

# THE ART OF SURVIVING THE TRAVEL BUSINESS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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**Article history:** received 12 August 2022; revised 16 September 2022; accepted 12 October 2022

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33751/jhss.v6i3.6497>

**Abstract.** The COVID 19 pandemic has paralyzed all economic sectors, especially the tourism and travel business. Because this sector has close contact with humans and is completely contrary to government regulations during this pandemic. Therefore, companies need to issue management policies and strategies to maintain the continuity of this business. These policies and strategies include human resource management strategies, financial management, operational management, and business product innovation. This research was conducted on five tour and travel businesses in the city of Bandung. This research uses descriptive qualitative method. After researching, on average these five travelers implement new strategies, habits and innovations in their companies. Apart from that, it also discusses the marketing of the tour and travel business during the pandemic as well as in the future. The results of this study are that the five tour and travel businesses during this pandemic must continue to operate by implementing business strategies, marketing and also innovating with new types of tourism that have never been tried before, to make business turnover that is not in line with their companies.

**Keywords:** covid-19 pandemic; management strategy; tour and travel

## I. INTRODUCTION

All humans panic about the COVID-19 virus (coronavirus disease 19) that comes suddenly. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 pandemic since 11 March 2020. All countries, including Indonesia, are anticipating that the virus will not spread by taking various precautions. There are many efforts to prevent and suppress the spread of the virus, including controlling the transmission and spread of the COVID-19 virus, such as wearing masks, washing hands with soap, maintaining distance and avoiding crowds (Raditya [1]). The government also did not remain silent and responded to this by carrying out policies such as PSBB (Large-Scale Social Restrictions) since April 10 2020 to break the chain of spread of COVID-19 in several regions of Indonesia. The rules regarding PSBB are contained in Government Regulation Number 21 of 2020, namely regarding PSBB in the Context of Accelerating the Handling of COVID-19 which refers to Law Number 6 of 2018 concerning Health Quarantine (CNN Indonesia [2]). After the PSBB, the government issued a new policy namely the Implementation of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM) as stated in Ministerial Instruction Number 1 of 2021 by the Minister of Home Affairs and provided socialization of the stay at home or work from home policy during the COVID-19 pandemic (Setyawan [3]). The existence of these policies and regulations greatly affect all sectors. Not only the health sector, the economic sector was totally paralyzed as well as the tourism industry sector.

Tourism is a human activity that travels with the aim of having fun and even doing business (Sucipto & Nurohman [4]). The economic aspect in the tourism business unit greatly influences various sectors ranging from small, medium to

large scale because the tourism business influences each other (Wirateja [5]). Before the pandemic, the tourism sector was a very promising business and a contributor to the country's foreign exchange. Even this sector can boost the economy because it absorbs a lot of labor. In fact, according to UNWTO [6], the implementation of tourism travel has increased significantly from 2009 to 2019. So that the travel business, especially related to tourism, has become one of the most popular businesses and is included in the top 10 promising businesses in the world (Widhartana [7]). The survey results show how seriously tourism-related businesses have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with 87.62% of respondents reporting that the virus had a significant or fatal impact on their operations. The impact of the self-assessment is greater for small businesses that have had to delay restarts and lay off employees. The delay in reopening was also affected by staffing issues and the seriousness of the regional pandemic, but the decision to lay off was mainly due to financial conditions (Bhaskara & Filimonau [8]).

Most of the tourism businesses in the surveyed case studies have suffered badly from the pandemic, and some tourism-related businesses were able to recover from the first wave of infections. Unfortunately, the tourism sector has been found to be on the verge of bankruptcy or facing permanent closure after the third wave. In general, all tourism businesses appear to be experiencing visitor numbers, tourism revenue, facility and service occupancy, and staff reductions, but the degree of decline depends on the businesses surveyed. Within the tourism business, travel agencies and the accommodation sector were found to suffer the greatest financial losses compared to other stakeholders (Huynh [9]).

In research conducted in Thailand, it shows that brand strength and management are the right strategy in helping tourism businesses survive during a crisis, in this case the COVID-19 pandemic, in which there are values that must be considered in maintaining business, such as trust, Solid and honest relationships between business partners who work together play an important role in the survival of a tourism business (Pongsakornrungsilp [10]). Going deeper, in the same research conducted in Thailand, business strategies for surviving the pandemic, namely, accelerated business adaptation during COVID 19, such as implementing online business channels, utilizing online channels allows businesses to continue without contact with customers, as was feared in pandemic period. Furthermore, there are 7 types of business adaptation which are strategies for survival, namely temporarily closing the business, providing price discounts, using different marketing channels than before, changing business operational hours, reducing the number of employees, reducing the products offered and also relocating the business (Fuchs [11]).

