

## Create Successful Content Media as Crisis Mitigation in Tourism Industry During Covid-19 Pandemic

<http://dx.doi.org/10.25008/jkiski.v5i2.474>

Janette Maria Pinariya<sup>1</sup>, Wulan Yulianti<sup>2</sup>, Jane Mitha<sup>3</sup>, Past Novel Larasaty<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>Faculty of Communication Studies

LSPR Communication and Business Institute

Jl. Mas Mansur Kav. 35 Jakarta 10220 – Indonesia

\*Corresponding author: [janette.mp@lspr.edu](mailto:janette.mp@lspr.edu)

**Submitted:** September 30, 2020, **Revised:** November 18, 2020, **Accepted:** December 30, 2020

Accredited by Kemristekdikti No. 28/E/KPT/2019

### Abstract

Every year the Indonesian tourism industry continues to be managed optimally until finally, it can play a role in the country's foreign exchange earnings. Bank Indonesia (BI) stressed the importance of the tourism sector for the Indonesian economy as it succeeded in becoming the second major foreign exchange earner. However, with the Covid-19 pandemic casting a shadow on tourism industry, even online travel management that has utilized technology is experiencing a crisis. This study uses a descriptive qualitative research approach by collecting data through observation, book documentation and interviews to examine the effect of Covid-19 pandemic on tourism industry. This study found that in a crisis situation, it is very important for tourism industry to create successful content as crisis mitigation in tourism industry during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is also necessary to conduct the four stages as framework of a human driven process (facilitated by technology) to close the gap. The essential insights into the importance of mitigating the perceived risk factors currently influencing tourism, particularly within the short to medium term, hence providing tourism marketers impetus to seek to address the current evolving consumer trend(s) related to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is really important that the message reflects empathy for what had happened.

**Keywords:** Content media; content marketing; tourism industry; pandemic Covid 19; crisis mitigation

### Introduction

The Indonesian tourism industry continues to be managed optimally and is expected to increase Indonesia's foreign exchange earnings. According to World Travel & Tourism Council, Indonesia had significantly showed its growth, it ranks ninth in the world, third in Asia and first in South East Asia in terms of the fastest growing tourism industry (Dwinanda, 2018). The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report released by World Economic Forum stated that Indonesia ranks 40<sup>th</sup> among 140 countries in terms of tourism competitiveness in 2019 (Forum, 2019).

In 2019, Bank Indonesia (BI) emphasized the importance of the tourism sector for the Indonesian economy, because it has managed to

become the second largest foreign exchange earner (Anggit, 2019). But, the current market condition seems to be unexpected, since the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 or Covid-19 all over the world, has bought a lot of chances in digital marketing.

The Covid-19 has a significant impact on the Tourism Industry. According to the Search Engine Lands (Strielkowski, 2020), since the Covid-19 pandemic hit all over the country, the search engine shows an upward trend in the number of people searching for groceries, while on the other hand the number of people traveling seems to go down. The impact of large-scale social restriction (PSSB) creates a lot of chances in market right now due to their search intent. Quarantine has a tremendous

effect on citizens to travel at this moment. Data collected from Consumer Behavior New Normal After Covid 19 shows that there is prediction that after Covid-19 ends, market will focus more on doing staycation instead of travelling overseas. So, through the prediction the researcher bets that local tourism would grow soon after Covid-19 is over. In their journal, Burhanuddin & Abdi (2020) said the global economy cannot be accessed with only a limited allocation of the economy itself. Corona Virus (Covid-19) is evidence that the virus produces health that can cause economic instability in a country even on a global scale (Yuswohady, 2020).

Jamal and Budke (2020) explain the Covid-19 issue is related to not only economic and resource needs but also intangible injustices resulting from discrimination, racism, emotional responses and fear. Addressing this, there must be part of every crisis preparation, planning and response strategy. Lessons learned from past pandemics include: communication channels or media must remain open between key tourism and hospitality stakeholders and the local and regional public health authorities as part of a proactive strategic response plan. The findings from a research done by Haque, et al., (2020) highlighted the virus outbreak and its impact on these two industries (i.e. Airlines and Hotel).

