



UNDERSTANDING TOURISTS' PERCEPTIONS OF BALI

DURING POST-PANDEMIC ERA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of tourist perceptions on the post-pandemic era towards Bali tourist destination. The study results provide a basis of how COVID-19 affects tourists' decision-making process that influenced by their travel behaviour, motivation, preferences and their experiences. Based on the results, the government policies of health protocols implementations and the power of social media influence the tourist perceptions of Bali during the post-pandemic era. The method of this study using focus group discussion with ten participants and supported by secondary data collected by the researcher. These findings contributed to the proposed strategies that increased the number of local and international tourists.

Keywords: Tourists' perceptions, Post-pandemic, Bali.

1. INTRODUCTION

The covid-19 outbreak affected most of the things in our lives. Indonesia tourism industry has been one of the most affected economic sectors since the COVID-19 outbreak. Covid-19 affects travel behaviour since tourists are afraid being infected by the virus while traveling. Travel restrictions implemented worldwide in an effort to control the pandemic have resulted in a decline in international arrivals by 30% (Gössling et al., 2020). Tourism contributed 6% of national GDP and employed 10% of the workforce in 2019 (WTTC, 2020).

As one of the most-recognized tourist destinations in Indonesia, Bali's economy revenue depend on the tourism sector. Around six million tourists come to the Bali every year (Jamaluddin, 2021). Tourism is a leading sector that makes an important contribution to regional economic growth in Bali. However, during the COVID-19 outbreak, Bali tourism experienced a sharp decline (Suasih et al., 2021). The Bali provincial government has response quickly by taking policies to deal with the impact of COVID-19 (Suasih and Wijaya, 2021). Considering number of tourist destination in Bali, it is hoped that the tourists' perception both domestic and foreign tourists will stay positive during the post-pandemic era.

The fear of tourist come to Bali in the early of the COVID-19 outbreak is understandable. The pandemic era might change tourist perceptions of one tourist destination. Meanwhile, the needs of going to Bali for leisure activity is hard to refuse. Therefore, it is very interesting to study about tourists' perceptions of Bali post-pandemic era.

The purpose of this study is to analyze tourists' perceptions of Bali in the post pandemic era so that it can be used as a reference in making strategic decisions for the stakeholder and the government to recover Bali's tourism after COVID-19 outbreak.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The way people perceive a certain place influences their decision to travel and their satisfaction degree which based on their experiences when traveling to the destination (Cherifi, 2014). Moreover, a destination image results to the perception of tourists in the way they differentiate destinations from each other and is a fundamental and influential element of tourists' decision process (Razak, 2019).

The attractions offered in Bali spoil the tourists whether from domestic tourists or from foreign tourists. The beauty of the nature and the unique culture of Bali develop Bali's image stronger from year to year. The characteristics of Bali tourist destination makes Bali different compare to other destinations in Indonesia.

Image in the marketing study is a key to bring positive or negative perceptions of customer. Thus, marketer will give their best to develop a positive image. A positive image of tourist destination will develop sustainable tourism. Lemy et al., (2019) identified three key objectives of sustainable tourism (1) to meet the needs of local communities to improve living standards, both in the short term and long term; (2) to fulfilling tourist demand; and (3) to safeguard the natural environment to achieve the two previous goals.

The fear of the COVID-19 pandemic, movement control regulation and the lockdown uncertainty changed the tourists' behaviour as they were unwilling to travel (Altuntas and Gok, 2021; Ajzen, 2020; Rather, 2021). Thus, the government role in creating positive image on tourist destination in the post-pandemic era is important. Indonesian government had three main strategies when going through the pandemic era, namely innovation, adaptation, and collaboration. Those strategies also bring Indonesia to the 8th position of the best tourism in the Asia Pacific in 2021 (Kemlu, 2022).

As a results of the COVID-19 pandemic, the data showed that cumulative foreign tourist visits Bali in 2020 reached 1,069,473 people. However, that number is dominated by foreign tourist in the first quarter (January-March 2020). Figure 1 provide information about the number of foreign tourist visits Bali during 2020-2021.



Figure 1. Number of Direct Foreign Tourist Visits Bali during 2020-2021
(Source: Statistic Bureau of Indonesia in Bali, 2021)

SWOT Matrix	Strengths – S	Weaknesses – W
Opportunities – O	S-O Strategy: Optimizing the promotion of natural and cultural tourism, as well as public health to provide a sense of security for traveling so that in the early stages of recovery it is able to bring in domestic tourists.	W-O Strategy: Preparing the tourism mitigation concept to bring in quality tourists.
Threats – T	S-T Strategy: Optimizing, refocusing, and implementing health protocols on various tourist objects/attractions so that they can compete with tourist destinations outside Bali and provide a sense of security and comfort for tourists.	W-T Strategy: Upgrade skills and innovation in business (especially tourism) so that it can attract quality tourists (because it is no longer a mass tourism pattern).

Figure 2. SWOT Matrix of Bali Tourism in the New Normal Era

(Source: Budhi et al., 2022, The Recovery of The Tourism Industry in Bali Province Through The Penta-Helix Collaboration Strategy In The New Normal Era)

In an effort to shaping a positive image of tourists, it requires the synergy of all parties. Figure 2 shows the SWOT Analysis that can be used to identify the positioning of Bali during the post-pandemic era. Hence, the proper strategies can be decided by the government and the stakeholders in Bali tourism industry.

3. METHODOLOGY

In conducting this study, researcher used focused group discussion which involved ten persons who have experienced Bali's attractions. Five persons were foreign tourist which came from Australia and another five were domestic tourists which came from South Sulawesi, Bandung, Jakarta. In addition, the secondary data is used to explore the current situation of Bali's tourists' destination during the post-pandemic era. By collecting the data during the observation, the results were interpreted by the researcher.

Research hypothesis

Ho: Tourists have a negative image on tourists' destination in Bali during the post-pandemic era.

H1: Tourists have a positive image on tourists' destination in Bali during the post-pandemic era.

4. RESULTS

The emergence of COVID-19 brings changes in tourist travel preferences. Tourist from abroad will prefer to choose destination with implementation of strict health protocols. This study found that COVID-19 outbreak affects tourist behavioral. The government policies towards the pandemic is key to establish trust for tourists. Government successful to bring safe environment for health issue is a considerable factor that will bring tourist come to Bali during the post-pandemic era. According to the tourists' preferences, it is suggested that tourism businesses must follow the new health protocol as part of an effort to survive and maintain the sustainability of the tourism sector. In this regard, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia has issued guidelines related to tourist travel protocols, especially in Bali during the post-pandemic era.

Considering the importance of tourists' perceptions of Bali during the post-pandemic era, it is also important to prepare human resources in who understand health protocol standards.

Through wonderful Indonesia, the government presents various campaign to stimulate Bali's attractions. Meanwhile, social media promotions apparently bring a significant impact to shape a positive image on tourists' perceptions.

All of the participants agreed that the social media influence their preferences to visit Bali.

5. CONCLUSION

Tourist attractions in Bali are very diverse. This finding is expected to suggest the proposed strategies that increased the number of domestic and foreign tourists to visit Bali and perceive Bali as the attractive tourist destination.

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