



Article Type: Research Paper

The Strategy of Mataram Tourism Services in Growing the Tourism Sector in The Era of COVID-19

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THIS ARTICLE IS AVAILABLE IN:

<http://journal.umy.ac.id/index.php/jerss>

DOI: 10.18196/jerss.v6i2.14373

CITATION:

Johari, M., Lestari, S. A., Hariono, H., & Azizurrohman, M. (2022). The Strategy of Mataram Tourism Services in Growing the Tourism Sector in The Era of COVID-19. *Journal of Economics Research and Social Sciences*, 6(2), 139-148.



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Abstract: COVID-19 has caused numerous disasters in all sectors of the economy, including the tourism industry. Various regions continue to work to restore tourism activities to mitigate the impact that has occurred. This research aims to determine Mataram city tourism's economic recovery strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic. The descriptive qualitative research method was used in this study, with primary and secondary data obtained from the Mataram City Tourism Office, hotels, and restaurants. Data analysis techniques such as data reduction, presentation, and confirmation were used in this study. According to the study's findings, the Mataram City tourism office is attempting to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 through various programs involving tourism stakeholders. These programs include the implementation of CHSE, the creation of unique tours, digital tourism, promotions, and the provision of grants to tourism industry actors.

Keywords: Recovery strategy; Tourism; Tourism office; Mataram; COVID-19

JEL Classification: L83; Z32; Z31

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted many aspects of human life, including economic, social, and cultural factors. The tourism industry has been hit the hardest. Tourism activities that rely on tourist arrivals were abruptly halted due to a lack of available space for tourists to move. It negatively impacts the community and the government's income (Solemede et al., 2020).

Several institutions, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), predict a weakening global economy, with the IMF projecting a minus 3 percent growth rate. The impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the economies of the world's countries is also significant. Economic growth in several of Indonesia's trading partners fell in the first quarter of 2020, including Singapore (-2.2), Hong Kong (-8.9), the European Union (-2.7), and China (-6.8).¹

¹ International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2019

Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara, appears to have experienced a relatively large economic shock as one of the cities in Indonesia that relies on tourism activities, particularly the Meeting Incentive, Conference, Exhibition (MICE). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some five-star hotels, homestays, shopping malls, and restaurants have closed.

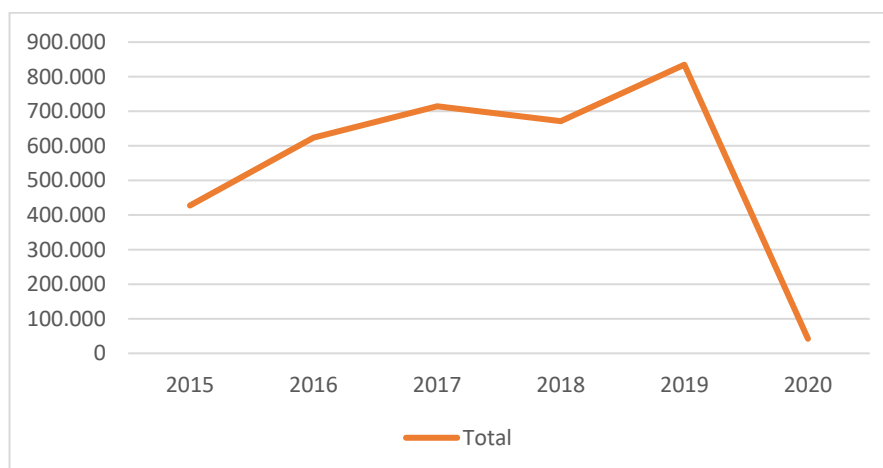


Figure 1 Visitor in Mataram (Thousand People)

Source: Tourism Office of Mataram, 2020

Meanwhile, according to data collected by the West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Tourism Office, to design the improvement and restoration of the creative and tourism industries in NTB, 15,000 tourism sector workers were laid off as a result of COVID-19. There are 6,122 in the hotel sector, 1874 in the Pokdarwis sector, 1357 Travel/Guide, 676 Porters, 213, 2410 Creative Economy/IKM, 394 Art Studios, 353 Culinary, 617 Boatman, and 984 cleaning, tickets, and hawkers.

As a first step toward resolving this issue, the government has prepared all mitigation measures for dealing with the tourism crisis through the tourism and creative economy ministry. There are three stages of tourism crisis mitigation management: (1) the emergency response stage, which was completed in early March 2020; (2) the post-covid-19 recovery stage, which was completed in early 2020 from June to December 2020; and (3) normalization, which is expected to begin this year and last until the end of December 2021 (Sugihamretha, 2020).

