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Assessing Blue Lagoon Beach as a Special Interest Snorkeling Destination in Bali: A Qualitative Analysis of 4A Attributes, Activity Characteristics, and Management Implications

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Abstract

Marine tourism increasingly relies on experience-based coastal activities, and snorkeling has become one of the most accessible forms of special interest tourism in coral-reef destinations. However, the attractiveness of a snorkeling site cannot be assessed only through scenery; it also depends on destination readiness, safety, interpretation, and management capacity. This study examines Blue Lagoon Beach in Padangbai, Karangasem, Bali, with two objectives: first, to assess its feasibility as a special interest snorkeling destination through the 4A framework (attraction, amenities, accessibility, and ancillary services); and second, to analyse the characteristics of snorkeling activities and their implications for sustainable marine tourism. The study employed a qualitative descriptive design based on field observation, semi-structured interviews with local tourism actors and community stakeholders, and documentary review. Data were analysed thematically through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that Blue Lagoon possesses strong natural attractiveness, adequate tourism amenities, relatively convenient accessibility, and supporting ancillary services that make the destination operationally viable. Its snorkeling product is strengthened by calm shallow waters, local guide assistance, and learning opportunities related to reef etiquette and marine conservation. At the same time, the study indicates the need for stronger interpretive materials, visitor management, and conservation-sensitive governance to reduce ecological risk as visitation grows. The article argues that Blue Lagoon should be positioned not merely as a generic beach attraction, but as a community-based special interest marine destination whose competitiveness depends on balancing visitor experience with coral reef protection.

Keywords: marine tourism; snorkeling tourism; special interest tourism; 4A framework; Blue Lagoon Beach

INTRODUCTION

Background

Marine tourism has become an increasingly important component of coastal destination development because it connects recreation, place-based experience, and the economic value of marine ecosystems. Coral reefs, in particular, function not only as biodiversity assets but also as tourism assets that contribute significantly to coastal economies and destination branding (Spalding et al., 2017). At the same time, the growth of marine and coastal tourism can place increasing pressure on fragile ecosystems when destination development is not accompanied by adequate management, behavioural control, and conservation-sensitive governance (Tranter et al., 2022; Boakes et al., 2022). This indicates that marine tourism development should be assessed not only in terms of attractiveness and marketability, but also in relation to ecological sensitivity, destination readiness, and long-term sustainability.

Within this broader context, snorkeling has emerged as one of the most accessible and rapidly growing marine tourism activities. Compared with scuba diving, snorkeling requires less technical training, lower costs, and shorter preparation time, enabling a wider range of visitors to engage directly with underwater environments. For this reason, snorkeling is often closely associated with special interest tourism, namely tourism motivated by a particular activity, setting, or experiential interest rather than by general leisure consumption alone (Trauer, 2006). Moreover, snorkeling can function not merely as a recreational activity, but also as an interpretive marine experience that enhances environmental learning, reef awareness, and responsible tourist behaviour when supported by proper guidance and ecological information (Pineiro-Corbeira et al., 2020; Waters et al., 2026).

The contemporary development of snorkeling tourism, however, presents a double-sided phenomenon. On the one hand, snorkeling creates opportunities for local income generation, product diversification, and destination differentiation. On the other hand, uncontrolled in-water behaviour, weak visitor briefing systems, crowding, and poor operational standards may damage coral reefs and reduce the quality of visitor experience. Previous studies have shown that direct contact with corals, fin kicks, and weak behavioural control among snorkelers can negatively affect reef ecosystems, while guide-based mediation, operator standards, and pre-trip interpretation can reduce harmful practices and support more sustainable tourism activities (Hunt et al., 2013; Webler & Jakubowski, 2016). Other studies also emphasize that carrying-capacity assessment and visitor management are crucial for marine destinations whose attractiveness depends heavily on coral reef quality (Naranjo-Arriola, 2021). These debates are especially relevant in Bali, where coral reef tourism has become both economically important and environmentally vulnerable (Boakes et al., 2022).

