

HARD RESET: IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON BALI'S HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INDUSTRY FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 pandemic has had immensely adverse implications on Bali's hospitality and tourism industry. This paper investigates and summarizes findings from select articles and publications on studies, reports, and outlooks regarding the implications of pandemic on the hospitality and tourism sector in Bali, from the perspectives of three domains of management studies: finance, human resources, and marketing. The author found that in terms of financial management, many hospitality and tourism had to engage in various crisis management and survival strategies. In terms of human resource management, both companies and workers have been adversely impacted. Meanwhile, the marketing efforts have largely focused on the domestic markets throughout 2020-2021. In brief, Bali's tourism and hospitality industry have had to adopt a survival mode, with a focus towards short-term demands and immediate implications. Meanwhile, a focus on long-term solutions that sees this pandemic as an opportunity for hard reset have been noticeably lacking.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, hospitality, tourism, financial management, human resource management, marketing management

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 pandemic has had an immensely adverse impact on the world's tourism industry. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2021) estimated that the pandemic could cause a global GDP contraction of more than US\$ 4 billion for 2020 and 2021. This is in line with a study by Škare et al. (2021), using dynamic model using an annual data set from 1995 to 2019, forecasting a -2.93% to -7.82% decrease in total GDP contribution from the tourism industry, with a further 2.44% to 6.55% job loss due to the pandemic. The worldwide implications of Covid-19 pandemic have been felt in Indonesia, which has experienced nearly 1.58 million job lost in the hospitality and tourism sector throughout 2020 and 2021, with international arrivals decreasing 75% in 2020 (year-on-year) and a further 89% in 2021 (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif, 2021a).

Many have called the Covid-19 pandemic as "the great equalizer" (Kantamneni, 2020; Magnani, 2020). Yet arguably, it has resulted in even greater inequality because different countries, regions, and industries are impacted differently. For the hospitality and tourism industry, "hard reset" is perhaps a more suitable term (Harvey, 2021), especially for regions that are tourism-dependent. The

pandemic has had deeper impacts and more long-term implications for tourist destinations, such as Bali. As such, the management responses from all stakeholders involved, including the so-called penta-helix of tourism (Budhi et al., 2022), should be explored and studied as at different reference points—in order to gauge past actions, paint a picture of the current state, and determine future outlooks and directions.

Pandemic especially hit the island of Bali immensely, as the island is heavily dependent on the hospitality and tourism industry. Due to the closing of direct international flights to Bali's Ngurah Rai International Airport for the majority of Q2 2020 to Q4 2021, the number of international arrivals to Bali decreased from 6.3 million passengers in 2019 to 1.1 million in 2020 (the majority of which was in Q1), to a meager 51 passengers in 2021 (BPS Provinsi Bali, 2022). In 2020, Bali's economy contracted almost 9.31 percent, while in 2021 the decline was around 2.47% (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif, 2021a).

The impacts and implications of Covid-19 pandemic in Bali have justifiably received great attention from academic scholars, including in the fields of management studies. Various studies have been published since the declaration of the pandemic in March 2020. This paper investigates and summarizes findings from select articles and publications on studies, reports, and outlooks regarding the implications of pandemic on the hospitality and tourism in Bali. It aims to do so from the lenses of three domains of management studies, i.e., financial management, human resource management, and marketing management.

METHODS

This paper is based on secondary research, presenting a descriptive review of literature on the implications of Covid-19 pandemic on Bali's hospitality and tourism industry, from the perspectives of management studies. Literature review is an important feature of an academic project, as it could serve as a strong foundation on which to develop knowledge, facilitate theory development, determine research themes and directions, and discover areas in which research gaps are still present (Palmatier et al., 2018; Webster & Watson, 2002). In this case, the review of literature is done by looking at the immediate past (i.e., through published research and reports) to help gauge and guide for the future. To conduct the review for this paper, the author first gathered select publications (i.e., in the forms of research articles, conference proceedings, published monographs and reference books, and policy briefs) related to the topic. The publications were accessed through online databases of scholarly articles (e.g., Google Scholar, e-Perpusnas), and only articles with open access were selected. The articles and reports gathered for the purpose of writing this paper largely derived from primary research, and were published in either Bahasa Indonesia and English. The author narrowed down the search results to works published between April 2020 (i.e., immediately following the state of pandemic declaration) to May 2022 (i.e., at the time of writing), using search keywords including "Covid-19 pandemic", "Bali tourism", "Bali hospitality", "management", "marketing", "finance", "human resource" (and their equivalence in Bahasa Indonesia). Then, the articles and reports were categorized into three domains of management studies: finance, human resource, and marketing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As this paper employed a secondary research approach, the author presents the results and discussions in thematic domains—rather than as two separate sections of “results” for presenting the findings, followed by “discussion” for presenting the interpretations. The three thematic domains are based on three domains of management studies, i.e., finance, human resource, and marketing. Even though there are other domains in the studies of management (e.g., supply chain and strategic management), the author chose to focus on the three “traditional” domains in the study of management. In this paper, the hospitality and tourism industry played the role of the study context—as opposed to separate domains of study. This consideration was taken particularly to narrow down and focus the paper in terms of the hospitality and tourism industry in Bali, and the adverse impacts that Covid-19 pandemic has had.

