

The Challenges of Indonesia Travel Corridor Arrangement: Study Case Travel Bubble Indonesia-Singapore

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has the best international cross-border tourism called Bintan Resorts or better known as Lagoi. The emergence of Covid-19 made the tourism sector in Lagoi slumped. This condition makes Bintan Resorts and tenants, local governments, and the central government strive to revive Lagoi tourism through promotion by using a business diplomacy strategy through a travel bubble approach to attract Singaporean tourists as Lagoi's main target market. This research uses a qualitative method that shows the results that the concept of a travel bubble between Bintan Resorts and Singapore has not been fully implemented. This is because Indonesia's diplomacy has not been followed by domestic policies that are consistent and of the same standard as Singapore. This study argues the need for a middle ground in the form of a mutual agreement, where the Indonesian government can apply all Singaporean requirements as national standards, especially in tourism management.

Keywords : **Economy; Management; Travel Bubble; Business; Building Capacity**

ABSTRAK

Indonesia memiliki wisata lintas batas internasional terbaik yang bernama Bintan Resorts atau lebih dikenal dengan Lagoi. Munculnya Covid-19 membuat sektor pariwisata di Lagoi terpuruk. Kondisi ini membuat Bintan Resorts dan para tenant, pemerintah daerah, dan pemerintah pusat berupaya untuk menghidupkan kembali pariwisata Lagoi melalui promosi dengan menggunakan strategi diplomasi bisnis melalui pendekatan travel bubble untuk menarik wisatawan Singapura sebagai target pasar utama Lagoi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif yang menunjukkan hasil bahwa konsep travel bubble antara Bintan Resorts dan Singapura belum sepenuhnya diterapkan. Hal ini disebabkan diplomasi Indonesia belum diikuti dengan kebijakan dalam negeri yang konsisten dan berstandar sama dengan Singapura. Kajian ini berpendapat perlunya jalan tengah berupa kesepakatan bersama, yaitu pemerintah Indonesia dapat menerapkan seluruh persyaratan Singapura sebagai standar nasional, khususnya dalam pengelolaan pariwisata.

Kata Kunci : **Ekonomi; Manajemen; Travel Bubble; Bisnis; Pembangunan Kapasitas**

INTRODUCTION

In the past two weeks, the number of Covid-19 cases outside of China has increased 13-fold, and the number of affected countries has tripled. Now, there are more than 118,000 cases in 114 countries, and 4,291 people have lost their lives (World Health Organization, 2020). The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic caused many countries take policy action like travel restrictions and lockdown. This situation makes global tourism has been collapsed. Data from The World Travel and Tourism Council estimate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic could cut 50 million jobs worldwide in the travel and tourism industry (Faus, 2020).

Currently, there are many scholars who are studying the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the socio-economic sector. One of the studies which are being researched is how the socio-economic sector is able to survive during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study analyzes the condition of tourism as a part of the socio-economic sector. The interesting part of this study is the location of research is conducted at the border tourism which is familiarly called by the *international tourism border*.

Lagoi is a border tourism area that has investments from many multinational corporations (MNCs). This study observes Logoi's planning model in reviving tourism through a discount strategy for the domestic market and the travel bubble through the Travel Corridor Arrangement for the foreign market. Referring to Global development, the tourism business must apply a new protocol pattern as a part of an effort to escape and maintain the sustainability of the tourism sector (Belinda, 2020).

Business Diplomacy for Cross-border Tourism

Alammar et al state that business diplomacy is a way to constructively engage and negotiate with multiple business and non-business stakeholders, mitigate geopolitical and commercial risk, and influence actors within the global arena (Alammar & Pauleen, 2015). Business diplomacy has capabilities to 1) Analyze geopolitical risks to their operations at both global and market-specific levels, 2) Identify the governmental and non-governmental actors "geopolitical stakeholders" who shape those risks, 3) Develop multi-level, heterogeneous networks of information and influence, 4) Create coalitions among the geopolitical stakeholders based on shared interests to put pressure on reluctant collaborators and marginalize "problem actors", 5) Integrate these elements into a holistic, business diplomacy strategy to promote the firm's objectives and manage geopolitical risk (Riordan, 2014).

Cross Border Tourism

Albert et al state that the existence of borders enables to maintain some sort of order, both within the spaces and groups which are thus encompassed, as well as between "our" compartment and that of the "other" groups and spaces which were part of a broader system of global ordering (Newman, 2003). Border tourism has two perspectives. *First*, the borderline is an anomalous part of the cultural landscape and an interesting attraction. *Second*, the areas adjacent to a border have become settings for several touristic activities (Tosun et al., 2008). Border tourism, which has principles of human mobility (tourism flows), typologies of political relations that affect cross-border tourism flows and tourism partnerships, and particularities of transnational tourism development (Taena & Afoan, 2020).

