

Digital transformation of E-Visa on arrival to support the recovery of the tourism sector in Bali province

Barron Ichsan^{1,*}, Yogi Suprayogi Sugandi¹, Widya Setiabudi Sumadinata², Slamet Usman Ismanto¹

¹ Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Padjadjaran University, Bandung 40135, Indonesia

² Department of International Relation, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Padjadjaran University, Bandung 40135, Indonesia

* **Corresponding author:** Barron Ichsan, barron23001@mail.unpad.ac.id

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Abstract: Tourism is one of the important sectors that support Indonesia's economic growth. The tourism sector itself plays a strategic role in increasing the country's foreign exchange. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, tourism became one of the most affected sectors. Electronic visa on arrival (e-VOA) is a form of digital transformation in immigration services offered by the Indonesian government to increase the number of tourist arrivals during the recovery of the national economy, especially in the tourism sector, after the Covid-19 pandemic. This study provides an in-depth insight into how e-VOA functions as a digital transformation tool in the immigration and tourism sectors. By exploring the impact of e-VOA implementation, this article contributes to the understanding of how digitalisation can improve the efficiency of administrative processes and support the recovery of the tourism sector in post-pandemic Bali. This study uses qualitative approaches and methods with descriptive analysis techniques to create an objective description of a situation through numbers or statistical data. The results of this study show that e-VOA services effectively contribute to an increase in the number of foreign tourists in Bali. It also has a positive impact on the economic growth of tourism-related businesses in Bali.

Keywords: digital transformation; e-VOA; immigration service; economic recovery

1. Introduction

Tourism is currently the fastest-growing sector in the global economy and one of the countries strategic foreign exchange-generating sectors. In developing countries, tourism has long been considered an important sector for economic development because of its potential to reduce poverty (Cárdenas-García et al., 2015; Mahadevan, 2016).

Indonesia is a developing country that uses the tourism sector as a frontline instrument to increase its economic growth and foreign exchange earnings. Having experienced shocks due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry is slowly starting to show positive signals in terms of economic recovery. In 2022, the state revenue from the Indonesian tourism sector reached USD4.26 billion. This value jumped 769.39% from 2021 when state revenue from the tourism sector was only USD 0.49 billion BPS RI (2024c).

In this case, the government made several efforts through policy initiatives targeting the recovery of the tourism industry after the pandemic. These efforts include reopening the tourism sector more widely and implementing immigration schemes that make things easier for foreign tourists, one of which is through the visa-on-arrival service. This policy is stated in the Circular Letter of Director General of Immigration No. IMI-0532.GR.01.01 of 2022 concerning Visa on Arrival

Special for Tourism in the Context of Supporting Sustainable Tourism in Bali during the 2019 corona virus disease pandemic. Through this regulation, the visa-on-arrival scheme is seen as a service that can encourage the optimization of the immigration function as a facilitator of community welfare with the concept of sustainable tourism in Bali.

Bali has long been a popular tourist destination for Indonesia. Before the Covid-19 pandemic hit, millions of domestic and foreign tourists visited Bali annually. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit in 2020, the number of tourist visits declined significantly. In fact, in 2021, the number of foreign tourists visiting Bali was only 51, which is due to the government's policy of closing entry to Indonesia as a measure to prevent and mitigate the spread of Covid-19. An increase in visits begin to seen in 2022, which 10.2 million tourists were recorded, consisting of 8.05 million domestic tourists and 2.15 million foreign tourists visiting Bali.

In the same year, the government, through the Directorate General of Immigration, issued the Circular Letter of the Director General of Immigration No. IMI-0764.GR.01.01.2022 concerning Immigration Policy regarding electronic visas on arrival (e-VOA), Visa on Arrival, and Free Visit Visa Services to Support Sustainable Tourism in the Future 2019 corona virus disease pandemic. This regulation instructs the implementation of the electronic visa on arrival (e-VOA) service. Through e-VOA, foreign tourists can apply and pay for a visa on arrival abroad before arriving in Indonesian territory, thereby increasing the flexibility and efficiency of foreign tourists who want to visit Indonesia.

