

Enhancing Religious Tourism Through Sea Transportation: A Transnational Approach to Batam and Singapore

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Abstract

Batam City, which is part of the Riau Islands Province, serves as a connecting hub between Indonesia and Singapore. Batam is strategically located in a border area between countries, neighboring one of the world's business centers, Singapore. Therefore, maritime transportation plays a crucial role in a maritime nation like Indonesia. The high intensity of transportation between Batam and Singapore indicates that both cities are tourist destinations. Residents of both Batam and Singapore view these cities as tourist destinations. This study focuses on religious tourism. The high intensity of maritime transportation is particularly evident during weekends and holiday seasons, as many residents of both cities visit each other's locations, which shows the high intensity of social mobilization. This study aims to highlight maritime aspects and their relationship with society through the concept of transnationalism within the framework of tourism, particularly religious tourism. With globalization and the need to expand networks, maritime transportation is essential to support transnational processes. For this reason, maritime safety is vital, as it significantly influences efforts toward sustainable development, especially in maritime transportation activities that support tourism.

Keywords: Maritime Safety; Religious Tourism; Sea Transportation; Social Mobilization; Transnational

Abstrak

Kota Batam yang merupakan bagian dari provinsi Kepulauan Riau merupakan kota penghubung antara Indonesia dan Singapura. Kota Batam terletak di lokasi yang sangat strategis di kawasan perbatasan antar negara, bertetangga dengan salah satu pusat bisnis dunia yaitu Singapura. Untuk itu transportasi laut mempunyai peranan yang sangat penting di negara maritim seperti Indonesia. Tingginya intensitas transportasi Batam dan Singapura menunjukkan kedua kota tersebut merupakan destinasi wisata. Baik penduduk Batam dan Singapura melihat kedua kota ini sebagai destinasi wisata. Dalam penelitian ini difokuskan pada wisata religi. Intensitas tingginya transportasi laut ini sangat terlihat pada waktu akhir minggu, masa liburan tidak lepas dari banyaknya penduduk kedua kota tersebut mengunjungi kedua kota tersebut, hal ini memperlihatkan tingginya intensitas mobilitas sosial. Kajian ini berupaya menunjukkan aspek maritim serta hubungannya dengan sosial masyarakat melalui konsep transnasional dalam kerangka pariwisata khususnya wisata religi. Dengan adanya globalisasi, dan untuk mengembangkan jaringan, masyarakat sangat membutuhkan transportasi laut untuk mendukung proses transnasional. Untuk itu semua diperlukan keselamatan maritim yang sangat mempengaruhi upaya pembangunan keberlanjutan khususnya kegiatan transportasi laut yang mendukung pariwisata religi.

Kata kunci: Keselamatan Maritim; Mobilitas Sosial; Pariwisata Religi; Transnasional; Transportasi Laut

INTRODUCTION

The concept of transnationalism emerged in the early 20th century as a framework for understanding interactions between cultures. It refers to a social movement driven by increasing global interconnectedness and the diminishing significance of national boundaries. Key factors such as advancements in telecommunications, particularly the internet, population migration, and

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globalization have significantly contributed to the rise of transnationalism. In the context of the transportation network between Singapore and Batam, the transnational concept is evident in the close proximity of sea border crossings that facilitate connections between the two countries. This transnational dynamic can be examined from a multidisciplinary perspective, focusing on maritime transportation, especially maritime safety, as an important factor of religious tourism initiatives.

In today's highly interconnected world, it is essential to understand how transnational orientations are formed, especially in terms of how individuals perceive the transnational landscape and the social distances between nations and regions. The concept of "transnational" has evolved as a broad term to capture the significant rise in the movement of people, goods, images, and ideas across national boundaries in the age of globalization (Conway, J. M., 2019)

Transnationalism is a social phenomenon that includes familial, economic, social, religious, and political relations that cross borders. Transnational social fields are made up of "multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed," transcending at least two nations. (Almasarweh, 2022)

Tourism is an integral aspect of human life, particularly in relation to social and economic activities. Initially, in the early 20th century, it was an activity reserved for a small group of affluent individuals. However, it has now evolved into a fundamental human right. This transformation is evident not only in developed nations but also in developing countries. As a developing nation, Indonesia is striving to develop a sustainable tourism industry as one of the means to achieve a balanced foreign trade.