Cross-border tourism is a concept of tourism development which is only typical of regions having a special economic and geographical location (Stepanova, 2014). In

developing cross-border Tourism, cooperation in marketing programs is required. According to UNWTO, 2018, there are several trends of collaborative marketing programs that propel more cross-border travels, namely: a) Travel facilitation enables more tourists to cross borders, b) Facilitation of visa and cross-border formalities, c) Transportation networks and flexible transport arrangements , Shorter and more frequent active travel , Quest for more varied experiences , d) Availability of information through technology , e) Collaboration between cross-border partners and development of ecosystems , f) Last minute availability and special offers , g) Increase in long-haul travel , h) Increase in middle-class travel to 'once-in-a-life-time' destinations, i) Need of travellers to feed social media with as much content as possible. As the cross-border visitation has been facilitated, there have been more cases of such collaborations (Kozak & Buhalis, 2019).

Cross-border Tourism with Capacity Building

Enemark & Ahene states that capacity building is the development of human resources (knowledge, skills, individual and group attitudes) to develop and manage certain areas in society (Merino & Carmenado, 2012). From the organizational perspective, capacity building increases the ability of an organization to fulfill its mission (Wing, 2004). Based on the framework, capacity building is the process through which the abilities to do are obtained, strengthened, adapted and maintained over time (Whittle, 2019). Viewed from the objective, Capacity building is an intervention which strengthens an organization's ability to fulfill its mission by promoting sound management, strong governance, and persistent rededication to achieve results. (Practitioner & Quarterly, 2010). Capacity building can be implemented with power, for the practitioner requires power in order to undertake capacity building, which in turn is about change and transformation. To develop the capacity building, the organization must demonstrate five fundamental 'capacities' such as 1) Competent (qualified and experienced) people, 2) Relevant programs, 3) Efficient organizational structures 4) Adequate resources 5) An effective way of working (Whittle, 2019).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted in Bintan. This research is qualitative descriptive approach which is using primary and secondary data. The qualitative descriptive method is a research method based on interpretive philosophy. This method is used to study the condition of natural objects, with the main tool being researchers. The approach taken is to triangulate (integrate) data collection, use inductive/qualitative analysis, and emphasize meaning over generalization. The aim of qualitative descriptive research is to provide a detailed description, explanation and understanding of the problem being studied by looking in depth at a person, group or event. In qualitative research, people are used as research tools and the results are presented in the form of words or statements that are appropriate to the situation observed by the researcher.

The primary data are obtained through direct focus group discussions (FGD) with the Bintan Sustainable Tourism Destination (STD) Forum in 09 February 2020, The Bintan Sustainable Tourism Destination (STD) Forum was formed in line with the Indonesian Sustainable Tourism Destination (STD) Forum to encourage the accelerated development of sustainable tourism destinations, this Forum has 83 members consisting of tourism actors, academics this stakeholders who are involved in discussion about the travel bubble

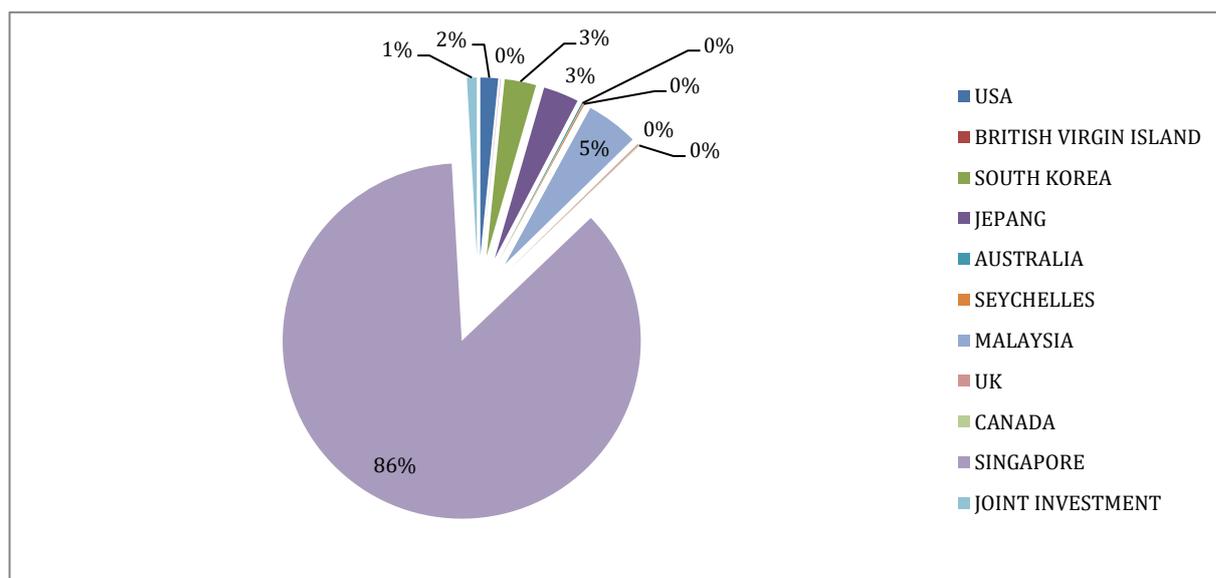
Bintan Resorts-Singapore. The secondary data are gotten on local and international news from the middle of 2020 to April 2021.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lagoi's Dependence on Singapore

