

Exploring The Transportation Service for Tourists: A Strategic Issue of Small Island Tourism in Nusa Penida

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Abstract—This paper reports on an initial part of a study on strategic issues facing small island tourism. More specifically, this study explored the transportation service available in the island of Nusa Penida, an emerging tourist destination in Bali. The rationale of this study was that limited research that particularly focused on the transportation aspect within the small island tourism literature has been conducted. In fact, one of the crucial facilities to promote small island destinations is the availability of adequate transportation to enter and exit the island, as well as to explore inside the island. As such, it is arguably essential to understand small island tourism from this perspective. Data were collected from 9 respondents using interview method. In addition, observation was also conducted to verify and qualify data gathered from the interview. Data were analyzed using a qualitative approach. The study revealed a wide range of issues within the transportation context. There was only one mode of transportation to reach the island, that is, by boat. Most respondents expressed their appreciation toward the increased number of boats operated for this island, although there were several concerns reported by the majority of respondents. In addition, within the island, motor bike was likely to be more popular alternative than car rental. Discussion on the passengers' experience in using the transportation service as well as the identification of its strengths and weaknesses including potential issues surrounding this topic are presented throughout the paper. Limitation and direction for future research are also provided.

Keywords—*exploratory study; small island tourism; strategic issues; transportation service*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been recognized as one of the important industries across the globe. Indeed, this sector has been known as the major contributor to economic development as well as job and employment rate [1], [2], [3], [4]. Furthermore, tourism is considered the only industry that consistently demonstrated growth especially in many developing small island destinations [3]. For this reason, investments to support the tourism activities may increase along with the growth of tourism.

However, in line with such prospective growth, the tourism industry also brings several consequences. Indeed, previous studies have also highlighted the downside of this industry particularly for small island tourism. See for example, the works of [5], [2], [3]. Moreover, some authors have suggested that small island tourism is somewhat fragile. That is, they are considerably high dependent on the main land resources and facilities. Furthermore, many small island tourism destinations failed to put forward the important issue of social sustainability [3]. In addition, it may be challenging to implement the concept of equity enhancing tourism in which the entire community can benefit from tourism activities. In other words, several issues are strategic in developing small island tourism.

Having that in mind, an abroad approach that values social and environmental sustainability as well as economic growth would be necessary [3]. As such, government needs to play its role especially in establishing policy, rules and regulations. However, practically, with the growing fascination of the local livelihood and reliance on tourism sector, many small island tourism destinations did not specifically and carefully plan. In fact, the potential of island for tourism may be ruined by wrong policies and regulations particularly with regard to the construction of tourist facilities as well as the lack of professional hospitality human resources, and as the result, the image of the destination may be destroyed [1].

One of the important issues facing small island tourism is transportation aspect. Being isolated or away from the main land, the transportation service becomes crucial for the development of small island tourism. In fact, it may be the critical drive for potential tourists to visit. However, there has been lacking of studies that have looked into small island tourism from this perspective. The majority of the studies within small island tourism have focused more on the economical, cultural, residents' attitude, and social aspects [1], [2], [3], [4].

Addressing such gaps, this paper suggests several aspects to be improved in order to provide better transportation service to tourists or visitors that may be useful for the local government body, tourism firms, and community in terms of formulating rules and regulations, further developing destination planning and management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The tourism literature has mainly highlighted the context of mainland. Small island tourism has received little attention and has not much been researched. The vulnerability of small island tourism [6], [7], [3], requires more comprehensive research within this topic in order to understand more particularly with strategic issues facing the destination island. Among the limited work on this particular tourism were those focusing on the community role [8], sustainable development [9], sustainability and adaptability [3], and development strategy [2].