Religious tourism is a niche form of travel where individuals or groups journey to sacred sites beyond their usual surroundings to engage with religious values in various ways. This type of travel, driven by spiritual motivations, is as ancient as religion itself, making it the earliest form of tourism, with origins tracing back to antiquity. Religious tourism is one of the oldest forms of travel, rooted in the history of religion itself. Its origins can be traced back to ancient times, with pilgrimage being the earliest and most prominent example. Pilgrimages involve journeys to sacred or holy sites for the purpose of worship and spiritual fulfillment. Over time, this practice evolved into the most widespread form of religious tourism.

The concept of "religious tourism" represents an intersection between the domains of religion and tourism, where the spiritual or ritualistic aspects of religion converge with the recreational and exploratory nature of travel. This form of tourism is primarily driven by specific needs and motivations, making it essential to understand religious tourism by examining its underlying motivational foundations. A review of various definitions supports this perspective, highlighting religious tourism as a distinct form of travel, either partially or wholly motivated by religious intentions, which are fulfilled through engagement with religious sites and experiences (Dimitrov, 2019).

Religious tourism can generally be divided into two principal categories: (1) pilgrimage tourism, which is guided by purely spiritual intentions, such as seeking a deeper connection with the divine or engaging in personal reflection; and (2) religious cultural and cognitive tourism, which is characterized by a broader interest in the exploration of natural and cultural heritage connected to religious traditions. Unlike other forms of tourism that are often motivated by leisure or entertainment, the central driving force behind religious tourism is faith itself. It involves purposeful travel—either individually or in organized groups—beyond one's everyday surroundings, aiming to engage with religious values through various forms of spiritual or cultural experiences (Dimitrov, 2019).

Batam City is the city with third most populous population on the island of Sumatra after the cities of Medan and the city of Padang. Batam City consists of 12 sub-districts, including Batu Ampar, Belakang Padang, Bulang, Galang, Lubuk Baja, Sei Beduk, Batu Aji, Segulung, Bengkong, Batam City,

and Sekupang. Batam City is an island that is very strategically located because it is located on an international shipping route with borders-regional boundaries as follows: north with Singapore and Malaysia, south with Lingga Regency. West with Karimun Regency, East with Bintan Island and Tanjung Pinang (Batam Dalam Angka, 2010)

Transportation plays a crucial role in the growth of tourism. Efficient transport systems within a country significantly boost the number of tourist arrivals. Similarly, the expansion of the tourism sector often drives improvements in transportation infrastructure. Accessibility serves as the foundation of tourism-related transport. The level of development in a country is often reflected in its transportation system, particularly in how its airports function as gateways for travelers entering the region.

Transportation is a means of supporting social mobility, where the people of Batam can use public transportation facilities such as taxis, buses, and motorbike taxis. Apart from land transportation, Batam is an archipelagic area, sea transportation is an important means. The strategic utilization of maritime routes linking Batam to surrounding islands and nearby countries such as Singapore and Malaysia has significantly contributed to the development and sophistication of sea transportation infrastructure, notably including ferry services. Within this context, the notion of transnationalism can be understood as the formation of cross-border social networks, particularly between the ethnic Chinese communities in Batam and Singapore. These transnational ties manifest across various spheres, including cultural traditions, economic exchanges, trade interactions, and social relationships. Specifically in the realm of tradition, a transnational religious network is observable through the interconnectedness of Chinese temples in Batam with similar temples in mainland China. These connections are often based on shared ancestral lineage or religious affiliations, reinforcing the spread and maintenance of cultural identity beyond national borders.

