*).

Wedding ceremonies in the global era are complex and provide society with high standards. In the global era, the needs of people in the city of Denpasar have also increased along with high economic needs. In addition, there are job responsibilities that require tight working hours. This phenomenon encourages people to worry when carrying out traditional ceremonies that have high costs and relatively long times—especially the wedding ceremony, which is a ceremony that must be carried out so that various changes occur.

The emergence of the *griya* cultural industry or conventional places that serve the implementation of wedding ceremonies easily and quickly. *Griya* become a cultural industry that provides places and all the needs of wedding ceremonies and services by professional agents. In an interview with Ida Bhagawan Gana, he gave an understanding of the cultural industry as follows:

"Finally, with the rigidity or lack of flexibility in the mindset, ideas emerged - there are communities, there are organizations, there are foundations to create a place for what exactly to facilitate the movement of the Hindu community in Bali in the

yadnya order if the place is not made automatically the community will be afraid in the context of *yadnya* because it seems expensive, seems complicated, and so on." (Interview on May 5, 2024)

The wedding ceremony industry refers to the business sector that includes various wedding-related products and services. This industry includes everything needed to plan, organize, and execute a wedding ceremony from start to finish and all the elements involved in creating a wedding ceremony, including services, goods, and commercial activities aimed at meeting the married couple's needs.

In Denpasar City, places to carry out modern wedding ceremonies have emerged as a response to the needs of city residents who want to realize an ideal, practical wedding ceremony at an affordable cost. Marriage in the global era, which has high standards, places an economic burden on society.

The wedding industry in Bali offers a variety of packages that combine various services, making it easier for couples but at an affordable cost. Packages range from economical for intimate weddings to luxurious for specific groups. These packages include location, decoration, catering, makeup, documentation, and Balinese traditional components. The cost of a traditional Balinese wedding varies greatly depending on the scale and luxury desired, such as a place for the traditional ceremony, decoration, catering, bridal wear and family uniforms, priests, offerings, and traditional music such as *rindik*. It includes pre-wedding photos, transportation, invitations, and souvenirs.

Overall, the economic commodification of Balinese wedding ceremonies shows how cultural traditions can adapt and develop amidst the pressures of the modern economy and market needs. The proliferation of wedding ceremony services in conventional places is a phenomenon in Denpasar City society. This commodification creates new economic opportunities and raises challenges related to preserving original values and financial burdens for the community.

In addition, various events in the wedding ceremony emerge, such as ring exchange and reception. Back then, in the *nyuang* tradition, the groom only brought *upakara* (offerings), but now the groom brings dowry ranging from gold rings to unique things that the bride likes. In the global era, the wedding ceremony is continued with a reception. The reception is a party attended by guests to celebrate the legitimacy of the bride and groom. The reception is an activity that is not included in the series of traditional wedding ceremonies but is now a mandatory event. The reception is considered a one-

night party, which means performances ranging from decoration and consumption to spectacular entertainment. The reception is often more expensive than the series of wedding ceremonies.

The series of marriages in the global era has also become a consumer activity regardless of its philosophical meaning. Various parties are involved because they now prefer to rent. After all, it is considered practical rather than involving community participation. This phenomenon responds to changes in wedding ceremonies, and alternatives are offered to carry out ceremonies practically. The wedding ceremony industry has become a business opportunity to answer the needs of modern society.

The wedding ceremony industry has become a commodity, where the ceremony is seen not only as a sacred or social bond but also as a marketable product. This idea means that the wedding ceremony has become an event for consuming goods and services, creating a large market. Modern-era wedding events, especially among young couples, are often events to show social status by choosing a luxurious wedding event. The wedding ceremony industry is growing and adapting to the changing times; innovation and creativity are signs of success. This industry includes various products and services for implementing traditional and modern wedding ceremonies.

The Hindu wedding ceremony industry in Bali is a rapidly growing economic sector that combines needs with modern dynamics. Couples who modify their wedding ceremonies want a more personal traditional ceremony that fits their tastes. There is a blend of tradition and modern touches in decoration and entertainment. In addition, there is motivation to carry out wedding ceremonies with a concept that displays specific colours, materials, and themes to create the nuances of the event.

The start of the massive wedding ceremony industry during the COVID pandemic in 2020; during the pandemic, people were limited to holding ceremonies without involving many people because the Covid virus spread in crowds. A wedding ceremony is a ceremony that cannot be postponed and must involve many people so that an alternative emerges to hold a wedding ceremony at a house or conventional place with ceremonies and its implementers assisted by professional agents so that the bride and groom do not need to involve other people. Since then, wedding ceremonies at *griya* or in commercial places have become a rapidly growing cultural industry. The wedding ceremony industry continues to grow and adapt to changing times and offers time-saving and energy-efficient implementation.

In an interview with Ida Bhagawan Gana, he explained the essence of the wedding ceremony held at the *Griya*:

"Activities like what we do according to literary literature are not haphazard, but why can it be cheap because of the strategy, for example, using a bunch of bananas, we use two pieces of it, more or less like that, there is a method that is not known by some people, the point is to carry it out according to your ability, make it according to literature so that the ceremony looks cheaper, then in *griya*, it achieves its essence." (interview on May 5, 2024)

In literary terms, marriage ceremonies at *griya* or conventional places are legitimate and provide economic impacts not only to the providers but also to partners in the community, as explained by Komang Indra the chairman of the Bali Gases Foundation, who also serves marriage ceremonies as follows:

"Positive and negative cannot be separated because it comes back to the economic side when people who feel threatened, they definitely think like that. When we are not contaminated with that, just think positively, I think it doesn't matter because what because we do when we give cheap prices we don't harm anyone, for example, I buy from the offerings seller, fruit seller and so on" (interview on May 13, 2024)

In its implementation, the wedding ceremony in *griya* and conventional places faces new economic problems, such as price competition between providers and demands by the broader community. This issue is considered an economic monopoly. New challenges will certainly follow changes in people's lifestyle patterns. Economic commodification has become a solution and a new problem in the Hindu community in Denpasar City in this global era.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, this change in commodification shows that commodification is not a uniform top-down process but an adaptive local phenomenon. This idea suggests that commodification is a dynamic and localized process of cultural negotiation in which elements are selectively integrated based on perceived market value, convenience, and modern aesthetic appeal rather than simply the imposition of external commercialism.

The commodification of wedding ceremonies is a complex and multi-layered phenomenon that transforms traditional cultural practices into marketable goods and services. Its manifestations include the transformation of traditional rituals, the growth of

the wedding industry complex, the central role of the media in commercializing the marriage narrative, and even the commodification of the relationship formation process itself. This phenomenon is driven by the interaction between economic imperatives (profit maximization, market competition), socio-cultural dynamics (consumerism, hedonism, social status pressures), and technological advances (digitalization, AI, social media).

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