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STRATEGY ANALYSIS OF TRAIN JOURNEY TOURISM PACKAGES IN IMPROVING HOTEL OCCUPANCY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AT AMANJIWO RESORT, MAGELANG REGENCY, CENTRAL JAVA

Ni Wayan Lisnawati¹, Dinar Sukma Pramesti^{2*}, Victor Bangun Mulia³ Hospitality Management Study Program, Politeknik Internasional Bali^{12*3} dinar.pramesti@pib.ac.id

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Abstract

The Train Journey tour package is the latest innovation launched by Amanjiwo Resort during the Covid-19 pandemic to help increase hotel occupancy. The aim of this research is to analyze the strategies implemented in the Train Journey package and the efforts made to increase hotel occupancy during the Covid-19 pandemic at Amanjiwo Resort. The research method is qualitative, with data collection through interviews. The study uses the marketing mix theory (7P). The results reveal that the strategies implemented are as follows: from the product aspect, Amanjiwo Resort plans to add 2-3 Train Journey trips per month after the Covid-19 pandemic; from the price aspect, the price of the Train Journey trip remains in line with the room type; from the place aspect, Amanjiwo Resort focuses on the Jakarta-Yogyakarta route by increasing the number of trips; from the promotion aspect, Amanjiwo Resort selects media for promotion carefully; from the people aspect, the staff serving the Train Journey guests consists of 6 people, with a guest capacity of 8-12 pax; from the process aspect, the Train Journey is inspired by the Orient Express and then modified; and from the physical evidence aspect, Amanjiwo Resort continues to utilize the facilities provided by PT KAI (Indonesian Railways). The development strategies that can be implemented to increase occupancy include: from the product aspect, Amanjiwo Resort does not need to add more train carriages, but can increase the number of Train Journey trips or combine it with other tour packages; from the price aspect, Amanjiwo Resort can increase the price of the Train Journey trip during certain periods; from the place aspect, Amanjiwo Resort can add a new route, namely Surabaya-Yogyakarta; from the promotion aspect, Amanjiwo Resort should target more travel agents; from the people aspect, Amanjiwo Resort should engage in discussions with guests regarding meal schedules; from the process aspect, Amanjiwo Resort needs to introduce the Train Journey trip to guests; and lastly, from the physical evidence aspect, Amanjiwo Resort should coordinate with PT KAI (Indonesian Railways) to select specific dates for additional Train Journey trips.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic, Hotel Occupancy, Tour Package Strategy, Train Journey

1. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced the global pandemic status for the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on March 11, 2020 (Suprihatin, 2020). Indonesia is one of the countries affected by COVID-19, and the pandemic phenomenon has brought many changes, including social, economic, and behavioural shifts in society (Nurbaity, 2020). The government issued several new policies to address the pandemic, including Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB), New Normal protocols which include Health Quarantine, followed by the Implementation of Public Activity Restrictions (PPKM), and the Procurement and Implementation of Vaccinations for COVID-19 mitigation. These policies were aimed at minimizing and controlling the spread of the COVID-19 virus. As a result of these policies, the economy has slowed down due to reduced economic activities, leading to the closure of many businesses, and even the temporary layoff of employees. One sector affected by this is tourism, with tourist attractions, hotels, and restaurants forced to cease operations due to a lack of visitors and no tourists coming from both domestic and international markets (Suprihatin, 2020).

The Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association (PHRI) reported that 1,642 hotels across Indonesia had to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Diayudha, 2020). During this pandemic, each hotel or resort implemented various strategies and promotions to increase occupancy or hotel room occupancy. In Central Java Province, the number of tourist visits in 2019 was 58,592,562 people, whereas in 2020, the number dropped to 8,829,656 people. In Magelang Regency, the number of tourist visits in 2019 was 3,715,625 people, while in 2020, it dropped to 719,781 people. Based on the number of tourist visits from 2019 to 2020, the number of visits in Central Java Province and Magelang Regency experienced a drastic decline due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020).

Amanjiwo Resort, located in Majaksingi Village, Borobudur District, Magelang Regency, Central Java, is one of the accommodations affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Amanjiwo Resort implemented various strategies to maintain and continue hotel operations during the pandemic. One of the new tourism packages introduced by the resort is the Train Journey package. The Train Journey is a new way to offer a unique experience to guests during the pandemic. The hope is that this Train Journey package can attract tourists and increase the occupancy rate of Amanjiwo Resort. Based on the issues outlined, research on the Analysis of the Train Journey Package Strategy to Increase Hotel Occupancy During the COVID-19 Pandemic at Amanjiwo Resort, Magelang Regency, Central Java is necessary. The general aim of this research is to analyze the tourism package strategies used by hotels to increase hotel occupancy. The specific objective of this research is to analyze the Train Journey package strategy that has been implemented and efforts made to increase hotel occupancy during the COVID-19 pandemic at Amanjiwo Resort, Magelang Regency, Central Java. The benefit of this research is to add information about hotel promotions to increase hotel occupancy and be useful for the industry and accommodation service providers in creating strategies that attract tourists.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of tourism packages has been widely discussed in the literature, with a focus on the role of marketing strategies in increasing tourist visits and boosting occupancy rates, particularly during challenging periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Several previous studies highlight the importance of strategic planning in the

