

Designing a Planning and Development Model for Sisters' Islands Tourism Products in Bali, NTB, and NTT

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ABSTRACT

This study develops an integrated planning and development model for Sisters' Islands tourism products across Bali, West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), and East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) to address fragmented inter-destination development and weak cross-island coordination. A mixed-methods approach combined with Research and Development (Borg and Gall) was applied. Quantitative data were collected from 50 tourists using a 1–5 Likert scale, while qualitative data were obtained from 8 stakeholders (tourism authorities, destination managers, and local actors) during 2025 fieldwork. The study examines tourism product integration, stakeholder collaboration, and destination connectivity. Results show moderate integration (mean = 3.18) with the lowest performance in connectivity (mean = 2.89), while qualitative findings indicate sectoral and uncoordinated collaboration. The proposed model strengthens integrated planning, stakeholder synergy, and cross-island tourism competitiveness

INTRODUCTION

Tourism development in archipelagic regions has become a strategic agenda in many countries due to its contribution to regional economic growth and sustainability. In Indonesia, destinations such as Bali, West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), and East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) are increasingly positioned as interconnected tourism zones with high development potential. However, despite their geographical proximity, tourism development in these regions remains fragmented and lacks systemic integration. This condition limits the optimization of cross-island tourism experiences and reduces regional competitiveness. Therefore, an integrated planning approach is urgently required to strengthen destination connectivity and sustainability. Recent regional policy developments demonstrate an emerging commitment to address this fragmentation through the Bali-NTB-NTT Regional Cooperation framework, hereafter referred to as KR BNN. Initiated through an agreement among the three provincial governments in November 2025, this framework is intended to harmonize regional development and strengthen cooperation in tourism, connectivity, renewable energy, interregional trade, and other strategic sectors. The initiative indicates that cross-island collaboration has begun to move from an informal and event-based pattern toward a more structured regional cooperation mechanism, although its implementation and institutional effectiveness still require further assessment (Government of West Nusa Tenggara Province, 2026).

Previous studies emphasize that tourism competitiveness is strongly influenced by strategic communication, branding, and coordinated governance structures. Sihombing and Panjaitan (2025) highlight that tourism communication plays a significant role in strengthening destination branding in super-priority areas. Meanwhile, Rahafuna (2023) stresses that compliance with regional tourism masterplans is essential for sustainability and competitiveness. In addition, Hafifi and Murdana (2024) show that environmental management, such as waste control, is a critical factor in sustainable destination development. These studies indicate that tourism success depends on integrated planning rather than isolated initiatives. Within the KR BNN framework, this integrated planning orientation is reflected in the proposed complementary positioning of Bali as a cultural tourism center, NTB as an adventure tourism center, and NTT as a marine tourism center. This differentiation provides an opportunity to develop mutually reinforcing destination identities rather than positioning the three provinces as competing tourism areas. Such a complementary structure requires synchronized policies, integrated tourism routes, and a shared regional development strategy to transform individual destination strengths into a unified cross-island tourism system (Government of West Nusa Tenggara Province, 2025).

Furthermore, digital transformation and smart tourism innovation have become important drivers in modern tourism development. Samudra and Mufidah (2025) explain that smart tourism technologies enhance visitor experience and destination efficiency. However, technological adoption alone is insufficient without strong institutional coordination. Anzela and Rachmawati

(2023) argue that commercial diplomacy and inter-sector collaboration are key to strengthening destination promotion. This indicates that tourism development requires synergy between technological, institutional, and strategic governance components. In response to this need, the regional cooperation agenda includes the development of an integrated tourism promotion portal that presents destination information and tourism products from Bali, NTB, and NTT through a common digital platform. The proposed platform is expected to support integrated promotion, tourism information accessibility, travel planning, and the development of connected visitor journeys across the three provinces. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of such a platform depends on the availability of shared data, consistent destination branding, coordinated management, and institutional commitment among the participating regions (Government of West Nusa Tenggara Province, 2025).

The role of collaborative governance in tourism development has been widely discussed in recent literature. Rochaeni et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of the pentahelix model in strengthening stakeholder collaboration in tourism areas. Similarly, Arfani (2022) highlights that multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential in disaster-risk tourism management. Astriyantika and Cahyo (2025) also confirm that stakeholder mapping improves coordination in eco-tourism development. These studies collectively indicate that tourism governance must be inclusive, participatory, and coordinated across actors. The formalization of KR BNN provides a relevant institutional context for applying collaborative governance at the interprovincial level. The framework is expected to involve provincial governments, tourism authorities, transportation providers, business actors, local communities, educational institutions, and media organizations. However, the establishment of a regional cooperation framework does not automatically ensure effective collaboration. Clear divisions of responsibility, permanent coordination mechanisms, measurable implementation targets, and continuous stakeholder participation remain necessary to ensure that the cooperation produces tangible outcomes for integrated tourism development.