Financial Management Perspective

The financial implications of Covid-19 pandemic on Indonesia's hospitality and tourism sector are well established. In a study on the financial performance of 30 companies in the sub-sector of hotel, restaurant and tourism listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange, Esomar & Christianty (2021) found that debt to equity (D/E) ratio increased from an average of 93.4% prior to the pandemic (2019) to 125.1% after the pandemic (2020), indicating increased burden of liabilities as well as increased risks, while return on equity (ROE) decreased from an average of 10.6% prior to the pandemic (2019) to -19.1% after the pandemic (2020), indicating significant decline in the companies' ability to generate profit using their own shareholders' equity—most likely due to losses throughout 2020. A separate study also indicated that debt to equity (D/E) ratio for Indonesia's publicly listed companies in the hotel, restaurant and tourism sub-sector increased, while return on equity (ROE) decreased as an impact of Covid-19 pandemic—even though current ratio (CR) and price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio did not experience significant changes (Amalia et al., 2021).

Particularly for the tourist island of Bali, the pandemic has caused considerable financial distress to the hospitality industry. The average room occupancy rate of star hotels in the island decreased from 59.6% in 2019 (prior to the pandemic) to 28.7% in 2020, and further to only 13.0% in 2021 (BPS Provinsi Bali, 2022). In terms of Bali's financial outlook, Yoga and Yudiarta (2021) utilized Even Grey Forecasting (EGM) in estimating a loss of at least US\$ \$7.3 billion for the island's economy due to Covid-19 pandemic—suggesting that the severe impacts of Covid-19 would take some time for recovery, which could be intensified as the efforts to fight the pandemic is prolonged. The pandemic also disrupted an ongoing trend of increasing revenue per tourist, which had been increasing since 2017 until 2019, then experienced a sharp decline in 2020 and 2021.

Although the hospitality and tourism industry is not the only industry in Bali adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, it is one of the most severely hit. A survey on 594 companies and organizations across various industries and sectors in Bali (except the government sector) found only 59.3% of companies surveyed in the hotel and restaurant sectors operated as usual (i.e., never experienced any periods of closure) throughout 2020 and 2021, while 26.7% companies surveyed in the same sectors had to close at some point in 2020-2021 and was subsequently reopened in 2021 (BPS Provinsi

Bali, 2021). In a study involving eight star hotels in the city of Denpasar, Wedaningsih et al. (2021) found that hotels had to lay off anywhere between 8 to 62% of its employees due to the pandemic – with the highest average layoff occurring in the three-star hotel category (32%).

Many hotel companies had to take extreme measures and engage in crisis management to adjust to the financial situation. In a study on one five-star hotel in Nusa Dua, the company had to lay off employees either on a temporary or permanent basis, limit the use of hotel facilities, adjust spending to be more efficient, and adjust the booking refund policies (Manek, 2021). In another study, Puspita et al. (2021) found that another five-star hotel in Nusa Dua employed cost leadership strategy by reducing operating cost and managing finances more efficiently, while maintaining cash flow in order to balance income against liabilities and obligations. Meanwhile, a study by Saputra et al. (2022) found that crisis management strategies to deal with current difficulties differ across different financial health statuses of hotels in Bali: (a) companies considered to be healthy implemented defensive strategy focusing on budget efficiency and product innovation, (b) struggling companies applied adaptive strategy focusing on asset management, among other things, and (c) companies considered to be unhealthy applied dynamic strategy, including but not limited to closing operations and laying off employees.

