

## Explorative Study of Tourist Behavior in Seeking Information to Travel Planning

Diena M. Lemy, Amelda Pramezwarly, Juliana\*, Rudy Pramono, Lauditta Nabila Qurotadini

Faculty of Tourism, Pelita Harapan University, Tangerang 15811, Indonesia

Corresponding Author Email: [Juliana.stpph@uph.edu](mailto:Juliana.stpph@uph.edu)



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### ABSTRACT

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This study aims to explore the behavior of domestic tourists in seeking information to travel during the COVID-19 pandemic and whether there are significant differences with tourist behavior before the pandemic and what are the best strategies so that they can be helpful in tourism actors in creating and developing digital marketing strategies based on the latest information technology phenomena. This study uses a qualitative paradigm. Data collection techniques used in the study were observation, in-depth interviews, literature study, and documentation. The results of this exploratory research can then be used as a basis for the following research stage, namely descriptive analysis. Online focus group discussions and surveys were conducted to achieve the objectives of this research. Tourist behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic has changed, that tourists will always look for travel information using window shopping or online search through social media and ask personal questions (individuals) in travelling to a tourist destination. The right strategy for tourism actors in developing sustainable digital marketing includes building personal trust to tourists, implementing innovation strategies that involve guests, and mutual integration and collaboration, which are the main keys to the success of tourism actors in creating or developing sustainable digital marketing. The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented and ongoing crisis for the global tourism industry. The key to the recovery of the worldwide tourism industry will be to encourage tourism activities both domestically and internationally.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Outbreaks of infectious diseases have a significant impact on tourism demand and the destination economy [1]. In smart tourism, technology is the infrastructure that integrates hardware, software, and network technology (Internet) to provide real-time data that allows more thoughtful decision-making for all stakeholder's interests [2] Mobile technology, especially smartphones and their applications, has a significant influence on the development of innovative tourism. However, the ultimate goal of the initial initiative or concept of intelligent tourism is to develop intelligent destinations, which is a particular case called smart city [3]. The tourism industry is one of the essential sources of state revenue indicated by the development of the number of foreign and domestic tourists who come to a place and continues to increase from year to year [4]. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourism industry was recognized as one of the fastest-growing sectors leading to the primary source of economic income in most developing countries [5].

Today, tourism is one of the sectors relied upon to boost the Indonesian state's foreign exchange. The diversity of natural and cultural resources and the availability of human resources are why the Indonesian tourism sector is excellent. Initially, in 2019, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) targeted 18 million tourist visits. However, the total tourist arrivals in 2019 were divided into two, namely domestic tourists only amounting to 282.9 million tourists and foreign tourists amounting to 16.11 million tourists [6].

Even though the predicted target was not achieved, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy continues to strive to increase the number of tourist visits by utilizing technology and internet developments, one of which is digital marketing; both agencies and companies are increasingly carrying this out without abandoning traditional marketing. The Internet has enormous potential in influencing human behaviour, as well as tourism marketing activities. According to Werthner and Klein [7], the Internet has reshaped the tourism industry in various ways.

Smart Tourism is a development of E-Tourism can be seen as a logical development of traditional tourism. Smart Tourism has an understanding that intelligence is built with openness innovation, supported by investments in human and social capital, and supported by participatory governance, to develop the collective competitiveness of tourism destinations for improve social, economic, and environmental welfare for all stakeholders and provide value for visitors [8].

On the demand side, most tourists rely on the Internet to search for information as part of their travel planning efforts. In contrast, on the supply side, tourism businesses and organizations have adopted the Internet as one of the main communication channels for obtaining information and retaining tourists. It was found that the use of the website as one of the tourism promotion media has a significant impact, especially on the USG (user-generated content) model, also known as website 2.0. refers to the second generation of web-based information systems that involve visitors collaborating and sharing information online. One area where social media

can have a substantial impact is Travel, which occurs due to an information-intensive industry, particularly in information seeking, decision-making behavior, and tourism promotion [9, 10] While social media and the Internet are becoming popular among tourists [11] the tourism industry is turning into an information-laden industry, as social media allows tourists to collaborate in producing, consuming, and distributing travel information via the Internet [12, 13]. Tourism is a phenomenon with unique features and characteristics that make it a complex measurement. Rapid changes in society and consumer behavior due to the country's economic situation have made it challenging to collect statistical data, which has hampered the dissemination of current and relevant indicators. This fact demonstrates the difficulty of obtaining timely knowledge about this tourism sector, resulting in tourism stakeholders making harsh and inappropriate decisions.

