Jakarta Creative Tourism Travel Agent: Virtual Tour During Pandemic Covid-19

Heru Suheryadi[1], Andy Noviadi[2], FX Setiyo Wibowo[3], Fadia Azzahra[4]
[1234]Sahid Polytechnic
email: [1]herusuh@polteksahid.ac.id, [2]andynoviadi@gmail.com,
[3]fxsetiyowibowo@polteksahid.ac.id, [4]fadiaazzahranb@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The aim of this research is to explore the virtual tours (VT) are provided by Jakarta Creative Tourism Travel Agents (JCTTA) for tourists to travel during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Research methods: The research method used in this study is descriptive qualitative. Data collection was carried out by interview with key informants consisting of virtual tour service managers, visitors as service users. Data analysis was carried out descriptive qualitative form the results of interview which were used to answer problem formulations related to virtual tour products managed by JCCTA.

Result and discussion: The results of this study indicate that VT has become an alternative in the tourism business and a viable option for travelers during the COVID-19 pandemic. VT enable travelers to explore tourist destinations without physically traveling, providing visual and interactive experiences through video and Google Earth. The discussion in this research highlights the advantages of VT as a means to sustain the tourism industry and offer a safe option for travelers during the pandemic.

Implication: The implications suggest that 1) handling quickly in response to tourist complaints, especially network connections; 2) displays complete tourist attractions found in tourism destinations, so that no tourist attraction is overlooked; 3) presenting more attractive displays on the web site to attract new customers and consumers; 4) improve the quality of software and hardware used to produce VT packages; 5) Managers must try to establish a program for how this virtual tour business can still run in the normal era after the COVID-19 pandemic by conducting surveys of previous customer interests. On the other hand, JCTTA's investment in software and hardware to produce virtual tour packages continues to generate profits for the company.

Keywords: virtual tour, covid-19 pandemic, travel agent

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is defined as travel or activities carried out voluntarily and temporarily to enjoy tourist objects and attractions (Fandeli, 2016). Infrastructure, accommodation, tourist facilities and services, transit facilities and services, and other elements are the components that make up a tourism destination (Nugraha & Nurani, 2022). Traveling by taking a tour of a tourist spot is an activity that is highly recommended and much preferred by various groups

because it offers many interesting and unique tourist objects to see and learn about. Basically, traveling is not just traveling from one place to another; it can also be used as a useful learning resource.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 halted the growth of the tourism sector and led to the closure of tourist destinations, hotels and restaurants as well as layoffs of employees. The virus spread quickly, limiting people's mobility. Global tourism industry revenue has fallen dramatically compared to the previous year, which hurt many sectors in 2020 (Haryanto, 2020). This led to very strict health protocols. So that's why the tourism sector is looking for other ways to survive. One way is to create a virtual tour program, which is a trip simulation to a destination that has been set with a video or Google Earth and explained by a guide (Nugraha & Nurani, 2022). Virtual Tour usually lasts between 90 minutes and 120 minutes with different costs according to the travel agent's policy.

Table 1. World Tourism Industry Income

No	World Tourism	2019	2020
1	Asia	225.9 Billion USD	164.7 Billion USD
2	Europe	212 Billion USD	177.7 Billion USD
3	North America	181.8 Billion USD	164.7 Billion USD

[Source: Data Center for Indonesian Economy and Business, 2022]

Wisata Kreatif Jakarta is a travel agency based in Jakarta that offers interesting destinations with various types of unique themes in each tour, such as the 7 City Festival Tour, Bike Sharing Tour, Food Tour, Bhineka Tour, Mausoleum Tour, and Family Fun Tour. Since 2019, JCTTA has not been operating as usual and it cannot carry out routine activities as usual after the COVID-19 outbreak and the implementation of the Restrictions on the Social Scale Large (PSBB) and Enforcement of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM) in Indonesia. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, this travel agent has started holding virtual tours by selling tour packages to various destinations. This is supported by previous research that one of the travel options during the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual travel is quite promising to survive in the midst of a pandemic (Rahmawati, Prasastono, Susanto, & Sudiro, 2022).