This step resulted from collaboration between the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy at the Directorate General of Immigration, Ministry of Law and Human Rights to support sustainable tourism. The implementation of e-VOA shows the Indonesian government's commitment to supporting and improving the quality of bureaucracy through digitizing services or digital transformation. This form of e-VOA digital transformation can add value to the previously implemented visa-on-arrival service. In this case, the e-VOA scheme is expected to increase the number of foreign tourists to Indonesia and ultimately increase state revenue (Putri, 2023).

In the context of tourism, UNWTO (2020) encourages digital transformation in the tourism sector to create an ecosystem to maximize its potential in terms of economic growth, job creation, and sustainable development. Several studies such as the one conducted by Nanda et al. (2023) have discussed digital transformation in tourism policy more broadly in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Adrian et al. (2023) and Estheria et al. (2022) have examined the impact of digitalisation on visa services in Indonesia. These finding suggest that digital transformation has positive implications for the tourism sector in terms of economic growth (Gutierriz et al., 2023; Pérez et al., 2022). However, in contrast to these previous studies that are more general in discussing tourism digitisation, this study provides a specific focus on the e-VOA policy and its impact in Bali, which is one of the main tourist destinations in Indonesia.

In line with this phenomenon, the topic of digital transformation through e-Visa on Arrival (e-VOA) services is very relevant and interesting, especially in the context of recovering the tourism sector after the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had a huge impact on the global tourism sector, including Bali, which

relies heavily on foreign tourist visits. With e-VOA, Indonesia is not only responding to the need to revive the tourism sector, but also accelerating the adoption of digital technology in public services. This effort is in line with the global trend where digitalisation plays a key role in improving the efficiency, attractiveness, and sustainability of tourism.

The purpose of this research is to examine the effectiveness of e-VOA services as a digital transformation tool that supports tourism recovery in Bali. In addition, this research also tries to dig deeper into the specific impact of e-VOA in the context of post-pandemic economic recovery. The main contribution of this paper to the literature is the emphasis on how digitalisation of immigration services can increase the number of tourist arrivals and, ultimately, restore pandemic-affected economies.

2. Literature review

In an era of rapid transformation caused by technology, organizations are faced with demands for fundamental changes in their business processes (Veglianti, 2023). Digital transformation is seen as an organizational need that can help organizations become more flexible and adaptive entities (Mergel et al., 2018). Public organizations are no exception, public organizations are currently reinterpreting the vision of public values and the public management they carry out, taking into account the potential dimensions of technology (Goodsell, 2006). This presents disruption that brings changes to public organizations around the world and creates many challenges (Decastri et al., 2019).

Digital transformation is a holistic effort to renew core processes and services beyond traditional digitalization efforts that focus on satisfying user needs, renewing services, and expanding the user base (Mergel et al., 2019). According to Ebert and Duarte (2018) the benefits of implementing digital transformation for the economy include increasing income, productivity, added value, and improving the regulatory framework and technical standards. We are currently in the era of digital government (Dunleavy et al., 2005). In public organizations, developments in technology and information encourage the digital transformation process to simplify bureaucracy, increase cooperation, collaboration, and exchange value with society as a whole (Moon and Bretschneider, 2002; Torfing, 2018).

OECD (2009) views digital transformation as a solution to problems relevant to public organizations (public budgeting, inefficiency, etc.). In addition, digital transformation can also lead public organizations to become smarter entities, driving technological advances and innovation that help these entities offer services and operations more efficiently and effectively (Gil-garcia et al., 2016). Digital transformation is one of the main options for public organizations to increase their role as facilitators of public value creation by involving society in community-centered interactions and services (Schedler et al., 2019; Stoker, 2006).

