

COVID-19: An Assessment of Creative Communication, Crisis Preparedness, and Resilience Building in Hospitality Business in Bali

<http://dx.doi.org/10.25008/jkiski.v7i1.650>

Syafiq Basri Assegaff^{1*}, Rudi Sukandar¹, Mike Hardy², Julia Ratnasari Dewi¹, Habib Mohammad Ali³, Ni Putu Ayuniantari¹

¹Institut Komunikasi dan Bisnis LSPR

Sudirman Park Campus, Jl. K.H. Mas Mansyur Kav. 35, Jakarta 10220 - Indonesia.

²Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University
Cheetah Rd, Coventry CV1 2TL – United Kingdom

³Department of Media Studies and Journalism, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh
688 Beribadh Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka 1207 – Bangladesh

*Corresponding author: syafiq.a@lspr.edu

Submitted: March 21, 2022, **Revised:** April 20, 2022, **Accepted:** June 11, 2022
Accredited by Kemristekdikti No. 28/E/KPT/2019

Abstract

Two years of COVID-19 pandemic have brought global consequences, especially to those operating in business. This paper examines how risk and crisis preparedness contributed to business survival and resilience in the hospitality sector in Bali, Indonesia, a market significantly dependent on international visitors. This qualitative research employing a phenomenological approach. Initial data were acquired from two months of observation in Bali from March 2020 until the end of May 2020. In addition to observation, semi structured interviews were also conducted with informants from four different hotels, aiming to uncover if the hotels embraced some strategies from the proactive pre-crisis planning to strategic implementations during the crisis. We did not include the after-crisis stage as the pandemic is still ongoing. The researchers validated findings through triangulating interviews with Balinese authorities. We found that although the current crisis disrupted hotel business, it also provided opportunities for creative communication, security strategies, and new connections with public sector health management. Further, in the early stages of crisis management preparedness and focused communication were vital for the level of survivability of the hotels. The study concluded that during a crisis, a successful organization management team does not follow a linear and organized process to lead their business through the stressful and chaotic phases. Based on this study, we learned that business managers who adapted to the situation with crisis preparation, combined with raised awareness of public health issues, and use of commercial strategies focused on local communities can successfully reduce threats.

Keywords: crisis communication; strategies; pandemic; hospitality management; resilience.

Introduction

The COVID-19 virus brought significant and negative consequences for global tourism. From March 2020, worldwide travel

restrictions, and extended bans on public movements and social gatherings in different parts of the world brought unprecedented threat

to the hospitality sector (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020).

Christakis (2020) describes the virulence and acceleration of COVID-19 with an assumption that at least 40 percent of the global population will face infection from this virus, causing millions of deaths. Gössling, Scott, and Hall (2020) showed the severity of disruption of the global economy by coining it as the single most occurrences since World War II. Air travel, cruises, and accommodations suffered to a catastrophic level. Gössling et al (2020) predicted that international arrivals could drop by 20 to 30 percent compared to 2019 from the impact of this pandemic.

Interestingly, one of the more likely consequences of the disruptions to overall tourism is the strengthening of, so-called, “proximity tourism” (Jurado et al., 2020 in Romagosa, 2020); this refocuses tourism and travelling much nearer to home.

Romagosa (2020) further suggested that local tourists or populations in the midst of an insecure and uncertain situation may consider nearby destinations as ‘less risky’ because of their incomes were reduced significantly. This is consistent with the Asian Development Bank’s (July 2021) recommendations for greater emphasis on proximity tourism (domestic and short-haul international travel), besides other steps such as health and hygiene, and environmentally sustainable tourism.

It is apparent that the tourism sector is particularly vulnerable and must devise strategies to counteract pandemics because the sector operates its business in crowded places where maintaining social distancing and the prevention of random population mobility is significant.

Gurtner (2016) observes that the global tourism industry, since the turn of the century, has suffered from a wide range of shocks such as terrorism (September 11 terrorist attack and 2002 and 2005 Bali Bombings among others), disease pandemics (Foot and Mouth 2001, SARS 2002-3, Avian influenza 2003-6), and a global financial and economic recession (2008-2010). According to Gurtner (2016), we need a stronger understanding of a set of real interdependencies between tourism, risk, and hazards, and the development of more holistic strategies to produce stronger and more resilient tourist destinations at time of crisis.

The previous impressive growth of tourism industry in Southeast Asia, from 37

million tourist arrivals in 2005 to 144 million in 2019, faced an existential threat. Foreign visitor arrivals in 2020 dropped by between 50% and 80%, with some popular destinations in Indonesia, such as Bali, experiencing almost 100%. Even the attraction for history, culture, and natural landscapes made more accessible by low-cost air transport and rising incomes in the region could not compete with the closures required by the battle against the Coronavirus (Asian Development Bank, 2021). As of 21 April 2021, the island recorded 43,289 confirmed cases and more than 1200 deaths (Corona Statistic Indonesia, 2021).