In addition, event tourism and destination promotion strategies play a crucial role in increasing tourist visitation and strengthening destination image. Haniah and Setiawati (2022) demonstrate that festivals can significantly enhance post-crisis tourism recovery. Situ Asih et al. (2022) emphasize that the marketing mix (promotion, product, price, and place) strongly influences destination attractiveness. Priyanto et al. (2022) further show that sport events based on community participation contribute to regional tourism development. Perdana et al. (2023) highlight that cultural festivals significantly improve tourist engagement and cultural preservation. Skadinavion and Aliami (2024) explain that content marketing and event marketing synergy increases customer loyalty in tourism sectors. Kharis et al. (2024) add that capacity building in event planning strengthens human resource readiness in tourism development. Wago et al. (2025) and Bratayasa et al. (2025) further confirm that collaborative event management involving communities, students, and local stakeholders improves tourism sustainability.

These findings collectively indicate that event-based tourism and promotional strategies are key drivers in enhancing destination competitiveness and regional tourism integration. This orientation is consistent with the KR BNN tourism agenda, which proposes an Integrated Promotion Tourism program, an Integrated Event Calendar, and cross-provincial familiarization trips connecting tourism routes in Bali, NTB, and NTT. A joint event calendar is expected to reduce schedule fragmentation, strengthen regional promotion, and encourage tourists visiting Bali to extend their journeys to NTB and NTT. Meanwhile, integrated travel packages may combine cultural tourism experiences in Bali, adventure tourism in NTB, and marine tourism in NTT within a continuous visitor itinerary. These initiatives provide a practical foundation for developing Sisters' Islands tourism products as interconnected experiences rather than as separate destination offerings (Government of West Nusa Tenggara Province, 2025).

Sustainable tourism development within the three provinces is also increasingly connected to the regional transition toward renewable energy and low-carbon tourism. Recent cooperation discussions have proposed the development of a renewable-energy super grid connecting Bali, NTB, and NTT, with NTB and NTT potentially supporting Bali's electricity demand through renewable energy sources. This initiative is expected to support the positioning of Bali and the wider Bali-Nusa Tenggara corridor as an environmentally responsible tourism region. By connecting clean-energy development with tourism planning, the proposed collaboration expands the concept of tourism sustainability beyond waste management and carrying capacity to include energy efficiency, reduced carbon emissions, and resilient tourism infrastructure. However, these initiatives remain at an emerging implementation stage and therefore require technical feasibility studies, regulatory coordination, investment commitment, and measurable sustainability indicators (Government of West Nusa Tenggara Province, 2026; Radio Republik Indonesia, 2026). The official regional cooperation agenda entered a consolidation and implementation phase in January 2026, including plans for connectivity and a renewable-energy super grid.

Despite extensive studies on tourism governance, branding, and events, there remains a lack of integrated models connecting multiple destinations within a unified planning framework. Leonandri et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of multi-sector collaboration in developing integrated tourism ecosystems, yet implementation across island regions remains limited. Similarly, Fitriani and Astuti (2026) note that collaboration dynamics in heritage destinations are still fragmented. Brown et al. (2026) further argue that destination resilience depends on structured governance systems, which are still underdeveloped in many regions. This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive cross-island tourism model. Although the establishment of KR BNN signals meaningful progress toward formal regional coordination, the framework remains relatively recent and its operational effectiveness in integrating tourism products, transportation networks, event calendars, digital promotion, and sustainable-energy initiatives has not yet been empirically

evaluated. Therefore, the research gap no longer concerns the complete absence of interregional cooperation, but rather the absence of an empirically grounded tourism development model capable of translating emerging policy cooperation into an integrated and marketable cross-island tourism system.

