# Hotel's Strict Restriction of Outside Meals Arrangement during Pandemic Covid-19: An Evaluative Study

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## Abstract

*The implementation of global health protocols is carried out by hotel management with the aim of limiting the spread of the virus; one of them is CHSE certification. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the strict prohibition or restriction on bringing food and drinks from outside the hotel during the pandemic. Rules whose original purpose is to secure guest safety essentially have an impact on increasing complaints and negative reviews from hotel guests. Sources of data in this study are primary data, namely the results of interviews with Front Office Staff, Front Office Supervisors and Front Office Managers, as well as secondary data obtained from online travel agents in the form of guest complaints. The analytical technique used is narrative analysis where the data is presented in the form of a narrative or story. In this study, it was analyzed using four evaluation indicators, namely: context evaluation, input evaluation, process evaluation, and outcome evaluation. The results of this study indicate that the strict restriction policy on bringing food and drinks from outside the hotel during the pandemic has not been in accordance with its objectives, so the program does not run optimally and needs to be discontinued.*

*Keywords: pandemic covid-19, food and drink, hotel, outside meals arrangement*

## Abstrak

*Pandemi COVID-19 membawa perubahan tata kelola pada industri hospitaliti, terutama perhotelan. Penerapan protokol kesehatan global dilakukan oleh manajemen hotel dengan tujuan untuk membatasi penyebaran virus; salah satunya adalah sertifikasi CHSE (cleanliness, health, safety, and environment sustainability). Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengevaluasi larangan ketat membawa makanan dan minuman dari luar hotel selama masa pandemi. Aturan yang tujuan awalnya untuk mengamankan keselamatan tamu justru berdampak pada meningkatkan keluhan dan ulasan negatif dari para tamu hotel. Sumber data dalam penelitian ini adalah data primer yaitu hasil wawancara dengan Staff Front Office, Front Office Supervisor dan Front Office Manager, serta data sekunder yang didapatkan dari online travel agent berupa keluhan tamu. Teknik analisis yang digunakan adalah analisis naratif dimana data yang disajikan dalam bentuk narasi atau cerita. Pada penelitian ini dianalisis menggunakan Teori Arikunto & Jabar (2008) mencakup empat indikator evaluasi yaitu: evaluasi konteks, evaluasi input, evaluasi proses, dan evaluasi hasil. Hasil penelitian ini*

*menunjukkan bahwa kebijakan larangan ketat membawa makanan dan minuman dari luar hotel selama masa pandemi belum sesuai dengan tujuan, sehingga program tidak berjalan dengan maksimal dan perlu dikaji ulang untuk tidak dilanjutkan.*

***Kata kunci:*** *pandemi Covid-19, makanan dan minuman, hotel, pengaturan makanan dari luar*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The global hospitality industry has been disrupted by the health catastrophe caused by the COVID-19 disease epidemic. The current pandemic has prompted the government to impose strict measures to stop the spread of the virus. According to the Indonesian health authorities, preventive and curative measures should be taken in situations of ambiguity and lack of knowledge through a four-phase progressive and asymmetric de-escalation procedure (Rachmadizal et al., 2022). Various adaptation, innovation, network building, and sustainability planning initiatives were done by culinary business players to be resilient throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (Kristina, 2020; Munthe, 2015). The implementation of global health protocols is carried out by hotel management with the aim of limiting the spread of the virus; one of them is CHSE (cleanliness, health, safety, and environment sustainability) certification. A model by Robina-Ramírez et al. (2021) offer four factors that have been previously evaluated among hotel managers in the tourism industry worldwide. The theories lead to four relevant conclusions: (1) Various trainings are needed to create a competent crisis management team committed to customer health and safety. (2) Health protocols should be followed and changed gradually, not only at hotels but also at tourist arrivals. (3) Health measurement must be updated regularly. (5) Every hotel must implement a monitoring system to ensure the safety of its customers.

These four factors focus on ensuring the health and safety of guests during their stay. In this regard, one of the hotels in the Nusa Dua area with a relatively stable occupancy rate during the pandemic also implemented a policy of regulating food and drinks for guests staying. During the pandemic, this hotel has a policy where hotel guests are not allowed to bring food or drinks from outside. This policy is implemented because the hotel aims to ensure comfort and maintain the safety and health of guests and employees. Initially, the strict policy that prohibited guests from bringing food and drinks from outside was made to prevent viruses and bacteria that might contaminate the food and drinks. Besides that, the hotel finds it difficult to track food and beverage ordering transactions, which are largely done online using digital apps like Go-Food, Grab-Food, or Shopee Food.

