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TOUR AND TRAVEL COMPANY INNOVATION AFTER THE PANDEMIC ERA OF COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the tourism sector, particularly tour and travel companies. However, this pandemic has also presented opportunities to innovate and create new ways to survive in the tourism industry. This paper discusses various innovations made by tour and travel companies after the COVID19 pandemic, such as the use of technology, the development of new products and services, and adjustments to the needs and preferences of new customers. The research method used is qualitative by conducting in-depth interviews with several tour and travel companies implementing innovations. The results of the study show that the creations made by time and travel companies positively impact company performance, such as increasing the number of customers, customer satisfaction, and reducing operational costs.

Keywords: Innovation, Tour And Travel Company, After The COVID-19 Pandemic

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the industries most affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Travel and social restrictions have significantly decreased the number of tourists visiting, so many tours and travel companies have needed help running their businesses. According to data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the tourism sector decreased by 72% in 2020 compared to the previous year. This is due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, which has caused travel restrictions and the closure of tourist attractions. In addition, various countries have also implemented lockdowns to break the chain of the spread of the virus, thus impacting the tourism industry globally.

The impact felt by the tourism industry also occurs in Indonesia. According to data from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf), the number of foreign tourists to Indonesia fell by 75.57% in 2020. In addition, the tour and travel business in Indonesia has also experienced a significant decline due to travel restrictions and the closure of tourist attractions. The tour and travel business has slumped due to the COVID-19 Pandemic due to international and local travel restrictions and consumer fears of the risk of virus transmission. Travel restrictions during the COVID-19 Pandemic caused many countries' governments to limit international and local travel. This causes many tourists to cancel their trips or cancel their scheduled trips. Thus, the number of tourists who come is reduced drastically. Projections for the future The tour and travel business is expected to improve because the pandemic era has passed. Government programs to prevent coronavirus transmission are carried out in every country to increase the population's immunity against coronavirus attacks.

After the COVID-19 pandemic has passed, the prospects for tour and travel companies are positive again, even though challenges must be faced. Here are some related analyses: But changes in consumer preferences Consumers may have different choices after the COVID-19

pandemic. They may prefer more remote destinations or simpler camping and vacations and be less inclined to travel to big cities or crowded tourist spots. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the use of technology in the tour and travel business. Increased use of virtual reality, travel applications, and online ordering tools can help companies improve customer experience and optimize business operations. Challenges in the travel business There are still challenges in the tour and travel business after the COVID-19 pandemic, such as tougher competition, rising travel costs, and strict health protocols. However, tour and travel companies can overcome these challenges with adaptation and innovation. Opportunities for growth Tour and travel companies have opportunities for growth in several areas, such as increasing personalized service, offering smaller and more exclusive tours, or targeting a different market, such as travelers who prefer to explore lesser-known places. Tour and travel companies must innovate to face the challenges after the COVID-19 pandemic era. This research determined what innovations must be made to meet these challenges. Research questions about tour and travel company innovation after the COVID19 pandemic:

RQ1: What is the marketing strategy for tour and travel companies after the COVID19 pandemic to reach the market?

RQ2: What innovations have tour and travel companies made after the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ3: What are the tour and travel business prospects after the COVID-19 pandemic?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several theories can be used to research tour and travel company innovation after the COVID-19 pandemic era, namely:

1. Innovation Model and Its Impact on Company Performance

This theory discusses the relationship between innovation and company performance. The innovation here is defined as a company's ability to create, develop, and implement new products, services, and processes that can improve operational efficiency, improve customer experience, and improve the company's financial performance. According to Kusumawati (2019), innovation can positively impact company performance. Innovations produced by companies can improve operational efficiency, develop new products or services, expand markets, and increase company profits. Companies that deliver innovation consistently can create a sustainable competitive advantage and strengthen their position in the market. However, the invention also has risks that companies must manage properly, such as development costs, risk of failure, and challenges in implementation. In the context of tour and travel companies, innovation can help companies overcome the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, companies can develop new products or services that suit customer needs during the pandemic, such as virtual tour packages or specialty food delivery services from certain tourist destinations. Innovation can also help companies optimize technology use, increase operational efficiency, and improve customer experience.

2. Diffusion of Innovation Theory

According to Rogers (2010), the Diffusion of Innovation theory explains how innovation spreads from one group to another. According to this theory, the invention can be applied through interpersonal communication between individuals and mass media. This theory consists of five main elements: the innovation itself, communication, time, social system, and characteristics of innovators. Innovation is a new idea, practice, or object that potential users find useful. Characteristics of innovations, such as relative advantage, complexity, suitability, completeness, and clarity, can affect the adoption rate of innovations by users. Communication in the Diffusion of Innovation theory is a social process that allows users to understand and accept innovation. Mass media and interpersonal communication can be important in disseminating information about