In this regard, Karangasem Regency represents an important coastal tourism area in Bali. The Karangasem Regency Government has articulated a mission to develop quality, competitive, and sustainable tourism destinations grounded in local wisdom (Kantona, Adi, and Kurniawan, 2016). In practice, tourism in Karangasem has shown notable growth, as reflected in the increasing number of tourist arrivals between 2021 and 2023 (karangasemkab.bps.go.id, 2024). Although several destinations in the regency have been relatively well developed and managed, others still possess considerable tourism potential that has not yet been fully optimized. One of these is Blue Lagoon Beach, a natural tourist attraction located in Padangbai Village, Manggis District, Karangasem Regency.

According to Karangasem Regent Regulation Number 52 of 2017 concerning the management of tourist attractions, Blue Lagoon Beach is listed as one of the 43 natural tourism attractions in Karangasem Regency. The destination is characterized by white sand, clear blue seawater, and a diverse marine ecosystem. Its rocky coastal topography creates varying underwater depths, with an average depth of around 2.5 meters, while coral reef conditions and marine life remain relatively good and diverse. These characteristics make Blue Lagoon especially suitable for snorkeling, which offers visitors a simple and direct way to enjoy its underwater scenery. In addition, the site's marine resources, including ecological richness and potential underwater cultural value, offer strong potential for further tourism and scientific development. With proper management, Blue Lagoon has the potential to become a leading marine tourism destination in Karangasem, particularly for snorkeling and other forms of special interest tourism.

Special interest tourism is designed to meet the specific interests and motivations of tourists, in contrast to more generalized forms of mass tourism. In this sense, snorkeling at Blue Lagoon is not merely an ordinary beach activity, but can be understood as a special interest experience shaped by environmental uniqueness, marine biodiversity, and experiential engagement (Bolango et al., 2019). This form of tourism can generate economic benefits for local communities while also introducing visitors to the importance of marine conservation. However, sustaining such benefits requires effective destination management, including operational standards, environmental regulation, and visitor education regarding responsible behaviour in marine environments (Suryaningsih, Susila, and Dewi, 2023). This is particularly important in Indonesia, where underwater heritage and marine-based special interest attractions have not yet become dominant tourism products compared with more conventional nature-based tourism, despite their considerable potential (Komaini et al., 2022).

Blue Lagoon Beach clearly reflects this wider opportunity and challenge. In practical terms, it is already functioning as a marine tourism site due to its clear waters, relatively calm bay, accessible snorkeling area, and strategic location near Padangbai Port. Yet, from an academic perspective, its development is still more often described in terms of scenic appeal or general tourism promotion rather than through systematic assessment. There remains limited scholarly analysis explaining how Blue Lagoon actually performs as a special interest snorkeling destination, how its tourism components can be evaluated through the 4A framework, and how snorkeling activities are supported through guide assistance, safety, interpretation, and local service systems. This gap is important because destinations such as Blue Lagoon require more than promotional recognition; they require empirical assessment to determine whether their attraction, amenities, accessibility, and ancillary services are adequate to support sustainable special interest marine tourism.

Based on this context, this study seeks to assess Blue Lagoon Beach as a special interest snorkeling destination by examining its 4A attributes and analysing the characteristics of snorkeling activities developed at the site. The study is important not only for understanding the tourism potential of Blue Lagoon Beach, but also for contributing to the broader discourse on marine tourism development, special interest tourism, and sustainable destination management in coastal areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marine tourism generally refers to tourism activities that depend on marine settings, marine resources, or coastal-marine experiences as their primary basis of attraction. In such contexts, environmental quality is not a secondary attribute but part of the tourism product itself. Reef

condition, water clarity, wildlife encounters, seascape quality, and the organisation of marine activities all influence visitor satisfaction and destination competitiveness (Coghlan, 2012; Spalding et al., 2017). For reef-based destinations, marine tourism therefore needs to be analysed through a socio-ecological lens in which environmental assets, tourism operations, and local governance are inseparable.