Therefore, this study aims to develop an integrated planning and development model for Sisters' Islands tourism products across Bali, NTB, and NTT. The study contributes to tourism literature by integrating concepts of collaborative governance, destination planning, event tourism, and tourism product development into a unified framework. Practically, the proposed model is expected to improve cross-island connectivity, strengthen stakeholder synergy, and enhance tourism competitiveness. The study also provides a structured guideline for regional tourism policymakers and industry stakeholders. Ultimately, this research offers a novel contribution in designing an integrated tourism system for archipelagic destinations in Indonesia. In the context of the emerging KR BNN framework, the proposed model is also expected to provide an operational foundation for integrating the complementary tourism identities of Bali, NTB, and NTT, coordinating shared promotional and event programs, developing seamless cross-island travel packages, strengthening multimodal connectivity, and incorporating renewable-energy-based green tourism principles. Accordingly, this study does not merely propose the establishment of regional collaboration, but seeks to strengthen and operationalize an existing interprovincial cooperation initiative through a structured, evidence-based Sisters' Islands tourism development model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism Planning and Destination Integration

Tourism planning is a fundamental component in ensuring sustainable destination development, particularly in multi-destination regions. Integrated planning enables coordination between destinations to optimize resources, accessibility, and visitor experience. However, in many archipelagic regions, tourism development tends to occur in isolation, resulting in fragmented destination performance. Rahafuna (2023) emphasizes that compliance with tourism masterplans is critical to maintaining sustainability and competitiveness in super-priority destinations. Sirajuddin and Hanan (2025) further highlight that structured tourism packages improve destination performance through coordinated planning systems. In addition, Saputra et al. (2023) and Nata Saputra et al. (2023) emphasize that structured governance alignment is necessary to ensure planning consistency across regions. In this context, regional tourism cooperation among Bali, NTB, and NTT provides an emerging institutional basis for synchronizing tourism policies, strengthening inter-island connectivity, and integrating destination development. Such cooperation also supports inter-island destination complementarity by positioning Bali, NTB, and NTT as destinations with distinct but mutually reinforcing tourism characteristics rather than as competing regions (Government of West Nusa Tenggara Province, 2025). Based on this, integrated tourism planning is expected to significantly influence destination connectivity and product integration across regions.

H1: Tourism planning integration has a positive effect on destination connectivity in Sisters' Islands tourism.

Collaborative Governance in Tourism Development

Collaborative governance has become a central approach in modern tourism development, particularly in managing complex stakeholder relationships. The pentahelix model involving government, private sector, academia, community, and media is widely recognized as an effective framework for tourism collaboration (Rochaeni et al., 2022). Arfani (2022) emphasizes that multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential for sustainable tourism management, while Astriyantika and Cahyo (2025) show that stakeholder mapping improves coordination effectiveness. Furthermore, Fatin et al. (2024) highlight that cross-stakeholder collaboration strengthens tourism sustainability at destination level, while Fajariyah and Haris (2025) confirm that institutional participation improves collaborative governance performance in tourism management. Maturbongs and Lekatompessy (2020) also underline that community-based collaboration is crucial in strengthening local tourism resilience. The Bali-NTB-NTT Regional Cooperation framework reflects a broader form of collaborative governance that connects interprovincial governments with tourism authorities, private actors, communities, and other stakeholders. Its effectiveness, however, depends on clear institutional roles, continuous coordination, and the translation of regional agreements into measurable tourism programs. These studies collectively indicate that stronger collaboration leads to more integrated and sustainable tourism governance systems.

H2: Stakeholder collaboration positively affects tourism planning integration in Sisters' Islands tourism.

Tourism Communication, Branding, and Promotion

Tourism communication plays a significant role in shaping destination image and attracting visitors. Sihombing and Panjaitan (2025) explain that strategic communication strengthens destination branding in super-priority tourism areas. Anzela and Rachmawati (2023) highlight that inter-sector cooperation improves tourism promotion effectiveness. Lestari et al. (2025) also show that tourism events significantly influence tourist arrivals, while Anisa and Lindawati (2024) emphasize the importance of promotional strategies in enhancing destination competitiveness. The development of integrated promotion and a joint event calendar among Bali, NTB, and NTT may strengthen regional branding, reduce fragmented promotional activities, and encourage tourists to extend their journeys across the three provinces. A shared promotional platform and coordinated event schedule can also connect destination information, tourism attractions, and travel programs within a unified regional narrative (Government of West Nusa Tenggara Province, 2025). These findings suggest that effective communication enhances tourism product attractiveness and visitor engagement.

H3: Tourism communication and promotion positively influence tourism product attractiveness.