Months before the emergence of new Omicron variant in November 2021, protective strategies of closure and spatial distancing brought significant economic challenges: crowded places like hotels particularly, and the hospitality and tourism industry, in general, have been the most impacted. In 2020 foreign arrivals dropped to around 1.05 million.

By early 2020 the tourism industry faced a sudden hit, which paralyzed the tourism sector in Bali. This negative impact may also have been worsened by misinformation spread through social media (for instance see Eysenbach, 2020). To borrow the idea of “infodemic” (Assegaff, 2021; Eysenbach, 2020), significant new challenges are created for businesses in all sectors by a deluge of information, both unfiltered and uncontrolled, generated or amplified by the public through social media, and generated by professionals, policy makers, health care organizations, and journalists. This creates significant new challenges for business in all sectors.

The COVID-19 crisis led to more countries adopting travel restrictions; in February 2021 foreign tourist arrivals in Indonesia dropped 86.59 percent year-on-year to 117,000 only. The number of arrivals by air in Bali slumped 100 percent to 122 (Trading Economics, 2021). Throughout 2020, many actions were taken by local and national governments in Indonesia to stabilize the sector. The Island of Bali was closed to all travelers in March 2020. Plans to re-open the island for the international visitors were pushed back because of the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Indonesia.

However, businesses on the island were opened to domestic tourists and foreigners residing already in the country. It is important to highlight that with the cases increasing as the

vaccination program kicked off last February 2021, Bali implemented a stricter control to address the flow of local and foreign tourists, who violated the COVID-19 public health protocols set by the central government (Azwar, 2021).

The partial reopening of Bali in 2021 was an improvement compared to the condition in the previous year. In 2020, the Governor of Bali had required all Bali tourist attractions to be closed temporarily, without exceptions. Major events were cancelled, and the governor had instructed the Balinese to avoid religious and non-religious mass events.

Within lockdown mode, the livelihoods of people and industry in the island were seriously threatened. Hotels and restaurants were temporarily closed, and thousands of employees were laid off. According to a hotel manager, Wayan Narta (personal communication, July 2, 2020), in Badung Regency, thousands of employees were instructed to stay home with 20-50 percent of their wage being cut.

Since June 2021, about five months prior to the growth of new Omicron variant, situations have worsened, due to more a transmissible identified COVID-19's *Delta* variant, which caused caseload to rise on Bali Island and across Indonesia. Bali logged some 200 new COVID-19 cases a day, up from only 40 new daily cases in late May 2021 (Eloksari, 2021).

Consistent with many contexts, in accordance with the central government's last lockdown policy, the Bali administration tightened requirements for visitors entering Bali. For instance, it has issued a new regulation stating that domestic tourists may only enter the province after obtaining a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or antigen swab test. The requirement applies even to those who have been vaccinated. Congruently, doors for international visitors were also temporarily closed.

The plan to open Bali by the end of July 2021 was delayed for a second time, following the latest surge in COVID-19 infections in the country (Eloksari, 2021). In mid-July 2021, as Indonesia buckled under a deadly second wave of COVID-19 infections, many countries, including 21 European Schengen countries, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Singapore, and Japan announced new bans and

restrictions on travelers from Indonesia (Lai, 2021).

Later, Bali was officially opened to domestic visitors. However, the move was considered insufficient to sustain the business. As most of its hospitality business has always relied on international visitors, Bali still struggled to survive (Rahman, 2022). The latest policy to open Bali for international visitors in 2022 was greatly welcome by many, especially the visitors themselves and the hospitality industry operators in Bali. The first wave of visitors to Bali after the latest policy was flown by a Singapore Airlines plane, carrying 109 international travelers and 47 Indonesians ("Bali welcomes back tourists," 2022). The policy was further revised by the central government to waive quarantine for international visitors who have been fully vaccinated (Loasana, 2022).

Despite all the progress for the recovery, the struggle to survive during the pandemic remains the subject that needs to be investigated. Bali has had past experience with managing crisis caused by disasters, natural or man-made, as studied, for example, by Prabawa and Dewi (2018). The study examined the style and content of the crisis management conducted by the Bali Tourism Board (BTB) to generate tourism recovery following the Mount Agung volcano eruption disaster.

Their result showed that the crisis in Bali's tourism sector was severe, with significant damage to the Bali tourism industry, both in terms of financial loss and negative impact on the image of Bali. Both scholars observed that the Bali Tourism Board carried out a series of crisis management actions, which were divided into necessary and sequential steps. They also discussed pre-crisis and during-crisis strategies, including the techniques applied by each hotel and uncovered successes and failures throughout interviewing some informants (Prabawa and Dewi, 2018).

Building on a systematic review of academic work on crisis preparedness and new empirical work in Bali, this paper highlights strategies and insights for tourism industry and hotel corporate to support proactive and creative policies amidst the new trends and fierce global competition. We show that in analysis of whole systems, businesses such as tourism are inextricably connected to public health issues. This paper attempts to uncover and reassess how the industry implemented all

forms of crisis management to survive during this disastrous pandemic.