Snorkeling occupies a distinctive place within marine tourism because it combines low-threshold participation with direct embodied contact with underwater ecosystems. This makes snorkeling particularly relevant to special interest tourism. The activity is not consumed as a generic beach pastime alone, but as a site-specific experience motivated by interest in reefs, marine life, underwater scenery, and soft adventure. At the same time, the literature consistently shows that snorkeling has ambivalent effects. It can function as environmental education and seascape appreciation when supported by interpretation and route design, but it can also create direct pressure on coral reefs when visitor behaviour is poorly managed (Hannak et al., 2011; Pineiro-Corbeira et al., 2020; Webler & Jakubowski, 2016).

The 4A framework remains useful for evaluating destination feasibility because it directs attention to four interrelated dimensions: attraction, amenities, accessibility, and ancillary services. In marine destinations, attraction concerns not only scenery but also ecological quality and experiential distinctiveness. Amenities relate to accommodation, equipment, food services, and operational convenience. Accessibility concerns transport connectivity and ease of reaching the site. Ancillary services include supporting institutions, information, safety support, and organisational services that make tourism activity function effectively. Although the 4A framework is often applied descriptively, it becomes more analytically useful when linked to the nature of the core activity, in this case snorkeling, and to the management implications required for sustainability.

Based on this review, the present study positions Blue Lagoon Beach as more than a scenic beach attraction. It is analysed as a special interest snorkeling destination whose feasibility depends on the interaction between environmental quality, local services, guide-mediated experience, and conservation-sensitive management. This analytical position differentiates the study from generic destination descriptions and provides a clearer contribution to the literature on marine tourism in Bali and comparable reef-based coastal destinations.

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METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with an interpretive orientation to examine Blue Lagoon Beach as a special interest snorkeling destination. The research was conducted in Padangbai Village, Manggis District, Karangasem Regency, Bali. The site was selected purposively because it has an established snorkeling product, active tourism services, and a strategic position within East Bali's coastal mobility system. Rather than measuring tourist perceptions statistically, the study aimed to understand how destination quality and snorkeling practices are constructed, experienced, and managed in their natural setting.

Primary data were obtained through direct field observation and semi-structured interviews with actors directly connected to destination operations, including tourism managers, snorkeling guides, local business actors, tourists encountered on site, and community representatives. Secondary data were collected from official statistics, village and destination documents, government regulations, operator materials, and academic literature on marine tourism, snorkeling, and sustainable destination management. Using purposive informant selection allowed the study to focus on actors who possessed practical knowledge of destination conditions, service provision, visitor behaviour, and local tourism dynamics.

Data collection was organised around two analytical dimensions. The first dimension concerned destination feasibility through the 4A framework: attraction, amenities, accessibility, and ancillary services. The second concerned the operational characteristics of snorkeling activities, including site conditions, beginner suitability, guide assistance, safety practices, package organisation, and environmental interpretation. Observations focused on the physical setting, tourism facilities, access conditions, visitor flows, and in-water activity arrangements. Interview and documentary data were coded thematically and interpreted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Credibility was strengthened through source triangulation and method triangulation by comparing observation findings, interview narratives, and documentary evidence. The study does not claim statistical generalisation; instead, it offers contextual explanation and analytical insight into how Blue Lagoon operates as a snorkeling destination and what management implications emerge from that condition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Blue Lagoon Beach in the Coastal Marine Tourism System of Padangbai

Padangbai occupies a distinctive position in East Bali because it functions simultaneously as a coastal settlement, a port gateway, and a tourism node. This layered spatial role is important because destinations located near mobility corridors often benefit from visitor spillover, shorter decision cycles, and activity-based visitation patterns. In the case of Blue Lagoon Beach, the destination is not isolated from the wider tourism system. Rather, its attractiveness is reinforced by the broader circulation of travellers moving through Padangbai, as well as by the coexistence of marine livelihoods, village life, and tourism services within the same coastal setting. With an area of approximately 360 hectares and a topography that combines lowlands, hills, and coastal areas, Padangbai forms a dynamic socio-spatial environment in which fisheries, trade, transport, and tourism intersect. This combination reflects an adaptive local economy and provides an important foundation for the development of sustainable marine tourism (Kantona et al., 2016).