More specifically, researchers noticed the complexity of crisis faced by tourism industry during this pandemic based on several findings is the use of facilities and destination compared to unbalanced demand and supply in the market (Senbeto & Hon, 2020). Moreover, through their data, researchers find out the certain types of changes in public behaviours towards travelling divided it into two main types. The anxious travellers are more concerned about travelling, irrespective of profile and purpose. The second would be into the financial related, they were more concerned about the price elasticity and turn into less purchasing.

According to Fearn-Banks (2009), a crisis is a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company, or industry, as well as publics, products, services or good name. It interrupts normal business transactions and can sometimes threaten the existence of the organization. In this situation the tourism industry faces the crisis.

Learnt from the last pandemic, Dissertori (2017) research gives evidence that the influenza pandemic in 2009 and 2010 had an impact on tourism demand, as seen by the changes in room-nights sold, and, consecutively, on tourism supply in terms of rooms available. Organizations and

managers should scrutinize and adapt the plans and strategies they have in place for crisis management. Based the explanation of the problem, background and presentation of the previous review literature, the purpose of this research is to find out communication that is focused on creating successful content as crisis mitigation in tourism industry during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### Theoretical Framework

During the pandemic, crisis mitigation plan is an important aspect for industry to be prepared for crisis situations, manage costs during crisis, make full use of local advice, maintain good communication with guests and consumers. The basic objective of crisis mitigation is to facilitate, expedite, and increase the effectiveness of resolving or at least mitigating a crisis (Robie, 2020). The principal characteristic of a crisis situation like Covid-19 is that it occurs unexpectedly and that its exact cause is unknown and unpredictable.

Organizations need to choose media that have a proactive role in shaping the mass population's actions, thereby influencing policy actions. The print media especially are considered a key factor in conveying information to the masses. With the shortage of institutional reporting and Covid-19 results, all industries in a nation and all strata of society depend on the media (Pravin, et.al. 2020). To create successful content media tourism industry need to build framework of a human driven process (facilitated by technology) to close the gap on managing an online and offline content marketing engine (Pulizzi, 2011).

Competition in the industry in content creation today is increasingly stringent. Access is increasingly easier for today's digital society, because it is needed to provide truly high-quality content and work, not only to discuss information or interesting nature, but each brand today must also provide value to the audience, because it discusses the sound and identity of a brand (LIEB, 2012, p.45). So through this, it can be concluded that current content marketing must be made with strategies that can be assets to educate the public in the short and long term.

Strategies of building content marketing like those in Robert Rose and Joe Pulizzi's book *Managing Content Marketing* (Pulizzi, 2011): (1) Create and Manage is the key to creating compelling content. Include people, roles & responsibilities, schedules, and rules & guidelines. How creative process and technical things are combined to achieve a consistent thing such as the use of tone, maximum keywords, branding guidelines, grammar style, tags, content marketing

tools which are all maximized to maintain the level of engagement; (2) Optimize, Aggregate, and Curate. With A-B-C "Always Communicate", things that must be considered when creating content is a reference that presents specific data and sources.

The intent and purpose of forming a content must ultimately be optimized by the system and selected digital media. To that end, a balance of creativity, persuasion, technology, level of involvement, communication, measurement, finance is needed in creating content; (3) Converse and Listen. A goal is achieved from a brand that is made in the community and by reference to the community. In this context, the content appears as an answer from everyone. The content is made to be read, so it must find the right tools to get its audience.

The key to optimizing content is the balance between the acquisition of metrics and the quality of relevant and convincing content. This can be obtained from the process of analyzing the content marketing tools used, by paying attention to keywords, problems, and trends; (4) Measure and Study, "Starting from the beginning, this allows you to go back to the first and start from the beginning". Organizations must understand content in the proper context in the use of data as a supporting system. Things to consider when measuring success are content to drive sales, save costs, engage customers. These four things must be based on the main objectives of content marketing, such as the branding perspective. Measurements must be adjusted to relevant settings.

