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The (un)sustainability of rural tourism travel in the Global South: A social practice theory perspective

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Abstract

Rural tourism transport provision makes sustainable travel challenging as evidenced by studies in the Global North. However, the nature of socio-environmental challenges is different in the Global South, necessitating attention on resolving these different problems. Social practice theory (SPT) allows greater understanding of travel by considering the interplay between transport form and availability, the tourists' competences to make use of the provision, and the meanings associated with using it. Drawing from 31 semi-structured interviews with tourists and destination stakeholders, this paper aims to explore and understand tourists' rural travel practices in Bali through a SPT lens to identify sustainable travel opportunities. Destination transport provision has evolved to meet residents' needs for travel and income generation, shaping the options for tourists. Motorbike and car-rental allow tourists to achieve holiday needs and overcome travel limitations. Regional authorities need to address rural tourism provision deficiencies to tackle socio-environmental sustainability in rural travel.

KEYWORDS
Global South, rural tourism, social practice, sustainability, sustainable travel, transport

1 | INTRODUCTION

Decarbonising transport in tourism is inevitable. Transport accounts for almost half of tourism emissions (Lenzen et al., 2018), so studies have urged a shift to reduce the climate impacts of future tourism travel (Gössling et al., 2017; Peeters et al., 2019). However, studies on decarbonising tourism travel are still scarce (Scott & Gössling, 2021), especially in the Global South. While recognising the impact of air travel, the emphasis here is on intra-destination travel which is currently underexplored (Bursa et al., 2022). In a destination, public transport is recommended to substitute car travel, including private cars (Kim et al., 2023) and car hire (Rendeiro Martín-Cejas et al., 2021), but decarbonising travel has both environmental and social implications.

Unlike travel studies that focus on demand side (Guiver et al., 2008) or supply side (Guiver et al., 2007) exclusively, this study analyses both to provide a more nuanced perspective as suggested by Tomej and Liburd (2019). Hence, this study uses social practice theory (SPT) to explore the interplay between individuals and the respective social structure. This paper aims to explore and understand tourists' rural travel practices through a SPT lens to identify sustainable travel opportunities. Two research questions were investigated; how and why do tourists perform certain travel practices to rural destinations? And how do social practice elements interrelate and shape rural tourism travel practices? The focus is Bali, Indonesia, a major destination facing transport challenges. In Bali, more sustainable transport modes compete with local car and motorbike rentals. Further, non-motorised

travel is limited as supporting infrastructures are minimal. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how tourists' rural transport use practice has emerged, bringing empirical evidence and addressing research gaps from a Global South context.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Rural regions

There is a lack of clear definition of rural areas. Economic activity (Deavers, 1992), basic services (UN-DESA, 2021), travel distance (Bennett et al., 2019), natural resources (Dasgupta et al., 2014), and population (UK-DEFRA, 2021) are factors that constitute rural areas. However, it is largely up to the researcher's subjective bias to operationalise rural (Bennett et al., 2019), though studies involving rural areas should adhere to the consensus in the region being researched to easily contextualise the research processes and findings back to the local stakeholders.

In tourism, rural areas leverage tourism as a new form of land use (Dasgupta et al., 2014) as agriculture income declines (Aitchison et al., 2000). Scholars found rural tourism is associated with nature (Lane, 1994; Roberts & Hall, 2001) and culture (Royo-Vela, 2009). Further, rural tourism has been used for seeking peacefulness (Pesonen & Komppula, 2010) and cultural novelty (Masiero & Zoltan, 2013), although it might require certain competences (Buzinde, 2020) and access attributes (Aitchison et al., 2000). In this study, rural tourism is limited to tourism attractions that take place in rural areas, reflecting tourism attractions and rural boundaries which have been defined by the local authority (BPS-Indonesia, 2020).

2.2 | Rural tourism transport

Practicing sustainable travel to and around rural areas is complicated, and the transport provision makes rural travel more challenging. Rural tourism travel is also connected to urban transport provision as tourists often arrive in urban areas, thus this study acknowledges the interconnectedness of rural–urban transport provision (Juschten & Hössinger, 2021; Le-Klähn et al., 2015). The analysis of tourism travel should include all transport options in the destination (Domènech et al., 2023), hence the available transport options in the literature are discussed.

Public transport barely covers rural areas (Sardá et al., 2009; Šipuš & Abramović, 2017; Tomej & Liburd, 2019). It also requires more subsidies (Sörensen et al., 2021) because ridership decreases in rural (Butler & Hannam, 2012) and remote (Le-Klähn & Hall, 2015) areas. Similarly, active mobilities, like walking and cycling, demand more advanced physical abilities and skills, so they are maybe avoided by travellers accompanied by children or older adults (Smith et al., 2019). Moreover, the use of the above sustainable transport modes is complicated by accommodation location (Zientara et al., 2024), attraction connectivity (Zamparini et al., 2022), travel group composition (Smith et al., 2019), and tourists' familiarity with the destination (Masiero & Zoltan, 2013).

Individual motorised transport is consequently used (Dickinson & Robbins, 2007; Le-Klähn & Hall, 2015; Wiersma et al., 2017), causing rural congestion (Connell, 2005; Curtis et al., 2007). Further, alternatives like electric bicycle (e-bike) (Wiersma et al., 2017), demand responsive transport (DRT) (Park et al., 2021), and other locally unique transport modes (Maltese & Zamparini, 2023) have been proposed but adoption is limited.

2.3 | Differences in the Global South

The Global South has a low exposure to research on sustainable tourism (Dillimono & Dickinson, 2015; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023) and transport (Hopkins, 2020). The domination of Global North contexts in research implies a call to look at empirical evidence from the Global South, which embeds different sustainability problems. Economically, major Global South destinations depend on the high carbon travel of international tourists. Environmentally, air transport contributes the largest share of the carbon footprint (Lenzen et al., 2018), but ground transport can exacerbate the problem and also impacts natural areas. For example, infrastructure provision like road and parking relate to coastal damage (da Costa Cristiano et al., 2020; Lozoya et al., 2016), while a large number of vehicles increase congestion (Chong, 2020). Whilst social sustainability is rarely included in sustainable transport studies (Zhao et al., 2020), Jones et al. (2016) have identified the dilemma of conflicting sustainability agendas in the broader tourism sector. For instance, sustainable travel typically means travel to places close to home, but it will exclude tourism-reliant areas further from tourism markets. The paradox is pervasive at rural attractions. This study therefore acknowledges a trade-off where tourists may require initial long-haul travel but could thereafter travel sustainably in a destination.