Most of the literature on tourism development strategies in the pandemic era focuses solely on the scope of the central government, particularly in West Nusa Tenggara (Fathurrahim, 2020). As a result, it is worthwhile to examine how Mataram City's tourism recovery policy fits into the larger picture. The results of this study could be used as an alternative strategy for other regions in developing their tourism industry, especially in the pandemic era.

Many academics have investigated various tourist strategies in the pandemic age, both nationally and internationally. In international research by Sharma et al. (2021), all stakeholders in the industry must work together to make the sector resilient enough to

face the crisis. We think that with the help of a resilient approach from governments, market players, technology innovators, and a workforce employed in industry, the tourism sector may well develop in a much more sustainable way post-pandemic. Involvement of local communities will be crucial on this trip, as international travel restrictions may last longer than anticipated. Such developments will not only broaden the base of the tourism industry but also provide opportunities for less-developed tourist attractions to grow further.

Mohanty et al. (2020) conducted another international study. His study intends to comprehend several components of augmented reality (AR) and investigate its potential for aiding the relaunch of the tourism sector post-COVID-19, as per WHO and UNWTO recommendations. Even after COVID-19, it was discovered that social isolation and poorer mobility are still followed. As a result, online and mobile-based AR will be in high demand to assure tourist safety and provide distinctive, accessible, personalized, context-specific, immersive, and memorable experiences.

In her research using a descriptive analysis method, Sa'idah (2017) shows that the tourism development efforts carried out by the Bandar Lampung City Tourism Office are not all carried out optimally because there are currently no tourism objects that are managed independently by the Tourism Office but are still managed privately by the community. However, Bandar Lampung City's local revenue (PAD) continues to rise due to the tourism sector's contribution in the form of hotel, restaurant, and entertainment taxes.

According to a study by Solemede et al. (2020), the COVID 19 pandemic impacted various aspects of human life. The tourism industry predicted to be Indonesia's second-largest foreign exchange contribution source, has significantly declined. The government has developed several strategies to restore the tourism sector during the transition to a new normal. The provincial government has also planned to re-boost the Maluku tourism sector, nearly destroyed by the COVID-19 pandemic (Solemede et al., 2020). Like Sumarni's (2020) research, the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in the global economy, including the Indonesian economy. This pandemic has reduced the demand for and supply of Sharia-compliant products, lowering the return on investment.

Sutrisnawati et al. (2021) conducted additional research on efforts to recover the tourism sector in the pandemic era, mentioning that one of the primary keys to restoring the tourism sector is to regain confidence in traveling. One of the efforts to restore tourists' confidence in visiting Bali is implementing hygiene, health, and safety measures (CHSE).

Most of the emphasis in these various studies is on implementing policies imposed by the central government. Furthermore, this study only employs studies in which the researcher collects diverse supporting literature. Meanwhile, the author will concentrate on the policies implemented by the Mataram City government, specifically the Mataram City Tourism Office, in this study.

Research Method

This study falls into the descriptive-qualitative category, which includes studies that seek to specifically describe a situation, scenario, or social relationship that occurs in the research topic area (Dijk, 2019). The research site focuses on Mataram City's tourism industry, including hotels, restaurants, and the Mataram City Tourism Office in West Nusa Tenggara. Primary data sources obtained from Mataram City Dispar employees and secondary data sources derived from documents provided by Mataram City Dispars were used in this study.

Purposive sampling was used to determine respondents. Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of informants based on their ability to explain specific themes, concepts, or phenomena. Based on this, the researcher feels confident that the respondents in this study have met the standard criteria, such as knowing about tourism conditions in Mataram and understanding the policies carried out by the tourism office. The researcher distributed questionnaires to 9 respondents and used a tape recorder in the interviews to ensure that the information obtained was recorded correctly. Secondary information was gathered from report books and other sources. The data was analyzed by systematically collecting data from in-depth interviews, field notes, and documentation, organizing and describing it into several units, synthesizing, confirming, and drawing simple conclusions (Dicks et al., 2005).

Table 1 Respondents

No	Respondent	Role
1	Respondent 1	Hotel Employee
2	Respondent 2	Sub-Section General Staffing of the Mataram City Tourism Office
3	Respondent 3	Mataram City Tourism Office Data Management Section
4	Respondent 4	Mataram City Tourism Office Promotion Division
5	Respondent 5	Mataram City Tourism Officer
6	Respondent 6	Mataram City Tourism Officer
7	Respondent 7	Tour Guide
8	Respondent 8	Tourism Business Actors
9	Respondent 9	Manager of Bidari Hotel

Result and Discussion

Respondents Details

In the case of Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara, the respondents were chosen because of their understanding of the pandemic condition in the tourism business. Respondents 1 and 7 were selected because they had experienced a significant influence since COVID-19. Respondent 1 was laid off due to a personnel reduction at the hotel where he worked; meanwhile, respondent seven did not get any guests since the outbreaks of COVID-19. Respondents 2 to 6 were chosen because they are Mataram Tourism Office employees in various positions accountable for boosting the tourism sector's performance during the epidemic. Respondents 8 and 9 were selected for this study because they are critical

players in the tourism industry. They are acutely aware of the pandemic's consequences. They are also vital sources of information for confirming the policies implemented by the Mataram tourism bureau.

