

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF SMALL TOURISM BUSINESS FACING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN AMED KARANGASEM, BALI

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the strategy of tourism business actors in Bali's Amed Karangasem area to run their business during a pandemic. Data was obtained by conducting in-depth interviews and distributing questionnaires to tourism business actors. Results of data analysis showed that employers will continue to do the same business by reducing employees. There are also layoffs of employees, salary cuts, and significant discounts to customers to be able to get through the pandemic. Business actors will change their business strategies. Tourism businesses in Amed are faced with financial problems. The most significant financial issues during the pandemic are not being able to pay salaries/wages (66.7%), debt payments (20%), bill costs and other financial problems (13.3%). The implication of this study is to design more resilient business strategies that will help small business owners in the tourism sector in Amed Bali survive future crises. This study's theoretical implications contribute to our understanding of how small tourism businesses respond to crises and government policies. In contrast, its practical implications offer actionable recommendations to improve the resilience and support for businesses in the Amed region and potentially in similar tourism-dependent areas.

Keywords: survival strategy, tourism business, SME

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an industry that is very vulnerable to issues related to politics, security, disease outbreaks, and natural disasters. At the end of 2019, the world was shocked by the emergence of a new type of virus that changed the existing order, starting with Wuhan, China, which reported its first case of severe infection caused by the virus. In early 2020, the virus known as COVID-19 quickly spread

worldwide, affecting all aspects of human life. The fields of health, education, economy, social order, and others have all been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tourism activities greatly support the economy in Bali. According to data from BPS, economic growth in all regencies and cities has decreased, especially from 2018 to 2020. As shown in the following table.

Table 1: GDP / Regency / City Economic Growth in Bali Province (Percent)

Regency/City	Year		
	2018	2019	2020
Jembrana	5,59	5,56	-4,96
Tabanan	5,71	5,59	-6,14
Badung	6,73	5,81	-16,52
Gianyar	6,01	5,61	-8,38
Klungkung	5,48	5,42	-6,35
Bangli	5,48	5,46	-4,10
Karangasem	5,44	5,50	-4,45
Buleleng	5,60	5,53	-5,76
Denpasar	6,42	5,82	-9,42

From these data, it can be explained that the 2020 economic growth in Bali is minus. Badung Regency, which relies most on tourism sector GDP, experienced a significant decline of minus 16.52%. This indicator shows that tourism has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. It can also indicate that Bali is highly dependent on the tourism business.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the government issue policies that limit community activities to reduce the spread of the virus. Starting in 2020, various policies limiting community activities, such as lockdowns, Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB), and the Implementation of Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM) which limit community movement and affect the flow of human movement. This dramatically affects the number of tourist visits to all tourist destinations. The decrease in the number of visitors and even the absence of visitors resulted in a decrease in the income sector for tourism business actors.

Data on tourist arrivals at the peak of the pandemic 19 is shown by the movement of tourist arrivals at Bali's Ngurah Rai International Airport. General Manager of PT Angkasa Pura I (Persero) I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport - Bali stated that in May 2020, a total of 8,829 passengers were served. If broken down again, the figure narrows to 5,099 passengers from domestic routes and

3,730 passengers from international routes. Statistics in May 2020 experienced a sharp decrease compared to records in April 2020, with 94,480 passengers. (<https://bali-airport.com/id> accessed April 19, 2022)

For passenger movement records in May 2020, with a total number of passengers of 8.829 passengers with a division of 3.730 passengers on international routes and 5.099 passengers on domestic routes, if compared with passenger statistics in May 2019, where there were 1.736.396 passengers, there was a decrease of 99,5%, or there was a difference of 1.727.567 passengers (<https://bali-airport.com/en/news/index/januari-mei-bandara-i-gusti-ngurah-rai-layani-4-77-juta-penumpang> accessed April 19, 2022). This is an indicator that tourist arrivals to Bali have decreased sharply. The result is a decline in the income of the tourism sector, which is the mainstay in various regions in Bali, including the Karangasem district.

According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics of Bali Province, the decline in GDP of Karangasem Regency reached a value of -4,45 (table 1) overall. The COVID-19 pandemic caused this decline. One of the regional revenues of Karangasem Regency is from the tourism sector. Tourism potential in Karangasem Regency is quite a lot, including cultural tourism (heritage), natural and marine tourism, and agro-tourism. In addition to

cultural arts inherited by the community for generations, the combination of rice fields, valleys, coastlines, and mountains is a natural panorama that adds to the attractiveness of Karangasem Regency. Moreover, this area has its characteristics and uniqueness, including Besakih Temple, the most prominent Hindu holy place on the Island of the Gods.

