

Tourist Interests and Preferences for Snorkeling Activities at Manta Point Nusa Penida

Firle Lanovia Amir, Gusti Made Riko Hendrajana

International Institute of Tourism and Business, Indonesia.

firle@ipb-intl.ac.id *✉

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

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Background: Manta Point in Nusa Penida is a marine tourism destination primarily attracting visitors through manta rays and the beauty of the underwater ecosystem. Snorkeling is a popular tourist activity because it can be enjoyed by a wide range of tourists and provides a firsthand experience of the underwater world. However, research specifically examining tourist interests and preferences for snorkeling at Manta Point remains limited.

Research Gap: Research on marine tourism activities generally focuses more on tourist satisfaction, motivation to visit, or the economic impact of the destination. However, research specifically examining tourist interests and preferences for snorkeling, particularly at Manta Point Nusa Penida, is still relatively limited. Understanding tourist interests and preferences is crucial as a basis for developing marketing strategies, improving service quality, managing tourist experiences, and implementing sustainable tourism.

Novelty: This study uniquely examines tourist interests and preferences for snorkeling at Manta Point using a descriptive qualitative approach, integrating Islamic environmental ethics perspectives through the principles of khalifah, mizan, tawazun, hisbah, and hifz al-bi'ah as an ethical foundation for sustainable marine tourism management.

Method: This study used a descriptive qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of tourist interests and preferences for snorkeling at Manta Point, Nusa Penida. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, with three participants consisting of one manager and two tourists. Data collection involved observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data validity was tested using data triangulation.

Results: Tourist interest in snorkeling is influenced by the desire for new experiences, the attraction of manta rays, the beauty of the underwater panorama, and the influence of social media. Tourist preferences are influenced by factors such as safety, comfort, supporting facilities, service quality, and marine environmental conditions. The findings demonstrate that snorkeling at Manta Point has developed into a form of experience-based tourism combining natural interactions, personal experiences, digital culture, and environmental sustainability.

Conclusion: Destination management that pays attention to service quality and environmental sustainability is needed to improve the tourist experience and maintain the tourist destination. From a Sharia perspective, sustainable marine tourism management can be strengthened through the principles of khalifah, mizan, tawazun, hisbah, and hifz al-bi'ah. Destination managers should strengthen safety briefings and equipment standards, regulate boat and visitor density, establish responsible snorkeling routes, provide environmental education, and use social media to promote responsible tourism behavior.

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INTRODUCTION

Marine tourism is a rapidly growing sector in both the global and national tourism industries. As an archipelagic nation, Indonesia possesses vast marine resource potential, a major draw for both domestic and international tourists. The diversity of marine life, coral reefs, and unique underwater ecosystems make marine tourism a popular form of tourism. Marine tourism activities not only provide recreational experiences but also serve as a medium for education and environmental conservation, enhancing the economic value of destinations.

Bali Province is one of Indonesia's leading tourist destinations, boasting diverse marine tourism potential. Besides its cultural and natural attractions, Bali also offers a variety of underwater activities such as diving, surfing, and snorkeling (Subawa Pasek, 2018). One area developing as a marine tourism destination is Nusa Penida. This area boasts a rich and diverse marine ecosystem, beautiful coral reefs, and diverse marine life species, attracting both local and international tourists. Snorkeling is a popular activity because it can be enjoyed by a wide range of tourists, with a relatively easy skill level compared to diving (Putrayasa, 2022). Among various snorkeling locations in Nusa Penida (Iman Pribadi et al., 2021), Manta Point is a highly attractive destination due to the presence of manta rays in their natural habitat. This location is known as a favorite spot for tourists for snorkeling due to the relatively high chance of encountering manta rays throughout the year. The presence of a cleaning station, an area where manta rays clean their bodies of parasites, makes this area unique and different from other snorkeling destinations. In addition to manta rays, this area also offers an attractive underwater panorama with a variety of fish species and coral reefs.