As relatively few studies have been made on crisis phenomena in tourism (Gurtner, 2016), and fewer still conducted about the small island of Bali and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the leisure industry provides an opportunity to reflect more on what can be learned and applied from the perspective of the hospitality sector, and specifically how this health-related risk and related crisis preparedness contributes to the resilience of hotels in Bali and their ability to adapt and survive such shocks. Additionally, we question the suggested ‘wisdom’ of the “proximity tourism” approach (Romagosa 2020) as evidence showed continuing shortfalls of incomes to this “Island of God” tourism business. Before presenting this analysis, we review relevant literature on risk and crisis preparedness and the related communication strategies.

Theoretical Framework

Coombs (2017 in Tench & Yeomans, 2017) attempted to define a crisis as “the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders related to health, safety, environmental, and economic issues, and can seriously impact an organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes” (p. 345).

Similarly, organizations such as hotels can be also threatened or disrupted by sudden and unexpected events, causing financial, image, relational crises with long term effects (Coombs, 2007, as cited in Austin and Jin, 2017). In preparing for the eventuality of a crisis, including prevention, two measures should be taken swiftly, namely planning for actions and coordinating with important partners in responding to the crisis (Seeger, 2006).

Managing crises successfully requires a sequence of actions from preventing, preparing, reacting, and learning to resolving. Developing an ex-ante management plan improves reaction time, can reduce loss and creates the conditions for more effective crisis communication. Coombs (2014) argued that effective crisis management requires attention to this sequential approach, with public safety as a primary concern. In best-case scenarios, reputation and financial concerns are only considered after the remedy of public safety.

Robust crisis management plans protect organizations and their stakeholders from threats and/or reduce the impact felt by threats. Furthermore, Coombs (2014) observes that, as a process, crisis management can be divided into three phases: the first, pre-crisis, dealing with prevention and preparation; second, crisis response; and third, post-crisis phase, developing practices for a better approach in the future.

Communication has a central role in mitigating risk and managing crisis. Reynolds and Seeger (2005) described crisis and emergency risk communication (CERC) as a combination of risk communication and crisis communication into practice. This combination emphasizes the dynamic nature of crisis and the different communication needs and requirements of the audiences at various points in the iteration. Importantly, this approach sought to extend the time-profile for action, increasing the prospects of developing resilience and a crisis-coping capacity.

In the context of COVID-19 crisis management, health communication and health management received greater focus, being part of Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC). This is a developed approach used in professional training and development to support the implementation preventive measures to avert a health crisis (Veil et al., 2008).

The CERC process covers both crisis communication as part of an immediate response and the explanation of risks and benefits to all stakeholders including the public. Speedy and accessible communications in times of crisis are very important for contemporary stakeholders and general public (CDC, 2014).

The Center for Disease Control (CDC, 2014), suggest six principles of effective crisis and risk communication with particular reference to general public; we have adapted these marginally: (1) *be first* (as crises are time-sensitive it is critical that communications are early and accurate); (2) *be right* (information must be accurate); (3) *be credible* (communications must have integrity and be honest); (4) *be empathetic* (consider what people feel and focus on trust and sensitivity); (5) *be active* by introducing activities that promote and restore a sense of order and control and (6) *be respectful* (communication is sensitive to cooperative behaviors).

By following this pathway, a well-executed CERC can help organizations in ensuring limited resources, which normally occur during crises, are managed appropriately, and can do the best.

The process view in crisis management considers that the best way to manage a crisis is to prevent it through advanced warning and pre-emptive actions to reduce negative impact on stakeholders (Coombs, 2017, in Tench and Yeomans, 2017). Crisis managers detect warning signs by monitoring sources or scanning the environments related to specific types of crisis risks.

Earlier works with similar approaches to crisis preparedness were outlined by Pearson and Mitroff (1993). They put forward this five-stage framework: signal detection, preparation/prevention, containment/damage limitation, recovery, and learning. Upon detecting the signal of a risk or crisis, any business entity will launch the preventive strategies to contain the damage, which will lead to the recovery process. Finally, the organization learns from their actions, situations, and their limitations (Crandall, Parnell & Spillan, 2014).

The evidence and experience during the first year of this pandemic supports the view that ‘survivors’ are good and regular communicators, in language that resonates and is easily comprehended by stakeholders, whereas those who fail to communicate and “lose touch” with audiences tend to face enhanced difficulty (Stafford, 2020).

Material and Methodology

This research employed qualitative methods, following a phenomenological approach, in order to give meaning thematically to how the hotel management professionals sense their responses to manage COVID-19 crisis in their industries (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

The initial data for this study were acquired from two months of observation in Bali from March 2020 to the end of May 2020. In addition to observation, interviews were also conducted. Research informants were selected from four different hotels: two four-star hotels and two five-star hotels. The hotels were located at the main tourist spots in Bali: Kuta, Legian, Canggu, and Uluwatu.