This stretch of beach in the eastern region of Karangasem extends to Tulamben village, which is included in the Kubu sub-district. Right in the village of Tulamben, there is a famous diving spot, namely the skeleton of a historic ship in the form of the wreck of the Liberty Ship type USAT (US Army Transport), which sank in 1942 during the Second World War. Japanese submarine torpedo guns hit this ship. The location of the Liberty Shipwreck is about 25 meters from the shore and is at a depth of about 30 meters above sea level. When divers plunge into the water, at that point, we will see shipwrecks that have rusted with age. To reach this spot, divers must depart from the shore using boats that are already available.

This shipwreck has become a habitat for thousands of fish and coral reefs. The location of this shipwreck is a favorite snorkeling and scuba diving spot in Amed and Tulamben. Because there is a variety of coral reef life and a large number of fish, in addition, divers can see sea turtles, stingrays, and reef sharks. This spot is the mainstay of the destination and attracts many tourists to visit this region to do marine activities such as diving, snorkeling, and other activities. The coastal areas of Amed, Jemeluk, and Tulamben are in the eastern part of Karangasem Regency. It is located approximately 15 km from Amlapura City – the capital of Karangasem regency, 33 km from Candidasa tourist attractions, and ±78 km from Denpasar City. This tourist attraction is included in the development of the Tulamben tourism area. The main attraction of this tourist

attraction is the underwater panorama that stores the potential beauty of coral reefs with various types of ornamental fish.

The market share of international tourists who are interested in special interest tourism activities in the Amed and Jemeluk Tourism Areas so far are foreign tourists from countries in Western Europe, such as France, Germany, and England, and not a few who come from the Far East Asia region such as Japan, China, and Korea. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, foreign tourist visits have become exceedingly reduced and even non-existent. Since the closure of Bali from international flights on April 2, 2020, with the enactment of the Regulation of the Minister of Law and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia Number 11 of 2020 concerning the Temporary Ban on Foreigners Entering the Territory of the Republic of Indonesia, the east coast of Bali has become empty of visitors. Foreign tourists, the region's most prominent visitors, can no longer visit Amed. This dramatically impacts the existing tourism businesses in this region.

Hotels, restaurants, diving shops, and other small businesses were severely affected, forcing them to try to keep their businesses afloat. Businesses that can survive in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic certainly have a strong survival strategy. The community, such as small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the government, inevitably have to be able to prepare themselves to anticipate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The problems during the COVID-19 pandemic were drastically declining sales, difficulties in capital, hampered distribution and production, and a lack of knowledge about digitalization in business.

This research used small businesses in Amed, Karangasem, because it is the most affected by the pandemic from the preliminary survey

that has been conducted. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) generally are defined based on criteria and characteristics that can be in the form of the number of workers used, the amount of capital and turnover from the activities produced, and can also be defined based on the characteristics of MSMEs, such as business scale, a technology used, organization and management, market orientation and so on (Nurhaliza, 2021).

According to Damai et al. (2020), in their research, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is the shift of the company's financial system to zero-based budgeting. The second is the existence of massive layoffs in various companies. The third effect is the production chaos experienced by various companies. The fourth effect is a decrease in the productivity of the company. The latest impact is the company's collapse due to bankruptcy caused by the company's inability to survive amid a pandemic. Various negative impacts show the struggle made by the business sector to survive during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Therefore, the survival strategy of tourism business actors, in particular, is essential to pay attention to in dealing with COVID-19 to maintain their business's sustainability.

Ulya (2020) revealed that the right business strategy to market products during the COVID-19 pandemic is through electronic media, where producers and consumers do not meet directly in one place but have an extensive marketing reach.

This is in line with Arifqi's research (2020), which shows that the strategy that can be done is MSME digitalization activities to recover the Indonesian economy during the COVID-19 pandemic (Arifqi, 2021). Previous research conducted by Hardilawati (2020) and Firdaus (2021) also focused on digital marketing as a survival strategy for MSMEs facing the COVID-19 pandemic. Aladejebi (2020), in his research,

revealed the effects of the pandemic and MSME survival strategies in Nigeria. The results showed that respondents observed the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic, including a decrease in income, a reduction in staff salaries, and the government not doing enough to reduce the spread of the Pandemic. The problem faced by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is the inability to repay loans, rent, and salaries. Respondents suggested that the government should lower interest rates, loosen borrowing, and pay taxes.

The previous research found that the digitalization strategy is an alternative widely used by business actors to survive the VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) situation. Meanwhile, Aladejebi showed the impact of the pandemic and the survival strategy of SMEs in Nigeria. The study results will be used as a comparison and guideline to direct the research to be carried out.