Further unique differences in the Global South are different mode options and service informality. For example, due to public infrastructure limitations, motorbikes are used in some African (Nutsugbodo et al., 2018) and Southeast Asian (Chalermpong et al., 2022) countries. Furthermore, the governance of transport provision is usually informal (Ochieng & Kule, 2022; Truong et al., 2020). The sustainability dilemma and uniqueness of transport provisions in the Global South thus require a more context focused perspective, a theoretical lens that takes local characteristics into account.

2.4 | Social practice theory in travel research

Travel studies have predominantly adopted behavioural theories like the theory of planned behaviour and subsequent derivatives that focus on individual's belief, attitude, intention, and behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) but pay less attention to wider societal structures (Spaargaren & Van Vliet, 2000). Despite including social norms and perceived behavioural control, the theory of planned behaviour does

not focus on collective actions. The limitation makes the value of consumer models built upon individual choices questionable (Southerton et al., 2004). Alternatively, socio-psychological theory adopts the perspective of social groups but does not consider the societal structures, making policy intervention more difficult. Conversely, only exploring the structures of provision diminishes the role of individuals as the agents.

SPT provides a middle standpoint between structural determinism and individual behaviour, offering a lens to elaborate linkages between them (Verbeek & Mommaas, 2008). It has been used to explain social phenomenon through analysing daily practices and is rooted in the habitus concept by Bourdieu (1977) that creates practices which eventually reproduce objective social regularities. Further, Giddens (1979) identifies the mutual dependency of structure and agency in the structuration theory. Practice is also defined as a spatial and temporal nexus of doings and sayings (Schatzki, 1996) and 'a routinised type of behaviour' (Reckwitz, 2002). Whilst the development of practices could lead to behavioural change (Warde, 2005), SPT is useful to analyse changes in sustainable mobility and connections to broader social practice (Cairns et al., 2014; Lamers et al., 2017; Sarrica et al., 2019), although it has context-bounded limitations (Bourdieu, 1977). The 3-elements model of social practice (Shove et al., 2012), comprising materials, competences, and meanings, is widely utilised in recent travel studies (Becken & Hughey, 2021; Fitt & Curl, 2020; Smith et al., 2019). They constitute transport form and availability (materials), the tourists' ability to make use of the provision (competences), and the meanings associated with using it.

Previous travel research has explained how the interplay between elements could allow or deter changes. First, regarding materials, authorities can provide transport infrastructure but have limited influence to alter tourists' competences and meanings (Smith et al., 2019). Still, transport materials need to come first before people use them (Fitt & Curl, 2020). Second, various mobility competences of tourists lead to different travel practices (Lucas, 2019). Fitt and Curl (2020) found that people can partly borrow competencies from the use of other transport modes. Tourists can also gain skills from repeated travel and change their transport mode choices (Mertena et al., 2022). Third, meanings determine how people will travel and can be associated with certain age groups (Fitt & Curl, 2020), sociocultural norms (Chan et al., 2021), and status symbols (Becken & Hughey, 2021). However, Bachmann-Vargas et al. (2022) stressed the significance of competences in linking meanings and broader tourism materials.

Beyond the 3-elements, it is also essential to understand which elements are stable (sticky) and volatile (vulnerable), allowing other practices to emerge (Kent, 2022). Single practices can be grouped as a bundle connected to a main activity (Kent, 2022; Watson, 2012) with the linkages between single practices visualised (Higginson et al., 2015; Kuijer, 2014), for example, two practices may share the same elements. This study examines tourists' mobility practice to and around rural areas at a destination and the surrounding practice bundle.

3 | METHODOLOGY

3.1 | The empirical context

The Global South is not characterised as a geographical division of countries nor solely as underdeveloped regions. It is related to political power (Freeman, 2017) and how socioeconomic change is achieved (Dados & Connell, 2012). The list of Global South countries is absent from global economic-finance institutions but is available in political institutions, that is, The United Nations' Finance Center for South–South Cooperation. Hence, the Global South could be defined as a group of less politically powerful countries. Whilst tourism is used for development in the Global South, opportunities to better local livelihood are dubious (Saarinen & Rogerson, 2021).

Bali meets the research criteria as a major destination in the Asia Pacific with rapid development (Law et al., 2017). Yet, it is perceived to have the weakest transport infrastructure among the top destinations in Southeast Asia (Mustafa et al., 2020). Domestic and international tourist arrivals were as high as 10 and 6 million people in 2019. Air travel accounts for 68% and 99% of domestic and international arrivals respectively with the remainder arriving via the seaports (BPS-Indonesia, 2022a). Despite decreasing tourist arrivals due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the central government is now developing five super destinations as *new Balis* to attract more international tourists (Indonesia-President, 2020). However, erroneous development and management can create environmental strain (Law et al., 2016) and harm destinations (Kusumawati et al., 2021). Learning from experiences in Bali, the centre of Indonesian tourism, could prevent other similar destinations from tourism-induced damage. In Bali, not only is the natural scenery distinctive, but so is the culture. The Bali-Government (2020) also regulates cultural tourism as the diffusion of the Hindu religion (Murti, 2020) and its cultural norms (Pitana, 2010), offering a different experience to tourists.

Intersectoral national policies to reduce climate impacts influence the sustainability of tourism travel in Bali. From the energy sector, the net zero scenario (IEA, 2022; PLN, 2021) and transport electrification (Indonesia-President, 2022; MoEnergy, 2020) have been addressed, but public transport gets less attention. In the transport sector, improving destination connectivity is encouraged (Indonesia-President, 2020), but it should not trigger more congestion. As a public service obligation (Indonesia-Government, 2009), providing public transport necessitates complex multilevel partnerships (Wijaya & Imran, 2019). Rail-based urban public transport in Bali is planned (MoTransport, 2018), while subsidised bus pilot projects (MoTransport, 2020) have low ridership, and the local government has a limited fiscal capability (ITDP, 2023). Within the tourism sector, the MoTourism (2021) has identified sustainable transport infrastructure requirements in a sustainable destination, but these have yet to be fully implemented in Bali. Lastly, financial incentives have primarily been granted to electric cars (Indonesia-Government, 2019, 2021; MoInternalAffairs, 2020), despite proposals to include electric motorbikes (ADB, 2022; BCG, 2022), public transport, and cycling facilities (Magnusson & Rachmita, 2021).