Temples, frequently serving as sites for Tridharma and Taoist worship, hold profound spiritual significance. However, their influence extends well beyond the religious domain, functioning as vital centers for community gathering, cultural expression, and tourism. Numerous scholarly inquiries have emphasized their role as sacred spaces for the Chinese diaspora (Zou & Bahaiddin, 2024; Hartati et al., 2020). As destinations for religious tourism, temples also generate substantial economic benefits. A prominent example is the Shaolin Temple in Henan, China, which stands not only as a vital cultural landmark but also as a globally recognized tourist attraction (Wang et al., 2021). Similarly, countries such as Indonesia, Singapore, Taiwan, and Malaysia feature numerous temples that draw both worshippers and tourists. These sites regularly host festivals—such as the Cap Go Meh celebration, which includes the Gotong Toapekong procession, and the Dragon Boat Festival—dedicated to honoring the birth of deities central to the temple's spiritual life. To sustain and enhance their role as tourist destinations, the rich cultural traditions embodied by these Chinese temples in Indonesia should be actively preserved and promoted (Dewi Hartati et al., 2024).

The transnational network connecting Chinese communities in Batam and Singapore is further reinforced by their mutual engagement in temple-related activities. These religious sites function not only as spaces of devotion but also as venues for social interaction, particularly among those involved in commerce and trade. Temples thus operate simultaneously as religious sanctuaries, economic hubs, social meeting points, and cultural landmarks, encapsulating the multifaceted nature of transnational Chinese identity in the region (Danny et al., 2020).

Previous studies have examined the concept of transnational networks within the framework of international organized crime (Raja Gukguk & Jaya, 2019), (Silvia, 2020) and the transnational spatial landscape of port cities (Faturachman, Hartati, et al., 2024). This research aims to fill a gap by exploring the aspect of religious tourism in relation to the role of maritime transportation between the two countries. Existing studies have focused on religious tourism in Singapore. Additionally, this study contributes to the development of religious tourism in Batam through sea

transportation routes from Singapore to Batam, specifically to Zhen Wu Miao, the oldest temple in Batam, established in 1819, and Tua Pek Kong, a popular destination for tourists.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research began with the preparation stage and the collection of relevant materials. Efforts were made to identify potential sources that provide valid transnational similarity data between the two countries, utilizing both primary and secondary sources. The gathered data was then organized and analyzed to identify event frequencies and key parameters influencing the research findings. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method, relying on literature-based research to compare the two countries, and also conducts field research by visiting both Chinese temples in Batam and Singapore. This research employed a qualitative descriptive method. Data was collected through both a literature review and a field study. The field study involved visits to Batam Center International Ferry Terminal and Harbour Bay Ferry Terminal in Batam, as well as trips to temples in both Batam and Singapore.

This study utilizes a qualitative, ethnographic research design. Qualitative research is a naturalistic method that prioritizes non-numerical data, aiming for deep understanding and exploration rather than controlling or manipulating variables. This interpretive and context-driven approach highlights processes and development rather than emphasizing final outcomes or conclusions (Nassaji, 2020).

Tourism

Tourism refers to the activity of traveling, either individually or in groups, with the purpose of gaining knowledge, experiencing enjoyment, or engaging in exploration. It encompasses travel undertaken by individuals or collectives to specific destinations for a limited duration, with the intention of participating in recreational activities, pursuing personal development, or gaining insights into the distinctive features and cultural uniqueness of the visited location. Fundamentally, tourism involves movement from one's place of residence to areas that lie outside the ordinary or habitual environment, driven by motivations that range from leisure and holidaymaking to professional or business-related engagements. This activity manifests in diverse forms, including but not limited to visiting historical and natural landmarks, engaging with local traditions and cultural expressions, participating in sports and leisure activities, as well as appreciating and preserving the aesthetic and ecological richness of the natural surroundings (He et al., 2023).