Small island destinations tend to have high dependent on the main land resources especially the newly growing ones. Small island destinations mostly grow naturally, perhaps by the discovery of the island by a few tourists or tourism firms and then it becomes a tourist destination. As such it can be expected that the islands are not equipped with sufficient facilities for tourist as well as human resources. [[10],

On a positive light, small island destinations are associated with sun, sand, and sea [2]. Such destinations offer many adventurous activities close to nature. This may be enhanced by the emergence of selfie tourism in which tourists are growingly interested in taking their own photography in a destination particularly where their friends or relatives have not yet visited [11].

However, although there has been increasing interests in small island destinations, lack of attention of stakeholders are evident. The needs of special treatments in many small island tourist destinations seem crucial in order to respond to the growing interests and at the same time to protect the island from an overwhelming and not carefully planned development of tourist facilities. Indeed, apart from the economical benefit, the development of small island destinations could bring serious adverse consequences in terms of culture, environment, as well as the local community [12]. As such, more research within this field is arguably essential.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This field research was conducted in Nusa Penida, one of emerging small island tourism destination in Bali with the aim at understanding the transportation service available for tourist to enter and exit as well as to explore the island. Data were gathered from 9 respondents who were recruited using purposive sampling with snow ball method and were treated anonymous in the report. The respondents consist of tourists,

local people, hotel and restaurant manager, employee of boat service, government representative, and academia who used or work in the local transportation service.

The empirical materials were collected by means of interview method that included both general and specific questions that captured participants' view and experiences toward transportation services. In addition to verify or qualify the data collected, observation was also conducted [8]. All data gathered were recorded and note were taken to capture the participants' responses and thoughts. The raw materials were then transcribed. The analysis was performed by employing qualitative approach. The pattern searching was conducted using the three steps coding which were open coding, axial coding, and selective coding [13], [14]. In the open coding, emerging themes were identified. They were given initial label or code to condense the mass of data into categories. The second phase of data coding involved a review and examination of the initial codes. At this stage, additional codes were allowed to emerge and any irrelevant codes were removed. In the last phase of coding, the previously identified themes were compared and contrasted. Furthermore, major themes were selected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study revealed a wide range of issues that respondents were aware of or concerned and have experiences with the local transportation service. Most of the respondents expressed their appreciation of the improved availability of ferry or boat. That is, there has been increasing number of modern boats operated for this island. In the previous years, there were only traditional boats available that has inadequate safety equipment and are relatively small size. Passengers needed to wait for their turn until they can travel. Some respondents explained that with more sophisticated and safety equipment, passengers were more confidence and willing to travel. Besides, by the modern and speedy boats, the travelling time would be shorter. That is, they would reach the destination within 30 minutes. However, more boat companies are still needed to transfer more passengers per day. Several interviews also pointed to the lack of boat schedule during evening. Indeed, all boats did not operate after 6.30pm to go to the island and at least 4 pm from the island to the main land. The respondents explained that they can explore more in the island if the boats are available the entire evening. However, respondents emphasized that more adequate safety equipments should be provided during evening trip. One respondent reported her unfavorable experiences with one boat. That was the last boat that went to Nusa Penida. The boat hit a big rock underneath and there was no sufficient lighting that helped the captain see and avoid the rock. There was such a loud noise and the boat seemed to start sinking. All passengers were panic and started wearing the safety jacket. Finally, the boat captain and crews were able to manage the situation and released the parts of the boat that stuck on the rock. For visitors, especially first timers, such experience was

considered terrifying and possibly reduced the trust of the passengers. Thus, taking the last boat may not be a good choice, especially in the bad weather. The boat companies should have additional equipment especially those related to the safety aspect.

Next findings were related to the terminal facilities. All respondents were not satisfied with the terminal. In fact, there was not any proper terminal. Passengers had to walk on the sand and approach the boat. When the tide is high, they had to walk in the water and became wet. To get into the boat, passengers must climb, although, crews would be willing to provide help. A female Balinese respondent explained her difficulty to enter the boat when wearing the Balinese costume. It may be useful to discuss here that many of the local passengers travel to the island for the purpose of visiting temples and performing religious activities. The slippers or shoes of the passengers were put in a basket inside the boat. If passengers brought luggage or bags or any other belongings, the crew will help bring them to the boat. This situation was also observable when the boat arrived in the destination. Probably, proper terminal is the most urgent facility to be built to facility the flow of departing and arriving passengers. To say the least is the construction of pathway for passengers to enter and exit the boat.