VT is the main component of this research as an alternative tour. A virtual tour is a simulation of an actual location, usually consisting of a series of videos or a collection of photos. VT can also use other multimedia features, such as sound effects, music and text (Kristanto, 2020). The form of a video or a collection of photos that have a three-dimensional view as a whole, so that a three-dimensional modeling of the conditions at that location is needed.

Three-dimensional modeling takes a long time and is very complex. A method of collecting and producing complete views in a single view is known as virtual reality photography (Khan & Kusuma, 2021). VT has been widely used by hotels, travel agencies and universities as an important tool to promote their business. This is due to the increasingly sophisticated and rapid development of technology, which has resulted in many new innovations. Likewise, virtual reality (VR) technology has been one such innovation since the 1980s. The

development and promotion of this technology includes computer-mounted Head Mounted Displays (HMDs) and Data suits (or Data gloves), which help define what is often referred to as "Virtual Reality" (Syani & Rahman, 2017).

In a company's marketing program in Japan, virtual reality (VR) is used to attract customers by implementing a "Virtual Kitchen" system that gives them the sensation of being in the kitchen they want. According to Parish (2015), Panorama Virtual Reality is an interactive way to see a place in a wide-angle panorama. It provides a full space experience without artificial bias or effects. According to (Kisielnicki, 2018), visitors usually look for comprehensive and credible information about tourist destinations.

In Indonesia, the recovery phase, also known as the adaptation to new habits or "new normal", has begun. This began with the announcement of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia Number HK.01.07/KEMENKES/382/2020 concerning health protocols for the community in public places and facilities in the context of preventing and controlling Covid-19. In facing the new normal era, tourists use high sanitation and safety standards, staycations, special tours, solo travel, health travel, and virtual travel (Paramita & Putra, 2020).

This research aims to explore why VT is recommended for tourists to travel during the Covid-19 pandemic by the JCTTA?

RESEARCH METHOD

This research design uses qualitative methods, then using informants and key informants as sources. Determining informants used a purposive method and used several criteria's including: 1) the manager as a virtual tour service provider by JCCTA; 2) visitors as users of virtual tour services; 3) mature enough and considered capable of answering questions.

Depart from the outcomes of face to face interviews conducted in May 2022 with four key informants, answers were obtained which were their (tourists) experiences after participating in virtual tour activities during the pandemic and experiences in managing virtual tour services (managers) in the field. The following shows the profiles of the key informants shown in table 1 below.

Table 2. Key Informant Profiles

No	Informant Name	Information
1	Ira Lathief	Founder of JCTTA
2	Windi Aulia Devi	Student of Pamulang University
3	Syafa Atya	Student of Paramadina University
4	Yarra Azzahra	Student of Pamulang University

[Source: Primary Data (2022)]

Next, the results of the interview are narrated and linked to questions regarding the service provision process by visitors and the evaluation process. By using an interview guide which was conducted face to face with the informant,

the data obtained from the interview consisted of the informant's answers to the questions posed by the research (Creswell, 2009). The interview results are then presented in the form of quotations. To answer the formulation of the problem, excerpts from the interview describe various answers from key informants regarding online tours provided by JCTTA during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the results of interviews with informant 1 (IF1) it can be summarized that at first, tourists didn't know about virtual tours, but then they were introduced by JCTTA. As a result, even though the increase in revenue did not occur immediately, it provided an opportunity to help revive the tourism industry. As stated by informant

As the founder of JCTTA, they use the VT concept to promote tour travel packages. During the COVID-19 pandemic, JCTTA took the initiative to survive and considered tourism as a field that must be pursued. This made them their first ever virtual tour. This reveals that JCTTA is having a hard time implementing business tours (Suheryadi & Saputra, 2021). This is in line with statement that declared the Covid-19 epidemic affected entrepreneurial intent; economic downturns became a barrier to starting new businesses (Wibowo, Hurdawaty, Saputra, Suheryadi, & Karlina, 2022).