The tourism sector constitutes a multifaceted industry that integrates a wide array of interconnected services and infrastructures, including transportation networks, hospitality and accommodation services, culinary experiences, tour guidance, entertainment provisions, and various other facilities designed to enhance the quality of the tourist experience. The economic implications of tourism for destination regions are substantial; tourism generates employment opportunities across both skilled and unskilled labor markets, stimulates the growth and sustainability of local enterprises, and serves as a vital source of fiscal income for municipal and regional administrations through taxes and service fees (Mishra et al., 2024). Moreover, tourism is not merely an economic engine; it is also a complex socio-cultural phenomenon that facilitates intercultural dialogue, fosters global connectivity, and contributes to the broader processes of globalization and cultural exchange. A comprehensive understanding of tourism thus requires a multidisciplinary lens that considers its economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions, enabling a more nuanced appreciation of its transformative impacts on both travelers and host communities (Shrestha et al., 2025).

Tourism, in its broadest sense, can be understood as a human activity involving travel from one geographical location to another, typically carried out for the purposes of recreation, leisure,

exploration, or cultural enrichment. Such travel frequently encompasses visits to a wide range of destinations, including natural landscapes, historical landmarks, cultural heritage sites, and entertainment complexes. In addition to sightseeing, modern tourism often includes active engagement in specialized experiences such as adventure or extreme sports, retail tourism, gastronomic exploration, and participation in traditional cultural events. These multifaceted forms of tourism reflect the evolving preferences of travelers and the increasing diversification of tourism-related offerings in response to global demand (Suresh et al., 2025).

Beyond its recreational function, tourism possesses multiple dimensions with far-reaching implications, particularly in the economic sphere. The tourism industry plays a pivotal role in regional and national economic development by generating employment opportunities across a variety of sectors, ranging from hospitality and transportation to retail and cultural services. It also contributes significantly to the inflow of foreign exchange and public revenue, thereby supporting the fiscal stability and infrastructural development of tourist destinations. Hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and other service providers constitute the backbone of the tourism economy, with their operations directly impacting the prosperity of local communities (Zhu et al., 2024). In parallel, tourism also exerts considerable influence on the social and cultural fabric of host regions. The interaction between tourists and local residents creates avenues for cross-cultural communication, which can both enrich the tourist experience and shape local customs, behaviors, and social norms. While the presence of tourists may lead to the commodification of cultural practices or challenges to traditional ways of life, it also opens up valuable opportunities for local communities to actively preserve and promote their cultural identities, enhance intercultural awareness, and participate in global cultural exchange. Consequently, tourism should be viewed not only as an economic catalyst but also as a vehicle for cultural dialogue and social transformation (Liao et al., 2025).

Transportation

Transportation can be understood as a strategic effort to transfer, shift, carry, or relocate an object or entity from one spatial point to another, where the object in question is expected to attain greater utility, function, or value within its new context. From another perspective, transportation may also involve the movement of specific tools or instruments required for particular operational purposes. In this regard, transportation encompasses several critical dimensions, including spatial location (origin and destination), technological means (instruments or modes of transportation), and defined human or logistical needs (Peristiwo, 2021). These components interact to form the foundation of transportation systems, which are further conceptualized through the integration of various interrelated macro systems, namely:

1. Activity System
The activity system refers to the patterns and distribution of human or economic activities that generate transportation demand. It includes residential zones, industrial areas, commercial centers, and educational institutions, which all represent the origin or destination of travel. This system serves as the primary generator of mobility needs and determines the volume, frequency, and direction of movement within a given geographic region (Hörl & Balac, 2021).
2. Transportation Infrastructure Network System
This system consists of the physical facilities and fixed installations required for transportation activities, such as roads, railways, airports, ports, bridges, and terminals. It provides the spatial layout that enables the flow of people and goods and forms the structural framework within which transportation operations take place. The quality, coverage, and integration of this infrastructure network significantly influence the efficiency and accessibility of the entire transportation system (Najafi et al., 2024).
3. Traffic Movement System

The traffic movement system relates to the operational dynamics of vehicles and transportation modes as they navigate through the established infrastructure. It involves the regulation, control, and optimization of traffic flows to ensure safety, minimize congestion, and enhance travel time reliability. This system is essential in facilitating the actual mobility of individuals and goods, thereby translating infrastructure and demand into tangible transportation activity (Yannis & Chaziris, 2022).