In addition, it is important to understand that the creation of public value is closely related to the creation of e-governance platforms, namely relationships with interdependent actors in collaboration (Osborne et al., 2016). In this case, public organizations can apply information technology to develop digital platforms that enable the value-creation process in the social ecosystem (Osborne, 2018). In

essence, digital technology drives the transformation of public organizations by providing initiatives that improve the quality of life of each individual in an organization and society as a whole (Gil-garcia et al., 2016).

Digital transformation is a concept that has received a lot of attention from various disciplines due to its multidimensional and interesting nature (Haug et al., 2024) Although many governments have not yet achieved their goal of digitalising all public services and administrative processes, there has been an increasing use of new digital technologies that are causing significant changes in public sector organisations (Enang et al., 2022). A key expectation of these efforts is that digitalisation not only brings incremental change, but also transforms government organisations and their interactions with citizens, businesses and external stakeholders (Bannister and Connolly, 2014).

The Digital Transformation model put forward (Haug et al., 2024) is a model resulting from the development of several studies related to Digital Transformation in public services. This model consists of several large variables which are broken down into more detailed aspects. In the Digital Transformation model (Haug et al., 2024) there are large variables such as Drivers, Process Within the Organisation, and Outcomes. Each variable contained in this model has its own substance and context that affects each other. More clearly, the model (Haug et al., 2024) can be seen in **Figure 1**.

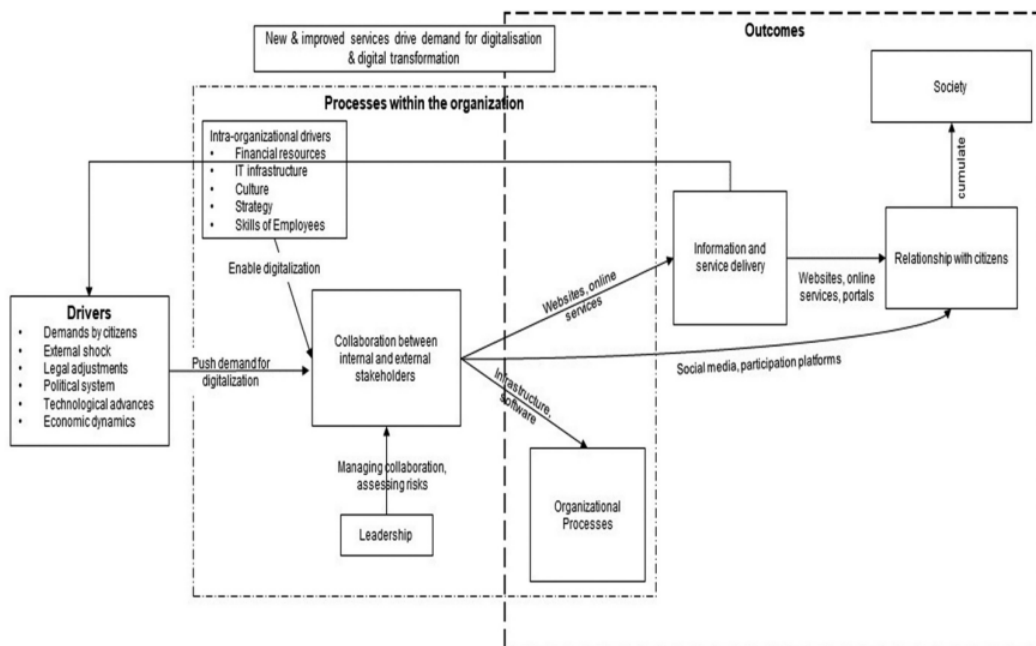


Figure 1. Digital transformation model.

Sources: (Haug et al., 2024).