Semi-structured interviews covered topics about the impact of COVID-19 on hotel

businesses, the measures adopted by the hotels, the individuals, and the industry during the pandemic. Interviews were conducted with senior management of the hotels in April 2020, which included two General Managers, Director of Food and Beverage Manager, and Executive Sous Chef. All four informants held an average of 20 years of experience in the related industry.

The interview questions were aimed to uncover if the hotels embraced some strategies from the proactive pre-crisis planning to strategic implementations during the crisis. We did not include the after-crisis stage as the pandemic is still ongoing.

Since the collected data were confidential in nature, the name of the hotels and the informants are not included. In the process of completing the study, the researchers validated findings through triangulating interviews with Balinese authorities.

Results and Discussion

Two main key themes emerged in relation to crisis communication preparedness within the Bali hotel industry, namely the negative and positive impacts of the pandemic to the business.

Negative Impacts and Business Decline

On the negative side, the harsh impact of COVID-19 has hit the hospitality sector in Bali even more severely than that caused by previous crises, such as the second Bali bombing of 2005 (See also Gurtner, 2016). A manager from a five-star resort A in Canggu described how the pandemic has affected the business and occupancy-rates following the announcement from the Governor of Bali that all tourism activities had to be closed for months. His occupancy-rate was only two percent for one week, which he felt “like the end of the world.”

Another informant, a manager of a four-star hotel B, located only a walking distance away from central Kuta, highlighted that he closed the hotel for a short period of time as there were no guests and that he was urged to rethink a new strategy to save expenses.

His hotel experienced 10 days of zero occupancy at the beginning of March 2020, making the decision to close the hotel for five days inevitable. A similar condition also happened to a four-star resort at Legian sunset beach. According to its Director of the Food

and Beverage, the general manager decided to close the hotel until September 2020 due to one percent occupancy throughout the month of March 2020 with almost no revenue coming from food and beverage.

The Bali Hotel Association, representing over 100 four-star and five-star hotels and resorts in Bali, reported that most accommodations and restaurants in Bali have opted to temporarily close for several months or even at longer state. This measure included the postponing of the launching of some new hotels.

A luxurious five-star resort situated in Uluwatu delayed its hotel opening as an impact of this pandemic. The executive sous chef said that the initial plan was to launch at the end of March 2020, but now they are uncertain when the launch can be done even after the pandemic ends.

Two other informants from hotels C and D shared the same response. However, the five-star resort located in Canggu decided not to close the hotel completely although the occupancy was only two percent throughout the week. According to the informant from Hotel A:

The owner gave me the freedom to decide whether to close the hotel or not. It was the most critical decision that I must make in my life. I need to think of a million strategies to survive, including making some adjustments to the hotel operation.

The informant from Hotel A shared an important point, namely the opportunities to take a step back, rethink, regroup, and re-strategize in response to crisis. Dismissal of employees is a difficult management decision, combining clear short-term cost-reduction gains, with medium-term to long-term disadvantages for adaptive capacity and re-recruiting. The decision made by an employer varied, ranging from an economic downturn to performance-related tribulations from the employee's part. The economic downturn due to the outbreak became the major reason to lay off employees—resulting in further unemployment. Three informants answered similarly that they had to lay off their daily casual workers while some permanent staff were asked to take unpaid leave. In addition, some worked on alternate weeks with seven

working days followed by seven days off while the rest were urged to work from home.

The pandemic is currently placing pressure on every organization, including those in the hotel industry. However, in a crisis, it is hard to hide behind a claim as people will see the action taken to answer for the crisis. People will check whether an action was taken because of fear of employees' losing their jobs or pre-emptive measures to prevent that from happening. According to informant from Hotel B:

As the hotel opening is postponed, I have a few numbers of people in my department who opted to leave the company as the result of their pay cut... It seems like they can't see the bigger picture of this pandemic. I think it is more of their ego that they decided to quit from the company even before they work full time.

Further, informant from Hotel C stated that:

I'm quite straight forward when I communicated with staff, and they showed me their "long face" after I told them about the adjustment in the working hours and the pay cut. I have No. room for complainers and my staff members know me well for that. They were not happy at the beginning when the alteration was made, but soon after they realized they were lucky enough to still have a job.

This experience provides similar challenges when a decision had to be made to allow the organization to adjust in order to survive. Resistance naturally came from the staff whose livelihood was impacted by the hotels' decision to lay off employees and to cut their income.

Positive Impacts

The COVID-19 crisis drove the Bali tourism industry to transform their actions to bring positive effects in the areas ranging from product development to marketing strategies and organizing newer communication strategies to develop a healthy environment.

Creative Product Development and Marketing Strategies during Pandemic

Cost saving in hotel operations cannot completely solve the problem caused by significant downturns in hotel business revenues. With many reservations being cancelled, hotels being researched sought to

maintain strong relationships with their guests by making courtesy calls and sending emails. Guests were also kept informed of the efforts made by the hotels during the pandemic crisis and offered special packages and promotions.