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative type using descriptive method. The descriptive method was chosen because the research carried out aims to clearly describe the object being studied naturally (Solemede et al. [12]). This research discusses how art is in maintaining the tour and travel business during the COVID-19 pandemic, which aims to find out how tour and travel business owners make strategies, analyze business conditions so that they can continue to survive under the pressure of the crisis that has hit. There are 5 samples in this study, all of whom are tour and travel business owners located in the city of Bandung. The owners were chosen because the owners will determine how the business continues in detail, including the marketing aspects which will be explored more deeply in this research.

The data collection method used was through in-depth interviews, interviews were conducted face-to-face with the samples who were resource persons in this study. First, the question is within the scope of the interviewees to tell the conditions of the COVID 19 Pandemic which has an impact on their business, how do the interviewees view this pandemic from the perspective of the survival of their business, because it is undeniable that the tourism industry has been badly affected, but a natural answer is expected in this question, to get a real picture of their condition. Second, the questions go into the main topic, how do they maintain their business, what has been done, and how are the results, deeper on the topic of the third question, the interviewees are presented with questions about the marketing strategy carried out in their business, because this also concerns how they looking at the future of their business when the pandemic has subsided.

The first data analysis carried out was interpreting the interview results into written form, to be analyzed and grouped into several topics of discussion (3 topics of discussion) where the results were presented in the discussion chapter as a whole, presenting the interview results as they

were without adding or subtracting answers from the participants. source person.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Strategies Implemented by the Tour and Travel Business in Surviving*

The Covid – 19 pandemic has paralyzed all businesses in the tourism industry including tour and travel. This is because this business is related (close contact) with humans. For this reason, several strategies are needed to maintain the continuity of this business based on the results of interviews with several tour and travel owners.

#### 1. Human Resource Management

According to Terry (1978) in Abbas [13] the term management dimensions are reaffirmed in accordance with management functions. Thus it can be said that the POAC theory which consists of Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling is a theory used by the management of a company in managing and carrying out a goal by utilizing Human Resources (HR) and other facilities as efficiently and effectively as possible.

##### a. Planning (planning)

The planning that was carried out by the FA, DH and R in the process of managing employees during the Covid-19 pandemic situation was to limit employees from working in the office. In addition to efficiency, health and safety among employees is of utmost priority during this pandemic. Meanwhile, the owner of HJ tour and travel laid off all of his employees. But when additional employees are needed, he recruits tour leaders or freelance photographers. That way, operational expenses can be reduced. For A tour and travel, they still optimize existing human resources, employees only work a few times a week, except in certain circumstances such as work projects or ordering tour packages.

##### b. Organizing

Structuring is the process of managing a team or division, managing work schedules, and the process of grouping individuals according to their abilities. In terms of arrangement, the owners, be it FA, DH, HJ, A and R, maximize existing employees to keep managing their place of business. Like doing General Cleaning of the office, and ensuring cleanliness is maintained. Plus spraying disinfectants regularly and providing hand sanitizers. Based on the results of the current interview they are focusing on the security and safety of staff and guests.

##### c. Actuating (implementation)

Execution is the process of implementing plans into action with the aim of achieving success in all forms of initial planning. In the implementation process, all tours and travel encountered in the field are almost the same, namely by implementing strict health protocols such as using masks, using hand sanitizers, and checking the temperature of all participants and tour and travel staff involved in travel or tourism activities.

##### d. Controlling (Supervision)

Controlling is an action taken to ensure business workflow runs smoothly. Control is carried out to find out

whether all types of planning and implementation that have been carried out are going well or not [14]. Based on data obtained in the field, all types of processes in carrying out work from tour and travel are in accordance with government policy regulations during the Covid-19 Pandemic situation.