The increasing popularity of Manta Point has led to a surge in tourist visits, attracting tourists interested in underwater tourism experiences. However, tourist interest in choosing snorkeling activities is influenced by various factors, such as travel motivation, previous travel experience, perceived safety, available facilities, the quality of the underwater environment, and individual preferences regarding the type of tourism experience desired. Tourist preferences are crucial because each tourist has different characteristics, needs, and expectations regarding the tourism activities they choose (Sukriyadi, 2024). Understanding tourist preferences can help destination managers provide tourism products that meet market needs. The increase in tourist visits also presents several challenges, such as tourist density, tourist safety, and potential disruption to the marine ecosystem. Several tourist experiences indicate that the high number of boats and tourists at certain snorkeling locations can impact the comfort of the tourist experience and the sustainability of the marine environment. Furthermore, changing ocean currents and wave conditions are also factors that tourists consider when choosing snorkeling activities.

Research on marine tourism activities generally focuses more on tourist satisfaction, motivation to visit, or the economic impact of the destination (Kusuma, 2022). However, research specifically examining tourist interests and preferences for snorkeling, particularly at Manta Point Nusa Penida, is still relatively limited. Yet, understanding tourist interests and preferences is crucial as a basis for developing marketing strategies, improving service quality, managing tourist experiences, and implementing sustainable tourism.

From an Islamic perspective, marine tourism development should not only pursue economic benefits and tourist satisfaction but also consider the responsibility of humans as khalifah (stewards) of the earth. Islam emphasizes that natural resources are a trust (amanah) that must be managed responsibly and not exploited excessively. The principle of mizan (balance) encourages humans to maintain equilibrium between economic activities, social interests, and environmental preservation. In the context of marine tourism, this principle is particularly relevant because increasing tourist activities may provide economic benefits while simultaneously creating pressure on marine ecosystems and wildlife habitats.

The concept of *hifz al-bi'ah* (environmental protection) further emphasizes the obligation to preserve the environment and prevent environmental damage. In addition, the principle of *hisbah* can be associated with accountability and supervision in tourism management, particularly in ensuring that tourism operators comply with safety standards, environmental regulations, and responsible tourism practices. *Tawazun* (balance) also provides a relevant framework for balancing tourist needs, destination management interests, local economic benefits, and marine ecosystem conservation. Therefore, sustainable management of Manta Point can be understood not only as a conventional tourism management issue but also as an ethical responsibility consistent with Islamic values of stewardship, balance, accountability, and environmental protection.

Based on this phenomenon, research into tourist interests and preferences for snorkeling at Manta Point Nusa Penida is crucial to understand the factors influencing tourist interest and preferences in choosing snorkeling activities. The results of this study are expected to benefit destination managers, tourism industry players, and the government in designing tourism products that meet tourist needs without neglecting environmental sustainability.

METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach to understand tourist interests and preferences for snorkeling activities at Manta Point, Nusa Penida. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena occurring in the field, based on the experiences and perspectives of informants. Qualitative research allows researchers to obtain more detailed information about tourist behavior and preferences for specific tourism activities (Hartono, 2018). The research was conducted directly in natural conditions without providing special treatment to the research subjects. The focus of the study was directed at tourist interests and the factors influencing their preferences in choosing snorkeling activities. This research was conducted at Manta Point, Nusa Penida, one of the leading marine tourism destinations in Bali. This location was chosen because of its underwater tourist attractions that attract both domestic and international tourists.

The selection of informants in this study used a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling was used because the researchers determined informants based on specific considerations that align with the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2017). Informants were selected based on their ability to provide relevant information regarding snorkeling activities at Manta Point, Nusa Penida. The research informants consisted of three individuals: one manager and two tourists. The managers were selected because of their knowledge of snorkeling management and the characteristics of visiting tourists. Meanwhile, two tourists were chosen because of their direct experience snorkeling at Manta Point. The selection of these informants was expected to provide in-depth information aligned with the research focus.