The Internet has proven to be a valuable source of information. As a result of a Google trend, it is possible to quickly determine potential consumers' interests and intentions in tourism [14]. According to ref. [15], a survey conducted by the Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers (APJII) revealed that internet users in Indonesia increased from 64.8 per cent to 73.7 per cent of the Indonesian population in the second quarter (Q2) 2019-202, with an estimated number of 196.71 million users (Q2) 2019-202. In 2019, internet users aged 16 to 64 used the Internet for an average of 7 hours and 59 minutes per day. It is estimated that 70% of online tourism consumers begin their trip planning by searching for information on search engines before deciding where and how to travel. Understanding information-seeking behaviour is critical for any tourism product or service; service providers want to improve marketing communications with tourists [16]. According to ref. [17], studies show that potential tourists' information-seeking behaviour includes decisions about which content and information channels to seek [18]. contends that search engines are an essential tool for consumers to plan trips, which is the first step in travel decision-making. According to ref. [19], in a study based on data from the customer journey to online purchase, search engines have a relatively superior influence in the decision-making process and pre-purchase. According to a study conducted by ref. [20] for the market in the United Kingdom, the travel purchase decision process begins with a search engine. It continues with a website browse before making a purchase. When a user enters search terms, the online search process begins with query formulation [21]. The query search formulation is influenced by the user's knowledge of the scientific field of search and the user's understanding of the search engine's operation and the search's purpose, according to Xiang et al. [22]. The Internet has led to a revolution in the way consumers access information, choose tourist destinations, make reservations, and share experiences [23]. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia will receive 17 million tourists by 2020, with a focus on the quality of visitors rather than the number of visits. Unfortunately, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a Coronavirus Disease or COVID-19 pandemic at 2020. The first case in Indonesia occurred in February 2020, and the number of cases continues to rise to this day. This has a significant global impact on almost all sectors and industries, particularly tourism. The development of tourism in Indonesia is directed at increasing the role of tourism in economic activities, namely increasing investment in the tourism sector that can create jobs and business opportunities to increase people's income and

foreign exchange earnings [24].

Tourists consider the costs, energy, and safety of the COVID-19 pandemic currently hitting the world globally. Tourism travel is expected to remain the primary choice for economic recovery and improving family relations [25].

Tourism development is a community-based activity. With the main factors of resources and the uniqueness of the local community, both in the form of physical and non-physical elements (traditions and culture) attached to the community, it is hoped that they can become the main driving force in tourism. To realize a well-run tourism development, the essential thing to do is to facilitate the broad involvement of local communities in the development process and maximize the social and economic benefits of tourism activities for the local community. The local community has an equally important position as a stakeholder in tourism development apart from the government and the tourism industry [26].

The global tourism industry, including Indonesia, has been paralyzed. Tourist arrivals have decreased dramatically because people are advised not to engage in many activities outside the home to minimize transmission or the so-called Large-Scale Social Restrictions. According to data from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, foreign tourist arrivals from January to September 2020 were only 3.56 million, a 70.57 per cent decrease from the same period in 2019. The same thing happened with domestic tourist arrivals, which fell by 61% to 120-140 million visits in 2020. The impact of COVID-19 on tourism has caused the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy to revise its tourist visit projections. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (2021), the primary strategy to emerge from the impact of COVID-19 is to (1) strengthen tourism 3A products (Attractions, Amenities, and Accessibility); (2) focus on completing infrastructure development in five super-priority destinations, namely Lake Toba, Borobudur, Mandalika, Labuan Bajo, and Likupang; (3) encourage investment in the tourism sector; and (4) strengthen promotions by optimally utilizing digital technology. To rebuild Indonesian tourism, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy will rely more on domestic tourists.