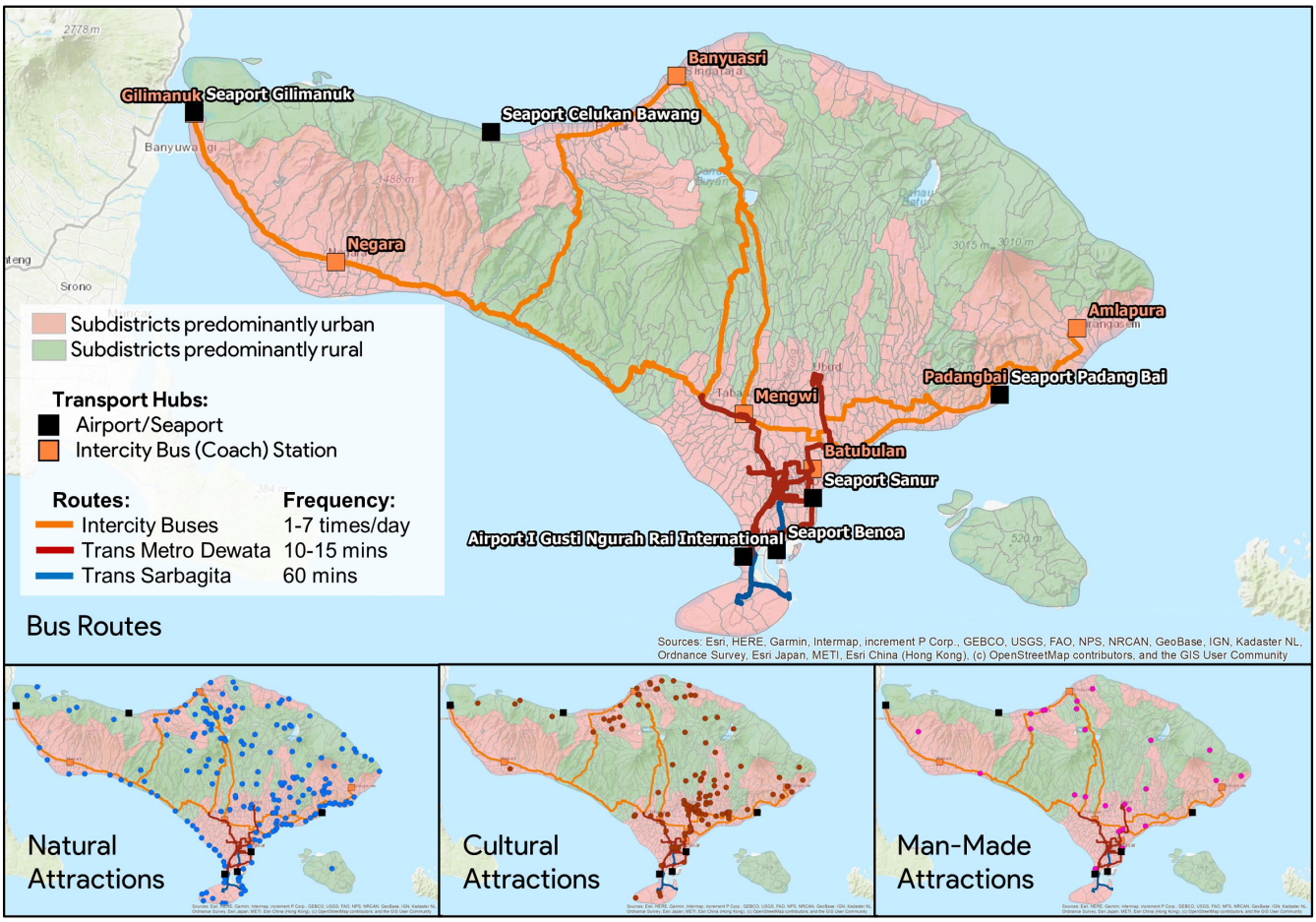

FIGURE 1 Rural–Urban Classifications, Bus Routes, and Tourism Attractions in Bali. Maps Data: Esri, ©2023 Map is own elaboration based on data points obtained from official permission by Satu Data Indonesia, Bali Provincial Government.

Bali residents predominantly use motorbikes (BPS-Indonesia, 2021), and the vehicle per capita in Bali is the second highest in the country after the capital city, Jakarta (BPS-Indonesia, 2021, 2022b), producing significant road congestion (WorldBank, 2020). Public transport ridership is also the lowest among Indonesia's urban agglomerations (Leung, 2016). Putri et al. (2021) show the desirability of rail-based options in urban Bali, but in the absence of this infrastructure, rental vehicles still dominate current (Hermawati et al., 2019; Wiradnyana et al., 2021) and future (Hermawati et al., 2020) tourists' choice of transport. Further, rural Bali destinations have poor public transport connectivity (Murti, 2020). This is specifically evident in the northern part of Bali which is mostly classified as rural (BPS-Indonesia, 2020) and hardly covered by bus services. Figure 1 shows the rural–urban classification and lack of public transport coverage for tourism attractions in northern Bali. This is particularly concerning for Celukan Bawang seaport as one of the arrival points for ferries, international cruise ships, and yachts. Consequently, most tourists rely on transport modes provided by tourism site providers (Ernawati et al., 2017) or by residents (UNWTO & Huzhou-City, 2017). Shared taxi microbus services to access smaller roads like *angkot* look unattractive to tourists. Whilst car and motorbike-based DRT draw users from public transport in other cities in Indonesia (Belgiawan et al., 2022; Irawan et al., 2020), these alternatives compete with local vehicle rentals in Bali, as happened to the new shuttle service (The Bali Sun, 2023). Furthermore, a new e-scooter service has only very limited use.