Data collection techniques in this research were carried out through observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. Observations were made by observing environmental conditions and snorkeling tourism activities at Manta Point directly. In-depth interviews were conducted with all informants to obtain information in accordance with the research objectives. Documentation is used as supporting data in the form of photos of activities, field notes, and documents related to research. The data obtained was then analyzed using a qualitative data analysis model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The validity of the data in this research was tested using data triangulation techniques. Triangulation is carried out by comparing the results of interviews, observations and documentation so that the data obtained has a better level of validity and credibility.

RESULTS

This section presents the empirical findings obtained through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation regarding tourist interest and preferences for snorkeling activities at Manta Point, Nusa Penida. The findings are organized around the main attractions that shape tourist interest, the role of social media and digital documentation, safety and comfort preferences, marine environmental conditions, and destination-management pressures.

Tourist Interest and Motivating Factors

Tourist interest in snorkeling at Manta Point is influenced by the desire for new and authentic experiences, the attraction of manta rays in their natural habitat, the underwater panorama, and direct interaction with the marine environment. The presence of manta rays is a distinctive attraction that gives tourists an exclusive and emotionally memorable snorkeling experience.

Social media also plays an important role in shaping tourist interest. Tourists reported being encouraged to visit Manta Point after seeing underwater photographs and videos on Instagram, TikTok, and other digital platforms. Visual content contributes to tourists' expectations before visiting and increases the appeal of snorkeling activities that can later be documented and shared online.

Digital Tourism Experience

The findings further show that tourists do not only enjoy snorkeling directly at the destination, but also reproduce the experience through digital documentation. Photos and videos are used to share the snorkeling experience in virtual spaces, making digital representation part of the overall tourist experience at Manta Point.

Tourist Preferences for Safety, Comfort, and Environmental Quality

Tourist preferences for snorkeling are strongly influenced by safety and comfort. Tourists prefer activities that provide buoys, adequate snorkeling equipment, and assistance from professional tour guides. Safety is especially important because sea currents at Manta Point are dynamic and can change according to weather conditions.

Marine environmental conditions are another important preference factor. Tourists favor snorkeling locations with clear water, diverse marine biota, and well-maintained natural ecosystems. Underwater visibility, marine-life diversity, and the condition of the ecosystem contribute directly to the perceived quality of the snorkeling experience.

Destination Management Pressures

Increasing snorkeling activity also creates management pressures at Manta Point. High boat activity and tourist density can reduce visitor comfort and place pressure on the marine ecosystem and manta ray habitat. These findings indicate the need to manage tourist flows, service quality, safety, and environmental conditions together so that tourism activity does not undermine the natural resources that attract visitors.

