

The Potential of Ports in North Sumatra to Increase Foreign Tourist Arrivals

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The Potential of Ports in North Sumatra to Increase Foreign Tourist Arrivals

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Abstract. Indonesia's tourism industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, particularly in the North Sumatra region, which boasts diverse cultures, stunning natural beauty. This study aims to explore the potential of North Sumatra's ports in supporting the tourism industry and increasing the flow of foreign tourists through these entry points. The research focuses on two major ports in the region, Belawan Port and Teluk Nibung Port, both managed by PT Pelabuhan Indonesia (Persero). These ports are equipped with international-standard passenger terminals and docking facilities for cruise ships and ferries, offering the potential to accommodate a large number of tourists. By analyzing the role and potential of these ports, along with their supporting facilities, this study seeks to provide insights into the factors driving the growth of North Sumatra's tourism industry and the challenges and opportunities faced by the sector in the coming years. The impact of port infrastructure development and the support and initiatives of local governments and related businesses on tourism in the region will also be examined. Furthermore, the importance of implementing sustainable tourism practices to ensure the long-term viability of North Sumatra's tourism industry will be discussed. The findings of this study are expected to foster a shared perception among businesses, port managers, and local governments in promoting North Sumatra's tourism industry to the world.

Keywords: Foreign Tourist, Nort Sumatera, Port, Tourism Industry

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelago with a variety of ethnic groups, cultures, tribes, and customs (Putu Meita Ramaputri, 2022). With the cultural diversity and natural beauty of Indonesia, especially in North Sumatra, it is a great opportunity to increase the growth of tourists, both local and foreign tourists (Nadila Syofia, 2023).

The tourism industry in North Sumatra has experienced significant growth in recent years (Batubara, 2020). Tourist destinations in North Sumatra have their own potential beauty and uniqueness that can attract tourists to visit North Sumatra, local tourists and foreign tourists (Asmara, 2020). For example, Lake Toba, which is one of the wonders of the world, which offers a stunning natural landscape and also the sultanate of Deli which has hospitality and rich culinary tours and an interesting and characterful cultural heritage, as well as the Barus area in Sibolga which is famous for being one of the areas where Islam spread in Indonesia, not to mention the beauty of the beach on the island of Nias. These destinations have become popular destinations for those seeking an authentic Indonesian experience in North Sumatra.

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Figure 1. Lake Toba
Source: Lake Toba North Sumatra

Quoted from the Central Bureau of Statistics, the January-December 2023 period saw the number of foreign tourists visiting North Sumatra increase by 164.46 percent when compared to the same period in 2022, from 74,498 visits in January-December 2022 to 197,015 visits in the 2023 period (BPS, 2024).

This data shows that the growth of foreign tourists has a positive trend and has the potential to be increased.



Figure 2. Tourism Development in North Sumatra
Source: sumut.bps.go.id

Based on Central Bureau of Statistics data, the entrance of foreign tourists is mostly through Kualanamu airport and Silangit airport, while those through the entrance of Belawan Port and Tanjung Balai Asahan Port are still very low in percentage (BPS, 2024).

The function of the port in addition to loading and unloading of goods also serves to up and down passengers, therefore the port is not only equipped with loading and unloading facilities but also equipped with passenger terminal facilities, both domestic passengers and foreign passengers (tourists).

As in the Port of Belawan, which is one of the largest ports in Indonesia, has berthing facilities for passenger ships and cruise ships and an international standard passenger terminal. Likewise, Teluk Nibung port in Tanjung Balai Asahan city has berthing facilities for ferries and an international standard passenger terminal as well.

The capacity of passengers/tourists that can be served at the port of Belawan in Medan and at the port of Teluk Nibung in Tanjung Balai Asahan is relatively potentially very large in number for one period, for example per month or per year. For example, at the Port of Belawan, the number of passengers/tourists served in accordance with the capacity of passenger ships/cruise ships is very large, which can be up to thousands of people per ship, while at the Port of Teluk Nibung also has the potential for a large number of passengers/tourists because the port of Teluk Nibung serves Indonesian ferries to Malaysia and vice versa where the ferry visits can be more than once a day. Therefore, the port has the potential to increase the number of foreign tourists and can support the domestic and foreign tourism industry.

PT Pelabuhan Indonesia (Persero) or better known as Pelindo is one of the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) engaged in logistics, specifically in the management and development of ports. To be able to improve the quality of excellent port services, one of the steps taken by the company is to prioritize customer satisfaction so as to maximize company progress and get a high level of customer loyalty. The next stage of customer loyalty to the company, which is characterized by customer engagement, is the use of other services provided by the company.