### **Material and Methodology**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, that provides a description or description of a situation as clearly as possible based on research data that contains without the treatment of the object being discussed (Yin, 2011). Data collection technique to answer the research needed appropriate research methods such as interviews. Conducting in-depth interviews to ask respondents to obtain information about the phenomena to be investigated (West & Turner, 2010). Then collect or collect document objects, and archives related to the study topic. Most of the collection will occur while in the field, then the collection of objects can be done from other sources, including libraries, historical archives, and electronic sources (Yin, 2011).

This research uses several requirements for key informants position: (1) An expert in the Indonesia tourism; (2) A person who profoundly understands about managing content marketing in digital; (3) A person who works for the tourism in

Indonesia. (4) An expert or leader that has a considerable influence on the online travel industry.

Key informant in this research is Harris Limanto, Airy's Senior Designer who was a guest speaker because he was the one who pioneered the development of Airy from the beginning together with his relative, Airy CEO Danny Handoko. Thus, researchers see that his credibility and knowledge about values and culture in Airy are well internalized. Also, researchers interviewed Yusti Tamtama, one of the digital marketing in Airy and Tuhu Nugraha, one of the digital marketers that passionate in travelling. Nunung Rusmiati, Chairperson of the Indonesian Association of Tours and Travel Agencies (Asita) for the 2019-2024 period.

Researchers were also invited to several webinars held by Asita during this pandemic. This serves as an opportunity to interview and listen the arguments of Wishnutama Kusubandio, Indonesian Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, and H. Syaiful Huda, Chairperson of the House of Representatives Commission X overseeing Education, Sports, Tourism and Creative Economy. It is the government that plays a role in providing programs and regulations for the continuity of the travel business in Indonesia.

The other is Kurniawan Halim, CEO of Travel Wholesale Centre, a well experienced Travel Management Expert and specializing in marketing who has experiences for almost 20 years in travel industry both in Tour Leisure, MICE and Tour Wholesaler. Next is Veriyanta Kusuma, Head of Community and Social Marketing of Traveloka who has spent more than nine years assisting brands and organisations in partnering and building highly engaged user community through online and social media for different objectives which will benefit both users and the brand.

### **Result and Discussion**

Overcoming the obscurity in travel industries for unpredicted time, several researchers found the new normal behaviours. According to data from Mc & Kinsey (2020) about market insights during the Covid-19 pandemic, this disruptive reliance on remote technologies would bring changes in people's perspective about travelling. The rising of local accommodation unto the travelling health restrictions would take a bigger place to happen. Researchers have also stated before, that based on previous research that people would still be stuck by their anxiety of travelling, whereas the financial issues also take place. This is how consumers would perceive travelling unto the purpose until vaccine is found. This tourism crisis

had occurred also due to the outbreak of SARS and Avian Flu in Hongkong on 2015 (Senbeto & Hon, 2020).

Misleading information about the pandemic has been stated in the previous research on how people create misleading information that resulted in discrimination and brought effects on somehow people's perspectives (Jamal & Budke, 2020). Also, researchers found that the most critical issues on tourism industry right now are the declining number of tourist arrivals, that cause imbalances between demand and supply. No exception, wholesalers, offline travel agents, online travel agents, virtual hotel operators even tour travel agents also get affected by this pandemic.

Everyone is entering the obscurity in travel industry for unpredicted time, there is no certainty from WHO about this, Mr. Veri, Head of Community and Social Marketing in Traveloka said:

*"Travelling could live in its worth, when people are freely interacting each other, this business industry needs human-based movement, and feel, because it's a form of exploration. Imagine if there is no announcement from the health or even government to authorized, then how could market feel safe about travelling. It really takes time" Same opinions were made by Mr. Halim and Mr. Tuhu that more unto the findings of vaccine that would bring back the travel industry, but still company need time for recovery".*

In terms of being more realistic to the situation, researchers used Content Marketing Strategy to solve this problem first. Back then, Pullizi in his book Content Marketing Strategy reinforced his strategy on market research strength due to the digital data and market trends on search engine and other social platforms to know the market pain points and also to evaluate how things are performed. Combining the act of optimising and socialising would be the best practise to tackle down the misleading information and creating the new trends of travelling in society, this is more unto marketing and managerial approach. Researcher agree about best practise to focus on managerial and marketing segments (Senbeto & Hon, 2020).