Consumers have a sudden, often substantial, and persistent desire to purchase something outright. The desire to buy is complicated and can cause emotional conflict [27, 28]. COVID-19 has brought about many social changes that have restricted the movement of people, even in the daily lives of tourists. Personal prevention products such as masks have become necessary when going out, and 'indirect' (non-face-to-face) interactions are now part of the new social culture [29] While lockdowns, quarantines, and border closures have had a significant impact on all sectors of the economy [30] the tourism and hospitality industry has seen the greatest (and most direct) impact of the crisis [31]. Closed borders prevent scheduled flights, and government-imposed quarantine measures limit extensive travel opportunities [32]. In the study of ref. [33], significant differences can be seen in the typology of tourists regarding tourist decision-making in travelling after the covid 19 pandemic. The research results by Ivanova et al. [34] stated that tourists would travel by private car and family. The main factors in tourist decisions will be cleanliness, disinfection, and a dependable health system at a destination. Female and older respondents were more concerned with health and safety than younger and male respondents. The pandemic affects tourism in many ways. Previously specialized research, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic,

created a solid urgency to develop this research topic. To examine the changes caused by the pandemic in tourist confidence and travel behaviour [35]. Research problem formulation: How is the behaviour of tourists in seeking information for travel planning during the COVID-19 pandemic? What are the differences in tourist behaviour in seeking information for travel planning before and during the COVID-19 pandemic? What is the right strategy for tourism actors in creating or developing sustainable digital marketing?

Based on the phenomena above, the purpose of this study is to explore how the behaviour of domestic tourists in seeking information for travel planning during the pandemic and whether there is a significant difference with the conduct of tourists before the pandemic and what strategies are best so that it can be useful for tourism actors in making decisions. And develop digital marketing strategies based on the latest information technology phenomena.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer behaviour is the process of selecting, purchasing and using a product or service to satisfy one's needs and desires. Whether in tourism or other consumption contexts, consumer behaviour is a key indicator quality, effectiveness, and suitability of work in tourism or other activities. Tourist behaviour occurs during the planning and execution stages of the holiday and after returning home. For tour operators or destinations to assess their marketing and operational relevance approach to development, marketing and implementation of tourism activities, it is necessary to recognize different forms of behaviour at each stage [36].

As proposed by Ajzen [37, 38], the theory of planned behaviour shows that human behaviour is influenced by intentions such as willingness to pay more if tourism activities or services can reduce their impact on society or the environment. The intention of this behaviour consists of attitude to behaviour, subjective norm about behaviour, and perceived control of behavior, including attitudes about attractions.

Tourist behaviour in the context of consumer behaviour in the purchase, uptake and abandonment of tourist services. According to Erasmus et al. [39], it is necessary to study consumer behaviour to adapt to a particular situation or product subject to purchase. Individual decisions in the decision-making process can be more or less risky, depending on the final product. Their consumer model behaviour also includes all the steps that occur both before and after the purchase.

Consumer behavioural psychology is one of the most popular these recent years. According to many experts, producers and service companies have been attracted to understanding how consumers behave differently according to individual attributes [40].

According to Stylianou-Lambert [41], tourists are active players. Travelers can create, through leisure activities, their unique places and experiences. The more diverse ways tourists act, the reasons tourists visit various locations, and the easier it is to take pictures can produce new types of behaviour [42]. Social media allows tourists to post their experiences to each other so that the content later influences potential travelers' travel expectations [43]. A travel experience that exceeds expectations confirms that tourists are satisfied with the tour. The use of hashtags and geotagging features during Travel

indirectly affects decision making and satisfaction from the tourism experience. However, everything returns to the content uploaded with the geotag and hashtag features because content that attracts more attention will influence decision-making [44] such as hashtags and geotags have been proven to support the formation of tourists' initial expectations, ranging from geographic descriptions of places to nearby accommodations.

