



Chapter 5

Tourism and Beyond: The Innovative and Remunerative Virtual Excursions Amidst the Pandemic

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A. Introduction

Indonesia is a maritime country consisting of many different cultures and ethnicities. Those cultures have shaped them until today, which leaves beautiful marks in Indonesia as a country with a wide variety of cultures. From ancient times, as Majapahit succeeded in uniting the entire population in Indonesia, Indonesian culture held a spirit of unity. Until now, those cultures are still held by Indonesian citizens. However, as time goes by, the advancement of technology leaves enormous changes in how people live. With the transformation of progress with technology, everything is now digitalized. Digitalization has been one of the most significant impacts on our daily lives and has changed human work ethic. As recently, due to the COVID-19

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pandemic, like it or not, everything has changed from conventional (face-to-face interaction) to online (virtual interaction). This digitalization technology brings changes for the better to our lives because it connects all of us from different places. Consequently, it also brings a massive impact on our economy.

Quoted from Investopedia, economic growth is an increase in production ranging from goods to economic services from one period to another. Economic growth can be measured symbolically and concretely (adjusted for inflation). Economic growth is a benchmark in a country because it can affect many conditions. As is the case in Indonesia, the creative economy is an economy that has a more extensive view beyond the electricity, gas, and other economic sectors. The creative economy is an economy that focuses on developing various creative ideas since ideas are used as the primary reference in the movement of an economy. This system relies on creativity and ideas from human resources as the primary point in economic activity (Shaid, 2022). As Indonesians, of course, we also want to know about economic growth and development in our nation. Many things can be used as a benchmark for the creative economy itself, mainly the government's main focus to make Indonesia a country with good creative economic growth and accelerate the development of SMEs today.

Indonesia has a wide variety of cultures which potentially become our economic resources. For example, the beautiful island of Bali can attract many tourists to Indonesia, which shows our potential economy in the tourism sector. Furthermore, the wide variety of cultures, especially in the arts sector, such as traditional dance or other performing arts, has developed and potentially led to our creative economic sector. The impacts of the creative economy include the entertainment industry, culinary, MSME businesses, and other industries. During the pandemic, many people lose jobs, and their incomes drop drastically. These force them to change their professions due to the pandemic regulations. As we know, the creative industries require spaces to craft their work. For example, behind performing

arts, there were a bunch of professions that only can be done at that time, such as engineering men, sound system men, etc.

Many parts of the economy are wrecked due to the social distancing policy. This downturn occurred because not all activity can be implemented successfully through virtual platforms. During the pandemic in Indonesia, there have been many changes in the form of many things, including the creative economy and tourism sector, several places were closed due to security purposes, and many facilities and policies were neglected so that their functionality was reduced. Where these changes lead us to what things must be addressed or improved. Alvin Toffler (1980) mentioned three waves of economic evolution. The first is the wave of the agricultural economy, where this economy is a relatively new branch that functions primarily based on natural resources so that they can be produced according to economic needs. The second is the wave of the industrial economy, focusing on industries, markets, and companies of all sizes. The third is the wave of the information economy. Lastly, the fourth wave potentially is a creative economy oriented towards creative ideas. Furthermore, several experts also mention the characteristics of the creative economy that intellectual creation requires collaboration, and its distribution can be direct and indirect. (Permana, 2021).

The limited mobility of the community due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of recreational and entertainment places had a considerable economic impact on the tourism sector. The COVID-19 pandemic for several years has made the government implement a system of restrictions on the community to limit outdoor activities. Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) are established to encourage people to be more active at home. As a result, the occupancy rate of hotel rooms and restaurants has decreased drastically due to this. However, the community is also dragged into various problems because of a sudden pandemic without being given enough time for any special preparation (Fauzan, 2020).