tourism sector. For instance, Stevanie (2021) discusses the marketing strategy at PT. Mutiara Holidays Tour and Travel, focusing on inbound tour packages aimed at attracting international tourists. This study uses a 7P marketing mix strategy to promote inbound tours, emphasizing product development and promotional strategies. The research underscores the role of marketing in enhancing tourist visits, aligning closely with the objectives of this study, which aims to analyze the strategies implemented at Amanjiwo Resort to increase hotel occupancy during the pandemic.

Similarly, Wicaksono (2017) in his research on Kampung Seni and Budaya Jelekong's promotional strategies for its tourism packages reveals the importance of tailored marketing efforts to increase sales and awareness of local tourism attractions. This study also relies on the marketing mix to understand the promotion of cultural tourism, which mirrors the approach taken by Amanjiwo Resort in promoting its new Train Journey package. Wicaksono's findings on the need for effective promotional channels and understanding consumer needs are highly relevant when evaluating the promotional efforts made by Amanjiwo Resort to sustain its occupancy rates during the pandemic.

Furthermore Widuri (2017) explores the creation of rural tourism packages in Koto Sentajo Village, aiming to enhance visitor numbers through unique tourism offerings. This study, while focused on rural tourism, also draws on the marketing mix concept, specifically highlighting the importance of product offerings, accessibility, and promotional strategies in increasing visitor interest. The relevance of this research lies in its exploration of creating attractive tourism packages that meet the needs of tourists, similar to Amanjiwo Resort's development of its Train Journey package.

To understand the effectiveness of the strategies implemented by Amanjiwo Resort, this study draws on several key concepts, particularly the marketing mix theory, which is essential in guiding the development and execution of tourism package strategies. According to Kotler & Armstrong (2012) the marketing mix consists of seven elements: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence. Each of these elements plays a crucial role in creating a cohesive and effective strategy for enhancing customer experiences and increasing sales. For example, the product aspect of Train Journey, inspired by the Orient Express, emphasizes a unique and private experience for guests, which is crucial for distinguishing the package in a competitive market.

The price is carefully aligned with room types, offering a consistent value proposition. Place refers to the Jakarta-Yogyakarta route, which is strategically chosen for its popularity, while promotion focuses on targeted channels such as travel agents and social media to attract guests. The people aspect is critical, as a dedicated team of staff ensures quality service, while process focuses on a smooth and efficient booking and service system. Lastly, physical evidence is represented through the luxurious train carriages and the seamless integration of facilities provided by PT Kereta Api Indonesia.

The marketing mix model is particularly relevant for analyzing the Train Journey package at Amanjiwo Resort, as it allows for a comprehensive understanding of how the resort's offerings can be aligned with customer expectations and market demands. The integration of these seven elements ensures that every aspect of the service, from the product to the promotional strategies, is carefully considered to increase occupancy rates and provide a unique and satisfying experience for guests.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative descriptive research method is a design process involving decisions on how to collect, analyze, and interpret data to ultimately answer the research problem. In this study, the research design includes six key elements: 1) Research objectives, 2) Type of research, 3) Researcher's intervention level, 4) Study setting, 5) Unit of analysis, and 6) Time horizon. These elements are important in creating a comprehensive research framework to ensure accurate and meaningful findings.

Qualitative research is particularly useful for exploring the relationship between collected data and observations. As stated by Sugiyono (2017), qualitative research is grounded in post-positivism and is used to study natural objects, where the researcher plays a key role as the main instrument. Data collection in qualitative research is often done through triangulation, using multiple methods to increase the validity of the findings. The data analysis in qualitative research is inductive, focusing on interpreting the data's meaning rather than making generalizations. This approach is particularly suitable for understanding complex social phenomena in their natural settings.

The research data used in this study consists of qualitative data gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through direct observations and interviews with relevant informants, such as front office managers and staff, food and beverage managers, chef de cuisine, HRD, and sales marketing staff. The secondary data was obtained through literature reviews, which included books, articles, journals, and other supporting documents that provided background and context for the study. The combination of primary and secondary data ensures a comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation.