The shift in service needs by every port business actor continues to occur, business people demand to be provided with excellent facilities to expedite the production process which has implications for reducing production costs, so that service demands become important for the existence and sustainability of the port business, including to support the tourism industry.

Pelabuhan Indonesia seeks to improve services through improved facilities that support tourism in North Sumatra by, among others, preparing docks that accommodate world cruise ships and passenger terminals and facilities of international standard.

Some ports to support tourism in North Sumatra include Belawan Port and Tanjung Balai Asahan Port. Belawan Port located in Medan city has the advantage of being able to serve large cruise ships and Tanjung Balai Asahan Port located in Tanjung Balai Asahan city has the potential to face directly with neighboring Malaysia, both ports are under the management of PT Pelabuhan Indonesia (Persero). The development of Belawan Port and

Teluk Nibung Port could make the tourist ports more competitive and attract more cruise ships to North Sumatra. An appropriate port to consider as a tourist port (cruise port).

In this study, the potential of ports in North Sumatra will be described in supporting the tourism industry, especially in its efforts to increase the flow of foreign tourist arrivals in North Sumatra through the ports of entry in North Sumatra. What are the main factors that drive the growth of the tourism industry in North Sumatra and examine the challenges and opportunities facing this sector in the coming years, especially in terms of optimizing existing ports in North Sumatra.

The discussion of this paper is to obtain and analyze the role, potential of the port through tourist support facilities at Belawan port and Teluk Nibung port, including the dock where cruise ships and ferries dock and international standard passenger terminal facilities.

Analyze the impact of Port infrastructure development and the support and initiatives of local governments and related businesses on tourism in the region and will discuss the importance of implementing sustainable tourism to ensure the long-term viability of North Sumatra's tourism industry. By knowing the potential and contribution of this port, it is hoped that it will be able to provide the same perception for business people, port managers and local governments to encourage the North Sumatra tourism industry in the eyes of the world.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Port is a place consisting of land and / or waters with certain boundaries as a place of government activities and business activities that are used as a place for ships to dock, embark and disembark passengers, and / or loading and unloading goods, in the form of terminals and ship berths equipped with shipping safety and security facilities and Port supporting activities as well as a place for intra-and intermodal transportation movements (PP61, 2009).

Terminal is a Port facility consisting of a berthing pool and a place for ships to lean or moor, a place for stacking, a place to wait and get on and off passengers, and / or a place for loading and unloading goods (PP61, 2009).

The port has a role as (PP61, 2009):

- a. Nodes in the transportation network according to their hierarchy;
- b. Gateway to economic activities;
- c. Place of transportation mode transfer activities;
- d. Supporting industrial and/or trade activities;

- e. Place of distribution, production, and consolidation of cargo or goods; and
- f. Realizing the Archipelago concept and state sovereignty.

¹¹ Port Development and Operation by state administrators and / or Port business entities is carried out after obtaining a permit, namely (PP61, 2009):

- ¹¹ a. Minister for main and collector ports;
- b. Governor for regional feeder ports; and
- c. Regents / mayors for local feeder ports and river and lake ports.

In accordance with the regulation of the Minister of Transportation number PM 4 of 2022 concerning the service of foreign tourist ships (yachts) and foreign cruise ships in Indonesian waters, it is stated that cruise ships are passenger ships that provide travel for tourism and visit several ports or tourist destinations while functioning as floating hotels (PM4, 2022).

Tourism is a trip to visit a tourist attraction outside the country or region both planned and unplanned, either alone or in groups. ¹⁰ According to Law No.10 of 2009 concerning tourism, what is meant by tourism is (Handana Sembiring, 2022):

- a. ³ Tourism is a travel activity carried out by a person or group of people by visiting certain places for the purpose of recreation, personal development, or studying the uniqueness of tourist attractions visited in a temporary period.
- b. Tourists are people who do tourism.
- c. Tourism is a variety of tourism activities and supported by various facilities and services provided by the community, entrepreneurs and the Regional Government.
- d. Tourism is an overall activity related to tourism and is multidimensional and multidisciplinary in nature which arises as a form of the needs of every person and country as well as interactions between tourists and local communities, fellow tourists, the Government, Regional Governments, and entrepreneurs.
- e. Tourism Attraction is everything that has uniqueness, beauty, and value in the form of diversity of natural wealth, culture, and man-made products that become the target or destination of tourist visits.