However, over time the policy reaped many pros and cons from hotel guests who were dominated by domestic guests, which then led to the emergence of several complaints and dissatisfaction from staying guests. According to a discussion with the guest experience manager, guests mostly complain because of the complex procedures when they insist on ordering food from outside the hotel. They have to complete certain forms, their food has to be opened and checked repeatedly by hotel employees, there are even some types of food that are not allowed into the hotel for security reasons. In addition, guest comment record in the Guest Experience section of the hotel during 2021 related to this policy include: guests feel disappointed and discriminated against by employees when bringing food from outside the hotel, hotel policies that are considered bad and unreasonable, these policies are not listed on social media or on confirmation letters so that guests feel cheated, and limited choices of food and drinks at the hotel so that guests feel forced to shop at the hotel.

In general, this policy does not get a positive response from staying guests and is considered a pretext for the hotel to get more profit by ignoring guest satisfaction. There were even some negative guest reviews with a fairly straightforward impression that were published on several digital platforms, as shown in Figure 1.
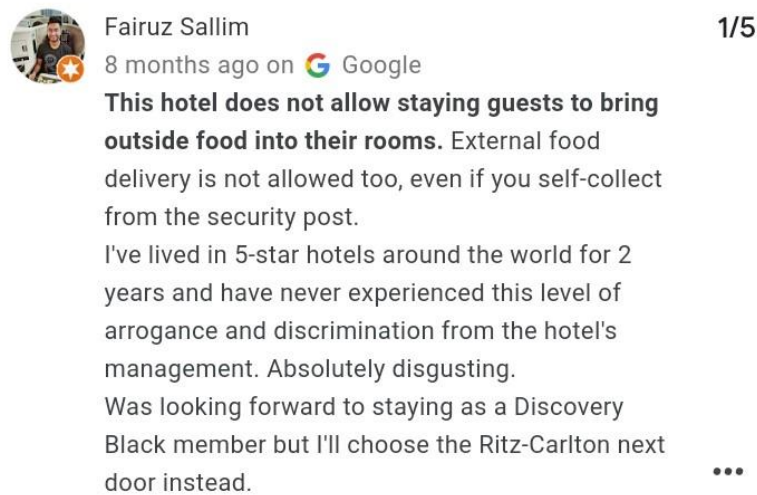
Figure 1. Guest Reviews on Online Travel Agent
[Source: Hotel Website]

According to Figure 1, it can be seen that the guest has been staying in five-star hotels around the world for two years but was disappointed when staying at this hotel due to very strict food and beverage regulations. For guests who insist on consuming food from outside the hotel, the hotel provides an option where guests must fill out a form called the Outside Food Disclaimer Form. The form contains guest identification such as guest name, room number, and the amount and type of food brought by the guest. However, it is still not effective, because many guests are reluctant to fill out the form.

The number of negative guest responses regarding the application of food and beverage arrangements from outside the hotel which is very strict and not pro to guests makes this rule or policy need to be re-evaluated because it is not in accordance with the original purpose of this rule. The rules that are intended to ensure the safety and security of guests while on vacation actually cause dissatisfaction and disappointment. Therefore, this rule or policy needs to be evaluated as soon as possible so that it does not continue and drag on. According to Dye (2013), policy evaluation is an assessment of the effectiveness of the overall program in achieving goals, or an assessment of the relative effectiveness of two or more policies to meet similar objectives. Research on policy evaluation is an objective, systematic, empirical examination of the impact of current policies on policy targets, in achieving policy objectives.

Several previous empirical studies have been conducted to evaluate the policy. Chan et al. (2021) investigates updates in service standards in hotels: how COVID-19 changed operations. The purpose of this research is to investigate into changes in hotel service standards, management decision-making processes, and future planning. This study interviews 24 hotel managers from mainland China and Hong Kong using grounded theory methods. It investigates the distinctions between hotels of various operating kinds, categories, and locations, as well as the service standards in physical and social services offered. Considering the severity and extent of the COVID-19 pandemic, policy actions are required at each process, such as adhering to regulatory guidelines and revising local standard operating procedures. According to the study, hotel management should update and apply well-thought-out standards based on relevant scientific information. Hotels, for example, should implement LSOPs in accordance with local restrictions. Hotels are also advised to put in more effort and focus on service innovation, guest experience, and improving hospitability.

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Another research was done by Hao et al. (2020). This exploratory research examines the overall effects of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on China's hotel business. A COVID-19 management framework is presented to cover the anti-pandemic stages, principles, and methods. This study also predicts that COVID-19 will have a substantial and long-term impact on four important elements of China's hotel industry: multi-business and multi-channels, product design and investment preference, digital and intelligent transformation, and market restructuring. Hotels must develop a responsive and efficient standard operating procedure (SOP) to improve disaster management skills in dealing with calamities such as natural disasters and crises (e.g., epidemics, explosions, fires, violence, robbery, critical illness, and death). Hotels that have dealt with a certain type of disaster will have a greater grasp of the disaster and will be better equipped to deal with a similar event in the future.