Within this setting, Blue Lagoon Beach has evolved into more than a scenic coastal cove. Historical accounts from the field indicate that the beach began attracting visitors as early as 1988, before the wider expansion of tourism in East Bali. The shift from the local name *Padang Kurungan* to *Blue Lagoon* also reflects a process of tourism symbolisation, in which the destination became repositioned through imagery associated with clear water, calm conditions, and lagoon-like visual appeal. This transformation is consistent with Butler's destination evolution framework, where destinations gradually move from exploration toward development as local participation, facilities, and visitor recognition begin to increase (Butler, 1980). In Blue Lagoon, the development of snorkeling services, small eateries, and

community-managed accommodation in the 1990s marked the early integration of tourism into village life.

Figure 1. Coastal landscape of Blue Lagoon Beach, Padangbai, Karangasem (Source: zubludiving.com)

At the same time, Blue Lagoon should not be romanticised only as a natural asset. It is part of a broader socio-ecological landscape in which local services, port connectivity, village culture, and coastal environmental pressures interact. This is especially relevant in Bali, where coral reef tourism is economically valuable but environmentally vulnerable. The growth of marine tourism in East Bali, including the rise of snorkeling and diving activities, reflects broader regional trends toward experience-based and special interest tourism. However, as the literature on marine destinations has shown, the very environmental quality that attracts visitors can be undermined if destination development is not accompanied by stronger conservation-sensitive governance. In line with this, Surpi et al. (2025) emphasize that sustainable tourism in Bali should not rely solely on natural attractiveness and market-oriented branding, but must also be grounded in local cosmology, community ethics, and cultural authenticity.

The findings indicate that Blue Lagoon's present competitiveness is built on a relatively favourable balance between environmental attractiveness and local tourism functionality. Its clear water, white sand, sheltered bay morphology, and visible reef life create a setting that is attractive both visually and operationally. The site offers manageable access to shallow marine environments, making it especially suitable for beginner-level snorkeling. Yet this balance should be understood as contingent rather than permanent. As visitation increases, destination quality will depend increasingly on how effectively local stakeholders regulate tourist conduct, maintain reef-sensitive practices, and preserve the quality of the visitor experience that currently differentiates Blue Lagoon from more crowded marine destinations. The ecological strength of the site is also supported by findings that the Padangbai marine area still maintains relatively stable coral reef conditions compared with several other coastal areas experiencing stronger tourism pressure (Suardana & Darma, 2024).

Another important dimension is the continuing presence of Padangbai's

cultural landscape. Blue Lagoon is embedded in a living village environment where local religious sites, art traditions, and coastal community life remain active. The existence of Dang Kahyangan Temple, the Rejang Dewa and Baris Gede dances, Genjek, and sekaa gong demonstrates that tourism here is not detached from local identity. Rather than functioning as a purely commodified beach attraction, Blue Lagoon continues to reflect the interaction between nature, culture, and everyday social life. This strengthens the argument that Bali's tourism appeal lies in the dialectical relationship between natural beauty and cultural significance (Picard, 1996; Picard, 2021). In this setting, Blue Lagoon offers not only recreation, but also a more meaningful sense of place.

The strategic location of Blue Lagoon near Padangbai Port further strengthens its role within the regional tourism network. The port functions as a major gateway to Lombok, the Gili Islands, and Nusa Penida, generating a substantial flow of transit passengers. BPS Bali data recorded approximately 1.8 million passenger movements through Padangbai Port in 2024, indicating strong potential for tourism spillover into destinations located nearby (BPS Bali, 2025). Because Blue Lagoon is located only a short distance from the port, it benefits from activity-based stopovers and short-visit marine recreation. This proximity creates a practical advantage: travellers with limited time can combine transport movement with snorkeling or beach-based leisure. In this sense, Blue Lagoon lies at the intersection of marine tourism and transit tourism, which enhances destination visibility but also increases the need for better visitor flow management (Hall & Lew, 2019; Rodrigue, 2020).