#### *Create and Manage*

Pullizi said that implementing and delivering a good content in media is vital to the market, since it might cause the brand to be noticed in our customer's lives during this time. Discover the purpose of your message and create relevant message (Pulizzi, 2011) about the travelling issues and health stigma. This should be maintained by Government to restate the health regulations

applied to all business of travel agent and airport regulations, in order to maintain the tourism industry to take action on it. Also towards passengers whom health requirement should be enforced to.

Knowing the market's pain point would matter during this time. Main problems are the refund system of cancellation, anxiety traveller and the price elasticity. In order to solve the problem, researchers find out there's an emergency to address the customer support first. Due to the outbreak of Coronavirus, there are many cancellations and refund process on hold. Consequently, every business travel agent should give certainty to customers. The content approach would be focused more on 'how to' solve the case. This phase should retain customers' trust in the brand. In an interview with Head of Community and Social Marketing of Traveloka, Mr. Veri, he said:

*"Our social media is currently focused on solving the issue of refunds that are 10 times as many as our 40,000,000 customers, our focus is currently concerned with customers, there's a switch on our tagline Sehat Aja Dulu, Traveloka Kemudian".*

This solution has similarities with previous journals recently published during Coronavirus related to action should immediately take during Corona virus outbreak (Ranasinghe, et al., 2020). Moreover, during the session with Mr. Harris, Head of Marketing Airy, he spoke of content marketing urgency right now. He said:

*"Storytelling is needed, because emotional factors are more influential at this time, also it makes our brand more compelling than others, and it would make brand's personality more humane"*

Airy also practises it with tagline *"Mari Bersama Jaga Diri Untuk Melawan Pandemi"*. Researchers would suggest marketers also need to focus on starting to plan the substantial campaign for Post-Coronavirus means and think of new solution to create a trend in domestic travel. Marketing solution suggested by researchers is to focus on the long-term sales campaign management to increase the demand and transmission to the new trends of marketing.

Researchers suggest the use of subscribed business model for travelling sales, by providing payment features. This must be communicated with good idea, in ways of compelling storytelling content. This is confirmed by previous research about ways to improve the communication by managing the content, taking into account message relevancy of products/services to seasonal trends,

cycles of purchasing. Keeping in mind to take note to what customer preferences are, in order to make target audience be receptive on our message (Porcu, et.al., 2012)

#### *Optimize, Aggregate and Curate*

Researchers agree that the mobile is an effective channel or media to reach many users. Mobile devices, including smart phones and tablets could increase the productivities and efficiencies of business agent travels to maintaining the research and development of demand in society (Camilleri, 2016). It is important to always be communicating as stated by Odden (2012) in his book, according to state about good content marketing.

*“A good content marketing strategy calls for the development of purposeful content across the organization, including human resources, public relations, customer service, marketing, and sales. Content optimization for search and social media can be instrumental in helping that content become easier for intended audiences to find wherever they may be looking online” (p.143-144).”*

Urgently, this is how Traveloka manages its media of communication especially social media organically. Mr. Veri, Head of Community and Social Marketing in Traveloka said that they focus on minimizing the negative sentiment on social media. Try to regularly manage our communication through Instagram in calming ways right now. Show the market how is Traveloka responsible for responding to the trouble and attempts to solve the problem. “We focus on managing our own media, from SEO like blogs, FAQ, newsletter, pop up notification, in order to support our customers right now,” he said.