B. The Key Message of Pandemic: The Synchronisation Strategies

Many business actors in the tourism industry and the creative economy cannot survive during the pandemic due to a drastic decrease in income or turnover due to the declining purchasing power of the public. The phenomenon that emerged from the impact of the pandemic encouraged the tourism industry and the creative economy to think optimistically, be enthusiastic and rise up face challenges, open up opportunities, and accelerate inflation and transformation by continuing to adapt current and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The government should be able to see the hidden message of the COVID-19 pandemic, which might encourage tourism and the creative economy to be more resilient, adaptive, and competitive. The tourism sector and creative economy can spread information and creative artwork ideas worldwide through various digital platforms. Especially in the creative industry, the ideas of business behavior whose value is very significant require a considerable strategy to attract people. The creative economy includes the great potency of every country to stabilize the country and build the nation's image and identity. The actors in the tourism sector must upgrade themselves, which means they must possess extraordinary capabilities to attract potential customers, including their concern for creating Health Safety Environment (HSE). Then to increase new capabilities with this digital platform to maintain their business amidst a pandemic like this. However, this pandemic has also created opportunities for tourism and creative business actors, including changing the business model from traditional tourism management to digital tourism management. This will be an opportunity to maintain and restore the national tourism sector. The digital-based creative economy sector can also increase its contribution to GDP and market segment changes from foreign tourists to domestic tourists, as stated by Prof. Dr. Ginta Ginting, M.B.A in Knowledge Sharing Forum (KSF) of Universitas Terbuka (Universitas Terbuka, 2021).

This phase is expected to be a benchmark for developing creative economy tourism by initiating various ideas that can later show the level of the economy from time to time. The government's focus must also be improved again. One of them is to focus on synchronizing the improvement of health status so that the system of creative economic trends can work. Along with realizing it, the trend of the creative economy during the pandemic has continued to increase over time, starting with the creativity of the nation's children for entertainment content that can be accessed through various platforms. Creative economy actors also continue to vary, as young Indonesians must be able to take the opportunity to introduce Indonesian cultural content that multiple countries can see. As adults, we must also give confidence to our young generation in advancing the creative industry, which can range from education to entertainment.

Neil Himam, Deputy of Digital and Economic Creative in Indonesia, stated that the most important thing to highlight is developing creative ideas to be adaptable, firm, and goal-oriented products/services. A good ecosystem must support the strengthening of creative economy products. This ecosystem should have several essential components. First and foremost, talented human resources and talents will be the driving force in conceptualizing ideas and goals in doing business creatively. Young generations could act as leaders to make this successful. Nowadays, they are eager to show their talents and interest by contributing to art events to showcase their creativity and talent. Second is the availability of other resources, including radio frequencies as a means of communication. The third is artificial resources such as numbering, IP addresses, domains, and others (Nur, 2021). The experts must also be able to see the market and opportunities. Several countries have already opened their borders to take great opportunities to build attractive destinations, introduce culture, and develop a creative industry.

C. The Importance of Virtual Platforms

The visual media such as handphone, laptop, and television is also one of the opportunities, as they provide a virtual trip service application that later tourists can access with various kinds of payments because digital transformation simplifies operational processes to be much more effective. In addition, using the digital ecosystem is also beneficial to make the company more developed because digital technology creates a more modern work environment. Using a digital platform can help people facilitate all their activities and needs. Utilizing digitalization can increase efficiency in space, time, and distance. So, the benefits are not only felt by consumers but also by producers. This digital ecosystem will help make marketing more accessible, especially in some of the leading sectors of the creative industry, which is very useful in this digital economy because there are forms and goods. However, all sub-sectors of the creative economy can enter this digital ecosystem with various innovations and collaborations with all parties.

Therefore, various news and events around the creative economy can encourage the younger generation to continue doing business or initiate ideas to advance creative economy tourism. For instance, they were using developed innovations, such as start-up technology, which is currently loved by the millennial generation. This can be one factor leading us to the country's economic recovery. Working hand in hand to create innovation is also one of the government's strategies to achieve this target. Innovation is the breath of the sustainability of the creative industry in Indonesia. Economic recovery, especially the creative economy, will grow if innovation and creativity go hand in hand.