Taken together, these findings show that Blue Lagoon's attractiveness cannot be explained by one factor alone. Its competitiveness is relational. Environmental quality, ease of access, village context, marine activity suitability, and tourism services reinforce one another. This relational profile is one reason why Blue Lagoon can be positioned not simply as another beach in East Bali, but as a viable special interest snorkeling destination with broader implications for sustainable coastal tourism development.

4A Assessment of Blue Lagoon Beach as a Special Interest Snorkeling Destination

The 4A framework provides a useful basis for assessing whether Blue Lagoon Beach is feasible as a special interest snorkeling destination. The findings suggest that the destination performs relatively well across all four components, although the strongest dimension is clearly attraction.

Attraction

From the perspective of attraction, Blue Lagoon offers a coherent relationship between physical environment and tourism activity. The destination is characterised by relatively clean white sand, clear blue water, a sheltered bay, and reef areas with high visibility. These features create both scenic and functional value. Tourists are drawn not only by the beauty of the landscape, but also by the feasibility of snorkeling as the main activity. This distinction is important because in special interest tourism, the destination's attractiveness depends not only on its visual appeal but on the quality of the core experience associated with the activity itself (Shintiya et al., 2022).

The marine biodiversity of Blue Lagoon strengthens this attraction further. Coral reefs, ornamental fish, turtles, and other marine organisms contribute to the perception of the site as a kind of "natural aquarium." This perception is not merely promotional. Research by Suardana and Darma (2024) shows that the Padangbai area maintains a relatively stable level of live coral abundance compared with several other snorkeling areas that have experienced degradation due to tourism

pressure and bleaching phenomena. As a result, Blue Lagoon retains the ecological quality necessary to support snorkeling as a tourism product. In marine tourism, such environmental quality is not simply aesthetic capital; it is the structural foundation of destination competitiveness (Hall & Page, 2022; UNWTO, 2023).

Figure 2. Underwater scenery and coral reef conditions at Blue Lagoon Beach (Source: https://www.tripspoint.com/)

The attraction dimension is also reinforced by the cultural and social environment surrounding the beach. Blue Lagoon exists within an active village landscape where local rituals, daily livelihoods, and tourism-related interaction continue to coexist. This embeddedness enriches the destination experience because visitors do not encounter only a marine setting, but also a living coastal community. In experiential terms, this increases perceived authenticity and creates a more meaningful visit. The destination thus combines natural attraction with a broader sense of place, in line with the notion of existential authenticity in tourism experiences (Salazar, 2020).

Another important finding is the role of geomorphological uniqueness. Informants described parts of the reef as forming terrace-like coral structures, which provide a distinctive underwater visual character not commonly highlighted in other East Bali destinations. This feature can serve as a unique selling point, strengthening Blue Lagoon's differentiation in a competitive snorkeling market. It also suggests that the destination has value not only for recreation, but also for environmental interpretation and potentially for educational tourism. In this regard, Blue Lagoon's attraction lies not solely in scenic beauty, but in the combination of ecological specificity, experiential accessibility, and interpretive potential.

Amenities

The second dimension, amenities, can be assessed as functionally supportive and relatively mature for a village-scale marine destination. Padangbai provides accommodation, restaurants, bars, dive-related businesses, equipment rental

services, and boat support that collectively sustain visitor activity before, during, and after snorkeling. The existence of 29 accommodations, five restaurants, three bars, and six diving or tirta tourism businesses reflects a fairly solid business structure in support of marine tourism activities. These facilities may not indicate a luxury destination, but they do indicate operational sufficiency. For a snorkeling site, this is highly significant because visitors rely on practical services such as equipment readiness, transport support, food and beverages, waiting areas, and nearby accommodation (Hall & Lew, 2019).