3.2 | Data collection and analysis

Capturing social practice is exploratory in nature. Interpreting the surrounding social structure can be achieved through interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To understand both human agents and the social structure, interviews were conducted with tourist and destination stakeholder participants. Whilst tourist participants were divided into several travel group profiles based on origin and travel companions, the stakeholder participants were divided into communities or non-government organisations (NGO), governments, and businesses. A semi-structured interview format allowed adaptability to participant contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). An online video interview option was available to enable participants to be in their safe locations (Saunders et al., 2016), and participation was less geographically

TABLE 1 Interview profiles and time.

Pseudonym	Sex	Group	Travel companion/stakeholder level	Origin/job	Time
Yani	Male	Tourist-Domestic	Older adults and/or children	Indonesia/Greater Jakarta	2022-Jun
Cinta	Female	Tourist-Domestic	Older adults and/or children	Indonesia/Bali	2022-Jun
Sari	Female	Tourist-Domestic	Older adults and/or children	Indonesia/Greater Jakarta	2022-Jun
Anto	Male	Tourist-Domestic	Adults	Indonesia/Greater Jakarta	2022-Jun
Ulfa	Female	Tourist-Domestic	Adults	Indonesia/Greater Jakarta	2022-Jun
Gaby	Female	Tourist-Domestic	Alone	Indonesia/Greater Jakarta—Work in Bali	2022-Sep
Anita	Female	Tourist-Domestic	Older adults and/or children	Indonesia/Greater Jakarta—Work in Bali	2022-Sep
Sandi	Male	Tourist-Domestic	Adults	Indonesia/East Java	2022-Sep
Ameena	Female	Tourist-International	Older adults and/or children	Asia/Malaysia	2022-Jun
Xiang	Female	Tourist-International	Adults	Asia/Hong Kong	2022-Jul
Grace	Female	Tourist-International	Adults	Europe/UK	2022-Oct
Ruud	Male	Tourist-International	Alone	Europe/Netherlands	2022-Nov
Bao	Female	Tourist-International	Adults	Asia/China	2023-Apr
Nicky	Female	Tourist-International	Older adults and/or children	Africa/South Africa	2023-Apr
Putri	Female	Business	National	Local & Outbound Travel Agent Manager	2022-Jul
Endar	Male	Business	Local	E-Bicycle Tour Staff	2022-Jul
Anang	Male	Business	National	Local & Inbound Travel Agent Manager	2022-Aug
Panji	Male	Business	National	Tourism Bus Association Senior Member	2022-Sep
Reini	Female	Business	Local	National Bus Company Local Operator	2022-Sep
Hafidz	Male	Business	Local	Bali International Airport Manager	2022-Oct
Febri	Female	Government	National	Ministry of Transport Officer	2022-Sep
Surya	Male	Government	Local	Bali Transport Office Staff	2022-Oct
Putu	Male	Government	Local	Local Bus Company Manager	2022-Nov
Sena	Male	Government	National	Ministry of Tourism Senior Officer	2022-Nov
Feri	Male	Government	National	Ministry of Tourism Officer	2022-Dec
Yogi	Male	Community/NGO	National	Transport NGO Manager	2022-Jul
Bobby	Male	Community/NGO	Local	Bali Local Transport NGO Staff	2022-Jul
Fiki	Male	Community/NGO	National	Cycling Community Manager	2022-Aug
Antara	Male	Community/NGO	Local	Bali Regional Transport NGO Staff	2022-Sep
Santi	Male	Community/NGO	Local	Rural Tourism Village Manager	2022-Dec
Agung	Male	Community/NGO	Local	Local Vehicle Rental Driver	2023-Jan

constrained (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The Interview protocol was designed in guided headings (Appendix). Follow-up questions were applied to explore themes (Rubin & Rubin, 2011), and they were asked in the interviewee's familiar language (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Purposive sampling was used through personal contacts to obtain heterogeneous participants (Saunders et al., 2016) according to predefined criteria (Patton, 2002). Tourist participants had experience in visiting rural Bali at least once in the last 7 years, when DRT, the newest transport mode, started to exist. Stakeholder participants were involved in the tourism or transport sector related to Bali travel. Snowball sampling was used to identify further participants (Saunders et al., 2016) by utilising previous participants' references. An information sheet was provided to the participants before the interview. Particular to the stakeholder group, an invitation letter and terms of reference were added as a locally appropriate means of participant recruitment. Research ethics approval was obtained.

The interviews provided a nuanced understanding of each transport mode, including tourists' reasons and decisions to travel to rural areas. Data saturation was achieved at 29 interviews, and an additional two participants were recruited to ensure it (Table 1). Each interview took an average of 59 min. A researcher's mobile phone was prepared and used to record the sound to allow duration monitoring and a seamless interview (Yow, 2005). Using QSR NVivo Pro 20 software, thematic analysis linked to research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was applied to bilingual interview transcriptions by several translation iterations in the code categorisation and theme development processes (Esfehani & Walters, 2018).

TABLE 2 Codes, categories, and themes.

Codes				
Materials	**Meanings**	**Competences**	**Categories**	**Themes**
Financial incentives, rentals, small roads, booking offers	Overcome congestion, adventure, unsafe, access, explore, fun	Cycling skills, group size, travel experience, license	Motorbike	Transport use practice
Rentals, driver, DRT, apps, parking	Cost, flexibility, certainty	Spatial knowledge, driving skills	Car	
Access, bus stops, signage, *angkot*	Luggage difficulty, poor services, demand	Awareness of service, language	Public transport	
Sidewalks, dogs, hilly terrain, climate	Safety, heat, travel group	Physical ability, travel group	Cycling and walking	
Scattered attractions and accommodations	Optimising stay, transport certainty, move accommodation	Holiday planning, driving/riding skills	Complex trip pattern	Visiting practice
Organised tour, car rental with a driver	Group travel ability, trade-off, concerns	Creative planning, driving/riding skills	Travel companion	
Electric vehicle, energy transitions, hop-on-hop-off bus, rural hub	Clean air, quiet, healing	Environmental awareness	Environmental	Sustainability
Rental, traditional transport	Local livelihood, competition	Conflict awareness	Social	

The data analysis was predominantly undertaken by the first author who speaks Indonesian and English. Reflections on SPT led some of the analysis. The other three authors were external auditors to the categories and were involved in theme development, resulting in eight categories. Table 2 shows the coding, categories, and themes that emerged concerning transport use practice, visiting practice, and sustainability.