The hotels recognized that the loss of the market during this pandemic crisis could not be recovered during any short to medium periods as travelers tend to change travel plans and set new destinations and expectations. As a consequence, senior hotel managers were observed working diligently to explore new markets to fill their now spare capacities, using in the main various social networks. Apart from offering one-year-long promotional packages for domestic and international tourists, those hotels were trying to touch visitors' economic considerations. Hotel D, for instance, wrote in its Instagram account: "Don't cancel your trip; change the date and let's save tourism together" while Hotel B sent persuasive messages to guests in its various social media platforms.

Simultaneously, Hotel B kept assuring potential customers that it maintained the highest level of hygiene and enduring safety and offered enormous flexibility to stay to attract more visitors.

According to the CEO of Hotel B in on the Instagram account: "We offer all guests, including those with prepaid or non-refundable reservations, the ability to cancel without penalty, for stays until six months."

Food and beverage operations were not affected as severely as room operations. However, the public awareness towards hygiene has increased. People chose to dine in a restaurant that maintained high standards of sanitation and cleanliness.

Consequently, to attract more customers, restaurants in the hotels launched a complimentary hotel stay promotion with the purchase in their restaurants. Alternatively, a food delivery service was also available, as provided by Hotel A. In another move, a special menu at the very reasonable or even considered economical price was also offered by Hotel C.

Revenues earned from selling amenities were advocated by Hotel C to the long stay guests with monthly payment. This revised package came with minimum amenities and services, twice-a-week room cleaning service, and laundry package per kilogram with a very reasonable price. All these creative marketing methods were implemented as parts of the

hotels' strategies to generate their main and alternative revenues.

Online Working and Creativeness

Before the pandemic, meetings took place physically in meeting rooms and the employee coaching in the training room. Now, all were done online. These working conditions, according to an interview with Wayan Narta (personal communication, July 2, 2020), have several advantages, such as time flexibility, no transportation budget, increase in productivity, and work-life balance.

As group guests were not allowed to travel under current regulations, the target market was changed for the individual. While most people were encouraged to "Work from Home," Balinese government promoted "Work from Bali" to encourage individuals who wanted to stay in Bali while working online.

The level of creativity and innovativeness of the hotels through their communication and marketing strategies and plans helped generate the revenue during this pandemic period. It was found that apart from using social media as handy and free tools for promotion, many hotels applied enormous discounts for international tourists who could not return to their countries due to the travel restriction or lockdown. Hotel A, for instance, discounted its rate to eight million rupiahs (around US\$ 570) for staying one whole month while Hotel C offered only six million rupiahs (about US\$ 428) per month (with certain terms and conditions).

Increase in Health and Sanitation Awareness

By staying in two hotels and exploring four different hotels, we observed how the hotel staff members were focused on the health and safety of all. As the occupancy rates were low, housekeeping departments increased the frequency of enhanced cleaning to rooms and public areas.

Additionally, hand sanitizers were placed in several areas such as at the entrance of the lift, the front desk, the restaurant, and the swimming pool. Furthermore, Bali hotels have implemented a series of measures to prevent the possible spread of COVID-19. Upon arrival at the hotel, a standard procedure of checking the guests' body temperature was taken. Security officers were placed at the lobby entrance with the thermometers on their hands, ready to do the checking.

A hotel manager, Wayan Narta, and the executive director of Bali Hotel and Restaurant Association Purwa Sidemen (personal communication, 7 July 2020) confirmed a guide was written for the new normal situation during hotel and restaurant openings written after the COVID-19 outbreak occurred. The guide consists of a cleanliness standard of restaurant and hotel facilities, employees, and guests. The guide is written to prevent further COVID-19 transmission.

At check-in, guests complete a health declaration as a precaution. All guests and employees wear facemasks within the hotel premises as required by government regulations. This is accepted openly as all guests and hotel employees understand the measures emphasized by the hotels are in line with the health and safety procedure from the government regulations. In a similar way, practices also changed in the ancillary food and beverages services. Here, staff members were required to wear face masks and gloves while they were preparing food or serving customers. Furthermore, the staff received a briefing on a regular and frequent basis regarding the additional hygiene and preventive measurements.

Hotel Improvement

Another positive impact of the pandemic, according to Purwa Sidemen (personal communication, 7 July 2020), was it provided opportunities for many hotels to renovate their facilities due to temporary closure. Certain hotels, which had planned to do the renovation the previous year, renovated their facilities during a pandemic while the others improved quality. Employees were seen to paint the walls and clean all the hotel area while preparing for the new normal opening, especially public areas like fitness center, swimming pool, restaurant, and spa where the transmission rate is higher.