The diversity of available accommodation also indicates a degree of market differentiation. Tourists can choose from modest lodging to eco-resort style accommodation such as Bloo Lagoon Eco Village, which broadens the destination's appeal across different spending categories and travel preferences. This is important because destinations with varied amenity provision tend to have a higher level of tourist satisfaction and a wider market reach. The location of many of these facilities near the coastal area further strengthens the sensory and experiential continuity of the visit, which is consistent with the concept of the experience economy in tourism (Pine & Gilmore, 2011).

From a socio-economic perspective, these amenities are also important because they reflect local participation in the tourism economy. The community is involved not only as labour but also as business actors in accommodation, food services, parking management, and guiding. This supports the argument that marine tourism in East Bali contributes to local economic circulation, especially through small businesses and service-based livelihoods (Putra, 2023). Thus, tourism amenities at Blue Lagoon do not function merely as supporting infrastructure for visitors, but also as mechanisms of community empowerment.

Accessibility

The third dimension, accessibility, is also favourable. Blue Lagoon can be reached from major tourism areas in Bali by road, and the travel time from Ngurah Rai International Airport is relatively manageable, approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes via the Ida Bagus Mantra Bypass. The destination's location near Padangbai Port further increases regional connectivity and supports both planned and incidental visitation. Accessibility therefore operates at two levels: as physical access through road infrastructure and as networked access through the wider mobility system of East Bali (Cooper et al., 2018).

This is particularly relevant for novice snorkelers and short-duration visitors. Destinations that are easy to reach are more likely to attract tourists who may not initially plan a full marine excursion but are willing to participate in a manageable and distinctive activity if access is simple. Improved road conditions, parking areas managed by local communities, and access to the beach through steps or defined entry points all contribute to visitor comfort and convenience. In this sense, Blue Lagoon benefits from a practical accessibility profile that supports its function as an activity-based marine destination. This finding is also consistent with studies showing that accessibility significantly influences interest in visiting marine destinations (Kantona et al., 2016; Rahmawati & Wibawa, 2023).

Ancillary Services

The fourth dimension, ancillary services, concerns the enabling systems that allow the destination to function smoothly and safely. In Blue Lagoon, ancillary support includes telecommunications, electricity, ATMs, banks, pharmacies, health clinics, Tourist Information Centres, police support, travel services, and local guide services. Although these elements are less visible than scenery or amenities, they are critical in shaping perceptions of security, convenience, and professionalism.

For marine tourism, ancillary services have particular importance because activities such as snorkeling and diving involve physical risk, unfamiliar environments, and potential environmental sensitivity. The findings suggest that Blue Lagoon already possesses a workable ancillary base. This condition is in line with the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy's guidance on sustainable destination readiness, which emphasises the importance of basic support services in marine tourism areas (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2021). However, stronger interpretive signage, clearer environmental codes of conduct, and more visible destination-level information would further enhance visitor confidence and management quality. In other words, the destination has a relatively solid service foundation, but there remains room to strengthen its institutional and interpretive support system.

Characteristics of Snorkeling Activities at Blue Lagoon Beach

A central result of this study is that Blue Lagoon's snorkeling product is attractive precisely because it is manageable for beginners while still delivering a distinctive marine experience. The water is relatively shallow, generally ranging between 2.5 and 3 meters, visibility is good, and the bay morphology is calmer than more exposed coastal sites. These conditions reduce participation barriers and make snorkeling accessible to a broader market, including first-time visitors, family groups, and tourists seeking short marine activities without advanced training. These characteristics are also broadly consistent with standards for snorkeling feasibility in marine tourism settings (Permenpar No. 7 of 2016).

This is a crucial point for understanding Blue Lagoon as a special interest destination. Special interest tourism does not necessarily mean exclusivity in technical skill; rather, it means that the activity itself becomes the main motivation for travel. In Blue Lagoon, snorkeling serves exactly this role. Visitors come not only to see a beach, but to engage directly with the underwater environment. The activity is therefore central to the destination's identity and is one of the main reasons why Blue Lagoon is able to differentiate itself from many other coastal destinations in Bali.