Tourism Product Development and Event-Based Tourism

Tourism product development plays a crucial role in enhancing visitor experience and destination competitiveness. Samudra and Mufidah (2025) explain that smart tourism innovation improves service quality and efficiency. Sirajuddin and Hanan (2025) highlight that structured tourism packages enhance destination competitiveness. Pratama et al. (2024) show that sustainable event management supports environmental and economic balance, while Oktian et al. (2024) emphasize that integrated marketing increases tourist loyalty. Additionally, Saputra et al. (2023) confirm that integrated planning systems are essential in linking tourism products into cohesive experiences. Inter-island destination complementarity may be developed by combining Bali's cultural tourism, NTB's adventure tourism, and NTT's marine tourism into connected travel routes and integrated tourism packages. This approach allows each destination to maintain its distinctive identity while contributing to a broader Sisters' Islands tourism experience. These studies indicate that well-designed tourism products improve overall tourism performance.

H4: Tourism product development positively influences tourist satisfaction in Sisters' Islands tourism.

Sustainable Tourism and Destination Competitiveness

Sustainability has become a key factor in tourism development, particularly in balancing economic, environmental, and social aspects. Hafifi and Murdana (2024) emphasize the importance of environmental management in sustainable tourism. Haribudiman et al. (2023) highlight tourism carrying capacity as a determinant of sustainability, while Brown et al. (2026) argue that destination resilience depends on strong governance systems. Fitriani and Astuti (2026) also show that dynamic collaboration supports sustainable destination development. Fatin et al. (2024) further strengthen this view by emphasizing that stakeholder coordination is essential for long-term destination sustainability. In addition to environmental management, green tourism increasingly involves the use of low-carbon infrastructure and renewable energy within destination systems. Recent cooperation among Bali, NTB, and NTT includes proposals to support tourism development through renewable energy supplies and an integrated regional energy network. Renewable energy-based tourism may reduce the environmental footprint of tourism activities while strengthening the image of the three provinces as sustainable and globally competitive destinations (Government of West Nusa Tenggara Province, 2026; Radio Republik Indonesia, 2026). These findings indicate that sustainability strengthens long-term destination competitiveness.

H5: Sustainable tourism practices positively influence destination competitiveness in Sisters' Islands tourism.

Destination Connectivity and Tourism Competitiveness (Dependent Structure)

Destination connectivity is a key outcome of integrated tourism systems, especially in archipelagic regions. Leonandri et al. (2025) highlight the importance of multi-sector collaboration in developing integrated tourism ecosystems, although implementation remains fragmented. Brown et al. (2026) argue that destination resilience requires structured governance systems. Fitriani and Astuti (2026) also confirm that collaboration improves destination sustainability and performance. Maturbongs and Lekatompessy (2020) emphasize that local collaboration strengthens connectivity in community-based tourism systems. In a multi-island context, connectivity extends beyond transportation access to include integrated itineraries, coordinated events, digital information, energy infrastructure, and complementary destination functions. Strengthening these linkages may enable Bali, NTB, and NTT to operate as one connected tourism corridor while preserving their respective destination identities. Therefore, connectivity is considered a central outcome of planning, collaboration, and product integration.

H6: Tourism planning integration positively influences destination competitiveness through destination connectivity.

This study proposes a conceptual framework illustrating the relationships among tourism planning integration, stakeholder collaboration, tourism communication, and tourism product development in shaping destination connectivity and competitiveness within the Sisters' Islands tourism system. The framework provides a clear overview of the proposed model used in this research.