VT organized by JCTTA becomes the primary method for rerun tour activities on business. This is in accordance with opinion that stated it encourages technological innovation in creating a digital platform as a step to increase attractiveness tourism in Indonesia, one of which is through a VT to advance the Indonesian tourism sector (Djunarto, Subiyantoro, & Sutrisno, 2022). Agreeing with this, virtual tours are a strategy to promote culinary tourism, natural beauty and local culture (Respatiningsih & Kurniawan, 2020). JCTTA has a number of VT types that were held, as in the following table.

Table 3. Types of VT on JCTTA

No	Types of VT	Description
1	Non-Live Zoom	Guide is not on location. Presentation Virtual Tour is held such presentation and use a number of support platform like Google Earth, Videos, Canva Designs, photos
2	Live Zoom	Guide is on location destination travel and deliver in a manner direct about object tourism at the destination
3	Free Live Streamin on Instagram	Activity this VT was held for free for traveler common on Instagram. This type virtual tour can be followed by everyone who wants join in journey tour

[Source: Primary Data (2022)]

After that, JCTTA changed and saw many new competitors. It continues to introduce VT packages on various online platforms, even though the situation

on the ground has begun to be difficult to attract the interest of the general audience and schools to use them. To provide a VT, JCTTA has to fulfill and collect data according to the wishes of tourists.

According to the informant who is the founder (IF1), said that all VT activities that will be carried out must be evaluated first before being included in a tour package that will be sold to the public. In order to make VT trips feel like real trips, the travel operator responsible for collecting data has to have an accurate understanding of the situation on the ground. JCTTA organizes a unique VT to attract tourists and make it easier for them by providing it that is tailored to their wishes. One form that satisfies tourists is by giving souvenirs from the destinations visited during the VT. This will motivate them to visit destinations in the real world.
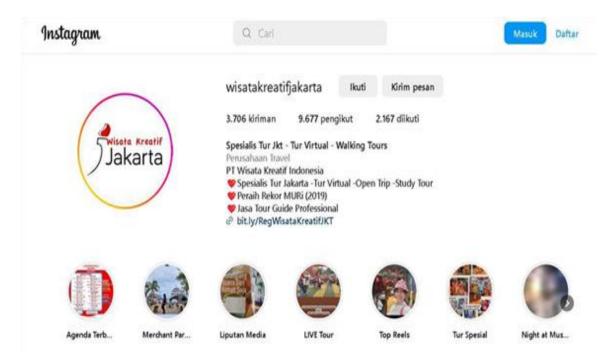

Figure 1. Profile of JCTTA in Instagram
[Source: Jakarta Creative Tourism Travel Agent (2022)]

The concept of VT by JCTTA is preparing devices such as software and hardware. Before the tour starts, the device used for activities must be tested. When running of it, paying attention to them that has been set up and the signal or network used is mandatory for the operator. It has to be well prepared to avoid network interference. This is supported by statement which underlined that after the build stage is complete; testing is done by running the application to see if there are any errors. The purpose of this stage is to find out whether the results of making the application are as expected or not (Satrio & Muhardono, 2023). The following table shows several types of VTs organized by JCTTA.

Table 4. Tours Organized by JCTTA

No	Tour Type	Travel Route	Description
1	Food Tours	1. Old Batavia 2. China Town 3. Little India 4. Portuguese Village 5. New Batavia 6. Superhero Town 7. Tangkiwood Town 8. Kwee tang AADC 9. Depok Dutch Town 10. Bogor China Town	Culinary Tour and Heritage
2	Bhinneka Tours	1. New Market 2. Gambir 3. Cilincing	Tour Interfaith House of Worship
3	Park and Cementery Tour	1. Ereveld 2. OG Khouw 3. Garden Museums 4. Inscription	Visit The Biggest Mausoleum in Jakarta
4	Fun Family Tour		Family Fun Trip
5	Bike Tours		Gowes Tour
6	Virtual Tours		Via Zoom Live Virtual on Instagram of JCTTA