Based on historical data, Bintan and Singapore are inseparable areas, since Johor-Riau sultanate, Singapore was part of it. When Singapore was under British rule, Singapore became a place of mobility between Malay and Chinese tribes on Bintan Island. As Singapore developed through 'particular processes of economic and political structuration' (Wee and Chou, 1997: 530), Bintan Islands become increasingly tied to the Singapore economy. It shows the existence of family ties between Singapore and Riau Islands, especially Bintan Island. The kinship relationship between Singapore and Bintan produces economic and social mobility. Those mobilities are capital flows and tourist trips. It can be seen from the amount of investment and the number of tourists to Bintan that majorities come from Singapore.

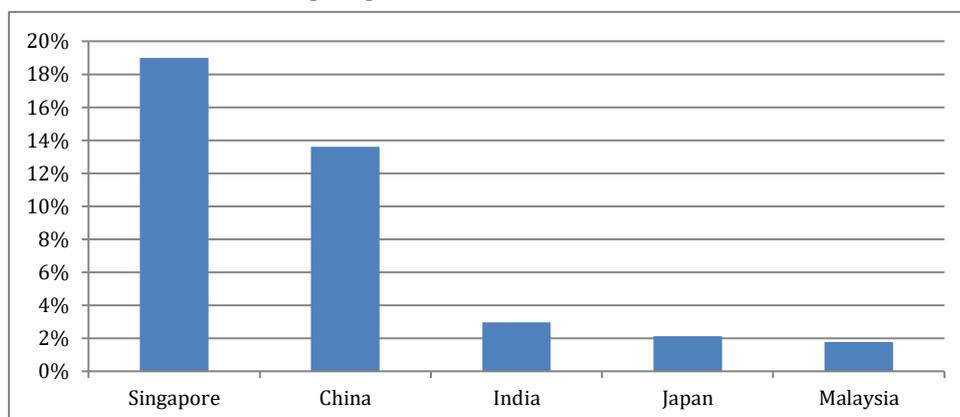
The tight relationship between Singapore and Bintan was marked by the development of Bintan Resorts in 1991 which was initiated by the Singapore Government through STB. Moreover, the establishment of Bintan Resorts as a Free Trade Zone in 2009 was also initiated by Singapore. Besides infrastructure development and assistance the special regulations (FTZ), Singapore also built mobility support facilities for Bintan Resorts through the opening of Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal in 1995. Currently, Bintan Resorts is being managed through a serial system by Salim Group (Indonesia) and Sembawang Corp (Singapore). This consortium formed Bintan Resorts Cakrawala (BRC) as manager and tourism investor seeker to become tenants in the Lagoi's area. Figure 1 shows a comparison of Singapore investment with other countries in Bintan Regency. Singapore holds the highest investment with a value of 86% and is followed by Malaysia with 5%.



Source: BP Bintan, 2019

Figure 1. Investment Comparison of Singapore and Other Countries in Bintan

Based on Figure 1, apart from being the largest investment holder, Singapore is also the largest contributor of foreign tourists visiting Bintan Regency when compared to other countries. Seen from Figure 2 shows the percentage of tourist visits, Singapore contributes 19% of the total tourists visiting Lagoi.