In addition, the visual content factor that attracts attention and the information contained in the content through the tag or caption feature also plays a significant role in decision making for users. Social media has multiple functions, as it has gained substantial popularity in the use of the Internet by businesses and stakeholders [10, 45]. This popularity is that social media allows many people to express opinions, feelings, experiences, and others in innovative ways [46]; Therefore, content uploaded on social media in user-generated or consumer-generated media is essential for generating and obtaining information related to travel [43]. The influence exerted through social media on Travel and tourism is observed before and after the trip. With the advancement of social media platforms, there has been a change in the way tourists consume information and how tourism information is disseminated [11]. The ability of social media to reach a global audience, provide easy access to information and communicate mass through social media platforms makes it convenient for travelers to get the views and experiences of others when planning a trip [47] tourists looking for confirmation post-trip (or during the trip) from social circles [48]. The ubiquitous accessibility of social media allows tourists to seek such confirmations continuously during their travels [49]. Tourist perceptions of COVID-19 have influenced intentions and motivation in the tourism sector and have changed travel behaviour. The mental health outcomes of travelling have been replaced by globally recognized fear and anxiety. However, there are several motivators for travelling during the pandemic [50]. The study of Su et al. [51] provides essential advice to tourists, government agencies, tourism marketers, policymakers, and other tourism stakeholders for recovery during and after the pandemic. Previous tourism research in the context of epidemic crises has primarily focused on examining subsequent patterns of recovery [52], analyzing the impact of infectious diseases on tourist arrivals and movements [53] researching how different outbreaks can change tourist travel, lifestyles, and preferences [54], and assessing their economic impact. However, understanding of the decision-making process and Travel intentions in a pandemic situation is still minimal. In this case, studies like those conducted by Chuo [55] on the self-protection behaviour of restaurant customers or Lee et al. [56] on the impact of non-pharmaceutical interventions on the intention of potential international tourists to travel can be mentioned.

## 3. METHOD

This research combines a qualitative paradigm with an exploratory study [57]. Specifically, the research objectives. This is done to find problems in the field that will provide new understanding. The research was conducted by holding online focus group discussions by collecting information on a particular situation through group discussions. Conducting a focus group discussion requires careful planning and not carelessly, so the following preparations are needed: forming

a team, choosing a place and arranging a place, preparing logistics, determining the number of participants, and recruiting participants. Data collection techniques used in the study were observation, in-depth interviews, literature study and documentation. Observation is a data collection technique by making direct observations of the research location to obtain clear and valid information related to the research topic. According to Sugiyono [58], qualitative research methods are research methods based on the philosophy of positivism used to examine natural object conditions where the researcher is the key instrument, and sampling is carried out by purposive sampling and snowball, data collection techniques are carried out by triangulation of inductive data analysis. Qualitative and research results emphasize more on meaning than generalization.

This study uses qualitative data analysis. The data analysis technique used in this study, according to Sekaran and Bougie [59], consists of several steps: Data reduction, Categorization, Priority, Determination of completeness, concluding.

#### 4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Based on the results of interviews with several sources from the key informant consist of Mr. Nengah Moneng from Penglipuran rural tourism in Bali, Stanley Supit is a tourism actor in North Sulawesi in Manado, the owner of Wenang Transport Bantur., Sarwoto Dwi Admojo, Mr Sarwoto is the head of HPI Jogjakarta, Mr. Anwar Sutrisna from Citra Jaya Lestari Travel, Henry Singer, this is also an amazing performer from Bintan Mrs. Wahyu Wikan, is the General Manager of 101 Hotel Yogyakarta, they stated that the behaviour of tourists in seeking information for travel planning during the COVID-19 pandemic, there are differences faced by tourists regarding time, especially in terms of using window shopping via online, especially from Traveloka, booking.com, and Agoda, except for regular guests. and the market segment consisting of individual travelers, in MICE consisting of government and corporate. Travelers will also be looking for many promotions, flash sales, and hot deals within two days. Tourists now always make last-minute bookings and 40 per cent book hotels on the same day. Tourist behaviour is different from the previous one, which currently communicates online. Some who come specifically for surveys and contact with travel agents and tourism actors are done online and must continually update the conditions in the tourist village, and all information is provided online. The requirement to enter the tourist village must also be sprayed with disinfectant first. Then you have to check first, wear a mask, carry any luggage; if he is deemed to meet the requirements, he can enter and keep a distance wearing a mask. So hand washing posts have been prepared everywhere and the implementation of CHSE. The behaviour of tourists today is more seeking information from online such as Tiktok, Instagram, and YouTube. And tourists always make one sudden and sudden decision.