² The definition of foreign tourists in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is every person who visits a country outside their place of residence, driven by one or more purposes without the intention of earning income in the place visited and the length of the visit is not more than 12 (twelve) months. This definition includes two categories of foreign guests, namely (BPS, 2024):

- a. Tourist (tourist) is any visitor as defined above who stays at least twenty-four hours, but not more than twelve (12) months in the place visited with the purpose of the visit, among others:
- 1) Vacation, recreation and sports
 - 2) Business, visiting friends and family, missions, attending meetings, conferences, visits for health, study and religious reasons.
- b. Excursionist is any visitor as defined above who stays for less than twenty-four hours in the place visited (including cruise passenger i.e. any visitor who arrives in a country by ship or train, where they do not stay in accommodation available in the country).

3. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive analysis method that will describe the potential of ports in North Sumatra and the realization of the flow of foreign tourist visits through port entrances in North Sumatra.

The purpose of qualitative research is to understand, seek the meaning behind the data, to find the truth, both sensual empirical truth and logical empirical (Sugiyono, 2013).

This study uses secondary data, namely data collected using the official website, which is focused on this descriptive model of the flow of foreign tourist visits in North Sumatra. The author also conducts library research, namely information from books, the internet, journal references and articles related to the research. The author also takes the data based on official sources and personal analysis assumptions.

Data collection is carried out on the basis of phenomenological principles, namely by deeply understanding the symptoms or phenomena at hand (Sugiyono, 2013).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When foreign tourists, whose entrance is through the port, arrive at a port in their destination country, the first personal view and experience is the port where the cruise ship is moored. If the perception and personal experience is positive about the port, then the foreign tourist's mind must be positive about a region and a country, and vice versa. If a cruise ship docks and visits Belawan Port for example, then the first impression that foreign tourists feel about Belawan Port will make a deep perception and impression of the city of Medan and even Indonesia.

This is one of the factors that will influence tourist decisions and behavior, which is closely related to the role of the port as a gateway for foreign tourists. The first impression

when foreign tourists visit the port and/or airport is an issue that has a lot of influence and a significant impact on the intention of tourists to return to a particular tourist area/country.

For tourists whose entrance is through the Port, facilities, accessibility of further transportation and other additional services will affect the first perception of tourists visiting. Ports that are able to provide more services for the needs of tourists will contribute greatly and affect the growth of the tourism industry, especially tourists through sea transportation modes, cruise ships and ferries.

In essence, the potential of the port in relation to international tourists, influential and very instrumental in giving the first impression to foreign tourists on the satisfaction of visiting a tourist destination area and country.

Sea transportation passenger services have been regulated in Minister of Transportation Regulation number 37 of 2015 concerning Sea Transportation Passenger Service Standards. ⁸ Sea Transportation Passenger Service Standards are guidelines for sea transportation passenger service providers in providing services to sea transportation passengers (PM37, 2015).

¹³ Sea Transportation Passenger Service Standards include sea transportation passenger service standards at passenger terminals and sea transportation passenger service standards on board ships (PM37, 2015).

⁸ Sea transportation passenger service standards at passenger terminals are provided by passenger terminal operators which include safety, security, comfort and convenience services (PM37, 2015).

Services of comfort, convenience and equality at the terminal include at least among others (PM37, 2015):

- a. Waiting room
- b. Gate boarding
- c. Restroom
- ⁸ d. Place of worship
- e. Lighting lamp
- f. Cleaning facilities
- g. Temperature control facilities
- h. Health service room
- i. Service information center
- j. Advanced transportation information
- k. Parking lot

- l. Disabled facilities
- m. Nursing mother room

The government has set 10 (ten) ports of call that will be visited by foreign cruise ships, which will have great potential for increasing tourism and will affect the economic growth of the region. These ports are (Widodo, 2023):

- a. Tanjung Priok Port
- b. Tanjung Perak Port
- c. Port of Belawan
- d. Makassar Port
- e. Bena Port
- f. Tanjung Emas Port
- g. Sorong Port
- h. Likupang Port
- i. Sheet Port
- j. Labuan Bajo Port

Ports managed by PT Pelabuhan Indonesia (Persero) located in North Sumatra, which can serve and have passenger terminal facilities include Belawan Port in Medan city and Teluk Nibung Port in Tanjung Balai Asahan.