Improvement of Hotel Industry's Standard Operating Procedures

As the busiest tourist destination in Indonesia, Bali has one of the best standard operating procedure (SOP) systems in tourism sectors that are acknowledged internationally. According to Purwa Sidemen (personal communication, 7 July 2020), the SOPs include those for safety, including terrorism prevention and SOP for disasters management, earthquake, and tsunami. Many international events have

successfully been conducted, which encourages views that Bali is safe. However, there was no communication plan for a pandemic. As Bali would open for domestic tourists and foreign tourists, both Narta and Sidemen (personal communication, 7 July 2020), said that some hotels and restaurants were being verified and some employees were being online trained for new normal SOPs.

The next step, such as the efforts to eliminate uncertainty or ambiguity and help crisis managers to look ahead and predict potential communication needs and issues, were not developed yet. As the focus was given more on how to survive the current crisis, the future was less prioritized despite the efforts to compile from the experience measures that were successful or unsuccessful to assist the companies' survival. However, with the current development and latest policy (Loasana, 2022), the hospitality business in Bali can move to utilize the favorable opportunities for improvement and plan for the immediate future while carefully threading the new trends for recovery.

This study found that management preparedness in the early stage of crisis and emergency risk communication (CERC) is vital in the level of survivability of the hotels. The results of the study demonstrated that individual hotels employed different strategies in dealing with the crisis and generated diverse outcomes; success was influenced directly by the degree of preparedness irrespective of the predictability of the crisis.

Using Reynolds and Seeger's (2005) crisis and emergency risk communication (CERC) framework, we start the discussion by firstly mentioning the early stage of the pre-crisis which played a key role in the hotel industry to manage the pandemic of COVID-19. The data stated that none of the hotels incorporated the alternate crisis communication plan, which means that planning had not existed despite its importance (Seeger, 2006). The unpreparedness towards the crisis had created a chaotic situation. The facts mentioned are in line with Voss and Lorenz's (2016) discussion that in the crisis communication such an expected specific event or series of events create high levels of uncertainty and a significant threat to high priority goals.

Furthermore, the ability of the hotels to create and perform their immediate strategies when a crisis occurs determines their success to

overcome the crisis or fail in keeping their business. In essence our findings highlight the benefits and importance of management-proximity to their businesses – their understanding of their immediate customers and their ability to adjust their business offer to fulfill new, previously not apparent demands (“Bali working,” for example). It became clear that trial and error strategies in responding to the crisis could result in potential benefit to net revenues. Two hotel managements have adjusted by renting the highly demanded rooms on a monthly basis with a discounted rate. Hotel A managed to reach the occupancy rate up to 80 percent and proudly broadcasted their achievement on their live Instagram claiming their rooms were sold out. Consequently, they also managed not to lay-off their full-time staff.

The hotels’ slower response to the crisis was identified in this research. This was driven by their confidence that the pandemic would not escalate and that their hotel was situated in one of the most marketable location. There was uncertainty in countering the during-crisis phase as they were not equipped with a dedicated risk and communication plan to respond to the crisis.

To create a breakthrough amidst the uncertainty, the hotels resorted to new marketing media. This moved followed Ghoshal’s (2019) conviction that social media such as Instagram and WhatsApp were effective tools in promoting marketing strategies. This study discovered that Hotel C formed a WhatsApp group through which they can network with its members. Two hotels actively updated their social media on a frequent basis. Subsequently, Hotel C maintained its occupancy rate at 70 percent throughout April, showing significant improvement compared to Hotel B and D. Effective pandemic communication required strategic messages across different phases. Social media platforms are often used to communicate as an adaptation of existing models in the context to guide strategic communication. The potential value and effectiveness were indicated by the public responses when two hotels managed to fill up the occupancy to over 70 percent. This further highlights Seeger’s (2006) belief that coordination is paramount in the time of crisis and also underlines Eysenbach’s (2002) view that the online management of information is crucial during health crisis.

As stated elsewhere tourists are likely to be influenced by their increased awareness about social and environmental issues, especially health-related matters, and make deliberate choices to restrict travel and stay closer to home (Romagosa, 2020). While this consequence has more likely and positive impact in developed countries than in developing economies, we argue that a deliberate and successful strategy to secure most of the local tourists, i.e., Indonesians, who like to travel abroad, for instance, would mitigate the loss of revenue from visitors from further afield.

Consequently, significant transition is necessary towards targeting the domestic visitors such as from the neighboring most populated Java Island instead of international or would-be travelling customers as general international travel restrictions are likely to be enforced, and locally determined for an extended period (see the Economist’s report, 2021). The reality for 2019 was that the number of domestic travelers reached almost 12 million people whose shopping expenditure exceeded US\$11billion (around 165 trillion Indonesian rupiah). This represented around 90 percent of Bali’s income from international tourists (Afifa, 2021). However, COVID-19 had a transforming effect on society, the economy, and tourism to create a more sustainable post-pandemic tourism sector (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020). Further, as clearly stated in Rahman (2022), especially in the case of Bali, relying on domestic visitors during pandemic proved insufficient to sustain the hospitality business.