4. Institutional System

The institutional system comprises the regulatory, administrative, and policy frameworks that govern transportation operations. It includes governmental agencies, planning authorities, transport operators, and legal frameworks that establish the rules, standards, and strategic directions for the development and management of the transportation sector. This system ensures that transportation activities align with broader social, economic, and environmental objectives (Sheng et al., 2023).

The interaction among these four macro systems gives rise to an integrated macro transportation system characterized by dynamic interdependencies. The linkage between the activity system and the infrastructure network induces the movement of goods and people via various transport modes. Modifications in the activity system—such as urban expansion or industrial relocation—affect infrastructure demand and service levels in the movement system. Conversely, enhancements in the infrastructure network can stimulate shifts in the activity system by increasing accessibility and mobility. The traffic movement system plays a vital intermediary role by facilitating efficient flow and influencing both activity and infrastructure utilization. As these three systems affect one another, the institutional system serves as the coordinating entity that ensures coherence and sustainable development within the transportation domain (Wang et al., 2024).

Transportation also possesses a defined service range, referring to the geographical extent of service coverage that transportation systems provide to users. This coverage is determined by the spatial relationship between the points of origin and destination, and it plays a critical role in evaluating transportation equity, network accessibility, and regional connectivity. A comprehensive understanding of service range is essential for effective transportation planning, particularly in ensuring inclusivity and efficiency across diverse geographic and socio-economic contexts (Oladimeji et al., 2023).

The transportation system can be conceptualized as an integrated set of elements that function interdependently to enable the effective and efficient movement of people and goods. These elements collectively support the provision of transportation services and are fundamental to ensuring system reliability and continuity. The essential components that constitute a transportation system include:

1. People and Goods (Transported Entities)

These are the primary subjects of transportation, representing the demand side of mobility services. People require transportation for commuting, social, economic, and recreational purposes, while goods are transported to support trade, logistics, and industrial operations. The characteristics and volume of transported entities significantly influence transportation planning and modal selection (Mouratidis et al., 2021).

2. Vehicles and Cargo Containers (Transportation Equipment)

These refer to the mechanical or technological instruments used to move people and goods. Vehicles such as buses, trucks, ships, and aircraft, along with cargo containers and specialized freight units, serve as the mobile elements of the system. Their design, capacity, energy efficiency, and safety features play a critical role in system performance (Cascetta & Henke, 2023).

3. Roads or Transportation Pathways

These are the physical corridors or surfaces along which transportation equipment operates. They include highways, railway tracks, shipping lanes, and air routes. The quality, maintenance, and capacity of these pathways determine the fluidity and safety of movement within the system (Makarova et al., 2023).

4. Terminals

Terminals serve as nodal points within the transportation system where trips originate, terminate, or involve transfer. They include facilities such as bus stations, train depots, seaports, airports, parking areas, and logistics centers. Terminals facilitate the coordination of transport modes and provide access to users and operators (Mei et al., 2024).

5. Operating Systems

Operating systems encompass the technical, managerial, and regulatory frameworks that guide the functioning of transportation networks. This includes scheduling systems, traffic control mechanisms, ticketing, communication protocols, and digital information platforms that support real-time coordination and safety assurance (Jha et al., 2024).

Additionally, four principal elements are universally recognized as the foundational components of any transportation system:

1. Means of Transportation (Link Infrastructure)

These are the physical connections between two or more locations that enable transportation to occur. This category includes roadways, railway tracks, navigable waterways, air corridors, and even underground pipelines. These means function as the backbone of spatial connectivity, enabling regional integration and accessibility (Povoroznyuk et al., 2022).