4 | FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The SPT elements of materials, meanings, and competences are interrelated and are therefore holistically discussed with a focus on transport use practice, visiting practice and sustainability. Transport use practice is discussed according to transport modes, while visiting practice provides a wider lens to understand the tourists' practice bundle. The sustainability theme captures different views on desired future socio-environmental interventions for rural travel. Whilst SPT elements interweave together in the themes below, codes for materials, meanings, and competences elements are clearly classified in Table 2.

4.1 | Transport use practice

4.1.1 | Motorbike

Stakeholder participants explain that motorbike riding is entrenched practice for residents and shifts the culture away from public transport use. Reini, Febri, Antara, and Putu (transport stakeholders) emphasise the role of financial incentives which ease residents in purchasing motorbikes. Thus, most first-time international tourists recognise this practice in their first visit to Bali. As Ruud (international tourist) explains, 'In Bali, I have the idea that everybody's driving by themselves and not by public transportation'.

High motorbike ownership due to its financial accessibility to residents shapes rental provision and makes motorbikes easily accessible to tourists (materials). Some international travellers are attracted to use motorbikes for exploring rural areas, particularly those who have gained knowledge from previous visits (Mertena et al., 2022) as they see the potential. For repeat travellers, this is part of their visiting experience and is full of meaning, with examples elsewhere including tourists visiting London wanting to use the London Bus (Filieri et al., 2021). Conversely, domestic tourists are well versed in motorbike use practice. Whilst finding motorbike rental shops within walking distance is easy, some tourists plan ahead to book a motorbike to be delivered directly to the airport. Having found offers through website browsing and social media search, they simply book motorbikes on travel booking websites and WhatsApp. These tourists rent the motorbike for the whole holiday in Bali.

Motorbike use by these tourists is determined by holiday goals (meanings), transport infrastructure, and climate-terrain factors (materials). Although they are not used to riding a motorbike at home, they want to try this as part of enjoying a holiday experience. Sandi explains, 'if we ride a motorbike, we can get the Balinese vibe'. Traffic congestion and small roads in some rural areas also attract tourists to use motorbikes, allowing tourists to be more flexible and travel faster. Further, having a rental motorbike allows more adventurous travel compared to a car, enabling tourists to explore remote areas. Anto (domestic tourist) adds, 'I really want to explore Bali … So, (I) go to places that are not easily accessible'. These advantages keep tourists away from using other modes.

Motorbikes present barriers to several tourist segments, that is, travel groups with children or older adults, tourists with substantial luggage, and those who are risk-averse (competence). International

tourists who have cycling skills and confidence come prepared to use motorbikes in subsequent visits by bringing less luggage. However, the use of motorbikes requires strict regulation enforcement as chaotic traffic is apparent. First-time international tourists avoid motorbikes even if they are competent bicycle users. They find motorbike riding dangerous as they see residents in Bali ride with children on the back. Tourists also see some riders are half-clothed. For international tourists, motorbike use is somewhat less restricted than in their home country, due to how traffic rules are enforced, that is, license checking and helmet requirements. Those who use a car feel unsafe around many motorbikes on the road.

4.1.2 | Car

Accessing cars is easy for residents and tourists. Financial incentives are available for residents to purchase cars, inducing car rental provisions which sustain driver jobs for local people. For tourists who are not interested in motorbikes, they can book a car—including an optional driver—for the whole holiday from the Bali airport (materials).

Different skills (Lucas, 2019) and travel group barriers (Smith et al., 2019) determine different car use practices in Bali. A few domestic tourist participants who frequently visit Bali like to do a road trip using their own car due to cost reasons and to ensure the availability of transport in rural areas. Meanwhile, first-time international tourists usually rent a car through their accommodation due to trust and security issues.

Car use solves limitations for some other tourists, that is, large travel group, luggage, and physical utility. They feel safe and enjoy the time with their travel group. The car also ensures their journey certainty, allowing them to relax while passing the hilly terrain (meanings). Congestion is interpreted as part of the experience in using cars to rural Bali. Ameena says, 'If you stuck in a congestion in Bali for a couple of hours to reach a (rural) destination, to me it's not a problem'.

Meanwhile, driving in rural settings requires further competences, such as parking availability and spatial knowledge, contributing to a preference for hiring a local driver or a DRT service. Whilst local drivers can be a tour guide, DRT with its mobile apps overcomes language barriers, spatial skills, parking limitations, and price uncertainty.

4.1.3 | Public transport

Poor public transport service is apparent on arrival at Bali's entry ports (materials), representing tourists' initial interaction with local transport provision. A few tourists use sea transport, that is, taking a train or using a car on Java Island and crossing by ferry. Tourists arriving by car will be unlikely to use public transport for onward travel from the arrival point, as found in previous studies (Gutiérrez & Miravet, 2016; Miravet et al., 2021). Buses are also hard to find at Bali seaports as bus companies have difficulty in providing a direct connection at the seaport pier. Reini (bus operator) explains, 'if you want to take our bus, you must walk further, (we) don't reach the pier'.

Accessing public transport is also challenging at the airport. Whilst taxis, DRT, and vehicle rentals are available, neither information nor direct access to bus public transport is provided for international arrivals, making public transport use after landing extremely unlikely. For tourists arriving on domestic flights, travelling by bus from the airport presents further issues in respect of vehicle suitability for carrying luggage (meanings). Hafidz (airport manager) admits public transport provision at the airport is poor, suggesting low-deck buses or coaches are needed to accommodate tourists' luggage.

Further, tourists struggle to acquire knowledge to use public transport around Bali. As Bobby (local NGO) asserts, '… the information on the bus stop … is also unclear … many people are waiting at the wrong bus stop'. Transport options in rural areas are also very limited (see Figure 1), which is similar to Global North contexts (Sardá et al., 2009; Šipuš & Abramović, 2017; Tomej & Liburd, 2019). Public transport fails to satisfy and guarantee the entire journey of rural travellers. Moreover, the language barrier makes *angkot* a local-only knowledge and hence inaccessible to international tourists (competences).