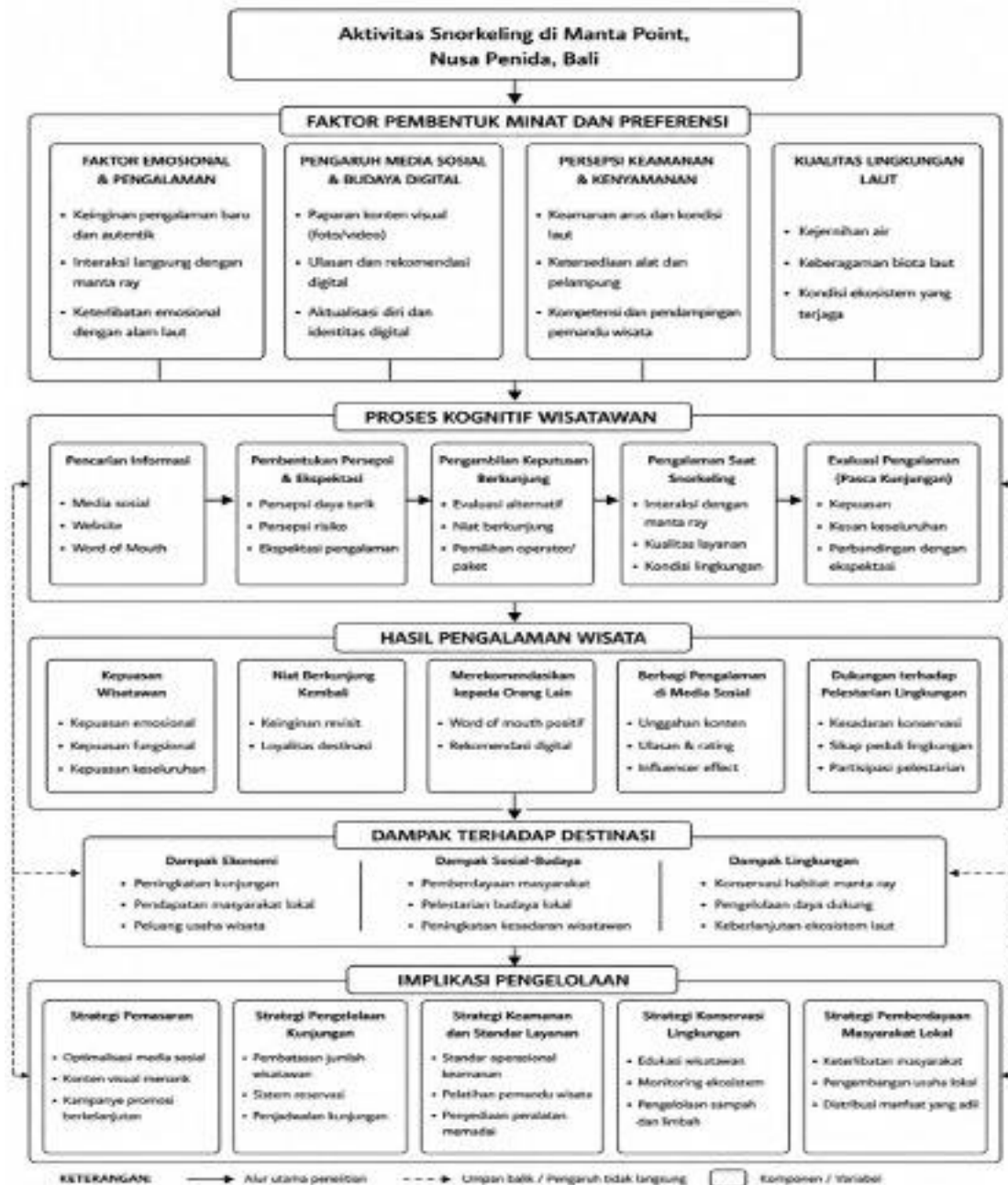


Figure 1. snorkeling activities at Manta Point, Nusa Penida, Bali

DISCUSSION

The findings position snorkeling at Manta Point as an experience-based form of marine tourism. Tourists are not solely attracted by the physical characteristics of the destination; they also seek authentic, emotional, and memorable experiences through direct interaction with the marine environment. This interpretation is consistent with Kim and Hall (2021), Prayag et al. (2020), Sthapit and Björk (2021), and Chandralal and Valenzuela (2015), who emphasize the importance of authentic and emotionally meaningful experiences in destination choice and memorable tourism experiences.

The strong role of social media indicates that Manta Point is also embedded in contemporary digital tourism culture. Underwater images and videos do more than promote the destination; they shape expectations, destination image, and the social meaning of travel experiences. This finding supports Munar and Jacobsen (2014), Leung et al. (2013), and Xiang and Gretzel (2010), who describe social media as an important influence on tourist behavior. It is also consistent with Dinhopl and Gretzel

(2016), Fotis et al. (2012), and Buhalis and Law (2008), who show how digital technology has transformed information search, destination perception, and real-time sharing of tourism experiences.

Safety, comfort, service quality, and environmental quality emerge as closely connected dimensions of tourist preference. The need for adequate equipment, professional guides, and attention to changing sea conditions confirms that the attractiveness of a marine destination cannot be separated from risk management and service professionalism. This interpretation is consistent with Chiu et al. (2020), Prayag et al. (2020), and Sthapit and Björk (2021), while the importance of clear water, marine biodiversity, and ecosystem condition supports the arguments of Hall (2020), Dimmock and Musa (2021), and Cater and Cater (2020) that environmental quality is fundamental to the sustainability and attractiveness of marine tourism.