From the background described above, this study aims to determine the survival strategy of tourism business actors in the Amed region in maintaining their business, particularly knowing how tourism business actors manage their business to survive the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the research will be used as consideration to determine the strategies that will be carried out by tourism business actors in Amed in order to maintain their business after the pandemic has passed.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used mixed methods; mixed methods research is a research approach that combines qualitative and quantitative research methods and data collection techniques in one study. This approach seeks to provide a more thorough understanding of the research problem by utilizing the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

According to Sugiyono (2019:126), the population is a generalization area consisting of objects/subjects with specific quantities and characteristics set by researchers to study and then draw conclusions. The population in this study is tourism business actors in the Amed Karangasem tourist destination area. Consists of hotel or lodging tourism business actors, diving equipment rentals, snorkeling, and restaurant entrepreneurs.

The sampling technique used is purposive sampling. The considerations used in this study are tourism business actors in the hotel or lodging business, restaurant entrepreneurs, and diving equipment rental businesses.

Data collection is the primary step before an interactive data analysis process. Idrus (2009: 148) revealed that qualitative data is data from phenomena, words, photos, behavior, and daily attitudes obtained from observations using voice recorders, cameras, and video tapes. Data collection techniques used in this study include observation, interview, questionnaire, and documentation.

The analysis in this study was carried out with a descriptive approach. In descriptive analysis, research identifies the characteristics of the observed phenomenon or explores the possible relationship between two or more phenomena (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Data Description

Primary data were obtained by distributing questionnaires to 30 tourism

business actors (table 4). In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with informants. The informant is a tourist business of accommodation, restaurants, and small and micro snorkeling equipment rental. The informants who owned accommodation businesses comprised four people, restaurant entrepreneur's one person, and equipment rentals one person.

In-depth interviews were conducted to determine how they maintained their business during the pandemic and the obstacles they experienced. In addition, the data unearthed related to their readiness to continue their tourism business after the pandemic has passed and their expectations for regulators, in this case, the government.

Respondents are tourism business actors in the Amed Karangasem area who have experienced the impact of the pandemic for two years. Tourism businesses that were respondents in this study amounted to thirty tourism businesses. Consists of hotel and accommodation businesses totaling 16 businesses, café or restaurant, eight businesses, and rental of marine game equipment totaling six businesses.

The scale of the tourism business is divided into small and micro businesses. Business criteria are adjusted to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No.20 of 2008 concerning MSMEs. Article 6 concerns the value of net worth or the value of assets excluding land and buildings of business premises or annual sales proceeds.

Table2: Validity Test Results
[Source: Results of research data processing in 2022]

No	Pearson Correlation r-calculate	r-table	Significance Value	Description r-calculate > r-table
1	0,384	0,361	0,036	Valid
2	0,405	0,361	0,027	Valid
3	0,606	0,361	0,000	Valid
4	0,392	0,361	0,032	Valid
5	0,382	0,361	0,037	Valid

6	0,624	0,361	0,000	Valid
7	0,731	0,361	0,000	Valid

Before the questionnaire is distributed, it is tested for validity and reliability. Based on the results of the instrument test with the distribution of questionnaires to 30 respondents, as in Table 2, it can be seen that all

questionnaire indicators in this study are valid because they have a correlation coefficient value of more than 0,30.

Reliability Test showed that r-calculate value > r-table, as shown in the table below.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Item	Rxy	r-table	Description
8	0,599	0,361	Reliable

3.2 Discussion

The questionnaire was distributed to 30 respondents from three types of tourism businesses: accommodation

businesses, restaurants, and dive shop rental businesses. The measurement scale using the lowest number is one and the highest is four.

Table 4. Questionnaire Tabulation Results
[Source: Results of research data processing in 2022]

No	Statement	Mean
1	Is there a reduction in employees in your business during the pandemic?	3,26
2	Did you pay employees in full during the COVID-19 pandemic?	1,2
3	Are there any plans to recall employees when the business recovers?	2,1
4	Do you expect to continue in the same business for the next one year?	3,1
5	Do you plan to change the way you do business after the pandemic is over? using digital media, WFH etc)	2,9
6	Do you agree with government policies related to the COVID-19 pandemic (PPKM, Lockdown, etc.....)?	2,6
7	Did you receive any assistance from the government during the pandemic?	2,16

In the statement, whether employers reduced the number of employees during the pandemic, an average score of 3.26 was obtained from the highest score of 4. It can be assumed that most businesses reduce the number

of employees. Although some businesses still retain employees, the strategy taken by each business actor is different. The interviews show that tourism business actors who still retain their employees survive by reducing the number of

employee jobs. Workload and person hours are reduced by half. This strategy is used in order to reduce payments to employees. This can be seen in statement No. 2 on the questionnaire, which asks whether tourism businesses fully pay their employees. The average answer gets an average of 1.2, which means they strongly disagree. No tourist business owner fully pays his employees. This is a very reasonable consequence due to reduced income in the business.

Most tourism businesses that have laid off employees say they have no plans to recall them. This can be seen in the respondents' answers to the third question, with an average score of 2.1. The interview results show that business activities are not entirely normal as before the pandemic.