The model of (Haug et al., 2024) describes the process of digitalisation and digital transformation in public organisations that forms a flow that includes several important elements. First, there are drivers that drive digitalisation and digital transformation including citizen demand, external shocks, legal adjustments, political systems, technological advances, and economic dynamics. Then there is a process within the organisation that starts with the demand for new and improved

services that drives the demand for digitalisation and digital transformation. This process includes several elements, such as intra-organisational drivers that support digitalisation by providing internal resources such as financial resources, IT infrastructure, culture, strategy and employee skills. In this process, collaboration between internal and external stakeholders is also important to drive the demand for digitalisation and includes collaboration management and risk assessment by the organisation's leadership. The outcomes of this process include the delivery of information and services through online services such as websites, social media and participation platforms that enhance interaction with citizens. The use of online services and portals also creates better relationships with citizens, which in turn affects the community as a whole. This process ultimately impacts society as a whole through the accumulation of positive changes brought about by digitalisation and digital transformation.

3. Materials and methods

This research uses a qualitative approach that seeks to provide detailed reports, examine words, provide a complex picture of the data or opinions or views of respondents and then conduct studies on the situation experienced (Creswell, 2010). In this research, this method is used to explain how the achievements and contributions of implementing e-VOA services as a form of digital transformation efforts that can support the optimization of recovery of tourism sector in Bali, especially in terms of increasing the number of foreign tourist visits and economic growth.

The qualitative research analysis model used in this study consists of a series of procedures as described by (Miles et al., 2014). The first step is data collection. The data used is secondary data, including statistical data sourced directly from the Immigration Division of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights Bali Regional Office, and indirect sources collected through government publication reports, scientific articles, and newspaper articles. The data collection intends to facilitate research and analyse properly and correctly so that it can get final conclusions and answers that are able to answer research questions. Data condensation is a process that involves selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming data from various sources. Then data display is an activity to present information from data obtained and compiled, then given content. And finally, conclusion drawing or verification is the closing stage carried out by drawing conclusions and verifying them so that they can be accounted for in a credible manner and the truth is scientifically recognised.

4. Results and discussion

Bali is one of region that experienced the deepest contraction in the tourism sector among other regions. This can be seen from the fluctuations in the number of domestic tourists and foreign tourists coming to Bali from year to year as shown in **Figure 2**. Tourism is the main sector driving the economy of Bali Province. Therefore, when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, Bali became one of the areas most affected by the closure of international borders in various countries in the world,

which resulted in the cessation of foreign tourist visits. Along with reducing the level of the pandemic to endemic and easing restrictions on mobility in and out of the country, the Indonesian government wants to increase tourism to previous levels by attracting foreign visitors back to their country and encouraging local tourism through sustainable tourism.

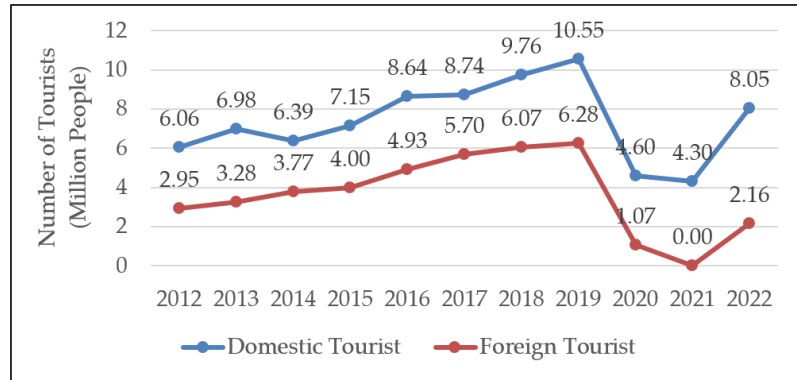


Figure 2. Graph of number of domestic and foreign tourist visits to Bali (2012–2022) (2019–2022).

Sources: BPS RI (2024a, 2024b).

The Directorate General of Immigration has created various policies to provide immigration facilities to support national development, especially in the tourism sector. One of these immigration facilities is the provision of immigration convenience for foreign tourists in the form of a Visa on Arrival (VOA) policy. This policy makes it easier for tourists to obtain immigration services in Indonesia for tourism purposes and other matters by applying policies.