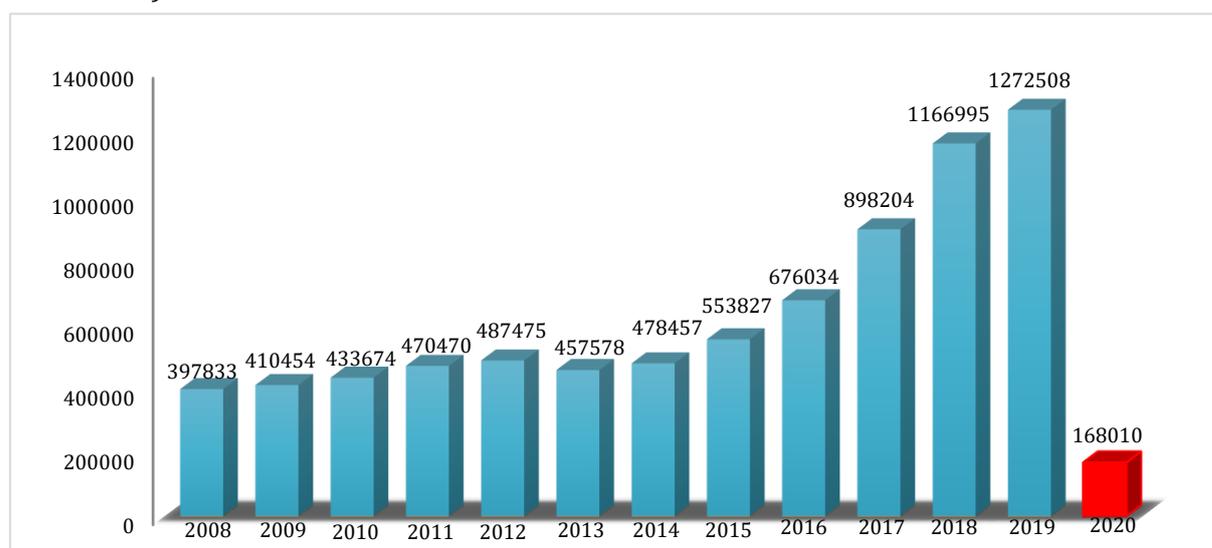


Source: *Bintan Resorts, 2019*

Figure 2. Comparison of Foreign Tourist Visits from Singapore with Other Countries in Lagoi

The Declining of Lagoi's Tourism Sector

Singapore was lockdown on April 3, 2020 (Leung & Wu, 2020), this situation closed access for Singaporeans to visit Lagoi. The closure is consistent with Indonesia's national policy which prohibited foreign visit through Permenkumham Number 11 Years 2020 (Kusumawardani, 2020). The impact of the closure, the number of tourist visits in Lagoi has decreased sharply even the rate of foreign tourists visiting has reached 0%. During the pandemic, Lagoi has been relying on the domestic tourist market (interview with General Adm, 2021).

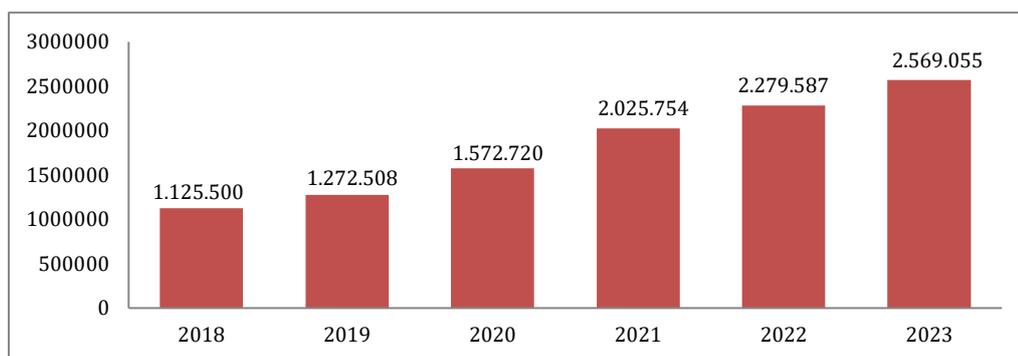


Source: *Bintan Resorts, 2021*

Figure 4. Number of Tourist Visits to Lagoi (2008-2020)

The collapse of the tourism sector in Lagoi has changed the arrival project. Based on Lagoi's analysis, it has been reducing to 728,848 tourists per year. This reduction is due to the impacts of Covid-19.

In the collapse situation, Lagoi still opens round trips access from Lagoi to Singapore via the port. This access is through Lagoi's port namely the BBT Port by sailing once a week (every Wednesday). Travel activities via Ferry must be continued for showing that Lagoi is still operating. Generally, passengers in this cruise activity are foreigners who have a Limited Stay Permit Card (KITAS).



Source: *Bintan Resorts, 2021*

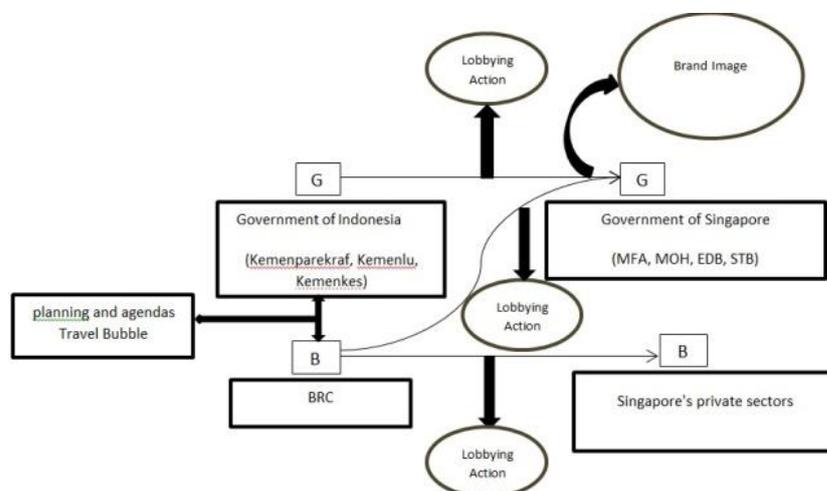
Figure 5. Projects Arrival for the Next 6 Years