The study was conducted at Amanjiwo Resort, located in Desa Majaksingi, Borobudur District, Magelang Regency, Central Java. This research also covered the Train Journey route, which runs between Jakarta and Yogyakarta, with a travel time of seven hours. By focusing on these locations, the research aimed to gather specific insights into how the Train Journey package can impact hotel occupancy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research instruments for this study included writing tools, recording devices, cameras, and interview guides. The interview guide was designed to address the research objectives and facilitate the gathering of relevant information. It served as a guide during the interview process, allowing the researcher to explore the data in depth. The interview guide was flexible, adapting to the flow of the conversation to encourage a more natural and comprehensive exchange of information.

Data collection was carried out through various techniques to ensure comprehensive and reliable findings. These techniques included observation, which involved systematically observing and recording the phenomena under study at both Amanjiwo Resort and Tugu Yogyakarta Station. Interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders at Amanjiwo Resort and Tugu Yogyakarta Station to gather in-depth insights. These interviews were unstructured to allow for open-ended responses, enabling the informants to share their perspectives freely. Additionally, a documentation study was conducted to gather secondary data from written sources such as institutional records, articles, and other relevant documents.

Data analysis followed a three-stage process. First, data reduction was carried out by summarizing the information collected during interviews and observations. This reduced data was then analyzed and linked to existing theories and literature to draw meaningful insights. Finally, conclusions were drawn and refined based on the analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the findings. The data was presented in both narrative form and, where applicable, in tables to facilitate clarity and comprehension. This approach ensured that the research findings were presented in a structured and easily understandable manner. In summary, the research design, data collection, and analysis methods were carefully chosen to address the research objectives and provide a detailed examination of the Train Journey package at Amanjiwo Resort. The combination of qualitative methods and triangulation allowed for a thorough exploration of the topic, ensuring that the findings were both valid and meaningful.



Figure 1. Amanjiwo Resort Source: Amanjiwo Resort (2021)

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Analysis of the Strategy of the Train Journey Tour Package Implemented to Increase Hotel Occupancy During the COVID-19 Pandemic at Amanjiwo Resort, Magelang Regency, Central Java

Based on the marketing mix theory (7P) by Kotler & Armstrong (2012), Amanjiwo Resort has implemented a marketing mix strategy as follows:

- a. Product: Amanjiwo Resort aims to expand its Train Journey offering by increasing the number of trips to 2-3 times per month after the pandemic. This decision reflects the resort's focus on enhancing its product offering and providing more opportunities for guests to experience the unique Train Journey, which is positioned as a luxurious and exclusive travel experience, inspired by the renowned Orient Express.
- b. Price: The pricing strategy for the Train Journey remains consistent with the resort's room rates, ensuring alignment between the accommodation experience and the journey. This approach helps maintain the luxury brand's image while keeping the price accessible for guests booking the experience. The resort understands that pricing consistency is important to maintain customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- c. Place: The destination for the Train Journey is the Jakarta-Yogyakarta route, with Amanjiwo Resort increasing the number of trips along this popular route. By focusing on this route, the resort aims to cater to domestic tourists who are interested in experiencing the historical and cultural landmarks of Yogyakarta while enjoying the comfort of the Train Journey. This strategic decision helps position Amanjiwo as a key player in regional luxury travel.

- d. Promotion: Amanjiwo Resort carefully selects promotional channels to ensure its Train Journey reaches the right audience. The resort uses various platforms to promote the package, including social media, travel agents, its website, and loyal guests. This selective approach ensures that marketing efforts are directed at potential customers who are most likely to appreciate the exclusivity and luxury of the Train Journey.
- e. People: The human resource aspect of the Train Journey is integral to its success. Amanjiwo Resort employs six dedicated staff members to serve guests on the Train Journey. These staff members are trained to provide a personalized and high-quality experience to groups of 8-12 people, ensuring that guests feel valued and receive the highest level of service throughout their journey. The team's professionalism and hospitality play a crucial role in creating a memorable experience for guests.
- f. Process: The operational process for the Train Journey is inspired by the famous Orient Express but has been adapted to meet local needs and preferences. This includes ensuring that all aspects of the journey, from boarding to the in-train experience, are smooth and provide guests with a seamless and luxurious experience. The process also incorporates health and safety measures, which are crucial during the ongoing pandemic.
- g. Physical Evidence: Amanjiwo Resort continues to use facilities provided by PT KAI (Indonesian Railways) for the Train Journey. The physical environment, including the train carriages and the amenities provided onboard, is an essential aspect of the experience. These facilities are maintained to ensure comfort, cleanliness, and safety, creating a sense of luxury and exclusivity for guests during their travel.