The importance of managing SEO due to the passive traffic is what Airy has done. According to the data, their blog traffic remains stable and increases in recent days. In an interview with head of Content & Design in Airy on ways to optimize, Mr. Harris Limanto said:

*“Blog can be a good asset in the long run towards our brand. Airy must inspire a broad audience with attractive destinations in Indonesia. Airy also supports government programs in developing tourism, so that Indonesia will be the most popular tourist destination, both for domestic and foreign tourists. We always state that our presence is budget solution for customer’s travel choice to market. Note to team in order to make content optimized, we need to focus on what topic will be raised, how about the keyword search volume. Research first to find out the right trend to be appointed; The number of articles produced must be stable like 500; don’t forget SEO writing techniques and write to impress Indonesia, make a*

*compelling title and filling out other essential things like image, address and any content but should be relevant to the keyword, trends and our target audiences”*

According to the previous research, to overcome this pandemic, there’s a need to organize effective system, medium and tools to communicate (Strielkowski, 2020). Hence, as market is now still in the moment of Coronavirus phase, we suggest every online travel agent collaborate with offline agent community to organize any online event at affordable price. Researcher found that local offering from cafes to music venues would be badly needed by society right now, according to the market preferences into the experience and entertainment needs. This has the same implication from previous research claimed that there’s an indeed market preferences on commercial entertainment (Peters, et all. 2020).

#### *Converse and Listen*

Odden (2012) in his book called Optimize stated that there is an importance to know in which media your target market are doing the discovery of your brands for researching before, during consumption until the engagement process. So, you could manage the well performed content for each sales funnel’s information, it’s good to be optimized for experience and credibility on search engine with your brand keyword. Last, optimized and socialized are indeed to maximize the communication. This is how Airy maximizes their business by strengthening the community. Knowing which platform would perform best for some occasion.

*“Our social media are focused on building the brand awareness and loyalty. Facebook has strong point on community, usually we’re sharing and creating page for them regularly to inform them regarding sales and discount. Twitter for updating several trending places. Instagram more focus on travelling recommendation. Blog is for the fun articles, news and update about Airy. Youtube basically for review, mostly on paid media. Tiktok more unto the entertainment.”*

Similar to Airy movement and effort, in this pandemic, Traveloka also uses the social media. Traveloka is convinced that they’re respecting their consumers, they know this time customers tend to complain about using Instagram, Mr Veri, Head of Community and Social Marketing of Traveloka, explained to us:

*“Social media is our company image, we really need to consider it now. Mostly, during this time our customers tend to contact us through*

*Instagram, not customer service, they reach us through comment or direct message complaining about their problems. During this hard time, we really value those who support us on social media, we're simply replying, retweet and mention them, we're still not activating the robots to reply, since we know this how personal touch matters to all eyes who see the interactions. We're ready and prepare the solution case, like customer service steps to handle their problem, our social media team must understand and recognise it."*

During this hard time, researchers would suggest online travel to analyze the function of every media touch point. Moreover, all content brief should be prepared to handle the complaint replacing the customer service. Be sure to prepare the workflow answer for every problem that might appear. Another thing is that researchers suggest that every customer support can address customer's problem by being available in website. Online travel agents should update their website, from the landing page, background to support health and government campaign during this Covid-19. More communicative in visualization also towards the content. Optimizing keyword that is relevant to their pain points, example: Refund Ticket and the company name. Use Google Analytics to know users' behavior on the website.

#### *Measure and Learn*

In this dimension, the online travel management needs to gauge the success of content to drive sales, save costs, engage customers. These four things must be based on the main objectives of content marketing, such as the branding perspective. Mr. Veri, Head of Community and Social Marketing of Traveloka convinced us about more into customer-centric:

*"We need to realize that travel businesses are rising because there's a movement between us as human doing things, we can't avoid this but this happens since the lockdown restrictions, everything seems hard to figure out in this industry. So, right now we're still focusing on how to satisfy our customers due to the refund process. We believe that, appearing to be responsible to audience, same as earning an advocacy to our brand. Instead of pivoting to other non-relevant business, it's better to be prepared for the next step, because what matters is our consumer's trust."*