D. Challenges and Opportunities of Tourism and Beyond Amidst the Pandemic

The number of tourist arrivals to Indonesia has shown an increasing trend. The number of tourists visiting in 2017 reached 14.04 million visits, an increase of 21.88% compared to only 11.52 million visits in

2016 (Kemenparekraf, 2017). Several parts of the economy have been devastated by social distancing policies. One of them is the sellers who experienced decreased income due to COVID-19. The number of tourists coming to Indonesia has declined since February 2020. During the last five years before 2020, the number of foreign visits to Indonesia has increased yearly. In 2019, Indonesia's highest number of foreign arrivals was 16.11 million visits. However, since COVID-19 began in March 2020, which occurred in almost all countries in the world, especially in Indonesia, the number of foreign arrivals has only reached 4.05 million visits, meaning that this has decreased by 74.84% compared to 2019 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2022). The peak occurred in April 2020, with only 158,000 tourists, according to data published by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economic of Indonesia (Kemenparekraf, 2020). Artists suffered huge losses because art or cultural exhibitions that used to display their work in a physical room and were seen by tourists no longer feel the glory. Today, all industries need to conform to the general policy of turning their work, performance, or product into something accessible digital or online.

As mentioned above, one sector that almost calls it quits is the field of art. Many artists, including the engineer behind the art performance, have lost their job and regular income due to these COVID-19 regulations. This happened because the face-to-face art or culture exhibitions could no longer be attended. Nowadays, all industries must adapt to today's situation to transform their job, performance, or product into something that can be digitally reached. The pandemic has forced the government to impose restrictions on traveling and gathering. These restrictions resulted in cultural tourism experiencing a significant decline. Many art performances had to be postponed or canceled due to direct contact restrictions (face-to-face interaction). Many artists quit their jobs due to the impact of COVID-19, leading them to seek other jobs to survive.

There is some positive impact that potentially can be utilized by the creative industry through these digital platforms. By implementing social distancing, there is a potential to enhance the artist's

productivity. The creative industry can utilize digitalization to exhibit creativity and reach a global audience. As we know, a digital platform can connect people worldwide. Through work at home, artists can explore many options to create art that exposes them worldwide.

Creative industries have the characteristic of being innovative and keep advancing their product. Unfortunately, some aspects cannot be done at home. For example, in the art sector, when they want to exhibit a traditional dance performance beside the dancer or the artist itself, take note that there are people behind the stage, such as make-up artists, sound engineers, or stage crew who do their job on the spot. Many people behind the art performances must cancel their job. Furthermore, to execute some art performance requires gathering a mass of people. In the art sector, amidst the pandemic, the artist and the audience who enjoy watching art or cultural performances need to enter the way to enjoy it, namely through online or virtual platforms. The experience between the offline and online art exhibitions reflects different sensations. The difference is in the level of satisfaction obtained. Experiencing the art performance on the spot has the advantage of feeling the direct sensation from the audio and visual experience on the spot. However, it also has disadvantages as not all the audience can get the best spot to watch the performance, which is conversely different from a virtual experience. The audience can watch it on the spot from their screen, wherever they are (Septiyan, 2020).

Indonesia has one factor that the government needs to focus on: developing the usage of technology and its infrastructure as a marketing strategy. Let us take the example of the evolution of K-pop. The Korean government has also made their Korean pop culture/artist one of their economic assets. South Korea has taken the evolution of K-Pop seriously as one of their national interests. The Korean government has established a department solely to promote K-pop in Korea and beyond. We can see that as the K-pop industry grows fast, the government provides full support. The evolution of K-pop is quite substantial because even the small concert held in

the country can create new work fields as the tourists spend a lot of money. Furthermore, K-pop can make the unique tradition of Korean becomes known worldwide. (Kelly, 2018). This phenomenon shows that full hand of government support is highly essential to enhance the Indonesian creative economic industry.

According to studies, the success of K-pop has been driven by the ambitiousness of the Korean Government to develop the usage of the technology and its infrastructure ahead of the rest of the world. The industry sectors realized the potency of internet technologies as one of the important factors contributing to the distribution and marketing of K-pop performances. Koreans technological has become one of the leaders in the world, making the industry like small businesses aware of the potential opportunities of their competitors. Furthermore, their internet technologies have small requirements, such as investment and low entry cost for small businesses, compared to prevailing technologies in the late 1990s. Last but not least, the Asian Financial Crisis that hit the Korean Economy in 1997–1998 seemed to have little effect, as, at the same time, there was a rapid emergence of new technologies by Korean producers of information and goods services (Messerlin & Shin, 2017).