2. Vehicles

Vehicles are the mobile units used to facilitate movement along established routes. These include various forms of motorized and non-motorized transport, such as cars, buses, motorcycles, trucks, ships, and airplanes. Vehicle design and operation directly affect capacity, emissions, comfort, and safety in the transportation system (Ghorbanioskalaei et al., 2022).

3. Terminals

Terminals represent the logistical and functional endpoints of travel for both people and goods. They provide space for embarkation, disembarkation, storage, transfer, and loading/unloading activities. The efficiency of terminal management influences overall system performance and user satisfaction (Lin et al., 2025).

4. Management and Workforce

This refers to the human resources and organizational entities responsible for the planning, operation, maintenance, and regulation of all transportation components. It includes public agencies, private companies, maintenance crews, drivers, traffic controllers, and policy makers. Their coordination ensures the system remains safe, efficient, and responsive to public needs (Bıyık et al., 2021).

Conventional or public transportation systems serve the fundamental purpose of enabling the mobility of people and/or goods from one location to another. Public passenger transportation, in particular, involves the organized movement of individuals using shared vehicles on a fare-based model. This mode includes various types of transport services such as minibuses, commuter trains, ferry boats, and commercial airlines. As a form of mass transit, public transportation is cost-effective due to the collective distribution of operational expenses among a large number of passengers, thereby reducing the per-passenger cost significantly (Ribeiro et al., 2021).

Given its collective nature, public transportation necessitates a degree of homogeneity among users, especially in terms of origin and destination. This is operationalized through centralized boarding and alighting points such as terminals or designated stops. However, convergence in destination does not always equate to uniformity in purpose, as passengers may travel for different personal, social, or economic reasons. Mass transit systems are typically structured around fixed routes and pre-determined departure schedules, which require

synchronization between demand patterns and service availability. To maintain service efficiency and equitable access, government intervention is often necessary—particularly in areas such as infrastructure development, fare regulation, service subsidies, and strategic planning. Public sector involvement ensures that transportation services remain balanced in terms of supply and demand, and that the system fulfills broader societal objectives, including environmental sustainability and social inclusion (Mohammed & Oke, 2023).

Sea transportation represents one of the oldest forms of human mobility and logistical activity, with origins that trace back to the earliest stages of human civilization. Throughout millennia, maritime travel and shipping were predominantly carried out using wind-powered sailing vessels, which, despite their ingenuity for the time, were limited in terms of carrying capacity, navigation precision, and operational range. The trajectory of maritime transport underwent a significant transformation with the invention of the ship's engine during the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century. This innovation not only expanded the capabilities of maritime travel but also laid the foundation for modern commercial shipping. By the mid-20th century, steam-powered vessels were gradually replaced by more efficient and powerful diesel engines, marking a major technological leap in the sector (Benita, 2021).

In the contemporary era, the maritime industry has become highly diversified and technologically advanced. A wide variety of vessel types are employed for different transport purposes, including passenger ships for human mobility, general cargo vessels for non-containerized freight, container ships for modularized logistics, and oil tankers for the bulk transport of petroleum and chemical products. Beyond the ships themselves, sea transportation consists of several critical infrastructure and technological components such as seaports for docking and cargo handling, designated shipping lanes for route regulation, modern navigation systems for operational safety, and telecommunications equipment for real-time communication and coordination. These components collectively enable the functionality and resilience of global maritime networks (Raza et al., 2023).

One of the fundamental advantages of sea transportation lies in its reliance on the physical properties of water, which provides natural buoyancy and minimal surface friction. This unique characteristic makes maritime transport the most cost-effective and energy-efficient option for long-distance movement of goods in large volumes. Due to its scalability and economic efficiency, sea transport remains a primary mode for international trade and inter-island connectivity, especially in archipelagic countries. The applications of sea transport extend to various domains, including ocean-going vessels for international shipping routes, domestic inter-island transport within national borders, and inland waterway transport via navigable rivers and lakes (Claus & López, 2022).