Travel Bubble is the Key

Resorts Council as a forum or organization of all hotels and resorts in Lagoi's area to consolidate in preparing Lagoi for a new normal period, designing the domestic market, and building communication with Singapore as the largest visitors. To communicate with Singapore, Bintan Resorts Council through BRC conducts business diplomacy models. The offered concepts by BRC are lobbying Singapore Government and Singapore companies. BRC lobbying process is an effort to build Singapore's trust in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the terminology Travel bubble is an exclusive partnership between countries that have shown success in containing and fighting the Covid-19 pandemic, they also agreed to create a travel corridor which is known as the "Corona Corridor". This corridor will facilitate residents to travel freely within the Zone, and avoid self-quarantine (Sugihamretha, 2020). (Sugihamretha, 2020). The existence of this travel bubble will be a solution in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic which has not ended. Lagoi as a border tourism area tries to apply this strategy. In particular, the use of the travel bubble is to create security and comfort for tourists' trip.

This lobbying process has been undertaking since June 2020 to the present (interview with the BRC Secretary, 2021). Because the decision is G to G concept, namely between Indonesia and Singapore governments, BRC collaborates with the Indonesian government to finalize the travel bubble concept. officially the Travel Bubble concept of Bintan Resorts-Singapore is assisted by the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Health through the Travel Corridor Agreement (TCA) planning. The finalization result of this scheme is that the pilot project for the travel bubble scheme will be implemented in 3 B, namely Bali, Bintan and Batam. Based on the statement of the Deputy for Strategic Policy of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy / Baparekraf, the prepared zones in the travel bubble concepts are 3 B, namely Nongsa in Batam and Lagoi in Bintan, however, in Bali, there are three prepared zones, they are Ubud, Sanur, and Nusa Dua(Okezone, 2021)

The lobbying process for the Travel Bubble of Bintan Resorts-Singapore was held In March 2021 officially, when The Tourism and Creative Economy Minister, Sandiaga Uno convince the Singapore Foreign Minister, Vivian Balakrishnan that Bintan had been ready to apply the Travel Bubble concept with Singapore Government(Kumparantravel, 2021).



Source: Processed Data, 2021

Figure 6. Business Diplomacy Model to open Lagoi's Travel Bubble

To convince the Singapore government, BRC created a zoning protected areas method. Based on the terminology, Mayer et al state that protected areas represent undoubtedly some of the most important destinations for nature-based tourism and ecotourism (Arnegger, 2014). Lagoi Protected areas are divided into the international zone A (Green Zone), the domestic zone B (Yellow Zone), and the special zone (Purple Zone). There is a border embarkation line between the green zone and the yellow zone. That border embarkation line is in Simpang Besar guard post. However, a special zone is prioritized for tourists who have specific destinations and high-class.

Hotels and tourist attractions at Zone A are Crystal Lagoon, Anmon, Natra Bintan, Nirwana Gardens Resorts, Banyan Tree, Angsana Resorts, Cassia Bintan, Laguna Bintan Golf, and Lagoi Township and Pujasera. At the first stage, Hotels, Resorts and Tourist Attractions at Zone A will be opened for visitors from Singapore when the Travel Bubble of Bintan Resorts-Singapore can be applied officially, followed by the second stage for Hotels, Resorts and golf courses in the Special Zone, namely Club Med Hotel, The Sanchaya, and Ria Bintan golf courses. Hotels and other tourist attraction locations are included in Zone B which can be accessed by Domestic travelers any time, such as Lagoi Bay, Safari Lagoi, Grand Lagoi Hotel, Pantai Indah Holiday Villa, Lagoi Bay Villa, and the Jack Niclaus Golf course. This zoning mapping plan aims to allow 'International' visitors from Singapore to come gradually based on zoning when the Travel Bubble of Bintan Resorts-Singapore can be applied officially in the Bintan Resorts' tourist area (Resorts et al., 2021).

The zoning method could be changes as long as Covid-19 pandemic situation. The screening process and CHSE in the zoning area is following the instructions from WHO, the central, the provincial and district governments.