Guide involvement emerges as one of the most important operational strengths of the destination. Local guides do more than accompany tourists to snorkeling spots. They assist with equipment, reassure less confident swimmers, interpret sea conditions, and explain basic reef-safe behaviour. Their role is particularly important for first-time snorkelers, who may lack familiarity with both the equipment and the marine environment. Through this guide-mediated structure, Blue Lagoon transforms from a simple recreational beach into a more organised and manageable snorkeling destination. This pattern also reflects community-based management practices that are considered effective for improving conservation awareness and reducing ecological damage in tourism settings (Picard, 2021; UNESCO, 2023).

The educational dimension of snorkeling is also significant. Observations and interviews suggest that tourists receive at least basic guidance regarding reef etiquette, including instructions not to touch corals and to behave carefully in the water. This positions snorkeling not merely as consumptive marine recreation, but as a potential medium for environmental interpretation and conservation awareness. In destinations where coral reefs form the core tourism product, this educational function is highly valuable because it can help align visitor enjoyment with ecological responsibility. The guide's role in introducing marine etiquette and conservation messages is therefore an important part of the tourism experience, not simply an operational add-on. This is consistent with the concept of interpretive marine tourism, which views marine recreation as a

medium for environmental learning (Orams, 1999; Suardana & Darma, 2024).

The affordability of snorkeling packages further broadens market access. Package prices ranging from approximately IDR 100,000 to IDR 250,000 make the activity relatively inclusive for domestic and international visitors. Combined with easy access and beginner-friendly conditions, this creates a strong comparative advantage for Blue Lagoon relative to more technically demanding or more expensive reef destinations. Daily visitation figures reported in the field, around 200 visitors engaging in snorkeling and diving activities, also suggest that the product is well accepted by the market.

At the same time, these strengths should be interpreted carefully. The very factors that make Blue Lagoon attractive, namely ease of participation, high accessibility, and growing demand, also increase pressure on the marine environment. Beginner-friendly destinations are especially vulnerable to coral contact, poor fin control, crowding, and inconsistent visitor behaviour. For this reason, the current strength of guide-based mediation should be institutionalised more clearly through standardised briefings, consistent environmental messaging, and destination-level management guidelines rather than relying solely on informal good practice.

Management Implications and Analytical Contribution

The findings suggest that Blue Lagoon is feasible as a special interest snorkeling destination because its 4A components function in combination rather than in isolation. Attraction provides the main pull factor, amenities support the continuity of the visitor experience, accessibility broadens market reach, and ancillary services increase safety and destination confidence. These dimensions are further strengthened by snorkeling conditions that are relatively suitable for beginners and by guide involvement that supports both safety and environmental learning.

However, the long-term sustainability of the destination will depend on whether this functional strength can be matched by stronger management capacity. Blue Lagoon's current competitiveness should not lead to a management model focused only on increasing visitor numbers. In reef-based tourism, growth without behavioural control and ecological sensitivity can rapidly erode the environmental quality on which tourism depends. Competitiveness and conservation must therefore be treated as mutually dependent rather than separate agendas.

Several practical implications follow from this. First, destination managers and operators should develop more standardised pre-trip briefings that include reef etiquette, safety instructions, and responsible in-water conduct. Second, the destination would benefit from simple but visible interpretive media that explain coral sensitivity, marine biodiversity, and acceptable tourist behaviour. Third, stronger coordination among local operators is needed to ensure consistent guiding standards and to avoid unmanaged crowd concentration at particular reef spots. Fourth, attention should be given to waste management, anchoring practices, and general environmental monitoring, particularly if visitation continues to increase. These directions are important because Blue Lagoon already possesses a strong natural and experiential product; the challenge is no longer how to create attraction, but how to manage and protect it effectively.