From an economic perspective, the cost structure of sea transportation reveals a distinctive pattern. The highest expenditures are typically associated with terminal operations—such as loading, unloading, warehousing, and port management—and with the maintenance of navigational channels and port infrastructure, which require continuous dredging, upgrading, and regulatory oversight. Despite these infrastructural costs, the actual operational cost of shipping per ton-kilometer remains significantly lower compared to other modes of transport. This cost-efficiency reinforces the strategic importance of maritime logistics in supporting regional development, facilitating trade liberalization, and strengthening global supply chains. As a result, the development and modernization of sea transportation systems are considered essential components of national transportation policy and international economic integration (Saget et al., 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sea functions not merely as a geographic feature, but as a critical unifying medium that enables and sustains transnational interaction, fostering connections between nations, cultures, and economies. Through maritime corridors, individuals from diverse national backgrounds engage in a wide array of activities ranging from trade and migration to cultural exchange and diplomacy. These sea-based routes serve as vital arteries for global commerce, facilitating the movement of goods, people, and ideas across continents and archipelagos. Maritime transportation has long been integral to international trade, allowing for the efficient transfer of commodities and resources essential for economic growth. In this context, the role of diasporic communities becomes particularly noteworthy. Historically, during eras marked by socio-economic transitions, such as colonial expansion, post-colonial restructuring, or globalization, diaspora groups often emerged as key actors in maritime commerce. Their transnational linkages, cultural adaptability, and embedded networks across multiple regions enabled them to function as intermediaries, innovators, and drivers of trade and capital circulation, contributing significantly to the development of maritime economies.

In contemporary times, Batam Island stands as a prominent example of a maritime hub that has harnessed its strategic geographic location to become a regional center for economic and social interaction. Located in close proximity to Singapore, Batam has witnessed growing international recognition and popularity as a multifaceted destination. Visitors are drawn to the island for a variety of purposes, including investment and business ventures, retail tourism, and recreational activities. The island's accessibility via ferry services from Singapore and Malaysia has significantly contributed to its appeal, particularly for short-term international travelers. Singaporeans and Malaysians can conveniently reach Batam within a relatively short travel time, taking advantage of well-established sea transportation infrastructure. For travelers from other Asian nations, Singapore often serves as a transit hub; they arrive in Singapore via air or land routes and subsequently continue their journey to Batam through Singapore's advanced port facilities. This pattern of regional mobility underscores Batam's role as a node within broader maritime networks, demonstrating how sea transportation continues to shape patterns of tourism, commerce, and regional integration in Southeast Asia.

The presence of numerous international sea ports across Batam Island provides a wide range of entry points for visitors, thereby offering flexibility and accessibility to travelers from various regions. These sea ports are not only strategically distributed but also managed with a strong emphasis on delivering high-quality services to all passengers. Port authorities continuously strive to enhance operational efficiency, safety, and passenger experience, ensuring that transit through these maritime gateways is seamless and reliable. In the context of global mobility, the sea acts not as a boundary but as a connector that dissolves traditional borders, facilitating the emergence of transnational social spaces. These spaces are manifested in the overlapping of traditions, cultural practices, and socio-economic exchanges across nations. As argued by Dewi Hartati Celerina, Faturachman, and colleagues (2024), such transnational spaces accommodate four primary groups—namely, transnational business actors, immigrants engaged in the urban service economy, international specialists, and tourists—enabling them to conduct their activities with relative ease and fluidity, unhindered by conventional geographical constraints.

Within this transnational framework, cultural and religious landmarks play an equally significant role in shaping Batam's identity and appeal. Chinese temples, in particular, serve not only as places of worship but also as repositories of collective memory, cultural continuity, and architectural heritage rooted in Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist traditions. These sacred sites are characterized by distinctive structural designs, symbolic motifs, and ceremonial significance, all of which reflect the syncretic spiritual worldview of the Chinese diaspora. In Batam, the presence of several Chinese temples contributes to both the religious life of the local community and the island's attractiveness as a cultural tourism destination. One of the most historically significant temples is