Some of the facilities prepared and available at the Port of Belawan include (Profil Pelabuhan Belawan, 2021):

- a. Docks where passenger ships and / or cruise ships dock.
- b. International standard passenger terminal, according to service standards set by the government.
- c. Garbarata for passenger ¹³boarding and disembarking facilities from and to the ship.
- d. Transit room/hotel.
- e. Government agency services
- f. Onward transportation such as trains and inter-city buses.



Figure 3. Belawan Port Passenger Terminal
Source: PT Pelabuhan Indonesia Belawan branch



Figure 4. Garbarata
Source: PT Pelabuhan Indonesia Belawan branch



Figure 5. Cruise Ship visiting Belawan Port
Source: PT Pelabuhan Indonesia Belawan branch

The Teluk Nibung Port in the city of Tanjung Balai Asahan is equipped with international standard facilities, including (Profile of TBAshahan Port, 2021):

- a. Passenger terminal, according to service standards.
- b. Jetty where the ferry docks.
- c. Government agency services
- d. Advanced transportation



Figure 6. Teluk Nibung Port Passenger Terminal

Source: PT Pelabuhan Indonesia TB Asahan branch



Gambar 7. Ferry Boat

Source: Facebook.com/dumaiexpressgroup

The modes of transportation that support the tourism industry at the Port include the support of land transportation modes such as the availability of trains from the city of Belawan to the surrounding cities, trains from Tanjung Balai Asahan to the city of Medan and its surroundings. With the existence of this advanced land transportation, it is a facility that greatly affects the impression and services to local tourists and foreign tourists.

The tourism industry through the Port entrance can also take advantage of Port connectivity in the sea toll network, such as from Belawan Port will continue to Sabang Port, then to Sibolga Port and so on, so that a tourism industry route pattern will be formed through ports in North Sumatra, Aceh and Tapanuli. With the support and supporting transportation facilities and the formation of alternative tourist routes, it will greatly affect and potentially increase ⁶ the growth of the tourism industry in North Sumatra.

One of the considerations and attractions of tourists, among others, is the uniqueness and excellence of the tourist area to be visited, in addition to a conducive environment and ease of further transportation modes. Tourists who enter through the Port entrance using

cruise ships are a huge potential for economic growth in tourist destinations, therefore supporting infrastructure such as roads and hotels are a must to be prepared by interested parties, both business people and local governments, especially for areas that have been designated by the government as areas and ports of call for foreign cruise ships in Indonesia. The government has set service priorities for cruise ship visits, but there are not enough ports designated as cruise ship stopover ports, or only 10 (ten) ports based on Minister of Transportation Regulation 4/2022.

With considerable tourism potential, and Indonesia as an archipelago, the development of additional ports of call is important to increase foreign exchange from the tourism sector (Widodo, 2023).

The potential of the Port will be highly optimized if it is associated with the marine tourism program, which is a type of tourism that is certainly closely related to the use of sea transportation modes in its implementation.

⁶ Before discussing sea transportation modes in tourism activities, it is necessary to first understand the definition of marine tourism, which includes the following:

- a. According to Vallega (1997), marine tourism is a type of special interest tourism that has activities related to the sea, both above the surface of the sea (marine), activities carried out below the surface of the sea (submarine), as well as activities carried out on the coast (coastal).
- b. According to Sero (2010:19), ⁵ Marine Tourism is a form of tourism that uses or utilizes the potential of the coastal and marine environment as the main attraction. The concept of marine tourism is based on the view, the uniqueness of nature, the characteristics of the ecosystem, the uniqueness of art and culture and the characteristics of the community as its basic strength.
- c. According to Fandeli (1996: 50), marine tourism is tourism whose objects and attractions are sourced from seascape and coastal landscape.
- d. According to Fandeli (1995: 89), water tourism or marine tourism (including beach tourism) are tourist activities such as swimming, fishing (fishing), diving (diving and snorkeling), sailing (sailing), surfing (surfing), sea skiing (skiing), sunbathing, beach recreation, underwater photography, canoeing, and others.

The activity of enjoying the beauty and biodiversity of marine potential can be done in two ways, namely:

- a. In shallow water by means of a boat whose floor or bottom wall is composed of translucent glass; and

- b. Using diving equipment, especially for places that are deep and impossible to see with a translucent glass boat (Widodo, 2023).

Another aspect to optimize the tourism industry in North Sumatra, which is no less important, is promotional efforts and cooperation between tourism businesses in North Sumatra with business actors in other parts of Indonesia and also tourism businesses in foreign countries. With the cooperation and delivery of facility information to the outside world as well as vigorous promotion through all promotional channels, it is certain that there will be an increase in the flow of domestic and foreign tourist visits.