## 2. Business Financial Management

Doing good financial management in companies, especially services such as tours and travel is very important because it will also get good results. In addition, this will foster a sense of trust in consumers who have used tour and travel services and potential customers who have not used their services. Based on the information we found in the field on tour and travel business actors during the pandemic, the owner had a lot of time to evaluate the company by improving all internal aspects of the company such as management and administration, cash flow, products and services. The following is an excerpt from an interview from FA regarding financial management at his company during a pandemic:

"I'm trying to improve financial management at the company, because to be honest, my income is almost a deficit. Immediately separate personal finances from the company. During the pandemic, to cover my company's operational costs, I used emergency funds or company savings, which fortunately were still enough to pay for building rent and pay for electricity for the next year"

In contrast to HJ, his business did not continue to rent the building for the office but instead moved to his parents' house to reduce operational costs which were very high because there was no income at all at the start of the pandemic. However, they still have to incur additional costs to buy equipment to support health protocols such as alcohol, hand sanitizers and masks. This is also applied by the owner of DH and R. As for A, he said:

"This pandemic has made us think and learn about risk management. We should not be lulled by the benefits obtained at that time. We must be good at managing finances. Therefore, rather than just running out of company money for operations, it is better when there is an opportunity to put the money to the best use. For example for our company, the company's savings are bought for capital to buy used cars and then resell them."

## 3. Business Operations Management

In terms of business operational management, almost the five tour and travel owners we met did the following:

a) Renting private vehicles to customers, usually to guests who have used tour and travel services. The vehicle driver is a staff or employee of the tour and travel company itself. That way, staff also earn extra money as drivers. The unit price for rent varies from Rp. 500,000, the vehicle includes fuel (gasoline) costs and driver fees. The available cars are minibuses such as Avanza and Innova. But if guests want another type of car, we are ready to provide it, of course, according to the budget.

b) Selling hotel room tickets, ranging from three-star hotels to five-star hotels according to the budget of the customer.

Actually, this is usually done by companies engaged in tour and travel.

## Business Product Innovation

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on tourism and the industry in it. One of them is the travel business because it deals directly with humans. However, every company definitely wants to be successful and survive in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. For that we need innovation in business. Of course, in this innovation and creativity, strong motivation and creativity are needed so that all changes that are created can be carried out easily. This motivation can be obtained from ourselves and those closest to us who have the most influence on ourselves and the creativity we get by how we make an idea to solve existing problems (Saleh, [15]). The following are innovations made by one of the tour and travel companies to maintain the travel business in the midst of a pandemic:

### 1. One Day Trip Outdoor and Historical Tourism

Doing a one day trip with the theme "Explore South Bandung. This tour program guests use Jeep vehicles for offroading to the South Bandung area, especially Ciwidey and visiting the White Crater Tourism Object, ending with Fun Games accompanied by certified professional instructors. This program is exclusive because guests are limited to only 10 people with two cars. In addition, there is also a Bandung City Tour program using a VW safari vehicle. Here, participants are limited to 4 people. The program provided is heritage tourism by visiting Dutch colonial heritage buildings in the city of Bandung such as Villa Isola, Gedung Sate, Gedung Merdeka, Savoy Homann Bidakara Hotel, Landmark Building, Indonesian Postal Museum to Bandung 5 Public High School. The trip ends by visiting the legendary restaurant Braga Permai which is very thick with the feel of the land of windmills.

"This pandemic has had a positive impact on generating new business ideas and ideas. During this pandemic, we must have the courage to change the segment that was used to group or mass tourism into tour packages that are more concerned with privacy or family. Because back again at this time the customer wants to travel not because of mere recreational desires but wants security and comfort during a pandemic. Do not forget that during this pandemic, we always implement and remind guests to maintain health protocols such as washing hands with running water, using hand sanitizers, maintaining distance and avoiding crowds in accordance with government recommendations. (FA, Owners).

HJ did almost the same thing as FA, namely heritage tourism by visiting historical buildings in the city of Bandung. The difference is, HJ is done by walking tour alias on foot. This means that these tourism activities are carried out in a more relaxed manner while exercising and campaigning for healthier tourism during a warm pandemic with health issues.

### 2. Tours for Children with Autism

Working on a special tourism program for children with autism disorders. This was initiated by one of the tour and travel owners owned by those who have children with

autism disorders. Almost once a week she does outdoor activities that are comfortable for her daughter. Then he started trying to organize himself, surveying the location and time until he dared to market the tourism program.