Another arguments from Mr. Yusti, digital marketing Airy remind us that we should remember that customers deserve to be satisfied with the experience that we offer. During this time, it's non sense if we're actively doing campaign

without any upgrade services. So, now we need to focus on our customers, and actually SEO does its role now. We're quite satisfied since day one we're working on it, he said. Researcher also received a statement from Mr. Tuhu about decision that should be taken right now:

*"Find more ways to engage with us as traveller, for me it seems not relevant if you're suggesting us to travel this time. It's better to show up and give sympathy. Focus on your brand management right now, how to be the top of mind in market during this hard time, create content to interact with them."*

Sense of art from (Putra, et al., 2019) in his research said that the common goals of communicating CSR in Tourism Industry companies communicated mostly to internal stakeholders; employees and owner, to customers, and the local community. However, there was no specific policy on contents. The relationships, reputation, and branding are the most common goals of communicating. In order to create demand during this hard time, researcher suggests it's good to strengthen the community based to form up collaboration with offline travel agent. While listening to the market intent and always doing research on what is the new normal behaviour, since until now we never know how would the behaviour exactly become later on. Urgently In measurement and learn dimension (Oisina & Sugianto, 2017) show that the result obtained from STP analysis theory can be used to develop branding strategy . The innovation is founded in tourism and development of tourism product like village and religious tourism that can be applied to Indonesia tourism.

During this coronavirus pandemic, every online travel agent needs to think again of what is the purpose of their communication. Researcher suggests that they focus on optimizing both earned and owned media, to gain awareness, optimizing customer support, nurturing your audience and then last, when the pandemic is over, start doing an upsell service but in affordable price for loyalty packages and other premium discounts. It could be started from making a creative viral content marketing, telling stories of Indonesia history through cartoon movies about Indonesia fairy tale from Sabang to Merauke.

Cartoon had proved effective to entertain market as it conducts entertainment to entertain, but actually more affects users unto the cognitive approach (Manaf & Alallan, 2017). Ms. Nunung Rusmiati said that Asita is optimistic that Indonesian tourism can rise again after this pandemic can be handled well. In addition, the

recovery period after the Covid-19 pandemic is a collective holiday shift to the end of the year, considering that at the end of the year the Covid-19 Pandemic is estimated to have been handled properly.

### Conclusion

Create successful content as crisis mitigation in tourism industry during the Covid 19 pandemic needs four stages as framework of a human driven process (facilitated by technology) to close the loop. Matiza (2020) explained essential insights into the importance of mitigating the perceived risk factors currently influencing tourism, particularly within the short to medium term, hence providing tourism marketers impetus to seek to address the current evolving consumer trend(s) related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Pedagogically, this paper contributes to the burgeoning body of knowledge related to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis and tourism. In the absence of research on tourist behaviour in light of a global crisis of the magnitude of the Covid-19 pandemic, the present paper as a primer to broader research identifies a significant gap

The findings from this research show several aspects to create successful content media. During pandemic situation and conditions, it is really important that message we show reflects empathy for what has happened. The media that attracts a lot to the transfer of marketing content to this media is online media. The Covid 19 pandemic makes people stay at home, not travel and keep physical distance from one another. Therefore, the effect of this pandemic has the potential to generate new habits for people who like to travel to stay in a place that is used for a vacation rather than a walk to see the scenery.

In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, the Indonesian Government is also trying to be well occupied with effective information and ways to overcome this Pandemic by issuing health and hygiene regulations. During this time, researcher had mentioned suggestion to create Viral Content Marketing with cartoon approach telling about Indonesia heritage, for example, fairy tale from each region. The most important thing is finding ways to be more attractive for creating the trends, and always consider the targeted people who will read.

Tourism practitioners need to be consistently reflexive to recognise and respond to changes in the tourism market. The suggestions for practitioners and academics who want to use topic of content marketing for further research can conduct deeper research in the recovery communication approach when the pandemic is

over. Deepening the recovery process will provide insight and direction for the travel industry, especially online travel management in managing their businesses.

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