Bhrammanachote (2021) analyses COVID-19'S Impact Towards Hotel Businesses and policies. The goal of this study is to create a sustainable strategy for Chiang Mai's local hospitality enterprises to avoid risk during the Covid 19 crisis and become resilient when the situation recovers. The intention of this study is to determine whether local hospitality businesses in Chiang Mai are employing a sustainable or survival approach in response to the global pandemic crisis. Five hotels in the province of Chiang Mai were chosen for the study, and the results were triangulated to provide ideas for a sustainable strategy. In the province of Chiang Mai, 400 questionnaires were sent to 85 hotels, including 8 of 5 star hotels, 47 of 4 star hotels, and 30 of 3 star hotels. The findings of this study are hotels can be sustainable in the long run if the government develops an atmosphere that encourages a healthy and intelligent company to take proactive efforts to ensure the well-being of its employees.

Some of the empirical research presented is still limited and has not been carried out in the hospitality sector, particularly in food and beverage aspect (Hapsari & Baiquni, 2022; Le & Phi, 2021; Muksin, 2019). Although most research focuses on economic hazards and their effects on tourist flows and economic profitability, few specifically explore the safety and health precautions that hotel management should provide to their customers (Awan et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2021). Thus, the researchers are interested in researching the evaluation of policies on prohibiting food and drinks from outside during the pandemic. This is important to investigate because the purpose of this policy was not achieved, which was indicated by the emergence of many guest complaints.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

The analytical technique used in this study is a narrative analysis technique. The use of narrative analysis where data is presented in the form of narratives or stories, for example in this study where this study uses the results of interviews and is poured in written form. This study refers to the evaluation of policies implemented in hotels during the pandemic. Policy is a series of actions that have a specific purpose that is followed and carried out by an actor or group of actors in order to solve a certain problem and produce a conclusion.

According to Arikunto & Safrudin (2009), there are four indicators to evaluate rules or policies or programs that will determine the effectiveness of these rules to achieve the specified goals. These four indicators are used as parameters in this study, including:

1) Context Evaluation. Context evaluation is an attempt to describe and detail the environment, needs met, populations and samples served, and program objectives. Context evaluation was conducted to answer the question "What are the objectives and reasons for the prohibition against bringing food and drinks from outside?"

2) Input Evaluation. Evaluation Input (input) aims to measure, translate and validate the course of a program. The input evaluation was carried out to answer the question

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"What is the goal or reason to be achieved with the policy of prohibiting the bringing of food and drinks from outside?"

3) Process Evaluation. Process evaluation is directed at how far the activities carried out in the program have been carried out according to the plan. The input evaluation was carried out to answer the question "Is the policy of prohibiting food and drink from outside running or operating optimally?"

4) Results Evaluation. Evaluation of results or products is an assessment carried out to measure success in achieving the goals that have been set. The resulting data will determine whether the program is continued, modified or terminated. Evaluation of results is carried out to answer the question "Are the results achieved in accordance with the objectives?"

The data collection technique in this study is through interviews with several parties such as front office employees, front office supervisors, and front office managers. In qualitative research, the researcher directly acts as a research instrument so there is no need to test the validity and reliability. Therefore, triangulation of data becomes important to do in qualitative research. Triangulation of sources is taken to be able to photograph phenomena from various points of view, so as to enrich the discussion and research findings. The research was conducted for three months, from May to August 2022.

## 3.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
## 3.1 Data Description

Table 1: Results of Interviews with Key Informants
[Source: processed data]

| Indicator | Question | *Front Office Staff* | *Supervisor* | *Front Office Manager* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Context Evaluation | What are the goals or reasons you want to achieve with the No Meal Allowed policy? | The goal is hygiene, to avoid cross-contamination from outside food | The goal to be achieved is comfort and safety for all guests and employees who are at the hotel | One form of hotel prevention is to reduce contamination in terms of hygiene and sanitation. |
| Input Evaluation | How do guests react to the No Meal Allowed policy? | Various responses such as accepting and also not accepting the policy. | Guests feel disappointed because they cannot bring food. | Not all guests accept this policy. |
| Process Evaluation | Is this policy running or operating optimally? | Enough maximum, but during the course of this policy is not spared from protests or complaints that come. | It did not run optimally, some guests who came to the hotel did not accept this policy. | Not optimal, some guests have not and cannot accept the policies that the hotel applies. |
| Result Evaluation | Are the results achieved in accordance with the objectives? | The results obtained are not appropriate because guests are not satisfied with | The results obtained are not appropriate because of the emergence of complaints. | The desired result of the hotel is not quite appropriate. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | the No Meal Allowed policy. |

Data obtained through interview and documentation techniques. Interviews were conducted for three days in June 2022 based on four program evaluation indicators, namely: context evaluation, input evaluation, process evaluation, and outcome evaluation. The results of the interviews can be seen in Table 1 above.