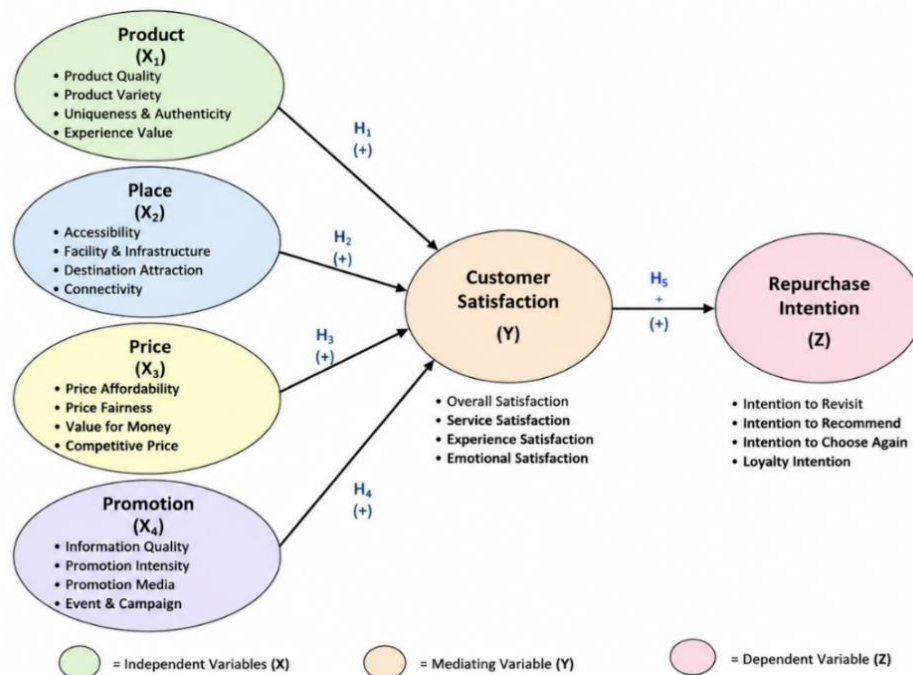


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combined with Research and Development (R&D) based on the Borg and Gall model. The mixed-methods design is used to integrate quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a comprehensive understanding of tourism planning and development across Bali, West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), and East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). The R&D approach is applied to develop a structured tourism product planning model for the Sisters' Islands tourism system. According to Creswell and Creswell (2021), mixed methods are appropriate when a study requires both numerical measurement and contextual interpretation to develop a practical model.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of two groups: (1) tourism stakeholders in Bali, NTB, and NTT, and (2) tourists visiting selected destinations in the three regions. The qualitative sample includes 8 key informants, selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in tourism planning, management, and development, including tourism office officials, destination managers, and local tourism actors. The quantitative sample consists of 50 tourists (domestic and international) selected using accidental sampling at major tourism sites. This sample size is considered sufficient for exploratory model development in mixed-method R&D studies (Saunders et al., 2020).

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using three main techniques: interviews, questionnaires, and observations.

1. Interviews were conducted with 8 stakeholders using semi-structured questions focusing on tourism planning, collaboration, and product development.
2. Questionnaires were distributed to 50 tourists using a 1–5 Likert scale measuring tourism integration, satisfaction, and connectivity perception.
3. Observations were conducted in selected tourism destinations across Bali, NTB, and NTT to assess infrastructure, accessibility, and tourism activity patterns.

Documentary evidence from official Mandalika International Festival materials and selected media reports was also analyzed to triangulate stakeholder statements concerning event-based collaboration, destination integration, and tourism connectivity.

The questionnaire indicators were adapted from previous tourism studies related to destination competitiveness and service quality (UNWTO, 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). Validity was tested using Pearson correlation, while reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, with a threshold value of ≥ 0.70 indicating acceptable reliability (Hair et al., 2022).

Research Procedure (Borg and Gall 10 Steps)

This study follows a simplified Borg and Gall R&D model consisting of 10 stages:

1. Research and information collection (literature review and field observation)
2. Planning (identifying tourism integration problems)
3. Developing initial product model (Sisters' Islands framework design)
4. Preliminary field testing (expert review from stakeholders)
5. Main product revision
6. Main field testing (limited tourism testing)
7. Operational product revision
8. Operational field testing
9. Final product revision
10. Dissemination and implementation of the tourism planning model

This structured process ensures that the developed model is empirically tested and contextually relevant to inter-island tourism integration.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, and category distribution) to measure tourist perceptions of tourism integration and satisfaction. The analysis was conducted using SPSS 26. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving data coding, categorization, and interpretation of stakeholder perspectives. According to Braun and Clarke (2021), thematic analysis is effective for identifying patterns in qualitative tourism research. The integration of both analyses allows triangulation to validate findings and strengthen the proposed tourism development model.

Research Timeline

Field data collection was conducted during 2025, covering tourism destinations across Bali, NTB, and NTT. The study process included sequential stages of data collection, analysis, model development, and validation within the same year to ensure contextual relevance.

RESEARCH RESULT

Tourism Planning Integration

The quantitative findings indicate that tourism planning integration across Bali, NTB, and NTT is at a moderate level (mean = 3.15). This score reflects that planning coordination among regions exists but has not yet been fully institutionalized into a unified cross-island system. The highest indicator is planning coordination (3.28), while the lowest is inter-regional synchronization (3.02), showing imbalance between operational coordination and strategic alignment. This condition indicates that tourism planning is still dominated by individual regional policies rather than an integrated Sisters' Islands framework. Therefore, planning integration remains partial and not yet systemic.