Tourists now explore many tourist destinations through technological sophistication, and tour guides will implement strategies to convince tourists to provide the correct information about natural, religious, and beach tourism. Moreover, tourists seek information directly (personally) to travel to a tourist destination. And the curiosity of tourists to come to visit is increasing even in a pandemic situation as long as the health protocols are carried out and security is

guaranteed. Based on the results of interviews regarding the right strategy for tourism actors in creating or developing sustainable digital marketing, including tourist destinations that must obtain a CHSE certificate and in each OTA including Traveloka, tiket.com has a label indicating that all tourist destinations and hotels have met the health protocol requirements, collaborate and implement B2B and B2C marketing strategies and take advantage of postings on social media, in providing information to tourists. Other methods are also implemented to make staycation and workcation packages and build engagement with customers in creating virtual exhibitions or making creative videos so that tourists will remember and get a good impression and review the implementation of health protocols.

Another strategy is to always provide information for tourists to stay active on social media and spread positive posts about brand identity and offer well-being destinations with the concept of back to nature, the idea of the environment, providing comfort, ensuring that healthy people are comfortable, managers and guests. Also, healthy and comfortable that can attract tourists to visit a tourist destination. The strategy in attracting tourists to do travel planning must spread positive posts, and indeed, the term branding of this business identity is authentic. In this situation, this is the right time to do promotions or provide information directly from social media. You can also do hard selling now, but you have to look at the current situation during this pandemic The right strategy to develop sustainable digital marketing can be done by building communication, building engagement with tourists, collecting information from the perspective of tourist assessments, prioritizing empathy because this pandemic will end, providing the most important education because so far, tourism actors have only thought economy oriented to build tourism. Seeing that there is financial potential or economic potential, people are interested in tourism and provide comfort and health for the officers, including the community. Penglipuran Tourism Village is truly community-based, so how can the community be directly involved as actors. And in connection with that, indeed the community is healthy and comfortable, the managers are healthy and comfortable, then the guests are also healthy and comfortable.

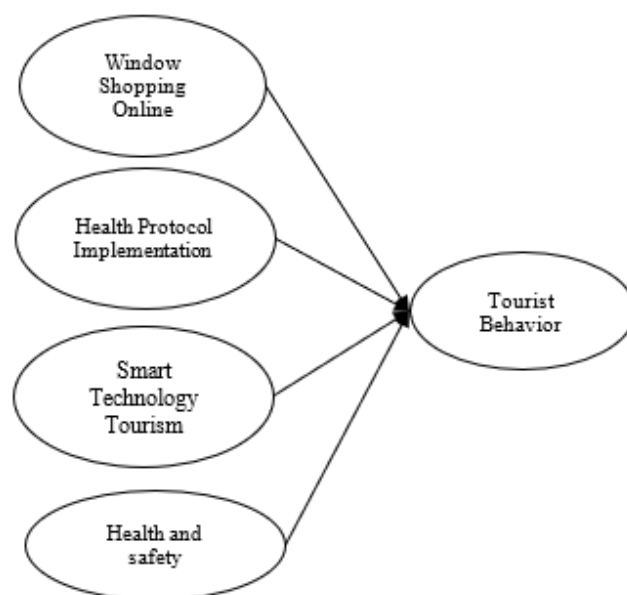


Figure 1. Proposed model

Based on the results of exploratory studies, obtained four main factors that influence the tourist behavior in seeking information to travel planning especially in this study. This research model different from other research models because this research model is built from exploratory research and the research variable used are not determined by the researcher or based on previous research. The proposed research model represents a phenomenon for specific research objects, namely destination in Indonesia. This model will then be empirically tested for future studies.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study results, it can be concluded that the behaviour of tourists during the COVID-19 pandemic has changed, that tourists will always look for travel information using window shopping or online search through social media and ask personal questions (individuals) in travelling to a tourist destination. The right strategy for tourism actors in developing sustainable digital marketing includes building personal trust to tourists, implementing innovation strategies that involve guests, and mutual integration and collaboration, which are the main keys to the success of tourism actors in creating or developing sustainable digital marketing. This study has limitations with only an exploratory study and needs to study longitudinal to find more strategy and apply the smart tourism in destination and understanding tourist behaviour post covid and after covid. However, this research is expected to contribute to an in-depth understanding of tourists' travel behaviour post-covid-19 and after covid-19. It is expected to conduct more in-depth, detailed, and complex studies regarding the behaviour of tourists in Indonesia and Abroad.

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