As we know, Indonesia still has several areas that the internet has not reached yet. Also, the elders tend to be technologically blind and prefer to use the conventional platform. Some areas in Indonesia still cannot afford an internet connection. In addition, the elderly tend to be less knowledgeable about technology and prefer to use simple ones. Thus, creative industry players need to build a virtual-friendly platform for everyone. Another factor that needs to be considered in selecting the target markets. A relatively high level of competition needs to be made. For example, in Korea, they already have high competition in the domestic market, which forces them to be able to step on the pedal gas that is supported by capital injection from the government as their technological infrastructure advances. Koreans have a high competition to reach their domestic markets, so it pressures them to be more innovative and self-enforcing to boost their

non-Korean markets or exports sector. Such a variety of products or creations has made their price structure generate more products to satisfy both local and international consumers. This intense pressure has made the fast growth of Korean Pop Culture widely exported to the rest of the world. Producing a variety of products and creations certainly can in the market capacity. The chances of their Korean culture are exposed worldwide and satisfy consumers' broader range of tastes from other countries. Thus, it is crucial to advance technology and internet infrastructure to support the growth of the creative economy.

E. Conclusion and Recommendation

Many steps are needed to save Indonesian tourism. Various efforts were made to save the tourism area from the crisis. The primary key for tourism and creative economy actors to survive during a pandemic is good adaptability, innovation, and collaboration. The reason is that community actors are starting to change, and a shift in tourism trends accompanies this. The first example is the freedom of the public to do holiday activities before the pandemic could no longer be carried out. Travelling has also changed to be more friendly with current conditions. So, there is a staycation trend that is considered safe. Unfortunately, staycation activities alone are not enough to excite the hospitality business. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many tourist attractions to close due to a lack of visitors. For this reason, tourism actors must take advantage of technological innovations that play an essential role in supporting shifting tourism trends during a pandemic, one of which is virtual tourism for online vacations.

The use of digital platforms to advance Indonesia's tourism sector has received direct support. In short, virtual tours are a new concept for vacationing during a pandemic. Various exciting tourist destinations in Indonesia can be explored by a smart device and an internet network from home. In addition to offering the beauty and uniqueness of each destination, virtual tours allow the visitors to learn more

deeply about the destinations visited. The virtual tour is equipped with a virtual tour guide that explains in sufficient detail the objects visited. Virtual tours during the COVID-19 pandemic have become a new trend for vacations and entertainment suggestions. Virtual tours are an exciting innovation we can use for vacations during a pandemic. Virtual tours simulate existing locations, usually consisting of video sequences or 360° panoramic images. We can only explore various exciting tourist destinations, especially in Indonesia, armed with smart digital devices such as smartphones or laptops and a good internet connection. Interest in virtual tourism continues to increase, and it is one of the strategies we can implement during this pandemic. The virtual tour can display the attractiveness of the places to increase the audience's interest, so one day, they can come to the site directly. Although we cannot say for sure when we can explore it now, with this Virtual Tour, we can let go of our holiday longing and make us curious to visit it directly when the pandemic ends.

The use of technology and the development of internet infrastructure is crucial to support the growth of the creative economy. Indonesia still needs to develop the technology and internet infrastructure to compete with other countries. Especially concerning the unequal distribution of internet networks all over the country. All of this certainly cannot be done without the government's support. As one example, due to the 1997 financial crisis, the South Korean Government give special attention to information technology and creative industries by injecting capital, funds, and tax incentives. Informational technology will provide a positive impact on the other industrial sector. Also, the creative industry sector can increase the export of creative industry products, such as music, films, and fashion (Indradi, 2018). As we know, Indonesia has enormous potential in this industrial sector because of the abundance of art and culture. Until now, there is still no certainty when the COVID-19 pandemic will end, causing uncertainty regarding the economic recovery in the tourism sector and beyond. Therefore, every level of government and local communities must immediately implement the strategies to utilize

the resources of tourism and creative economy through virtual platforms using technological advancement and internet infrastructure. Thus, recovery action for accelerating tourism economic and creative industry beyond must be carried out and focus not only on the future but also on the present, as a mitigation of a basic need. With these various solutions and changes, tourism and beyond will adapt and can gradually follow.

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