This study also uncovered that hotel industry sees itself as resilient and in general is optimistic about the future of the business before the pandemic, where hotel investment was still promising as few brand-new international hotel chains were built and ready to open. However, several hotels were not prepared to manage a pandemic crisis of this significant magnitude as some had to close the business or postponing the opening of the hotels. Despite this, the sense of resilience during the pandemic to a certain extent lent to optimism that the organizations could survive. This was implicitly stated as the hotels had survived crises in the past through the 2002 and 2005 terrorist attacks referred earlier. Unsurprisingly though, the tourism industry in Bali retrieved this sense of resilience from its

past crises during their organizational learning process. We believe this aspect needs to be discussed more to add to Reynolds and Seeger's (2005) crisis and emergency risk communication given its ability to increase the morale among employees and management.

This study has also highlighted the significance of anticipation rather than mere reaction as more likely to develop successful business responses. It shows clearly that a systematic approach to crisis (in hotels business) is likely to be most successful and develop strongest resilience. Reynolds and Seeger (2005) highlight the ingredients of resilience—the proximity that managers can develop for their organization and its market, the impact of staff-team morale and, importantly, the integral part that each business plays within the wider socio-economic context. However, Reynolds and Seeger did not provide where the resilience can be developed.

As mentioned above, Balinese business survival strategies and resilience of individual hotels were built, in part, on the breadth of experience developed following the 2002 and 2005 Bali bombings. However, there are clear implications from this study about the reaction to the current pandemic for the resilience of the hospitality sector. The resilience resulted from a pre, during, and post-crisis approach as a fundamental principle, making this equally applicable to the broader issues surrounding other sources of crisis.

The essential relationship between sector, organizations, customers, and wider stakeholders to the development of resilience is applied, also, within reviews of community safety. McIlhatton et al. (2020) shows the powerful read-across between strategies for organizational survival, in an economic sense, and strategies for counter-crisis safety and security considerations. Therefore, the benefits of effective survival management can be felt and seen in a range of important contexts and, as our study identified, alternative scenarios.

As the pandemic has been declining in the last few months of 2022, we argue that this study would ideally delve further to see the latest development of Bali hotel businesses; and that is the limitation of this study. Therefore we opine that future research can explore more on the post crisis communication in Bali tourism.

Conclusion

The study shows that during a crisis, a successful organization management team does not follow a linear and organized process to lead their business through the stressful and chaotic phases. Adaptive crisis management can be viewed as a process of trial and error, requiring constant change and improvement. While other works mention the importance of resilience during crises, the sources of such resilience are thoroughly discussed.

Based on this study, we found that the community recalled and rebuilt their resilience from past crises as they still had optimism that they would get through the present pandemic. In addition, the ability to adapt becomes more important in the midst of crises as uncertainty arises.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests: the authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

References

- Afifa, L. (2021, April 12). The tourism dilemma. *Tempo*. Retrieved from <https://en.tempo.co/read/1453663/the-tourism-dilemma>
- Assegaff, S. B. (June 21, 2021). Bahaya Infodemi dan COVID-19. *Kompas*. Retrieved from <https://www.kompas.id/baca/opini/2021/06/21/bahaya-infodemi-dan-covid-19/>
- Asian Development Bank (2021, July 1). *5 key sectors can boost post-pandemic recovery in Southeast Asia*. Retrieved from: https://development.asia/insight/5-key-sectors-can-boost-post-pandemic-recovery-southeast-asia?utm_source=daily&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=alerts
- Austin, L., & Jin, Y. (2017). *Social media and crisis communication*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Azwar, A. S. (2021, March 6). Expatriates join Indonesians in calling out foreign anti-maskers, anti-vaxxers in Bali. *The Jakarta Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2021/03/05/expatriates-join-indonesians-in-calling-out-foreign-anti-maskers-anti-vaxxers-in-bali.html>
- Bali welcomes back tourists with first international flight. (2022, February 17). *The Jakarta Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/busines>