4.1.4 | Walking and cycling

The interviews show how tourists staying in the urban area avoid walking and cycling to rural destinations in Bali as they are considered unsafe (meanings) and physically demanding on a tropical island (competences). Gaby (a traveller who works remotely in Bali) mentioned, '… you would be hit by a motorbike if you walk … It's dangerous to walk in Bali'. Tourists' perception on the easiness of finding bicycle rental in Bali is mixed, but it is more difficult than finding motorised vehicle rental.

Tourists staying in rural areas also find it difficult to walk and cycle due to the same concerns. Sidewalks are narrow and do not exist in some areas, making walking uncomfortable. Febri (transport policy board) adds, '… if they walk, let alone carry a baby stroller, … they are not comfortable … and the sidewalks are also not wide enough'. Street dogs are also perceived as dangerous and discourage walking, and the hilly terrain makes tourists unwilling to cycle. Active mobilities in rural Bali are currently limited to experience activities, like hill trekking and cycling tours.

The topography and climate are deterrents for travelling on foot or cycle, exacerbated by poor infrastructure for these modes (materials). Whilst improving walking and cycling infrastructure requires land buyback, the regional government fiscal capability is limited as the land value around tourism attractions has increased. Further, unreliable public transport disconnects cycling and walking from being practised as the first/last mile since there are no viable middle mile (Feng et al., 2023) options, perpetuating the use of individual motorised vehicles. Hence, tourists must work with these limited provisions.

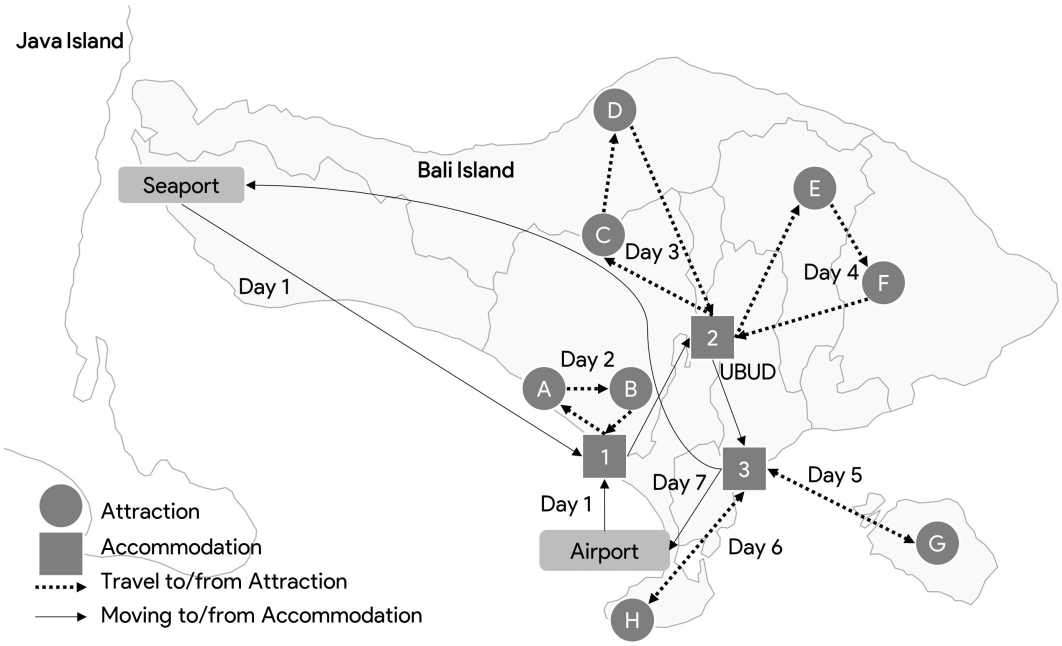

FIGURE 2 Multi-destination trip patterns of tourists visiting rural Bali, an illustration from interviews.

4.2 | Visiting practice

4.2.1 | Complex trip pattern

Decisions to use transport modes are tied to tourists' holiday itineraries or practice bundle (Kent, 2022; Watson, 2012). It includes places they intend to stay, attractions they plan to visit, and people they are travelling with. Some tourists stay in Ubud as their base to be closer to rural attractions. This is partly because rural attractions are scattered around the north of the island (materials). Other tourists stay in the urban area because it only takes approximately 4 h to reach the other end of Bali. Further, staying at multiple locations is prevalent for independent tourists. The interview analysis shows tourists tend to move to new accommodations around Bali every few days to experience as many attractions as possible (meanings) as shown in Figure 2.

> … two nights in Ubud, two nights in Nusa Dua, a night in Kuta, then one more night … there were four places.
>
> (Yani, traveller with children)

> We have six accommodations, moving around … I went to Lovina, … Ubud, … Sanur, Uluwatu, went back to Kuta or Denpasar.
>
> (Anto, traveller with adults)

From the list of rural places mentioned by participants, nature is the must-see thing in Bali, followed by cultural sites. However, the scattered rural attractions (Figure 1) force tourists to perform inefficient trips, necessitating long travel from different areas in Bali. Figure 2 shows typical tourists' complex trip itineraries due to scattered rural attractions and accommodation provisions, exhibiting a mix of base camp and regional tour patterns (Gühnemann et al., 2021; Lue et al., 1993). Most tourists cope with travel inefficiencies by renting a vehicle for their entire stay (competences). It also guarantees the entire journey, addressing public transport service uncertainties. Here, the temporal sequence is important for tourists (Shove et al., 2012), more than costs (Bursa et al., 2022), to fulfil complex travel itineraries. Stakeholder participants associate the scattered rural attractions and accommodations (provisions) with the failure of spatial planning (Panji, tourism bus association) and carrying capacity planning (Anang, travel agent), as rural tourism attractions have been evolving in an organic and under-regulated manner.

4.2.2 | Travel companion

Travel group profiles and their competences influence travel choices. Travel groups may comprise of individuals with differing competences and variation in the types of meanings sought from their holiday. Complex travel groups present limited travel options (Smith et al., 2019), although a simpler one does not necessarily shift to sustainable travel. For example, families consisting of young children and older adults are restricted by the group's heterogenous abilities (competences), limiting their transport options. Family travellers often use an organised tour operator (materials). Some others travel independently but have trade-offs in managing various travel companions. For instance, reducing the number of attractions visited daily and choosing certain transport modes (meanings). Infrastructure limitations also restrict these tourist groups.