To maximize the function of immigration in supporting the tourism sector and the creative economy, the Directorate General of Immigration consistently evaluates policies related to VOA by adding country subjects to the list adding to the list of Immigration Checkpoint subjects to VOA, to implementing electronic services in the form of electronic Visa on Arrival (e-VOA). E-VOA is seen as an immigration policy that provides convenience for foreign citizens, especially tourists, in matters of immigration bureaucracy. In contrast to conventional VOA services, through e-VOA, international travelers can apply for VOA service fee transactions from their home country, and applications can even be made 90 days before arriving in Indonesia.

Issuance of SE Directorate of Immigration no. IMI-0764.GR.01.01 of 2022 concerning Immigration Policy Regarding Electronic Visa on Arrival (e-VOA), Visit Visa On Arrival (Visa On Arrival), and Free Visit Visa Services To Support Sustainable Tourism During The Pandemic Corona Virus Disease 2019 shows the Directorate General of Immigration’s commitment to utilizing digital technology in visa policy. The essence of this circular is that VOA payments can now be made by payment from abroad before the arrival of foreign nationals in Indonesia so that payments are no longer made manually by going to a bank counter upon arrival in Indonesia, which is also hampered by queues.

Like conventional VOA services, e-VOA is a single entry visa that is only valid for 30 days in Indonesia, which foreigners can use for various purposes such as

tourism, government visits, business meetings, purchasing goods, and meetings. It can also be used for just temporary transit. Based on SE Director General of Immigration No. IMI-0794.GR.01.01 of 2022 concerning Immigration Policy regarding Electronic Visit Visa Services, Visit Visa Services on Arrival, and Free Visit Visas to Support Sustainable Tourism during the Covid-19 Pandemic, e-VOA services are available at 16 airports, 91 seaports, as well as six cross-border immigration checkpoints throughout Indonesia, and also available for foreign national from 86 countries. It is hoped that this scheme can increase the enthusiasm of the world community, especially tourists, to visit Indonesia. Apart from that, it is also hoped that a positive impact on the regional and national economy will arise from the increasing number of foreign tourist visits to Indonesia.

e-VOA is one of the results of digital transformation in the public sector that aims to provide easy access that can improve user experience and satisfaction. The implementation of e-VOA utilises a robust digital infrastructure (Gil-garcia et al., 2016) including visa processing systems, databases, and security protocols. The transformation of e-VOA shows that digital technology can influence operational processes and organisational structures through reducing bureaucracy (Haug et al., 2024). These systems also reduce the need for face-to-face interactions, minimise administrative errors and increase efficiency (Osborne, 2018).

The e-VOA service was implemented to offer flexibility to foreign citizens who wish to visit Indonesia and is expected to be able to increase the number of foreign tourist visits to Indonesia again during the recovery period from the COVID-19 pandemic. e-VOA has changed the visa process paradigm for international travellers. Prior to the implementation of e-VOA, travellers had to go through a time-consuming and bureaucratic visa process, often leading to frustration and travel delays. With e-VOA, visitors can apply and obtain their visas online, reducing waiting times and minimising the risk of rejection upon arrival. This simpler process enhances Bali's appeal as a tourist destination, attracting more visitors to choose the island as their holiday destination.

One of the immediate impacts of e-VOA is the significant increase in the number of tourist visits to Bali. With an easier and faster visa process, Bali is now a more attractive option for international travellers. Data shows that after the implementation of e-VOA, Bali experienced a surge in the number of tourist arrivals, both from traditional markets such as Australia, China, and Europe, as well as new markets. This surge has not only increased hotel occupancy and visits to tourist attractions, but also expanded Bali's influence as a global destination.

Based on data from the Immigration Division of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights Bali Regional Office, since it was implemented from November 5, 2022, the e-VOA service has been used by 782,011 foreign nationals to visit Bali. In the same period, the number of foreign tourists visiting Bali was 4,183,581. This figure has increased quite significantly. In November 2022, there are 287,398 foreign tourists visits to Bali. This figure increased and reached 522,141 in August 2023. In that period, e-VOA services contributed 18.7% of the total number of foreign tourist visits to Bali. As seen in **Figure 3**, this achievement indicates that the e-VOA service is quite effective in encouraging the number of foreign tourist visits to Bali.