"To be honest, at the start of the pandemic we were shocked, because the day before we had just taken a tour to Pangandaran Beach. After the lockdown all tour travel agendas were cancelled. Automatically there is no income, the office also has large operational costs. But after conferring with our friends, we couldn't sit idly by because the family needed to eat. Finally, with strong determination, we dared to try new things (innovations) such as doing one day trips for limited guests, one day trips specifically for children with autism, as well as entrepreneurship such as buying and selling used cars. (A, Founders)

The location chosen is adjusted to the needs of children with autism, the majority of whom like the outdoors. This is what is interesting during this pandemic because the government's calls for social distancing (social restrictions) such as reducing social contact and avoiding crowded places from the government are so embedded in people's minds. Traveling here was really created to help parents or schools find suitable travel programs according to their children so that parents or companions feel happy when traveling with their children. Why special tours? Because this tour is not a mass tour, guest capacity is limited for the convenience of children at different prices, of course. And don't forget that health protocols are very concerned about this tourism activity. Types of tourism include one day hiking or trekking tours to the hills, rice fields and plantations, agro-tourism activities by planting plants or feeding tame animals and camping.

### 3. Taking Opportunities in the Automotive Business

Doing other businesses in the automotive sector, namely buying and selling cars. For the business of buying and selling cars, using office cash with the aim of efficiency in the use of funds owned with the hope of getting a profit from the sales activity, which must be repaired first so that the selling price is higher. Due to the pandemic, doing other types of business can actually help the company's finances to pay for operational costs.

"By venturing into other businesses outside of travel is one way to cover operational costs, moreover than unused cash that will run out with unpredictable and seemingly unnecessary expenses, therefore it is better that the money is used for business. buying and selling cars with the hope that these buying and selling activities can generate profits and help our travel business."

Tour and Travel Business Marketing during the Pandemic During the pandemic, tour and travel companies experienced difficulties marketing directly to large companies or schools. Direct marketing is direct communication for specific individuals with the intention of seeking a response or commonly called door to door on a small scale. By providing direct information to parents who have children with autism, one of them is through the What'sApp group. In

addition, it also provides direct information to consumers who have used the services of tour and travel.

During this pandemic, people are mostly staying at home. Therefore, they prefer media that are easily and quickly accessed to obtain information. In fact, nowadays almost all people or people who live in the digital era seem to have tools or technology used to access information such as smartphones, or the like (Anggoro [16]). Therefore, some of the tour and travel business owners interviewed conduct marketing through online media, namely portals, the web (including blogs and social media such as Youtube, Instagram and Facebook).

### *Tour and Travel Business Marketing in the Future*

According to the FA, a very important strategy at this time is to build trust in consumers. Utilizing good relations with consumers who have used tour and travel services or potential customers. HJ wants that after the Covid-19 outbreak subsides, the owner will return to marketing services as before before the pandemic, such as sales calls to companies that have used services from HJ as well as companies or schools that are the next targets. Almost the same as HJ, DH and A will also return to marketing their business before the pandemic coupled with today's digital technology by selling tour packages in existing market places such as Tokopedia and Shopee. This is different from R, the owner will continue to use marketing through online media for fear that the pandemic outbreak will still exist, but will be added by selling tour packages on market places such as Tokopedia and Shopee.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The tour and travel business in the city of Bandung has experienced quite a heavy impact, such as a decrease in income to the termination of employee relations during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, they have to rack their brains to keep the wheels of the economy running. This is what makes them creative by improving Business Human Resource Management, Business Financial Management, Business Operations Management and issuing product innovations. As was done by the five travel service business owners studied, namely FA, HJ, DH, A and R as resource persons from this study. In terms of Human Resource Management, it is analyzed using the Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling approach. For business financial management, tour and travel business actors during a pandemic, the owner has a lot of time to evaluate the company by improving all internal aspects of the company such as management and administration, cash flow, products and services. In terms of business operational management, almost the five tour and travel owners they met rented private vehicles to customers, usually to guests who had used the services of tour and travel and also sold hotel room tickets (vouchers). Innovate by issuing several new tourism programs adapted to pandemic conditions to attract potential customers such as one day tours in the open with limited participants by riding a Jeep, heritage tours by riding a Volks Wagen car, renting private vehicles to

customers, selling hotel room tickets, buying and selling cars and working on special tourism programs for children with autism disorders. In terms of business marketing, it is certainly different during this pandemic. They carry out marketing through online media, namely portals, the web (including blogs and social media such as Youtube, Instagram and Facebook). But for the future they will return to pre-pandemic marketing with sales calls plus marketing with market places such as Tokopedia and Shopee.

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