A few tourists have creative trip decisions, splitting their group to allow more flexible trips for the adults. Meanwhile, tourists travelling

with adults or alone were more adventurous, giving them more freedom to take risks. For example, Ulfa, who recently had her first chance to travel independently in Bali, had not previously rented a motorbike when travelling with family. Anita imagines travelling to Bali without older adults, 'I would ride a motorbike'. These findings echo a link between a transport practice and travellers' life-cycle, as explained by child caring activity (Sersli et al., 2020), shopping, school, and work commute practices (Mattioli et al., 2016; Mattioli & Anable, 2017; Scheurenbrand et al., 2018).

4.3 | Sustainability

4.3.1 | Environmental

Most tourists visit rural destinations to find peacefulness (Pesonen & Komppula, 2010) (meanings). For example, participants mentioned clean air and quiet ambience for healing. In contrast, most of them use noisy and polluting transport modes. For instance, Ruud (a cyclist at home), Anto, Ulfa, Anita, Xiang, Bao, and Nicky (public transport users at home) rent motorbikes and cars in Bali. Only a few tourists are consistent with their sustainable transport choices at home. Fiki (cycling community) recalls his cycling enthusiast friends who tried Trans Metro Dewata bus to go uphill and return by cycling. An international tourist participant also hired a bicycle to travel around rural Bali, noting her awareness of the fragile environment.

> … when you're there … you do just become more aware of its beauty and also the fragility because we don't have that sort of nature around us in the UK.
>
> (Grace, international tourist)

Most tourist participants suggest electrifying individual motorised vehicles—including rental vehicles, to make rural travel in Bali more sustainable. However, as the current primary energy is mostly fossil-fuel-based, the sustainability gains will be limited. Antara (transport NGO) questions those promoting car electrification as it could worsen the congestion.

Rural attractions also indirectly encourage the use of cars and motorbikes (materials). From a stakeholder perspective, rural residents are yet to view sustainable transport in rural areas as a crucial part of rural tourism sustainability. For example, due to road congestion to his rural attraction, Santi (rural attraction manager) insists on developing more parking facilities and widening roads, further inducing individual motorised vehicle trip demand.

4.3.2 | Social

Whilst some tourist participants and stakeholders acknowledge the environmental impacts of tourism travel to rural Bali, they recognise the tangled social impacts. Conflicts arise from the emergence of DRT concerning informal local vehicle rental businesses and jeopardising local livelihoods (meanings). In a few places, signs prohibiting DRT are visible, showing the fragility of social sustainability. Ameena, a frequent traveller to Bali, opts to avoid DRT, 'we are afraid that if we use it, we might be harmed by (local) people due to that signage'. Vehicle rental drivers oppose DRT as it competes with them more significantly than public transport. Agung (rental car driver) explains, '… for us there are (route) gaps if the place is not accessible by public transport (compared to DRT)'. Yogi and Antara (transport NGO) also believe that local rentals can coexist with public transport, but not DRT due to their direct competition.

The Ministry of Tourism and cycling community participants propose non-motorised transport modes for rural destinations. Sena and Fery (Ministry of Tourism) suggest revitalising traditional and labour-intensive vehicles, that is, canoes, horse carts, and rickshaws (materials). This suggestion promotes the concept of transport decolonialisation (Schwanen, 2018), reintroducing tourists to unique transport modes (Maltese & Zamparini, 2023), particularly from Global South destinations.

Yogi, Febri, and Antara (transport stakeholders) explicitly suggest a concept of rural hubs as multimodal transport exchange points. These could be connected by public transport efficiently to the urban area and entry ports, as many experienced traveller participants suggest hop-on-hop-off buses. Hubs could provide diverse transport options which are currently unavailable to tourists. With room for local vehicle rental to coexist alongside public transport and complement each other to satisfy tourists' entire journey, the rural hub concept is echoed indirectly by wider participants from tourist and stakeholder groups, even though its implementation triggered social conflicts (The Bali Sun, 2023).

5 | CONCLUSION

5.1 | Theoretical implications

A SPT analysis has drawn attention to different challenges for the development of sustainable rural tourism transport in the Global South. Destination transport provision has evolved to meet residents' needs for travel and income generation, shaping the options (materials) for tourists. International tourists see how residents travel and want to emulate them, this contrasts with research on Rhodes, Greece, by Morfopos et al. (2023) where residents adapt to tourism travel instead. Further, domestic tourists are familiar with Indonesian travel options and have their travel expectations in advance (meanings for tourists). In Bali, the motorbike dominates, and some tourists wish to participate. Similarly, car rental is essential for local livelihoods (meanings for residents). There are also skills limitations on what tourists can do (competences), although several repeat tourists developed new skills such as motorbike riding. However, tourists do not always make use of their travel skills in a destination due to different meanings.

Motorbike and car-rental allow tourists to achieve holiday needs and overcome travel limitations, reflected by travel group

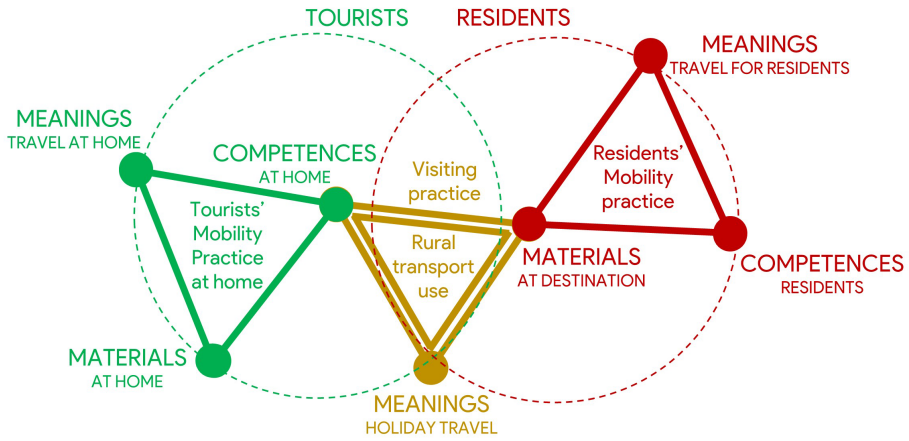

FIGURE 3 The conceptualisation of rural tourism travel practice elements in the Global South (the residents' practices were captured from local stakeholders, who live in Bali).