- s/2022/02/17/bali-welcomes-back-tourists-with-first-international-flight.html
- CDC (2014). *Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication 2014 Edition. Be First. Be Right. Be Credible.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Corona Statistic Indonesia. (2021). *Corona statistics Indonesia: Bali.* Retrieved from <https://bali.com/news/corona-updates/corona-statistics-indonesia-bali/>
- Coombs, W. T. (2017). Crisis public relations management. In R. Tench & L. Yeomans (Eds.) *Exploring public relations: Global strategic communication* (4th ed.) (pp. 343-361). New York, NY: Pearson Education.
- Coombs, W.T. (2014) *Crisis management and communications.* Retrieved from <https://instituteforpr.org/crisis-management-communications/>
- Crandall, W. R., Parnell, J. A., & Spillan, J. E. (2014). *Crisis management: Leading in the new strategy landscape* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Christakis, N. A. (2020, August 10). Responding to COVID-19 Nicholas Christakis on fighting COVID-19 by truly understanding the virus. *The Economist.* Retrieved from <https://www.economist.com/by-invitation/2020/08/10/nicholas-christakis-on-fighting-COVID-19-by-truly-understanding-the-virus>)
- Daymon, C., & Holloway, I. (2011). *Qualitative research methods in public relations and marketing communications* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Eloksari, E. A. (July 2, 2021). Bali tightens entry rules for tourists, ditches GeNose tests. *The Jakarta Post.* Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/paper/2021/07/01/bali-tightens-entry-rules-for-tourists-ditches-genose-tests.html>
- Eysenbach, G. (2020). How to Fight an infodemic: The four pillars of infodemic management. *J Med Internet Res*, 22(6), e21820. Retrieved from <https://www.jmir.org/2020/6/e21820>. DOI: 10.2196/21820
- Ghoshal, M. (2019). Social media as an effective tool to promote business: An empirical study. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 19, 15-25.
- Gössling, S., Scott, D., & Hall, C. M. (2020): Pandemics, tourism and global change: a rapid assessment of COVID-19, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(1), 1-20. DOI:10.1080/09669582.2020.1758708
- Gurtner, Y. (2016). Returning to paradise: Investigating issues of tourism crisis and disaster recovery on the island of Bali. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 28, 11-19. DOI: 10.1016/j.jhtm.2016.04.007
- Indonesian COVID-19 Taskforce (2021, February 13). *Peta sebaran COVID-19.* Retrieved from <https://covid19.go.id/peta-sebaran-covid19>
- Lai, Y. (2021, July 14). Countries put Indonesia on travel ban list as COVID-19 crisis worsens. *The Jakarta Post.* Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/travel/2021/04/04/england-to-ban-travel-from-four-new-countries-.html>
- Loasana, N, A. (2022, March 8). Bali becomes first destination in Indonesia to waive quarantine for vaccinated foreign travelers. *The Jakarta Post.* Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2022/03/07/bali-becomes-first-destination-in-indonesia-to-waive-quarantine-for-vaccinated-foreign-travelers.html>
- McIlhatton, D., Berry, J., Chapman, J., Christensen, P., Cuddihy, J., Monaghan, R. and Range, D. (2020). Protecting crowded places from terrorism: An analysis of the current considerations and barriers inhibiting the adoption of counterterrorism protective security measures. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 43(9), 753-774. DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2018.1507311
- Prabawa, I. W. S. W., & Dewi, K. A. R. (2018). Crisis management conducted by Bali Tourism Board (BTB) during tittle Mount Agung volcano eruption. *Journal of Business on Hospitality and Tourism*, 4(2), 150-156.
- Pearson, C., & Mitroff, I. (1993). From crisis prone to crisis prepared: A framework for crisis management. *Academy of Management Executive*, 7(1), 48-59

- Pongsakornrungsilp, S., Pongsakornrungsilp, P., Kumar, V., & Maswongssa, B. (2021). The Art of Survival: Tourism Businesses in Thailand Recovering from COVID-19 through Brand Management. *Sustainability, 13*(12), 6690.
- Rahman, D. F. (2020, January 18). Domestic travelers 'not enough' to revive Bali tourism. *The Jakarta Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/business/2022/01/18/domestic-travelers-not-enough-to-revive-bali-tourism.html>
- Reynolds, B., & Seeger, M. (2014). *Crisis emergency risk communication 2014 edition: Be first. Be right. Be credible*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Romagosa, F. (2020). The COVID-19 crisis: Opportunities for sustainable and proximity tourism. *Tourism Geographies, 22*(3), 690-694. DOI: 10.1080/14616688.2020.1763447
- Reynolds, B. J., and Seeger, M. W. (2005). Crisis and emergency risk communication as an integrative model. *Journal of Health Communication, 10*(1), 43-55. DOI: 10.1080/10810730590904571
- Seeger, M. W. (2006). Best practices in crisis communication: An expert panel process. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 34*(3), 232-244.
- Voss, M., & Lorenz, D. F. (2016). Sociological foundations of crisis communication. In A. Schwarz, M. W. Seeger, & C. Auer (Eds.). *Handbook of international crisis communication research* (pp. 45-55). Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons.
- Stafford, M. R. (2020). Connecting and communicating with the customer: Advertising research for the hospitality industry. *Journal of Advertising, 49*(5), 505-507. DOI: 10.1080/00913367.2020.1813663
- Trading Economics. (2021). *Indonesia tourist arrivals*. Retrieved from <https://tradingeconomics.com/indonesia/tourist-arrivals>
- The Economist (2021, February 13). *Special report: The future of travel*. Retrieved from <https://www.economist.com/special-report/2021-02-13>
- Veil, S., Reynolds, B., Sellnow, T.L., Seeger, M. W. (2008). CERC as a Theoretical Framework for Research and Practice. *Health Promotion Practice, 9*(4), 26S-34S. DOI: 10.1177/1524839908322113