To counter the adverse impacts of Covid-19 pandemic, several hotels employed the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) of market penetration by optimizing IT-based promotional campaigns by offering accommodation packages at special prices, while organizing culinary events or festivals for the general public and engaging in market development by selling day packages for locals and non in-house guests (e.g., day stay, swimming, brunch, afternoon teas, and spa packages), coupled with conducting horizontal integration by providing rewards or bonuses for high-performing travel agents (Wedaningsih et al., 2021). One case study of a four-star hotel in Kuta noted the use of six phases of strategic recovery plan, consisting of: (a) conducting market research and business strategy – despite the complexity of predicting market behavior during uncertain times, (b) setting top priorities based on must-haves and must-dos, (c) compiling strategic findings to prepare detailed actions once an opportunity is presented, (d) setting milestone with clearly stated goals, (e) creating market segment projection, and (f) developing a work plan in the form of control table (Putra, 2021). Some hospitality and tourism-related companies also implemented defensive survival strategy by tapping into their financial reserves to stay afloat as long as they could, as well as by applying for government grants, subsidies and tax incentives provided in 2020 and 2021 (Suryaningsih & Suryawardani, 2021).

Human Resource Management Perspective

The repercussions of Covid-19 pandemic are felt not only by the companies operating in the hospitality and tourism sector, but also by the workers in the sector – both ones who are directly employed in the primary sector like in hotels and travel companies, as well as ones indirectly in other sub-sectors supporting hospitality and tourism. The Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy noted that 80% of hospitality and tourism workers are employed in the fields of commerce or food and

beverage service supporting tourism – at least 409,000 of whom lost their jobs and 939,000 were laid off in 2020 alone (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif, 2021a). Meanwhile, more than 12,9 million workers had their work hours reduced due to the pandemic.

Many companies in Bali's hospitality and tourism sector also had to reduce the number of hours for their workers, foregoing several benefits (e.g., service charges) for their employees, even reducing workers' pay, or in some cases putting employees on furlough or laying off workers with unpaid leave (Suryaningsih & Suryawardani, 2021). One study noted that some companies had to resort to terminating a great number of contract employees and offering early retirement for long-time permanent employees, while adjusting work schedules and number of personnel per shift (Puspita et al., 2021). Some companies had to run with bare bones operation, attempting to optimum level of service with the minimum number of staff possible. Some companies offered online and offline training sessions either for new sets of skills or refresher training, which aimed to support and improve employee productivity during the pandemic (Dewi et al., 2021).

In terms of organizational responses related to human resource development and organizational behavior, Bhaskara & Filimonau (2021) noted that organizational learning in terms of disaster management and preparedness remain lacking, as individuals and organizations in Bali have been primarily concerned with short-term revenue generation instead of long-term disaster preparedness and recovery (i.e., "single-loop learning"). Nevertheless, organizational and individual resilience was well-documented by several studies (Bhaskara & Filimonau, 2021; Suryaningsih & Suryawardani, 2021). All the challenges, related to both financial or organizational situations during the pandemic, also have had consequences for organizational leadership. Irawanto et al., (2021) found that demand reconciliation (i.e., reconciling demand forecasts with the conditions at hand), and tolerance for uncertainty, were some of the most important aspects considered by leaders in Bali's tourism and hospitality sector. Leaders have had to adjust very quickly to rapid development in terms of travel restrictions, public access, hours of operations, as well as health-related protocols and procedures. In addition, leaders must show their support to the employees who need leadership support to remain loyal to their organization in the pandemic-induced economic slowdown (Aristana et al., 2021).

In addition to facing various challenges related to reduced number of employees and work hours, companies and workers also had to adjust to new health-related protocols and procedures that also contribute to organizational learning and pandemic preparedness. In the hospitality and tourism sector, the Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environmental Sustainability (CHSE) protocols were introduced and implemented by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif, 2021a). Preparing the protocols and procedures, providing adequate tools and equipment for implementing them, as well as conducting necessary training sessions to ensure that employees comply with the protocols and procedures that were put in place, proved to be challenging to many organizations in the hospitality and tourism sector (Winowatan et al., 2021). However, all aspects of hospitality and tourism must comply with the CHSE protocols, in order to ensure the health, safety, and protection for all individuals involved. CHSE extends to all stakeholders in the hospitality and tourism, including community-based tourism and rural tourism

initiatives (*desa wisata*). Strengthening the human resources involved in community-based tourism and village tourism, including in CHSE protocols and procedures, have been an important initiative for alternative tourism business with a focus on capacity building—not only focusing on South Bali as the tourist mecca, but also in the interior regions (Utama et al., 2022).