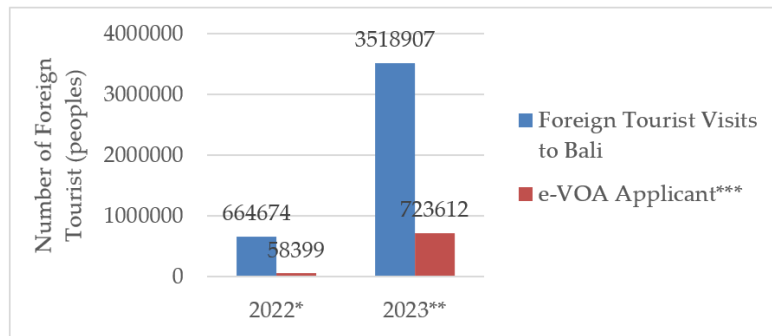


Figure 3. Graph of number of foreigners visiting Bali with E-VOA (2022–2023).

Sources: Immigration Division of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights Bali Regional Office.

* November-December 2022;

** Januari-September 2023;

*** e-VOA will be implemented from 5 November 2022.

The increase in the number of tourists certainly has positive implications for the Gross Regional Domestic Revenue (GRDP) of Bali Province. The tourism sector, as one of the main contributors to Bali’s GRDP, gets a huge boost from higher visitation flows. With more tourists coming, there is an increase in the consumption of goods and services, including accommodation, restaurants, transportation, and shopping. In addition, this growth in the tourism sector also creates more jobs and supports various related industries, from tour guides to local crafts. In **Figure 4**, it can be seen that data from Bank Indonesia shows a positive and strong growth of Bali’s Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) in businesses that support the tourism sector, namely food and beverage accommodation, trade, and transportation.

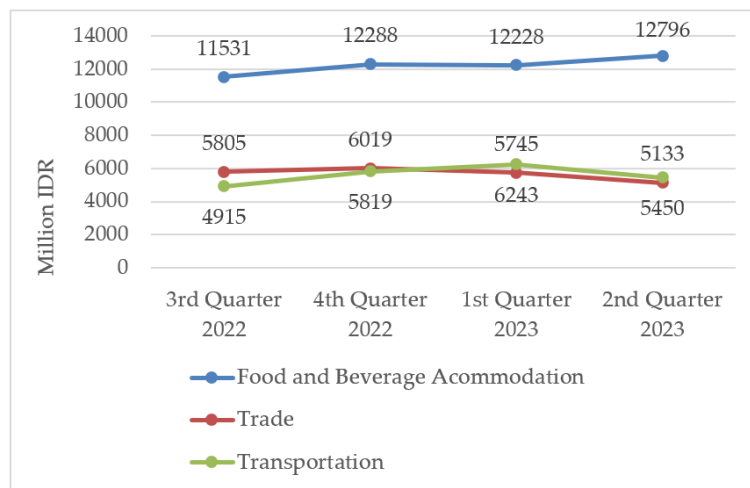


Figure 4. Bali gross regional domestic product based on tourism-related business fields (3rd Quarter 2022–2nd Quarter 2023).

Sources: BI (2023).

From an economic perspective, the increasing number of tourist visits is the main support for the recovery of the tourism sector in Bali. In 2022, Bali’s economy will begin to show recovery and strengthening. The acceleration of Bali’s economy is in line with the increase in tourism visits amidst the relaxation of policies restricting community activities and the level of spread of COVID-19 cases, which is increasingly under control. In general, Bali’s economic growth continues to be

supported by the growth of tourism-related business fields, namely accommodation and food and drink business fields, transportation business fields, and trade business fields) which continue to consistently record positive and strong growth.