The three informants had almost the same answers, namely that the purpose of the rules or policies for the prohibition of bringing food and drinks from outside was as a form of preventing viral or bacterial contamination into the hotel. This is due to a situation where every hotel must have strict health protocols. In the input evaluation indicator, three informants stated that the reactions of guests who visited or stayed at the hotel had varied reactions, some understood the purpose of the policy, but some could not accept and even felt disappointed with the rules or policies prohibiting bringing food and drinks from outside. . Furthermore, the informant stated that the policy was not optimal due to the emergence of many complaints from guests, so it can be concluded that when the policy was implemented many guests could not accept the policy. In the results evaluation indicators, it can be seen that the results obtained with the rules or policies prohibiting bringing food and drinks from outside are not in line with hotel expectations, where the hotel expects guests who will come or stay to feel comfortable and safe while in the hotel area but in reality guests feel dissatisfied and even disappointed with the policy rules or policies that prohibit bringing food and drinks from outside.

## 3.2 Discussion

From the results of interviews with key informants who play a role in the formulation and execution of rules or policies that prohibit bringing food and drinks from outside, it can be analyzed as follows:

Based on the results of interviews from Front Office Staff, Supervisors, Front Office Managers on context indicators it was found that the goals carried out by the hotel were not appropriate. The hotel avoids contamination caused by food or drinks brought by guests from outside, but the hotel allows guests to still bring food from outside by filling out the form provided. This makes the policy only a prohibition that is not strictly implemented. The form contains guest identification such as guest name, guest room number, amount and type of food to be brought by the guest, as well as the guest's signature. The hotel provides the form to avoid complaints from guests. Filling out the form is especially provided for guests who have complained constantly and feel aggrieved by the policy, but some guests do not want to fill out the form for various reasons. The consequence when a guest fills out the form is that if something unexpected happens, it will not be the responsibility of the hotel. Based on guest reviews or comments on online travel agents that the policy should be listed on social media or e-mail so that all guests who want to stay can know about the policy and can make the right decision. In fact, guests have never received information or notifications related to the prohibition of bringing food and drinks from outside, even some guests claim that they were not informed by the receptionist during the check-in process.

From the results of interviews with informants on the input evaluation indicators it was found that guests did not accept the policy and responded in a negative way. The hotel responded to complaints by explaining that the policy was in place during the pandemic because the hotel wanted to maintain the comfort of other guests. However, guests who have complaints are not satisfied, so the hotel finally advises guests to eat out without having to be brought into the hotel. The limited availability of food is also one of the reasons why guests want to order food from outside. This is a problem where the hotel does not provide certain food choices, there is a limited variety of food menus at expensive prices.

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In the process evaluation indicators, it can be found that the policy handling process did not run optimally properly. The ban on bringing food and drinks from outside the hotel is also intended for visiting guests. When employees handle guests who have just arrived at the hotel by checking guest luggage, guest luggage is opened and taken during inspection. Guests who bring food are reprimanded in a manner that is not polite by employees so that the guest feels disappointed and discriminated against. In fact, they never received any information about the existence of this kind of regulation. From the results of interviews on the results evaluation indicators, it can be found that the desired results are not suitable, other indicators are not in accordance with what is expected by the hotel.

From the results of the analysis of the four indicators, it can be concluded that the policy of the prohibition of bringing food and drinks from outside the hotel aims to reduce viral and bacterial contamination in terms of hygiene and sanitation. Especially during the pandemic, the hotel wants guests and employees who work to feel safe and comfortable. However, during the process, guests gave different reactions to this policy, resulting in obstacles as described previously. What's more, this rule or policy is not informed from the beginning of the room reservation so that guests are not aware of the policy and feel cheated. Thus, the policy of prohibiting the bringing of food and drink from outside did not run effectively and was not in accordance with the original purpose of this policy.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis using the evaluation theory of Arikunto & Safrudin (2009) which includes four evaluation indicators, it can be concluded that the policy or prohibition of bringing food and drinks from outside the hotel should be stopped. This is due to several considerations, including: a) The objectives and reasons for the prohibition of bringing food and drinks from outside were not achieved, b) The rules or policies for the prohibition of bringing food and drinks from outside did not work or operate optimally, c) The results achieved not in accordance with the purpose because it causes a negative response from guests who are dominated by domestic tourists. In order to ensure the safety and health of guests while traveling and staying at hotels during the pandemic, it is hoped that hotels can make policies or rules that focus on guest needs in accordance with current conditions and emphasize transparency of rules so that guests get complete information.

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