Annotation;

- E1 Bandar Bentan Telani ferry port
- A1 Doulos Phos the Ship Hotel
- A2 Treasure Bay Bintan (Natra, Anmon, Crystal Lagoon & Marine Life Discovery Park
- A3 Banyan Tree, Angsana, Casia & Laguna Bintan Golf Course
- A4 Nirwanan Gardens, Mayang Sari, Nirwana Beach Club, Villa Indra Maya & Banyu Biru
- A5 Safari Lagoi
- A6 Mangrove Discovery Tour
- A7 tourism clinic
- A8 dormitory for workers, food court for worker, Central Education
- A9 Covid-19 laboratory

Source: Processed Data, 2021

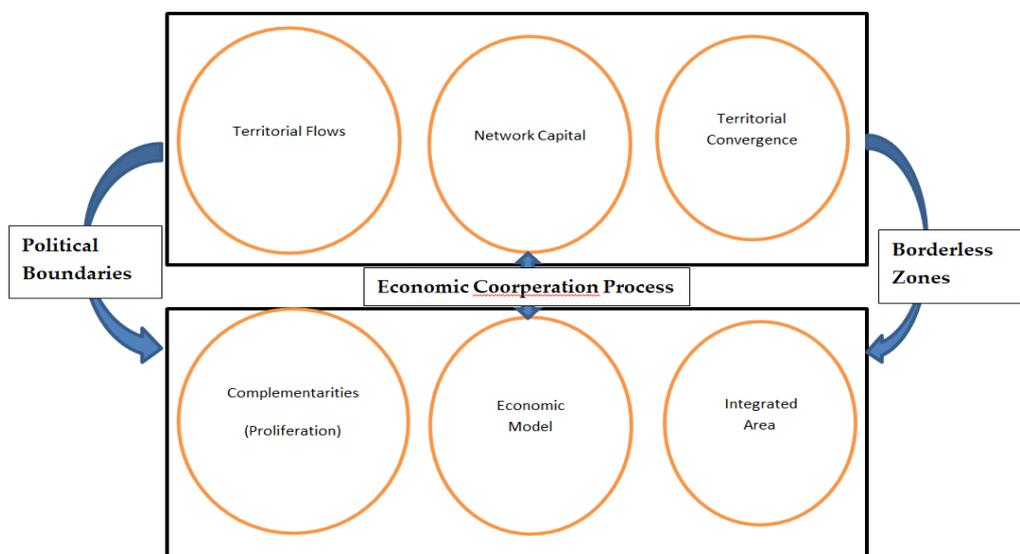
Figure 7. Planning a Zoning Map for the Lagoi's Area during Implementation of the Travel Bubble

Capacity Building is the Key of Travel Bubble Implementation

Lagoi's strategy to formulate the green zone aims to increase capacity building. The enhancement of capacity building is used to equalize the level of control between Singapore and Indonesia over Covid-19 cases before travel resumes. One of the executions of capacity building is through the implementation of Cleanliness, Health, Safety and Environmental Sustainability (CHSE). CHSE is a Guideline for Implementing Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environmental Preservation in Tourist Attractions. It is an appropriate operational guide by the Decree of Minister of Health Number HK.01.07/Menkes/382/2020 on Health Protocols of Communities in Public Places and Facilities in order to Prevent and Control Covid-19 (Kemenpraf, 2020). On February 11, 2020, BRC conducted a zoom triangle meeting with Indonesian Ambassador to Singapore and Riau Government tourism office. The purpose of the meeting was the implementation of CHSE blue pass and green bubble (Forum STD Bintan, 2021).

The implementation CHSE was held on September 26, 2020, Banyan Tree Hotel and Resort as the tenant in Lagoi became the first party to be CHSE certified from Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Bintan STD, 2020). On December 27, 2020, all tourism actors in Lagoi had been CHSE certified. With this certification, Singapore had not made the Travel Bubble to Lagoi. On March 26, 2021, there was a discussion between Singaporean and Indonesian Foreign Ministers in Jakarta, the important point of the discussion was "Travel must be done in a gradual, safe and cautious" (Kiki Siregar, n.d.-b). On March 27, 2021, Lagoi area conducted a Covid-19 handler training, this involved the Singapore Clean Consultant as the main consultant in health standards. The aim of this training is to improve standard 1 of health protocol (CSHE) which is equivalent to the

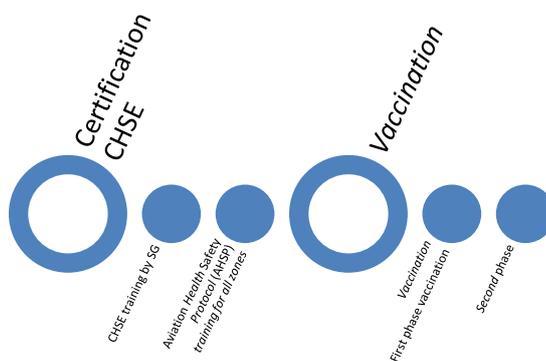
Singapore standard. Besides conducting standard health protocol 1 training, the organizers of the Lagoi area vaccinated 3,803, they are employees, traders, immigration officers and health workers in Lagoi area (*Inilahkepri*, n.d.)