Moving to the ticketing service, almost all respondents reported that there was not any specific issue to rise in terms of the service of reservation and ticket purchasing. It seems that it is considerably sufficient. According to respondents, there were many ticket counters available. Each counter represents different boat company and offers different departing schedule which were reported to be reliable. Most of the companies were owned and managed by local people. The price of the ticket was relatively similar among the transportation companies. After buying the tickets, passengers wait for the boat. Many respondents stated that the waiting time was somewhat confusing. Even, one passenger explained that he was worried during the waiting time because he was not sure about which boat to enter. Such confusion may be expected because there were many boats and there was not clear guidance given by the ticketing agent or staff. Also, it seems to be unclear about which staffs work for which company as they do not wear proper uniform. This may be worse when it happen in the early evening (last boat), where there is not sufficient lighting to help passengers recognize the boat. The feeling of anxiety experienced by foreigners who are not unfamiliar with the local, might reduce the intention to revisit the island especially those with lower level of tolerance [15].

In terms of the famous local transportation available within the island was motor cycle. The tourist respondents explained that the majority of the rental motor cycle was offered by local individual or people. They were approached upon their arrival in the island. They expressed their satisfaction toward the service. In other words, there were not any specific cases or

issues with the service. This finding was strengthened by the non tourist respondents who expressed their thoughts based on from what they observed or heard. That is the price offered by one individual and other individuals was relatively similar. Thus, there was no such price competition. The condition of the motor cycle was generally good. Perhaps, the manner of the individuals when offering their motor cycle needs to be improved as to not insisting the tourists.

In brief, the study has identified several issues pertaining to the transportation service, which could be classified into strengths and weaknesses. The majority of the respondents emphasized on the tangible aspects of the service that requires improvement, such as the terminal, safety equipment, staff with uniform to lead passengers to the boat. The respondents seem to be satisfied with the boats which were modern and more sophisticated than those available in the previous years. This constitutes one of the strengths of the transportation service. Another strength highlighted by respondents was the reliability of the schedule. These findings (tangibility and reliability) are relevant with some of the dimension of service quality [16]. The other elements such as responsiveness, empathy, and assurance were not discussed. Perhaps, tangibility and reliability were more important than other elements. In other words, passengers considered the first two elements as the first and foremost aspects which determined their satisfaction toward transportation service. Once the two aspects are satisfying, passengers may turn into the three later elements. It may also be due to they more focus on the service available within the island such as hotels, restaurant, and local transportation.

Finally, when it comes to general view on the destination island, perhaps, the most critical driver that emerged from the interview was the lack of government's involvement in the planning and development of the island. More specifically, most of the non government respondents reported that there has been a lack of adequate legislation especially with regard to the investment and infrastructure development. This finding supports the previous work of [1]. As such, it is recommended that the local government focus on these tangible aspects in order to facilitate the tourism activities in the island.

CONCLUSION

The research reported in this paper responded to the need to address the transportation service as one of the critical factors in the context of emerging growth of small island destination. The research was conducted in Nusa Penida, Bali, using a qualitative approach. The study revealed several issues to consider by government and decision makers in the planning and development of small island destination. The majority of respondents expressed their appreciation toward the increasing number of modern boat as the only transportation from and to the island. Probably, the most critical driver toward the management of the island was the active presence of government, particularly in ruling the development of tourist

facilities. Although this study was able to answer the research questions, due to the exploratory nature of this research, the results are not intended to be generalized to a wider population or to other context. Nevertheless, it provides avenue for future study. Further research might address other critical or strategic issues facing small island destinations which may help government in making regulations as well as tourism firms in operating their business. This idea is in line with the previous study that emphasized the fragile nature of small island destination [6], [7], [3].

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