innovation to users. Time is also an important factor in the Diffusion of Innovation theory. Adopters of innovations can be grouped into early, middle, or late categories based on the time of adoption. Early cohorts are often made up of innovators who tend to be bolder and more open to risk, while late affiliates are often more conservative. The social system also influences the adoption of innovations. Rogers views society as a system consisting of various interacting social groups. These groups can form norms, values, and habits that affect the adoption of innovations. The characteristics of innovators are also important in the Diffusion of Innovation theory. Innovators are individuals who first adopt innovations and provide information about innovations to others. Innovators usually have sufficient social, financial, and resources to try out creations and respond positively to them. In the context of tour and travel companies, the Diffusion of Innovation theory can assist companies in designing effective marketing and communication strategies to disseminate their innovations to the market. Companies can identify social groups that have the potential to become early adopters, as well as the characteristics of innovators who can become agents to spread information about innovations to others.

3. Customer Experience Theory.

Customer Experience Theory is described by Verhoef et al. (2009) as a company's effort to create a positive customer experience in their interactions with the company. This theory explains that the customer experience includes all customer interactions with the company, including interactions with the company's products, services, and employees. According to Verhoef et al. (2009), three main factors influence customer experience: environmental, internal, and external. Environmental factors include things like store layout, lighting, and background music. Internal factors include employee skills, willingness to help, and customer interactions. External factors include elements outside the company's control, such as the economic situation, competition, and technology. Customer Experience Theory also views the customer experience as a dynamic process involving four stages, namely the introduction stage, the exploration stage, the purchase stage, and the post-purchase experience stage. Companies can influence the customer experience at each stage by properly managing customer interactions. To create a positive customer experience, Verhoef et al. (2009) suggest several management strategies, such as: understand customer needs and expectations, and ensure that the company's products and services meet those needs and expectations. Increasing interaction with customers, both through employee training and information technology. Improve the quality of the company's products and services, including store layout, lighting, and background music. Develop customer loyalty programs, such as discounts or reward programs, and improve the customer experience after purchase by providing customer support and ensuring that customers are satisfied with the company's products and services. Customer Experience Theory can assist tour and travel companies to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. Companies can create a positive customer experience by managing appropriate customer interactions, developing quality products and services, and developing effective customer loyalty programs.

4. Theory of Sustainability.

Sustainability theory is an approach in business and the tourism industry that considers business activities' long-term social, environmental, and economic impacts. In the context of tour and travel companies, the concept of sustainability pays attention to the sustainable management of tourist destinations and tourism activities to minimize negative impacts on the environment and local communities. Gössling et al. (2020) stated that tour and travel companies must pay attention to the impact of tourism activities on

water resources and the surrounding environment. In this case, companies should consider reducing water use, minimizing liquid waste, and encouraging using more environmentally friendly technologies. Buhalis & Amaranggana (2014) emphasize the importance of service personalization in achieving sustainability in the tourism industry. In this case, companies must pay attention to customer needs and preferences and provide socially and environmentally sustainable services. Tour and travel companies can implement several strategies to achieve sustainability, such as: pay attention to the environmental impact of business activities by minimizing the use of resources and maximizing energy and water efficiency. It provides socially and environmentally sustainable services, such as promoting local products and reducing the use of hazardous chemicals in tourism activities. We are implementing more environmentally friendly technologies, such as sustainable transportation and effective waste management systems. Increase local community awareness and participation in tourism activities, and pay attention to their needs and interests. Sustainability theory can help tour and travel companies achieve long-term sustainability and minimize negative environmental and local communities impacts. Companies can increase customer satisfaction and gain long-term profits by implementing sustainable strategies and paying attention to customer needs and preferences.

METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative methodology. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is a research approach that aims to understand phenomena from the perspective of research participants through the collection of descriptive data in the form of words and pictures, as well as inductive data analysis. Participants, and explore the meaning contained in certain situations.

In qualitative research, the researcher focuses more on the context and social interactions that occur in a given case than on variables or concepts that can be measured quantitatively. The research method for the tour and travel company innovation after the COVID-19 pandemic era was carried out using a qualitative approach, namely collecting in-depth and descriptive data from relevant participants, such as customers, company managers, and company employees. This qualitative research method can provide a comprehensive and detailed description of the innovations carried out by tour and travel companies. Data were collected by conducting in-depth questions of two tour and travel business people in Jakarta. The first informant is a tour and travel business person managed individually with the initials IND, who usually serves tours to Turkey and European countries.

In contrast, the second informant, with the initials THL, is a tour and travel business leader in the form of a company that usually serves tourist destinations abroad. The research begins with data collection through in-depth interviews and participatory observation with the tour and travel industry participants. In addition, researchers can also conduct document studies and view information related to tour and travel company innovations that have been carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic era. The data that has been collected will then be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify themes that emerge from the data that has been collected. The analysis results will then be used to understand the types of innovations carried out by tour and travel companies and their impact on company performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The innovation of tour and travel companies after the COVID-19 pandemic is an interesting topic to discuss because this industry has had major changes. The global COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the travel and tourism industry, including tour and travel companies. Tour and travel companies must adapt quickly and find ways to maintain their existence during a pandemic. Many tour and travel companies have innovated in various aspects, such as technology development, marketing promotions, products and services, and financial management. For example, several tour and travel companies have increased their use of technology by developing applications or websites that make it easier for customers to make reservations or payments online. Time and travel companies also innovate their products and services, such as providing domestic tour packages or adjusting travel programs with stricter health protocols.