One example of a promotion program and synergy between domestic and foreign tourism business actors is a program run by the Batam city government. The program is by offering a “Hot Deal” program with the theme “Hot Deals 365 Everyday is Hot Deals Offers in Batam and Beyond”. The implementation of the Hot Deals program itself is a Ministry of Tourism program in the form of bundling packages, namely the sale of ferry tickets with accommodation and attractions in the Riau Islands which are sold at low prices and attractive offers in order to achieve the target of foreign tourist visits.

The Hot Deals program is designed to use idle capacity more effectively. When unused capacity in the 3A's (Accessibility, Accommodation, and are brought together into a platform, simple and cheap tourism services become available, which increases the number of foreign tourist visits. These “Hot Deals” packages are sold during the low season, especially on weekdays Monday to Thursday, when Batam's tourism industry offers huge discounts, including up to 60% for ferry tickets, 50% for attractions and 8% for hotel stays (Ramadhani, 2022).

Another good example is the strategy of the Bintan Tourism Office in increasing foreign tourist visits through the Wonderful Sail To Indonesia Event in 2018 and the dragon boat race event that utilizes the potential of the water area around the port of Sri Bintan Pura Tanjung Pinang. This marine tourism program has proven to be able to boost tourist visits both local and foreign tourists (Nadila Syofia, 2023).

Another thing that will attract tourists is implementing a halal tourism program. Indonesia, with the largest Muslim majority in the world, should make halal tourism an alternative tourism program that will promote Indonesia in the eyes of the world (Slamet Widodo, 2023).

These excellent and potential tourism programs will not be able to maximally achieve the expected goals if the information does not reach potential tourists. Therefore,

promotional programs must be intensively carried out by related business actors and by the local and/or central government.

In today's digital era, promotion will be more effective if digital marketing (digital promotion) is carried out. Applications, websites, social media must be created as one of the promotional media to be carried out. Digitalization of Tourism presents an in-depth understanding of how digital technology has revolutionized the tourism industry, and provides an in-depth look at how we can make the most of this digital potential (Surya Afnarius, 2024).

No less important is the growth of the tourism industry must take into account the interests and benefits that will be obtained by the community around the tourist destination, ¹² in addition to the benefits of economic growth. To obtain synergy between related business actors, local governments and local communities, tourism improvement programs must be planned, developed, promoted, managed, and operated properly and correctly, taking into account the interests of all stakeholders. ¹² All stakeholders must have the opportunity to express their opinions and aspirations to help shape the tourism industry towards a better direction (Fahlevi, 2016).

In the end, the potential and opportunities for improvement and growth of the tourism industry in North Sumatra must be known and realized by all interested parties, the vision and mission must be the same perception regarding the potential of the Port in its role in the tourism industry. Local governments, businesses and communities must work together and work together to explore, optimize and maintain existing potential. While all business people involved in port activities also need to be made aware of the importance of the tourism side at the port, so they will support port tourism activities (Indriyanto, 2005).

Thus the tourism industry in North Sumatra will grow, especially through the entrance of the Port with the potential of the Port in North Sumatra.

CONCLUSION

Indonesia, especially North Sumatra, has great potential in the tourism industry due to its cultural diversity and natural beauty. Some popular tourist destinations in North Sumatra and its surroundings include Lake Toba (one of the wonders of the world), the Sultanate of Deli, Barus in Sibolga, and Nias Island Beach.

Data shows an increase in the number of foreign tourists by 164.46% in the January-December 2023 period compared to the previous year. The Port of Belawan and Teluk Nibung have the potential to support the tourism industry with adequate facilities for cruise ships and

ferries. PT Pelabuhan Indonesia (Persero) seeks to improve services through improving tourism support facilities.

The tourism industry through the Port entrance can also take advantage of Port connectivity in the sea highway network, such as from Belawan Port will continue to Sabang Port, then to Sibolga Port and so on, so that a tourism industry route pattern will be formed through ports in North Sumatra, Aceh and Tapanuli. With the support and supporting transportation facilities and the formation of alternative tourist routes, it will greatly affect and potentially increase the growth of the tourism industry in North Sumatra.

With the facilities owned by the Port in North Sumatra to support the tourism industry, the Port in North Sumatra has the potential to increase the flow of foreign tourist visits through the Port entrance in North Sumatra. Regulatory support from the local government and the role of related businesses and community support are very important aspects to increase the flow of foreign tourist visits to North Sumatra in an effort to develop a sustainable tourism industry.

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