Source: Processed Data, 2021

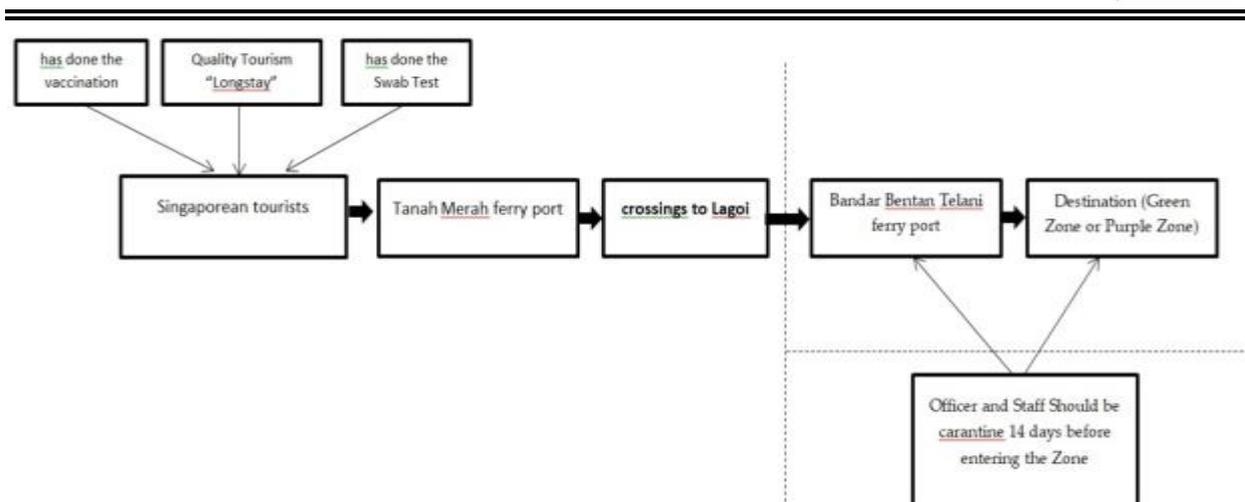
Figure 8. Partnerships Model at Cross Border Tourism

Figure 9 shows how Capacity Building in Accepting the Travel Bubble in Lagoi. Starting from the first stage, CHSE, which includes CHSE training by Singapore and Aviation Health Safety Protocol (AHSP) training for all zones. Then the second stage is giving first phase vaccination and second phase vaccination.



Source: Processed Data, 2021

Figure 9. Capacity Building in Accepting Travel Bubble at Lagoi



Source: Processed Data, 2021

Figure 10. Travel Bubble Planning Procedure at Lagoi

The travel bubble procedure Planning is BRC's step to create trust-building. This planning is started with the formation of a Task Force for handling Covid-19 in the area. This formation is collaboration between Bintan Resorts Council as a forum or organization which is consisting of all hotels and resorts in Lagoi. To strengthen this planning, Bintan Resorts Council Discussions regularly consults with Bintan Regency and Riau Islands Provincial governments in determining the framework and compiling the implementation strategy guidelines or roadmap (mapping) of Bubble travel in Lagoi (Suaraserumpun, n.d.).

Obstacle

Indonesian lobby was received by Singapore Minister for Foreign Affairs with several conditions. The minister also emphasized the need for testing, vaccination, and the ability to share verifiable and authoritative records, in order to enable cross-border travel (Kiki Siregar, n.d.-a). Singapore government seems to be careful in running the Travel Bubble with Indonesia, especially since the number of Covid-19 infections increase in Indonesia. The high number of Covid-19 in Indonesia, including Batam, and the closest area to Bintan has eroded the trust of the Singapore government in Indonesia's commitment to providing a green area for Singaporean who will visit Lagoi. Lagoi's travel bubble is scheduled to open on April 21, 2021, has been postponed to May 7, 2021, and then postponed until August 2021 (Kuswaraharja & (DetikTravel), n.d.).

The Travel Bubble of Bintan Resorts-Singapore has been postponed many times due to differences in standards between Indonesia and Singapore in managing and handling of Covid-19 case. Differences are determining safe entry tests on travel, CHSE standards, and vaccination standards. Those are becoming obstacles in implementation of the travel bubble.

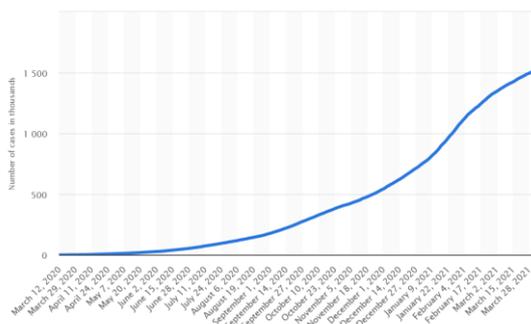
Table 1. Indonesia-Singapore Comparative Standards in Handling Covid-19 Pandemic in the Tourism Sector

Comparative Standards	INDONESIA	SINGAPORE
Safe Entry Test	PCR, Antigen, GeNose	PCR
CHSE Certification	ISTC Standard	SG Clean Standard
Vaccination Certification	Minister of health	Minister of health