Financial Management Perspective

When it comes to marketing management, the efforts to market Bali's hospitality and tourism product (as well as to market the destination as a whole) have largely focused on the domestic market—as the international market was still limited and foreign tourists had to go through a lengthy and strenuous process to visit Bali. Consequently, international tourists were largely limited to long-term visa holders. While the demand from international tourists has not returned until Q2 of 2022, the demand from domestic tourists has somewhat helped Bali's hospitality and tourism industry, especially going in 2021. Marketing efforts, especially aimed towards the Free Independent Travelers (FIT), families, and small groups, have had some positive impacts on domestic arrivals and hotel occupancy (Sukaatmadja & Kerti Yasa, 2021). For domestic tourists, perceived health risk is found to be one of the factors determining their attitude towards Bali as a destination, which also influences their revisit intention to the island (Sukaatmadja et al., 2022). Another study on 100 millennial tourists found that, at least at the time of the study, this market segment perceived the quality of health and safety protocols while traveling as important—including in accommodation and food service establishment (Febrianto, 2021).

To generate demand, many hospitality and tourism operators in Bali employed pricing and promotional strategies, especially through online channels, that were aimed at putting bodies in hotel beds and bums on restaurant seats. Many hotels have introduced “pay now stay later” pricing models in order to create short-term demand throughout the pandemic (Manek, 2021; Puspita et al., 2021; Suryaningsih & Suryawardani, 2021), with the hope that enough short-term earnings could be earned from this sales promotion campaign capitalizing on the “rock-bottom” prices offered particularly by five-star and four-star properties. Suryaningsih and Suryawardani (2021) also reported numerous other pricing and promotional strategies implemented by both one- to three-star properties (e.g., *staycation*, weekly stay, monthly stay, special prices for walk-in guests, special prices in online travel agencies and special promotions on social media), as well as by four- and five-star hotels (e.g., *staycation*, weekly stay, monthly stay, special OTA prices, room promotions, food promotions, pool promotions, day use promotions, and We Love Bali campaign). At some point in mid-2021, the government even introduced the “Work from Bali” campaign with hopes to boost domestic travel to Bali—which backfired and was short-lived due to a sharp increase in the spread of Covid-19 delta variant it caused in Bali at the time (Jatmiko, 2021).

One sub-sector of tourism that greatly suffered during the pandemic (2020-2021) was MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions). In 2020 alone, the potential loss from four major events scheduled to have taken place in Bali between February and October 2020 amounted to US\$ 310 million (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif, 2021b). Some event organizing companies diversified their product

offerings to counter the adverse effects of the pandemic that resulted in a sharp decline in their business (Natakusuma, 2021). In order to weather the so-called "Covid-19 storm", some hospitality and tourism establishments adopted horizontal integration in their marketing strategy by widening their product lines and distribution channels, to capture niche markets and new target markets (e.g., shifting from largely international to largely domestic markets) (Manuhutu et al., 2022). The pandemic has provided opportunities for developing and marketing emerging tourism niches, including virtual reality marketing in tourism (Subawa et al., 2021), film/movie tourism (Sousa et al., 2021), and eco-wellness adventure tourism (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif, 2021b). Another niche to be explored and marketed is community-based or rural tourism, which in addition to providing the 4A's of tourism (i.e., attraction, accessibility, amenities, and ancillary services) was also found to promote "Authenticity" for tourists looking for new experiences (Utama et al., 2021).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The impacts and implications of Covid-19 pandemic for the tourist island of Bali have been immensely felt by all stakeholders in the hospitality and tourism sector. Arguably, there has been a hard reset for Indonesia's foremost tourism destination. From the perspectives of management studies, all aspects of management have been adversely impacted by the pandemic – including finance, human resources, and marketing. Select publications based on research studies have shown that in terms of financial management, many hospitality and tourism companies had to engage in various crisis management and survival strategies throughout 2020 and 2021 – depending on the current health status of each company at the time. In terms of human resource management, companies have had to take various measures (from mild to severe) regarding employment, pay, and work hours. Workers were adversely impacted, and those still employed have to undergo additional training sessions in CHSE and other health-related protocols. The pandemic also presented an opportunity for organizational learning, preparedness and resilience, as well as for alternative tourism business with a focus on capacity building in Bali's interior. Meanwhile, marketing efforts during the pandemic (2020-2021) have largely focused on the domestic markets, with many operators engaging in short-term demand generation through various pricing and promotional strategies aimed at making sales and attracting guests in the short-term.

From the studies of literature, the author remarks that there is still a lack of long-term focused solutions for Bali's tourism and hospitality industry. Various studies, with very few exceptions, have largely discussed the immediate impacts and short-term implications of Covid-19 pandemic on Bali. This is regrettable because the pandemic has had the great potential as a hard reset for Bali's tourism, i.e., a chance to regroup, rethink, and reinvent the island as a resilient and less disaster-prone destination.

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