Table 1. Tourism Planning Integration (n=50)

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Planning Coordination	3.28	Moderate
Policy Synchronization	3.02	Moderate
Integrated Planning System	3.15	Moderate
Overall Mean	3.15	Moderate

The mean value of 3.15 indicates that respondents perceive planning integration as “adequate but not strong”. A score above 3.0 reflects the presence of coordination mechanisms, but still far from an ideal integrated system (>4.0). The gap between coordination (3.28) and synchronization (3.02) shows structural inconsistency in policy alignment across regions. This confirms that integration is still fragmented. This supports H1 and H2, indicating that stakeholder collaboration influences planning integration but has not fully created a unified system.

One informant stated: “each province still has its own tourism plan, there is no shared master plan” (INT-03, November 2025). Another added: “coordination exists, but only during events, not in long-term planning” (INT-05, November 2025). These findings confirm that planning integration is still sectoral and not institutionalized across regions.



Figure 1. Bali Sister's Island Products " Nusa Penida Island “ and Panglipuran Tourist Village First ”

Stakeholder Collaboration

The results show that stakeholder collaboration is at a moderate level (mean = 3.10). This indicates that collaboration among government, community, and private sector actors exists but is inconsistent and not yet structured. Community involvement is the strongest indicator (3.25), while institutional coordination is the weakest (2.95). This suggests that collaboration is driven more by grassroots participation rather than formal governance structures.

Table 2. Stakeholder Collaboration (n=50)

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Government Coordination	3.08	Moderate
Community Involvement	3.25	Moderate
Private Sector Coordination	2.95	Moderate
Overall Mean	3.10	Moderate

The mean score of 3.10 indicates moderate collaboration effectiveness. The difference between highest and lowest indicator (0.30 points) reflects imbalance in stakeholder roles. Community participation dominates, while formal

institutional coordination is weak. This explains why collaboration has not fully translated into strong planning integration. This supports H2, confirming that collaboration has a positive but partial influence on tourism planning integration.

One stakeholder stated: *"we only collaborate when there is an event, not in daily governance"* (INT-01, November 2025). Another mentioned: *"there is no permanent coordination forum between Bali, NTB, and NTT"* (INT-07, November 2025). This confirms that collaboration remains event-based rather than institutionalized.



Figure 2. West Nusa Tenggara, Sister Island Products " Gendang Beleg, Peresean Performance Lombok Sasak Traditions and Circuit Motogp Mandalika"

Tourism Product Development

Tourism product development shows a moderate performance (mean = 3.20). This indicates that tourism products across the three regions are attractive but not yet integrated into a unified Sisters' Islands experience. Product attractiveness is the highest indicator (3.35), while package integration is the lowest (3.05). This reflects strong individual destination products but weak cross-destination integration.

Table 3. Tourism Product Development (n=50)

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Product Attractiveness	3.35	Moderate
Package Integration	3.05	Moderate
Experience Value	3.20	Moderate
Overall Mean	3.20	Moderate



Figure 3. East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province Tourist Products 'Varanus Komodo and Padar Island

The mean score of 3.20 indicates that tourism products are perceived positively by tourists. However, the gap between attractiveness and integration (0.30 points) shows that tourism products are not structured as a cross-island system. This confirms that product development is still destination-based, not system-based. This supports H3 and H4, indicating that tourism products influence satisfaction but require stronger integration.

One informant explained: *“each island has strong tourism products, but they are not combined into one journey package”* (INT-04, November 2025). Another added: *“tourists usually only visit one island, not all three as a connected trip”* (INT-06, November 2025). This confirms weak product integration across destinations.

Destination Connectivity

Destination connectivity is the lowest-performing variable (mean = 2.89), indicating weak integration between Bali, NTB, and NTT. This reflects limited transportation linkage and lack of integrated travel systems. Transport linkage is the weakest indicator (2.85), while itinerary continuity is slightly higher (2.92). However, all indicators remain below the moderate threshold of strong integration.

Table 4. Destination Connectivity (n=50)

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Transportation Linkage	2.85	Low-Moderate
Itinerary Continuity	2.92	Moderate
Inter-destination Access	2.90	Moderate
Overall Mean	2.89	Low-Moderate

The mean score of 2.89 indicates weak connectivity. This is the lowest among all variables, confirming that connectivity is the main structural barrier in the Sisters' Islands model. The small variation among indicators shows that all connectivity dimensions are equally weak, not isolated. This supports H5 and H6, confirming that connectivity strongly determines destination competitiveness.