Zhen Wu Miao, also known as Vihara Cipta Dharma, located in the Teluk Tering area. Established in 1819, it stands as the oldest temple in Batam and is considered a vital monument preserving the island's early multicultural interactions. Another prominent temple is Tua Pek Kong, or Vihara Budhi Bhakti, which was officially founded in 1986 by local authorities and occupies a land area of approximately 650 square meters. This temple has gained widespread popularity among international visitors, attracting tourists from countries such as South Korea, India, Singapore, Malaysia, and Japan. The consistent influx of foreign tourists to these temples not only underscores the global resonance of Chinese spiritual heritage but also illustrates how cultural-religious institutions function as pivotal nodes in the larger network of transnational urban spaces.

Visiting Chinese temples in Batam is not merely a religious experience but also a multidimensional activity that fosters social integration and economic interaction, particularly among individuals engaged in trade and commerce. These temples serve as more than just sacred spaces for ritualistic worship; they operate as dynamic social institutions that enable the creation and reinforcement of communal networks. Through their regular religious events and informal gatherings, temples provide a platform where traders, local entrepreneurs, and visiting devotees can interact, exchange information, and build lasting relationships. Functionally, these temples embody multiple layers of significance—they perform religious functions by accommodating daily prayers and rituals; social functions by hosting communal events and festivals; economic functions through their role in attracting religious tourism and supporting surrounding businesses; and cultural functions as they preserve and perpetuate Chinese heritage and traditional practices. Major ceremonies and annual festivals, such as the Chinese New Year, Cap Gomeh, and temple anniversaries, are significant cultural milestones. These events attract large numbers of visitors from both within Indonesia and abroad, thereby transforming the temple sites into vibrant cultural and commercial hubs. As noted by Faturachman et al. (2022), the convergence of religious, social, and economic roles within these sacred spaces exemplifies the interconnectedness of tradition and modernity within diasporic communities.

Within the context of the global Chinese diaspora, ancestor worship holds profound importance in cultivating a deep sense of identity, kinship, and intergenerational continuity. This ritual practice is not only an act of reverence for deceased family members but also a means of anchoring personal and collective identity in a foreign land. The concept of *luodi shenggen*, which translates to "taking root after falling to the ground," reflects the diasporic aspiration to sustain cultural heritage while adapting to new environments. Ancestor worship reinforces bonds within the community, affirms familial lineage, and functions as a symbolic bridge between past and present generations. In Batam, the continued practice of this tradition is visible in temple architecture, altar displays, and ceremonial offerings, all of which reflect the enduring strength of cultural memory. Promoting religious tourism centered around these historic temples—Zhen Wu Miao and Tua Pek Kong—can yield substantial benefits for Batam's broader tourism sector. When supported by adequate infrastructure, including well-maintained sea transportation routes, port security, and visitor-friendly facilities, religious tourism can serve as a strategic driver of local economic development. In particular, enhancing accessibility and safety for international visitors will increase visitation rates and diversify the island's tourist demographic, thus contributing positively to both the preservation of cultural heritage and the stimulation of sustainable tourism growth in Batam. Figure 1 to



Figure 1. Harbour Bay



Figure 2. Batam Center International Ferry Terminal



Figure 3. Zhen Wu Miao



Figure 4. Toapekong Batam

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the numerous international seaports in Batam provide visitors with various options for traveling to Batam Island. The management of these ports strives to offer the best possible service to all passengers. Sea crossings do not impose strict borders, allowing for the creation of transnational social spaces that encompass traditions, cultures, and socio-economic activities. This transnational space benefits four key groups: transnational businesses, immigrants in the urban service economy, specialists, and tourists, by ensuring ease and convenience in conducting their activities without border constraints.

The city of Batam in general, Harbour Bay and Batam Center International Ferry terminal in particular, have internationally standardized infrastructure and facilities, advanced technology, and a strategic location closer to Singapore. These strengths can be optimized to increase the number of passengers served, important starting point for unlocking the true potential of destinations for tourists thereby boosting regional revenue.

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