composition (Smith et al., 2019) and trip itinerary. The use of less sustainable transport choices is determined by less-connected provision (materials): public transport (Sardá et al., 2009; Šipuš & Abramović, 2017; Tomej & Liburd, 2019), accommodation (Zientara et al., 2024), and attractions (Zamparini et al., 2022). Further, the meanings tourists associate with visiting rural areas, that is, less pollution and noise, have no influence on transport choices since they typically focus on visiting many places. In Bali, motorbikes resolve time pressure for some tourists, while cars resolve group travel limitations (meanings). Figure 3 visualises a novel concept of rural transport use and visiting practice in the Global South that emerges from the interplay of the holiday goals (meanings), adapted knowledge from home (competences), and different destination transport provision (materials). Materials at the destination represent transport provisions that are used by tourists and residents but are different from what most tourists have at home, indicating transport provision intervention as the most critical SPT element for sustainability transition (Schwanen et al., 2011). As a result, sustainable transport use habits practiced at home are rarely replicated in Bali, contrasting with the findings of Zamparini and Vergori (2021).

Whilst the findings reflect similar rural destination travel challenges in the Global North, Global South destinations gain local economic benefits from facilitating travel. Hence, managing social and environmental sustainability is paramount as most local transport provision is usually informal (Ochieng & Kule, 2022; Truong et al., 2020). However, despite decision makers recognising areas of provision deficiency, local transport providers in Bali are less supportive of change, that is, promoting DRT, because it will directly affect local livelihoods. This is less the case in the Global North, although social conflict exists when changes in transport provision occur. Nevertheless, residents will suffer the consequences of environmental degradation in the long term. Bali will be a less attractive destination locally, and globally with the effects of climate change. This longer-term view is difficult to act upon with the need to meet immediate economic requirements of local vehicle rental companies and drivers.

5.2 | Practical implications

The data analysis urges regional authorities to address rural tourism provision deficiencies to tackle socio-environmental sustainability in rural travel. The Bali railway plan is a good start to decarbonise and decongest travel on arrival. However, decentralised rural attractions in Bali produce inefficient trips and complicate travel to rural areas. Further, efficient alternatives, like DRT, conflict with local car rental businesses. In contrast to previous studies in the Global North (Gkavra et al., 2023; Sörensen et al., 2021), the findings reveal the uncertainty of DRT's potential to complement rural travel in an established local tourism transport economy as societal concerns arise. Bali is also unique and different from other Global South destinations where DRT works (Henama & Sifolo, 2017; Park et al., 2021). Therefore, a locally decentralised transport economy may ensure residents get fair benefits from tourism travel activities. Locally sourced motorbike rental—having less emission than car rental—is still prevalent and therefore should be sustained to meet travel and income needs of some tourists and residents, while offering a more sustainable travel option. Whilst some international tourists have limited prior knowledge of motorcycling, making it safer would encourage them to use motorbikes. Additionally, formalising motorbike rental could strengthen motorcycling despite the need to keep residents' ownership. These schemes allow authorities to standardise operational licensing, that is, insurance and helmet requirements. Competencies of international tourists could also be supported through local initiatives, such as motorbike training packages and tours on safer roads.

This study acknowledges that the sustainability of rural tourism transport in Bali is tangled by multiple entrenched interests. However, interventions need to uphold public interests. Further, sustainable travel policy does not need to originate directly from the very same sector where the emissions are emitted. For example, the *cool biz* programme reduces office building emissions from air conditioning by imposing a new working dress code regulation (Shove, 2014). In Bali, accelerating energy transitions would make more sense for rental vehicle electrification (Rizki et al., 2021) despite expected traffic congestion, as the current financial incentive on individual motorised electric vehicle could induce new vehicle demand. It should also allow

local providers to continue to benefit with a longer-term sustainability view.

Travel practice in Bali is difficult to trackback as people have heavily invested in transport provisions. The current state of travel practices involves multiple stakeholders, suggesting a collective path-dependent route in sustainability transition. In this context, the path-dependency is not only locked within government levels (Hrelja et al., 2013), but also in the wider social practices of everyday travel (Juschten & Hössinger, 2021; Upham et al., 2013). *New Balis* need different directions to strengthen socio-economic impacts without compromising the environment. Recognising what is happening now is part of determining how this should be done, and SPT provides a way of exploring this.

5.3 | Limitations and future research

This study has investigated how and why tourists do certain travel practices to rural destinations and the interplay of social practice elements to identify more sustainable opportunities. In contrast to studies in the Global North, the study sheds light on the importance of social impacts to fully comprehend the complexity of rural travel sustainability in the Global South. Nevertheless, the ability of this study to explain intra-destination rural travel practices in the Global South is limited to one destination. Diverging the empirical focus to other Global South contexts would enrich understanding. Further research could see if this instance is similar in other Global South destinations, especially with their peculiarity of transport modes, travel infrastructure provisions, and transport economy. Moreover, future studies could confirm traveller segments within rural transport use in these types of destinations through quantitative research to identify sustainable rural travel markets.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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APPENDIX

Interview questions	
Tourists	**Stakeholders**
1. Background a. Trip pattern (travel frequency, travel group, length of stay, stay and visited locations) b. Mobility at home (transport modes at home, driving license) 2. Rural tourism a. Could you tell me how you define rural tourism? b. What rural areas and attractions have you visited in Bali? 3. Rural Bali travel a. What attracted/brought you to Bali? b. Why did you travel to rural destinations in Bali?	1. Background: a. Job role and involvement in tourism transport b. Could you tell me how you define rural tourism?
4. Travel to rural Bali a. Tell me about your travel around Bali? (Prompt transport options) b. Tell me about the challenges you encountered when travelling around Bali?	2. Travel to rural Bali a. How and why do tourists travel in certain ways to rural Bali? b. Prompt influential factors; policy, infrastructure, weather, residents' practices
5. Sustainable travel a. What are your views on sustainable tourism travel? b. In your opinion, how rural destination travel in Bali can be made more sustainable?	3. Sustainable travel a. What are your views on sustainable tourism travel? b. How rural destination travel in Bali can be made more sustainable?
6. Confirming their multi-destination trip pattern in Bali	4. Confirming tourists' multi-destination trip pattern in Bali
Closing questions	