One informant stated: *“there is no seamless travel route connecting Bali, NTB, and NTT”* (INT-02, November 2025). Another added: *“tourists must arrange their own travel between islands”* (INT-08, November 2025). This confirms that connectivity is the key missing system in the model.

Overall, the findings indicate that tourism planning, stakeholder collaboration, and product development operate at a moderate level, while destination connectivity remains the weakest component. Documentary triangulation from the 2025 Mandalika International Festival further supports these findings. The international talkshow brought together national and international speakers who emphasized quality events, collaborative destination planning, professional human resources, digital promotion, sustainability, and cross-provincial connectivity. The forum also formulated the “Mandalika Top 10 Recommendations” as a strategic direction for developing Mandalika, SAMOTA, and Labuan Bajo through integrated events and destination cooperation. Statements from government authorities, universities, event professionals, and

tourism institutions consistently indicated that tourism development should move beyond temporary event-based cooperation toward permanent and coordinated collaboration. These findings provide practical validation for the broader Bali-NTB-NTT Sisters' Islands framework, although institutional coordination and seamless inter-destination connectivity remain limited.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that tourism development across Bali, NTB, and NTT remains moderately integrated in terms of planning coordination, stakeholder collaboration, product development, and destination connectivity. Although basic coordination mechanisms exist, each region still largely operates according to its own priorities, reflecting persistent fragmentation in archipelagic tourism governance. The establishment of the Bali-NTB-NTT Regional Cooperation framework (KR BNN) in late 2025 can therefore be interpreted as a policy response to this condition. These findings are consistent with Rahafuna (2023), who emphasizes the importance of tourism masterplan compliance for destination competitiveness, and Sirajuddin and Hanan (2025), who highlight the role of structured tourism packages in improving coordination. However, the present study shows that planning and tourism packages across the three regions remain insufficiently connected. The results also support Priyanto et al. (2022), Perdana et al. (2023), Haniah and Setiawati (2022), and Wago et al. (2025), who emphasize event-based tourism, structured coordination, and community involvement. Nevertheless, this study demonstrates that such initiatives may generate local benefits but do not automatically create regional integration without stronger systemic coordination.

In terms of collaborative governance, stakeholder cooperation exists but remains weakly institutionalized and is often limited to events or short-term activities. The formation of KR BNN may therefore represent an effort to transform temporary cooperation into a more permanent interprovincial framework. This supports Rochaeni et al. (2022), Arfani (2022), and Astriyantika and Cahyo (2025), who emphasize pentahelix and multi-stakeholder collaboration as important elements of tourism governance. However, the present findings show that stakeholder involvement alone is insufficient when cross-regional coordination lacks continuity. This is also consistent with Fatin et al. (2024), Fajariyah and Haris (2025), Maturbongs and Lekatompessy (2020), and Saputra et al. (2023), who highlight institutional participation, community collaboration, and structured governance. The current research extends these studies by demonstrating that collaboration must be supported by formal regional mechanisms to produce effective cross-island integration.

Regarding tourism communication and promotion, the findings confirm that strategic communication and tourism events contribute to destination attractiveness and branding. Sihombing and Panjaitan (2025) show that tourism communication strengthens destination branding, while Anzela and Rachmawati (2023) emphasize inter-sector cooperation in improving promotional effectiveness. Lestari et al. (2025) also demonstrate that tourism events can increase visitor numbers. The 2025 Mandalika International Festival

(MIF) further illustrates that events can function not only as promotional instruments but also as collaborative governance platforms involving government agencies, universities, tourism institutions, professionals, communities, and international speakers (Ketikjari.com, 2025; Nesianews.com, 2025). The Mandalika Top 10 Recommendations are therefore consistent with the proposed Sisters' Islands model, particularly in cross-provincial collaboration, professional human resources, sustainable events, digital promotion, and connectivity. However, unlike Anisa and Lindawati (2024), who emphasize the strong impact of promotion on competitiveness, this study finds that promotion alone is insufficient without integrated planning and connectivity. This interpretation is also supported by Susanti and Mawardi (2025) and Skadinavion and Aliami (2024), who show that integrated marketing and event-based promotion can enhance tourism engagement but often remain localized. Therefore, permanent coordination mechanisms, an integrated event calendar, connected tourism packages, and measurable implementation targets remain necessary.