In the statement of whether these business actors expect to continue in the same business one year in the future, most (mean value 3.1) stated that they would continue their tourism business. Even though tourism businesses suffered a heavy blow during the pandemic due to the lack of visits, they still hope and believe that tourism businesses can remain the main livelihood after the pandemic.

The results on whether respondents will change how they do business get an average score of 2.9. It can be assumed that business actors will change how they run their businesses post-pandemic. Adjustments to government regulations, such as the implementation of COVID-19 prevention

by carrying out health protocols, are applied at their place of business. Accommodation businesses have carried out the use of digital platforms in making reservations.

The opinions of business actors regarding government policies so far in handling the COVID-19 pandemic, such as PPKM, obtained a value of 2,6. It can be assumed that there are tourism business actors who agree and disagree. The value obtained is more than 50% of accepting policies from the government so far. Some disagree with government policies related to handling Covid 19.

On the statement whether they received assistance from the government during the COVID-19 pandemic, it got a score of 2.1. It can be assumed that 50% of the tourist entrepreneurs in Amed receive assistance from the government. From the interview results, it is known that the form of assistance obtained is food distribution. Information about business capital assistance is known to business actors, but accessing the assistance is difficult. Many document requirements are mandatory, so many do not take advantage of this alternative.

All respondents stated that their businesses experienced a decline in sales during the pandemic. Tourism businesses in Amed are faced with financial problems. The most significant financial problems during the pandemic include not being able to pay salaries/wages (66.7%), debt payments (20%), bill costs, and other financial problems (13.3%), as shown in table 5.

Table 5: The most significant financial problems during the pandemic

No.	Financial Problem	Frequency (pax)	Percentage
1	Cannot pay Salary/wages	20	66,7%
2	Debt repayment	6	20%
3	Other	4	13,3%

Most tourism businesses in Amed said they would continue to do the same business after the pandemic. They have

no intention of closing their businesses after the Covid pandemic has passed. Adjustments will be made so that we can

start doing business after the pandemic has passed.

The data obtained shows that all businesses experienced a decline in sales or jobs during the pandemic. Almost all businesses reduce the number of employees. In addition, what is done is to reduce the frequency of employee work to reduce the nominal amount of employee salary. This strategy is considered to help their efforts to stay afloat.

The tourism business actors in Amed are primarily locals. The scale of business carried out is small and micro businesses. Tourism business actors, who in this case are players in game theory, tend to wait or passively run their businesses when facing a pandemic.

From the review and point of view of prospect theory, it can be stated that tourism business actors in Amed are required to make decisions under conditions with pressure. In this case, the pressure is the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, so no visitors come, no income, employee salary burdens, and other financial problems. Psychologically, business actors experience severe pressure, as well as economically, in pandemic conditions that are not yet known when it will end at that time, causing conditions of uncertainty.

Business actors are forced to make decisions that are contrary to economic principles. An uncertain situation forces tourism businesses to conceptualize decisions to survive the pandemic (Kahneman and Tversky, 1989). Caused by unfavorable circumstances and in a state of loss, they tend to dare to face risks (risk seeking). Terminating employment with employees, salary cuts, and giving customers significant discounts are steps taken to survive the pandemic.

This study shows similarities with the results of research by Aledejabi in Nigeria. SMEs are experiencing financial difficulties; the difference is in frequency. Arifqi's and Hardilawati's research

mentioned that the strategy survives by digitizing marketing and promotion. However, this has not been done by SMEs in Amed. The use of digitalization in promotion needs to be done as an alternative that can be done.

4. CONCLUSION

From the results of data analysis and discussion described in the previous chapter, this study can be concluded that employers will continue to do the same business by reducing employees. There are also layoffs with employees, salary cuts, and giving large discounts to customers to be able to get through the pandemic and business actors will change their business strategies. More than 50% of business actors accept government policies dealing with Covid 19. Tourism businesses in Amed are faced with financial problems. The most significant financial problems during the pandemic include not being able to pay salaries/wages (66.7%), debt payments (20%), bill costs, and other financial problems (13.3%). The suggestions that can be conveyed in this study are as follows: There is a review of the capital loan system from the government so that business actors do not feel complicated in taking care of documents when borrowing capital. Local governments should go to villages more often, provide understanding, and provide support to business actors so that they feel cared for by the government. Business actors are looking for business development strategies such as utilizing social media as a promotional tool.

The theoretical implication of the study is the financial challenges small tourism businesses face. By identifying the most significant financial problems in the small tourism business during the pandemic, such as salary/wage payment issues and debt payments, the study adds to our theoretical knowledge of the specific financial vulnerabilities of this sector during the crisis. At the same time,

its practical implications offer actionable recommendations to improve the resilience and support for businesses in the Amed region and potentially in similar tourism-dependent areas.

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