In the third quarter of 2022, the performance of the food and drink accommodation business sector increased significantly compared to the previous quarter. The performance of the food and drink accommodation business grew 25.69% (yoy) in the third quarter of 2022, an increase compared to the previous quarter, which grew by 9.36% (yoy). This increase was driven by increased domestic and foreign tourist visits amidst the continued relaxation of domestic and international travel requirements.

The performance of the trading business field was also recorded to have increased compared to the previous quarter. The performance of the trading business field grew by 8.20% (yoy) in the third quarter of 2022, higher than the previous quarter, which grew by 3.29% (yoy). This increase is in line with the increase in demand for goods and services due to the intensity of tourism activities.

Apart from that, the performance of the transportation business field also experienced a significant increase compared to the previous quarter. In line with the continued easing of requirements, the performance of the transportation business sector in the third quarter of 2022 grew by 35.37% (yoy), much higher than the growth in the previous quarter of 11.14% (yoy). The increase in the performance of the transportation business field is in line with the increase in foreign tourist visits amidst the increase in the number of international direct flight airlines and flight frequencies.

Now, in the second quarter of 2023, the performance of tourism-related business fields in Bali's GRDP still grows high and shows consistency. In the second quarter of 2023, the performance of the food and drink accommodation business sector grew 16.12% (yoy) in the second quarter of 2023. In line with the food and drink accommodation business, the trading business field also continued to record positive performance. The performance of the trading business field in the second quarter of 2023 grew by 3.37% (yoy). The performance of the transportation business field also continues to grow at high levels. Throughout the second quarter of 2023, the performance of the transportation business field was quite impressive, showing a growth of 26.95% (yoy). The increase in the performance of tourism-related business fields was mainly driven by improving tourism activities amidst increasing visits from foreign tourists visiting Bali.

The performance of tourism-related businesses, including food and drink accommodation, trade, and transportation, is predicted to continue to be the main pillar of Bali's economic growth in 2023. This is driven by increased activity by foreign tourists, both visiting for recreational purposes and business purposes. BI (2023) estimates that in 2023, the transportation and the food and beverage accommodation business sectors will continue their significant growth trend, especially in line with the projected increase in the number of foreign tourist visits.

These achievements show that the level of foreign tourist arrivals is one of the key factors in economic growth in the tourism sector in Bali. This is what the Indonesian government continues to try to encourage, one of which is through the implementation of e-VOA services. However, to achieve optimal utilization to

increase the number of foreign tourist visits, one of the important things that can be done is to increase socialization to the global community regarding the e-VOA services offered, especially as e-VOA is a relatively new service offered by the Indonesian government. This can be done through promotional schemes for various communication channels, media, and government information and through coordination with embassies in countries included in the e-VOA application criteria.

5. Conclusion

Tourism is one of the sectors hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. This also made Bali, an area dependent on tourism activities, feel a significant impact during the pandemic. Currently, at the same time as the intensity of COVID-19 cases is decreasing, the Indonesian government is seeking economic recovery measures, one of which is through immigration policies to encourage national tourism to revive. E-VOA is a form of digital transformation of immigration services that is expected to attract and increase foreign tourist visits to Indonesia and impact the economic recovery of the tourism sector. In Bali, e-VOA services have effectively contributed to increasing the number of foreign tourist visits.

One of the main contributions of this research is its focus on the role of e-VOA in supporting the recovery of the tourism sector that drives Bali's economic growth after the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This research shows how the e-VOA policy helped increase the number of international tourist visits, which had a direct impact on the tourism sector and the local economy. It provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of digital policies in the context of economic recovery. From an economic perspective, the increase in the number of foreign tourists visits also has an impact on economic growth in tourism-related business fields in Bali, including the food and drink accommodation business field, the trade business field, and the transportation business field.

This study only covers the period after the implementation of e-VOA started in November 2022 until August 2023. This relatively short time span may not reflect the long-term impact of e-VOA on tourist arrivals and Bali's economy. Further evaluation with longer data is needed to understand the impact of e-VOA in the long term.

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