[Source: Website of JCTTA (2022)]

Based on assertion of the informant who is a tourist (IF4), the drawback of the VT is connection constraints, that when taking a VT trip through live streaming on Instagram, there are several problems with network connections that are experienced. This caused dissatisfaction with the broadcast of the VT at the time, the audio portion could still be heard despite the delay. This is similar to the opinion which states that VTs are more challenging than direct tours since they call for greater ingenuity, the ability to convey that viewers are not bored, and occasionally a slow network that causes hiccups during the VT (Hamid & Supardi, 2022). This condition must be corrected immediately because basically virtual tourism has a significant impact on several industries and will provide public perceptions of how virtual tourism will increase people's satisfaction in the midst of a pandemic (Muhammad, Mutiarin, & Damanik, 2021).

Over time, referred to IF1, tour operators have learned more about the unexpected things that can happen during a VT. Travel managers have started updating all its travel needs, starting from replacing devices that are more supportive and paying attention to network connections. Further, other informant who was a tourist (IF5) stated that the tour went smoothly even though there were still some network connection problems. Furthermore, for various types of VTs, including those that do not involve live zoom and live streaming on

Instagram, all of them must be properly prepared. This opinion reinforces previous finding that one key component of tourism communication is the internet, which has the ability to give high-quality virtual experiences and enable real-time interaction between people and computers (Werthner & Klein, 1999).

Pointed to IF2 and IF3, VT is not only a solution during the COVID-19 pandemic, but otherwise being an ongoing program to provide information about tourist destinations to tourists who have not been able to tour in person. However, if the restriction is removed or perhaps after the pandemic, it might serve to raise users' desire for travel and provide virtual tourists with an additional means of evaluating how worthwhile and viable the region is to visit (Gegung, 2021). Other opinions support this; they state that when someone decides to go on vacation somewhere, they tend to look for references through digital media, such as writing reviews, vlog videos, and photos on social media (Bramantyo & Ismail, 2021). In other words, VT is a very popular tool for location promotion and recognition (Syani & Rahman, 2017). Other findings state that Virtual Tourism can be used to promote destinations other than as an alternative tourism (Riesa & Haries, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

JCTTA offers the idea of a virtual tour as an effort for the tourism business to survive during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is also to encourage tourists to return to tourist destinations. Virtual trips can be covered via Instagram live streaming, non-live zoom, and live zoom. JCTTA continues to continue the virtual tour, even though there are some network connection problems. His party continues to update the system to ensure that every virtual tour activity is able to satisfy the tourists who take part. Related information about tourist destinations is promoted through online media.

The VT concept implemented by JCTTA has had a number of positive impacts for both managers and society at large, which include: 1) maintaining the viability of travel agents as a business in the tourism sector; 2) presenting a new concept, namely traveling using modern communication media; 3) a new breakthrough, i.e the concept of safe traveling during the COVID-19 pandemic; 4) a short cut in the field of tourism, travelling traveling with the most economical and easy concept and accessible to all levels of society; 5) the concept of traveling without having to leave the house.

This research has contributed to describing the condition of travel agents in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic, on the one hand trying to survive in running their travel business, on the one hand providing new breakthroughs in the travel business. However, this study recommends the next research agenda to examine how much interest in visiting again through virtual tours.

Managerial Implications

Some important implications that need to be carried out by virtual tour service providers, in this case are JCTTA including 1) handling quickly in response to tourist complaints, especially network connections; 2) displays complete tourist attractions found in tourism destinations, so that no tourist attraction is overlooked; 3) presenting more attractive displays on the web site to attract new customers and consumers; 4) improve the quality of software and

hardware used to produce VT packages; 5) Managers must try to establish a program for how this virtual tour business can still run in the normal era after the COVID-19 pandemic by conducting surveys of previous customer interests. On the other hand, JCTTA's investment in software and hardware to produce virtual tour packages continues to generate profits for the company.

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