The findings also reveal a management paradox: increasing visitor numbers can create economic opportunities while simultaneously reducing visitor comfort and increasing pressure on manta ray habitat and the surrounding marine ecosystem. This is consistent with Weaver (2021), Gössling et al. (2021), and Higham and Miller (2018), who warn that poorly managed nature-based tourism can contribute to overtourism, environmental degradation, and declining visitor experiences. Accordingly, the long-term attractiveness of Manta Point depends on balancing tourism growth with visitor management, safety standards, service quality, and marine conservation. In this sense, snorkeling at Manta Point can be understood as ecological experience consumption that connects natural interaction, personal experience, digital culture, and environmental sustainability.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that snorkeling at Manta Point Nusa Penida represents an experience-based marine tourism activity influenced by both natural and socio-digital factors. Tourist interest is primarily shaped by the desire for new experiences, the attraction of manta rays, underwater scenery, direct interaction with marine life, and social media exposure. Meanwhile, tourist preferences are influenced by safety, comfort, supporting facilities, service quality, and marine environmental conditions. The findings also demonstrate that the development of Manta Point requires a balance between tourism growth and marine ecosystem conservation. Increasing tourist activity may create economic opportunities while simultaneously generating environmental pressure through tourist density, boat activity, and potential disturbance to marine habitats. Therefore, destination management needs to integrate tourist experience, safety, service quality, and environmental conservation. From a Sharia perspective, sustainable marine tourism management can be strengthened through the principles of *khalifah*, *mizan*, *tawazun*, *hisbah*, and *hifz al-bi'ah*. The principle of *khalifah* emphasizes human responsibility to protect marine resources; *mizan* and *tawazun* encourage balance between economic, social, and environmental interests; *hisbah* emphasizes accountability and supervision; while *hifz al-bi'ah* reinforces environmental protection. These principles provide an ethical foundation for responsible snorkeling management at Manta Point. Practically, destination managers should strengthen safety briefings and equipment standards, regulate boat and visitor density, establish responsible snorkeling routes, provide environmental education, monitor interactions with manta rays, and use social media to promote responsible tourism behavior. These measures can improve tourist experience while protecting the marine ecosystem. This study has a limitation in the small number of informants, consisting of one manager and two tourists. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as contextual qualitative insights rather than statistically generalizable conclusions. Future research should involve a larger and more diverse number of informants, including local communities, tour guides, boat operators, government authorities, and Muslim tourists, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Sharia-oriented sustainable marine tourism management at Manta Point and other marine destinations.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Conceptualization, research design, methodology development, and the formulation of the qualitative research framework were carried out by Firlie Lanovia Amir and Gusti Made Riko Hendrajana. Data collection, including observation, in-depth interviews with the manager and tourists, and documentation at Manta Point, Nusa Penida, was conducted by Firlie Lanovia Amir and Gusti Made Riko Hendrajana. Formal analysis, including data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and data triangulation, was performed by Firlie Lanovia Amir and Gusti Made Riko Hendrajana. Original draft preparation and writing were conducted by Firlie Lanovia Amir, while review, editing, and revision were performed by Gusti Made Riko Hendrajana. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of this work.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used AI-assisted tools, such as grammar checkers and language enhancement software, solely for the purpose of improving readability and refining the language of the manuscript. No generative AI tools were used for qualitative data analysis, interpretation of results, conceptual framework development, or core scientific writing. The authors take full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the research findings and the final content of this article.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper. The research was conducted independently, and the results are presented objectively and without bias. The authors have no affiliation with or financial interest in any tour operator, boat company, or tourism organization operating at Manta Point, Nusa Penida, that could be perceived as influencing the analysis or conclusions of this study.

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