In terms of tourism product development, each island possesses strong individual tourism products, but cross-destination integration remains limited. Samudra and Mufidah (2025) argue that smart tourism requires system integration to function effectively, while Sirajuddin and Hanan (2025) emphasize structured tourism packages as a means of improving competitiveness. The present study supports these arguments but shows that strong tourism products do not automatically produce integrated visitor experiences. Pratama et al. (2024) and Oktian et al. (2024) further highlight the role of event management and marketing integration, while Kharis et al. (2024) emphasize capacity building in tourism event management. These studies indicate that product quality and human resources are important, yet the current findings suggest that both must be connected through cross-regional coordination. The complementary positioning of Bali as a cultural destination, NTB as an adventure destination, and NTT as a marine destination therefore provides a practical basis for developing integrated cross-island tourism packages.

From a sustainability perspective, destination competitiveness is influenced by environmental management and governance but remains constrained by weak connectivity. Hafifi and Murdana (2024) emphasize environmental management, while Haribudiman et al. (2023) highlight carrying capacity as a determinant of sustainable tourism. Brown et al. (2026) further argue that resilience depends on strong governance systems, whereas Fitriani and Astuti (2026) and Fatin et al. (2024) emphasize collaboration as a sustainability driver. These findings are consistent with the present study, although collaboration across Bali, NTB, and NTT remains fragmented. Sahabuddin et al. (2026) also stress community-based sustainability campaigns, while Bencardino et al. (2025) emphasize integrating carrying capacity into regional planning. Thus, environmental awareness and community involvement need to be institutionalized within a coordinated regional framework. Recent cooperation on green tourism and renewable energy further strengthens this sustainability agenda by linking tourism development with low-carbon infrastructure.

The most significant finding is that destination connectivity represents the weakest component of the Sisters' Islands tourism system. Leonandri et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of integrated tourism ecosystems, while Brown et al. (2026) and Fitriani and Astuti (2026) highlight governance and collaboration as drivers of destination resilience. However, the present study demonstrates that governance and collaboration cannot generate effective regional integration without adequate physical and structural connectivity. Maturbongs and Lekatompessy (2020) similarly emphasize local collaboration, but this research shows that successful local cooperation does not automatically translate into regional integration. Sidauruk et al. (2026) further confirm that digital promotion alone is insufficient without structural connectivity. This finding positions connectivity as the main mechanism linking planning, tourism products, stakeholders, and visitor movement across islands, which is also reflected in KR BNN's emphasis on land, sea, air, digital, and energy connectivity.

Overall, tourism integration in archipelagic regions is determined by the interaction between planning, collaboration, product development, and connectivity rather than by governance or promotion alone. Partial integration across these dimensions may generate moderate performance but is insufficient to create a unified regional tourism system. The emergence of KR BNN reinforces this interpretation because it reflects government recognition of fragmentation and connectivity as shared regional challenges. Theoretically, this study extends destination integration theory into a multi-island context, while practically it emphasizes the need to strengthen inter-island connectivity and institutional coordination. The novelty of this research lies in identifying structural fragmentation, particularly weak connectivity, as the main barrier to tourism system integration in Indonesia's archipelagic destinations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that tourism integration across Bali, NTB, and NTT remains moderate, with an overall mean score of 3.18. Destination connectivity is the weakest dimension (2.89), indicating that structural fragmentation and limited inter-island linkages remain the main barriers to implementing the Sisters' Islands tourism concept. Although stakeholder collaboration, tourism products, and promotion have developed, they are not yet fully integrated across regions. The emergence of the Bali-NTB-NTT Regional Cooperation framework (KR BNN) provides an important basis for strengthening cross-provincial coordination. Therefore, this study recommends operationalizing KR BNN through stronger institutional collaboration, synchronized planning, integrated tourism packages, coordinated transportation, digital promotion platforms, and improved destination connectivity. The Mandalika Top 10 Recommendations should also be incorporated through a joint event calendar, professional event management, integrated cross-island packages, and measurable collaboration among government, industry, universities, communities, and media.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study has limitations related to a relatively small quantitative sample (50 tourists) and limited qualitative informants (8 stakeholders), which may not fully represent all perspectives across Bali, NTB, and NTT. In addition, the study does not include longitudinal data to capture long-term tourism integration dynamics. Future research should increase sample size and involve broader stakeholders such as policymakers, investors, and international tourists. Further studies are recommended to apply SEM analysis and explore digital tourism integration and smart tourism platforms. Comparative studies with other archipelagic destinations are also suggested to strengthen theoretical development.

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