Tourism Conditions in Mataram City during the Pandemic Period

The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have slowed the movement of the tourism sector, particularly in the accommodation sector. COVID-19, according to Respondent 1, has changed his life. He also stated that he did not receive economic assistance from the government, which worsened his financial situation.

"In my workplace, the lockdown is still in effect; there is no movement at all, so from an economic standpoint, I am very disturbed; I used to work in tourism, but now I am a parking attendant." I do not receive assistance from the government or from where I work, so regardless of the current situation or conditions, we must endure and hope that the vaccine that has been implemented in the community can reduce or prevent the transmission of this COVID-19 outbreak and that the community's economy will recover as before (Respondent 1)

It was confirmed by respondent two, who said that the Tourism Office did not allow the implementation of Meeting, Incentive, Conference, Exhibition (MICE) based tourism activities.

"The tourism office is no longer carrying out tourism activities such as holding events in the form of a cultural festival which runs once a year during COVID-19. (Respondent 2)

Furthermore, respondent 3 added that the economic condition in Mataram City was horrible due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

"The pandemic condition in Mataram City has deteriorated with the current situation because the occurrence of COVID-19 is not as usual when an earthquake occurs; people can still carry out their routine activities in Mataram City. Because during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is closed, especially in terms of travel, both foreign and local tourists. (Respondent 3)

Tourism Recovery Policy in Mataram City

Tourism actors are taking steps to provide a sense of security and comfort in restoring the tourism economy, such as establishing sanitation and safety with high standards in all tourism products, as part of the tourism economic recovery strategy.

Cleanness, Health, Safety, Environment (CHSE)

Sanitation, or environmental cleanliness, is critical for maintaining an environment's health and preventing health problems. All types of tourism products are required to maintain ecological cleanliness following government standards.

"So, regarding health or cleanliness, we have applied to tourism actors, especially in hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions, during the current conditions with the COVID-19 pandemic. We are increasingly implementing health protocols such as CHSE (Cleanliness, Health, Safety, Environment) that we do now, and then we also go through the community and tourism actors so that they can work with us so that it can run smoothly. (Respondent 4)

From the information above, it can be concluded that health and hygiene in Mataram City have implemented health protocols which so far are still lacking. Therefore, the Mataram City Tourism Office has made CHS (Cleanliness, Health, and Safety).

Efforts to increase tourist arrivals continue to be carried out while considering the applicable safety standards following what was said by respondent 5.

"For security in Mataram City, so far, it is still safe; there have been no unwanted incidents. And the Mataram City Tourism Office continues to implement a security system such as officers who always maintain cleanliness and security for tourists in every tourist destination in Mataram City" (Respondent 5)

According to the results of the above interviews, security in the city of Mataram is still relatively safe because there have been no incidents that endanger tourists visiting the city of Mataram, such as mugging or being caught by robbers. The Mataram City Tourism Office always provides security officers who are always on standby for each tourist destination in Mataram City to ensure the security of tourist destinations in Mataram City.

Special Interest Tourism

In a joint interview with respondent 3, he said there is a need for special destinations that can create a new passion for tourism. It needs to be done to attract tourists from various economic classes, both lower and upper-middle classes.

"The Mataram City Tourism Office has three (three) interesting tourist destinations, including Ampenan Beach, Loang Balok, and alas. One of the things that makes these three tourist destinations appealing is the lack of an entry fee, which allows all visitors, particularly those with a mediocre economy (middle to lower classes), to visit at any time. The Mataram City Tourism Office is directly responsible for managing these three tourist destinations. This destination's management is being improved to meet tourism standards. As a result, in the future, this destination will have facilities that meet health protocol standards, such as handwashing stations, hand sanitizers, and masks." (Respondent 3)

According to the interview findings, the Mataram City Tourism Office has prepared various destinations with adequate health protocol standards to anticipate and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Ampenan Beach, Loang Balok, Mayura Park, and Sayang- Sayang are among the destinations with health protocols prepared by the Mataram City Tourism Office.

Digital Tourism

One of the tourist trends during the COVID-19 pandemic is to engage in virtual/online tourism activities. The term "digital tourism" relates to how we organize, manage, and even enjoy travel trips using digital means. Tourists, for example, can enjoy the beauty of a country's beaches from the comfort of their homes by adopting virtual reality (VR) (Akhtar et al., 2021; Mohanty et al., 2020; Riesa & Haries, 2020). One effort to increase virtual tourism activities is to use technological advancements to increase the attractiveness of platforms or applications to provide real-life experiences of traveling to tourist destinations. However, this cannot replace the direct experience of traveling, such as feeling the friendliness of the local community.