From an analytical perspective, this study contributes in three ways. First, it shows that Blue Lagoon should be understood not merely as a scenic beach, but as an activity-based marine destination whose value depends on the operational quality of snorkeling. Second, it demonstrates that the 4A framework remains useful for assessing special interest marine tourism when interpreted in relation to activity characteristics and environmental sensitivity. Third, it highlights that guide-mediated snorkeling can serve not only recreational

and economic purposes, but also educational and conservation-oriented functions in coastal destinations.

Overall, Blue Lagoon Beach can be categorised as a promising special interest snorkeling destination in Bali. Its ecological quality, accessible marine setting, local service system, and village-based tourism environment provide a strong basis for destination development. Yet its future strength will depend less on creating new attraction than on protecting, interpreting, and managing the attraction it already has. In this sense, Blue Lagoon offers a useful example of how a coastal village destination can combine marine recreation, local participation, and sustainability-oriented tourism development in a relatively balanced way.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to assess Blue Lagoon Beach, Padangbai, as a special interest snorkeling destination by examining its 4A attributes and the characteristics of snorkeling activities conducted at the site. The findings indicate that Blue Lagoon has a strong foundation as a snorkeling destination. In terms of the 4A framework, the destination can be considered relatively complete and feasible for the development of special interest marine tourism. Its primary strength lies in the attraction dimension, particularly the beauty of its underwater scenery, clear water, accessible reef areas, and beginner-friendly marine setting, all of which make snorkeling the main reason why tourists visit the site. On average, around 200 domestic and international tourists engage in snorkeling and diving activities at Blue Lagoon each day, indicating that the destination is well accepted by the market.

This natural strength is reinforced by supporting amenities, workable accessibility, and ancillary services that collectively make the destination operationally viable. Blue Lagoon is equipped with snorkeling equipment rentals, traditional boats to reach snorkeling spots, food stalls serving local dishes, accommodation options, and supporting tourism services in the surrounding Padangbai area. Several tour operators also offer snorkeling packages that include equipment, boat transportation, and lunch, with prices ranging from IDR 100,000 to IDR 250,000 per person depending on the type of package selected. These conditions show that Blue Lagoon should not be understood merely as a scenic coastal attraction, but as a marine tourism site whose competitiveness is built on the interaction between environmental quality, local tourism services, and activity-specific experience.

A further contribution of this study is the finding that Blue Lagoon's snorkeling product is shaped strongly by local guide involvement. Guides play a central role not only in ensuring safety and providing technical assistance, but also in mediating the quality of visitor experience through interpretation, behavioural guidance, and reef-related awareness. This means that the value of the destination lies not simply in what tourists see underwater, but also in how the experience is organised, guided, and managed. In this regard, Blue Lagoon has clear potential to be developed as a community-based and conservation-sensitive special interest destination, especially if snorkeling is positioned more explicitly as a guided, educational, and reef-respectful activity rather than as purely consumptive marine recreation.

At the same time, the study highlights that destination feasibility should not be equated with unlimited growth. As with many coral reef tourism sites, the long-term sustainability of Blue Lagoon will depend on whether its environmental quality can be maintained while visitor demand continues to increase. For this reason, stronger pre-trip briefing systems, clearer interpretive materials, basic visitor management measures, and stronger coordination among local operators are recommended. These efforts are important not only to reduce ecological risk, but also to

preserve the experience quality that currently distinguishes Blue Lagoon from other marine destinations.

Because this research is qualitative and context-specific, its findings are intended as analytical insight rather than statistical generalisation. Future studies could strengthen this work by incorporating visitor perception surveys, ecological assessments, and carrying-capacity analysis, so that tourism development at Blue Lagoon can be guided more comprehensively by socio-cultural understanding, market behaviour, and environmental evidence.

AI USE STATEMENT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) ChatGPT was used in some parts of this paper to recheck spellings and to improve the coherence of sentences in some paragraphs. To maintain academic integrity, the originality, accuracy, and credibility of data or contents are highly warranted.

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