Source: Processed Data, 2021

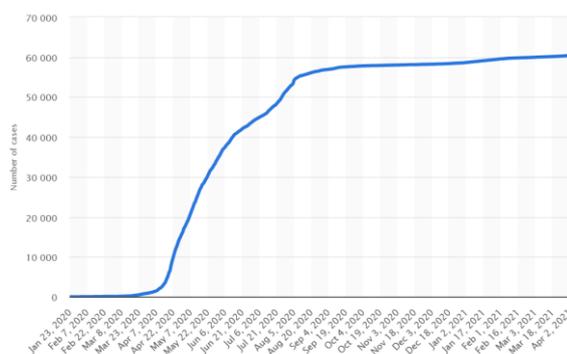
Besides differences in covid handling standards 19, Singapore Government has not wanted to open access for their citizens to visit Bintan Resorts because of the high number of Covid-19 spreads. The high cases of Covid 19 in Indonesia, Riau Islands Province, and Bintan Regency make Singapore carefully with the travel bubble policy. One of the burdensome requests for the Indonesian Government is an equalization of the standard number for spreading the Covid 19 number, namely 5 people per day (interview with Kadispar Bintan, 2021).

Currently, the Indonesian diplomacy is being processed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs team and the Ministry of Tourism team as the main support. This diplomatic process involves lobbying the Singapore embassy in Jakarta to unify the vision of the travel bubble Bintan Resorts-Singapore (interview with Kadispar Bintan, 2021).



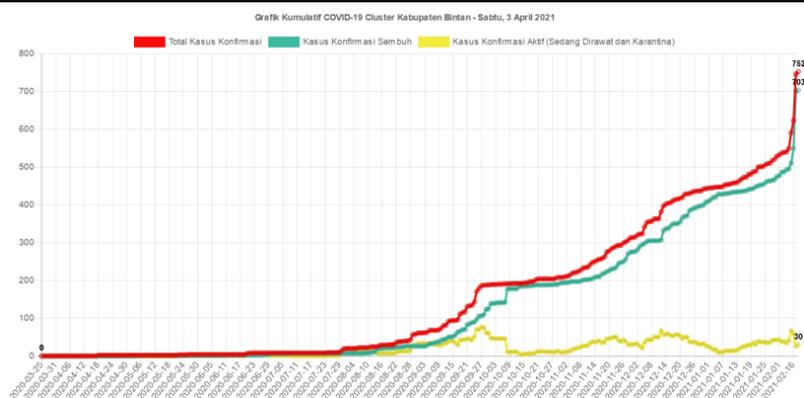
Source: (Nurhayati-Wolff, 2021)

**Figure 11. Comparison of COVID-19 cases (Indonesia, Singapore and Bintan)
Number of COVID-19 Cases in Indonesia as of April 5, 2021**



Source: (Statista, 2021)

Figure 12. Number of COVID-19 Cases in Singapore as of April 5, 2021



Source: (Gugus Tugas Covid 19, 2021)

Figure 13. Number of COVID-19 Cases in Bintan as of April 3, 2021

CONCLUSION

Lagoi really needs Singapore tourists as a key factor in reviving border tourism. The Covid 19 condition can be overcome with uniformity in regulations in the tourism sector, both from Indonesia and Singapore. In fact, Travel Bubble Indonesia - Singapore must pass a long stage. It is because the health standards between the Singaporean and Indonesian governments have not had the same standard in handling the Covid-19 pandemic. Lobbying through business diplomacy which is done by the Indonesian government and BRC is still facing problems due to the high number of Covid-19 at the national and the provincial level. The key to successful travel bubble diplomacy is a consistency of the Indonesian government to follow the Singapore government's policies, namely: 1) following the Covid-19 test standards which are used by the Singapore government in travels, namely using a PCR measuring instrument; 2) setting the SG Clean standard as the Indonesian Tourism CHSE standard; 3) conducting a reciprocal arrangement in vaccination certification so that the Indonesian Covid-19 vaccination certificate is recognized by the Singapore government; 4) negotiating the standard number of Covid-19 spreading so that the spreading standard scope is only in the Bintan Regency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Travel Bubble Indonesia - Singapore need Synchronization of programs and the formation of a joint corporation among various pandemic era are essential for the next pandemic in tourism world. In the future, uniform regulations are needed in building tourism corridors in pandemic conditions

This research can provide analytical tools and decision-making insights to better understand the dynamics of tourism sector in pandemic and how they continue to support sustainable tourism. The roles and functions of travel bubble have evolved with the changes in political, economic, and technological in health and safety in tourism businesses. As a result, travel bubble may experience advancements or setbacks with the ebb and flow of world tourism. The weakness of this research is that there were no interviews with stakeholders at the ministry level, who took part in the travel bubble lobbying process. The limitations of this research can be complemented by future research through the use of business interest variables that can be a determining factor in the success of lobbying in this travel bubble. The use of these variables requires analysis of business groups in Singapore and Indonesia.

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