"The Mataram City Tourism Office has created a technology that can make it easier for the public or tourists to travel virtually. The technology name is "Application Suka Mataram," one of the platforms based on Maya Tourism. The purpose of making the platform is so that the public can find the information center about Mataram City tourism through the application. This application will be developed in the future to meet other virtual tourism needs." (Respondent 3)

The Tourism Office makes Maya Tourism an alternative or recovery strategy for the community's economy and tourism actors so that people in the future are freer to seek information related to tourism developments in Mataram City.

Promotion

Various policies and schemes to restore tourism activities will not be optimal if no promotional activities exist. Promotion is essential to disseminate information related to policies or market a declared destination.

"One of the efforts in restoring the tourism sector set by the Mataram City Tourism Office is to carry out promotions through social media such as using Instagram accounts, Facebook, and other social media accounts where this media is beneficial to restore the tourism economy." (Respondent 4)

The Tourism Office's most accessible social media accounts for promoting tourist destinations in Mataram City are Instagram @DisparKotaMataram and Facebook @MataramDepartmentofTourism.

Vaccination

According to respondent 6, the effort to restore the current state of tourism is being made by hastening the vaccination process for Mataram residents.

"One type of effort that we are carrying out to restore or revive the tourism economy of the City of Mataram is by facilitating vaccination activities to business actors involved in the tourism sector so that visitors who come to their place of business can travel calmly and dare to return to active activities as usual." (Respondent No. 6)

"The vaccination impact can be seen from the decrease of the positive number of COVID-19 in the city of Mataram. With the improvement of the conditions of various tourist attractions in the city of Mataram because we carry out vaccinations in two stages, namely the first stage of 250 people for the staff of the Mataram City Tourism Office and the second stage for tourism business actors such as hotel managers, restaurants, tour guides, and travel agents." (respondent 4)

This statement was put forward by respondent four as the field of promotion and marketing of the Mataram City Office, who said that:

"To work as a tour guide, you must be vaccinated." As a result, as a condition for serving guests or groups and for tourism actors, you must be able to receive vaccinations, whether you are a hotel employee, a guide, a travel agent, or a restaurant owner because it is one of the conditions for comfort in receiving guests. (Respondent. 7)

According to the three opinions mentioned above, the impact of COVID 19 in Mataram City is severe. This vaccination has a significant impact, allowing them to restore their business, particularly in service providers such as hotels, travel agencies, restaurants, etc.

Tourism Grants

Grant funds are a tourism economic recovery strategy administered by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy to tourism actors.

"The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy provides grant funds in the form of money to be given to tourism actors such as service providers such as hotels, restaurants, and travel agents." The central government distributes grant funds in an amount proportional to the size of the business being run." (Respondent 3)

From the statement above, it is supported by eight respondents who are business actors in the tourism sector.

"The assistance from the Ministry of Tourism has helped us even though the amount is small, at least we can use it as capital for micro-enterprises to help with their daily needs." (Respondent 8)

The opinion above is strengthened by respondent nine, a manager at Bidari Hotel

"The grant we received from the Mataram City Tourism Office is beneficial; we can operate a little, even though the amount is insufficient. (Respondent 9)

The Mataram City Tourism Office carries out the targets and evaluations after receiving the grant funds.

"We are still evaluating because this grant is outfitted with a system that can be described as quite complex, yes, because there is a direct process so that the grant implementation is built at the same time and a review team or inspection team is established so that later we will check whether the grant funds are running properly." really good, and whether or not it works (Respondent 3)

A number of people who work in the hotel and restaurant industries receive grant payments from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. Grant payments are given to people who work in the hotel and restaurant industries to help them with restoration and business growth.

Conclusion

The spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia has hit the tourism industry the hardest. It has a long-term impact on society—the poverty rate rises in lockstep with the unemployment rate. As a first step toward resolving these issues, the government must implement policies that will allow tourism to resume.

The author used the descriptive qualitative method to conduct in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation from various secondary and primary sources. Secondary data for this study came from Tourism Office of Mataram City (Dispar) documents. Meanwhile, preliminary data is derived from interviews with a variety of parties.

The tourism economic recovery strategy in Mataram City during the COVID-19 pandemic was implemented by implementing the Cleanness, Health, Safety, and Environment (CHSE) protocol, promotion through social media, vaccination of tourism business actors in Mataram City, and providing grants for tourism businesses in Mataram, according to this study. Actors in the tourism industry in Mataram.

However, this research is still limited in terms of data coverage. Thus, further research needs to expand the range of data regarding the number of respondents.

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