However, tour and travel companies are also faced with various challenges in implementing these innovations, mainly due to limitations in the use of technology and limited capital. In addition, customer confidence in safety and health is also a factor influencing the decision to travel. To answer research questions about the marketing strategy of tour and travel companies after the pandemic, time and travel business people stated that they market their tour products through social media such as Facebook and Instagram.

"I do promotions online such as on Facebook and Instagram to reach customers. By placing advertisements on my promotional content. I asked many of my customers to know about my tour, where did they answer from Facebook and Instagram," said the 1st informant (interview conducted February 26, 2023).

The second tour and travel business did the same thing. According to him, the use of technology after the COVID-19 pandemic is absolute because it is easier to reach customers using technology assistance.

"Yes, I even created a special website and application that customers can access and place orders. They can choose a traveling target to any city they want, and the price will immediately appear on the website or app," said the second informant (interview conducted on February 26, 2023). Then what innovations were made by tour and travel companies after the COVID-19 pandemic? The 1st informant stated that he now offers more to specific tourist destinations.

"I chose a niche market, meaning not all are common. I have some that are common, but some things are not. I'm a combination. Like tours to Turkey, I also offer Cunda Island or Alaçati. So not purely on the usual route for tours to Turkey. Likewise, for destinations in European countries, there are still general tourist destinations, but I will include special tourist destinations. For tourists who are not beginners, I specialize in one country but explore many, for example Switzerland I explore trains, then Italy I explore mountains. So it's an anti-mainstream tourist destination," said the 1st informant (interview conducted on February 26, 2023).

"We promise more comfort and security. Now there are also fraudulent tour and travel businesses. They offered cheap rates but after receiving payment then disappeared. We don't. Our office is clear. They can come at any time. Even for visa arrangements for European countries, we guarantee they will get a visa if the requirements are complete. We are very serious about assisting our customers so they will not have any problems processing travel documents," said the 2nd informant (interview conducted February 26, 2023). To answer the question of whether marketing strategies through social media can effectively reach potential customers? According to the first key informant, it is very effective.

"They can trust us by looking at the testimonials on our social media, they will usually scroll up and down from the tours we have done. Then they contacted us and asked where the office was, I had indeed written down the location of our office so they could see on Google that our office was indeed there. Testimonials are important, on Instagram I put them in the spotlight," said the 1st informant (interview conducted 26 February 2023).

"We combine online and offline promotions. We use online media more for the convenience of our customers in accessing our services, while we also carry out promotions offline, moreover we also work with car rental companies to Soekarno-Hatta Airport, they can see our advertisements in the car," said the third informant. 2 (interview conducted 26 February 2023). What are the prospects for the tour and travel business after the pandemic? Tour and travel business people have different answers. Individual tour and travel business people prefer it during a pandemic, while tour and travel business people who already have big names prefer it after the pandemic era.

"I personally prefer it during a pandemic, because the big tour companies don't work because they are afraid. If we are a small tour company, we are still running. When the pandemic was over, the big tour companies were unable to compete in terms of price. Because large tour companies have a large bargaining position in terms of tickets and others, their names are also better known. Finally, I had to be more innovative, by taking tourist destinations that were anti-mainstream, which were not carried out by big travel companies," said the 1st informant (interview held 26 February 2023).

"For us it is more prospective after the COVID-19 pandemic era. Just look at the queues for processing visas for tours to European countries. In fact, many tourists whose visa processing was refused because they did not provide complete documents. The tour and travel business after the pandemic is very promising for us. In a month we can travel 2 to 4 times with the same tourist destination," said the 2nd informant (interview conducted 26 February 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review and discussion above, it can be concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the tourism industry, including tour and travel companies. However, over time and with technological developments, companies in this industry are trying to adapt to new situations and create innovations to deal with existing challenges by carrying out marketing strategies using online media such as Facebook and Instagram to reach a wider audience. Testimonials published on social media attract customers' attention to join the offered tour packages. In addition, they are opening special tourist destinations that are not mainstream so that customers feel interested in joining the tour packages offered. After the COVID-19 pandemic era, the tour and travel business has good prospects. Because the travel restrictions imposed by each country have been removed. However, for individual tour and travel entrepreneurs, he prefers it during a pandemic because companies offering tourist destination packages are less busy than after the pandemic. Hence, the opportunity to get tour package customers abroad is greater than after the pandemic. Individual tour and travel businesses cannot compete with time and travel companies that already have big names because they have stronger bargaining power, especially in determining lower airfare prices and reducing other travel costs.

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