Figure 1. Train Journey Source: Lisnawati (2021)

The findings of this study align closely with existing literature on tourism marketing and package strategies, particularly during periods of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. Stevanie (2021) and Wicaksono (2017) both emphasized the role of the marketing mix in promoting tourism packages and increasing tourist visits, which is consistent with Amanjiwo Resort's use of tailored promotional channels and product development strategies. Furthermore, Widuri (2016) and the application of the 7P model demonstrate the importance of product offerings and promotional efforts in boosting tourism during uncertain times, directly reflecting the resort's focus on product enhancement, pricing strategy, and targeted marketing. Overall, the integration of the 7P marketing mix elements by Amanjiwo Resort was essential in developing an effective strategy that met the needs of its guests, attracted new customers, and maintained high occupancy rates during the pandemic. The lessons learned from the pandemic, such as the flexibility in pricing, the importance of personalized service, and targeted promotions, will continue to benefit the resort in the post-pandemic era as it adapts to the evolving tourism landscape.

4.2 Analysis of the Train Journey Tour Package Strategy to Increase Hotel Occupancy During the COVID-19 Pandemic at Amanjiwo Resort, Magelang Regency, Central Java

Based on Kotler & Armstrong (2012), marketing mix theory (7P), there are several strategies that Amanjiwo Resort can implement to further enhance hotel occupancy during the COVID-19 pandemic while maintaining a high standard of service. These strategies focus on refining each of the 7P components, which are critical to developing an effective marketing approach.

- a. Product: Amanjiwo Resort can increase the appeal of the Train Journey package by expanding the number of trips offered. Instead of adding more train carriages, which may require significant investment, the resort could focus on increasing the frequency of Train Journey trips. Additionally, the resort could combine the Train Journey with other tour packages, creating a more comprehensive and attractive offer for potential guests. This strategy would allow for more flexible scheduling and provide added value, enhancing the overall guest experience.
- b. Price: Adjusting the pricing strategy based on demand is a crucial tactic for maximizing revenue. Amanjiwo Resort could consider increasing the price of the Train Journey during high-demand periods, such as holiday seasons or special events. This price adjustment could reflect the exclusivity and premium nature of the service, thereby maintaining a balance between affordability and profitability. Implementing a dynamic pricing model would ensure that the resort can capitalize on peak demand while still offering competitive rates during off-peak times.
- c. Place: Expanding the geographic reach of the Train Journey package is another potential strategy for increasing occupancy. Amanjiwo Resort could introduce new routes, such as a Surabaya-Yogyakarta connection, in addition to the current Jakarta-Yogyakarta route. This expansion would open up the product to a broader market and cater to tourists from different regions, potentially increasing the number of bookings and enhancing brand awareness in new areas. By offering more diverse routes, Amanjiwo Resort could also improve its competitive advantage over other tourism offerings in the region.
- d. Promotion: A focused promotional strategy is essential to increasing awareness and attracting new guests. Amanjiwo Resort could increase its efforts to reach travel agents, who play a significant role in promoting the Train Journey package. By building stronger relationships with travel agents, the resort can leverage their networks and expertise to expand its customer base. Additionally, the resort could invest in targeted advertising, especially in digital media, and make use of social media platforms to engage with potential customers. Offering exclusive promotions, such as discounts or bundled packages, could further entice travelers to choose Amanjiwo Resort.
- e. People: A personalized experience is crucial to maintaining high levels of guest satisfaction and fostering repeat visits. Amanjiwo Resort can engage directly with guests to discuss their preferences, such as meal schedules and any other specific needs. This personalized service helps to build a connection with guests, ensuring that their experience is memorable and tailored to their individual desires. Training staff to anticipate and meet the needs of guests will be key to maintaining a high standard of service during the pandemic, where comfort and safety are paramount.
- f. Process: Clear communication and proactive engagement are important for ensuring that guests are aware of the Train Journey package and are excited about it before

- their visit. Amanjiwo Resort should make efforts to introduce the Train Journey package to potential guests well in advance, perhaps through pre-arrival emails, website information, or marketing materials provided at the time of booking. This early introduction would allow guests to plan their visit and help build anticipation for the experience.
- g. Physical Evidence: To reinforce the luxury experience and ensure smooth operations, Amanjiwo Resort should work closely with PT KAI (Indonesian Railways) to select specific dates for additional Train Journey trips. Coordination with PT KAI would help streamline logistics and ensure that the physical infrastructure, such as the train carriages, is adequately prepared for the added trips. This collaboration will also ensure the resort can meet the growing demand without compromising on the quality of service provided to guests.

These strategies can help to improve the overall guest experience, enhance brand visibility, and maintain a higher occupancy rate at Amanjiwo Resort, especially during the challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic. By adapting the marketing mix strategies effectively, Amanjiwo Resort can ensure that it remains competitive and resilient in the hospitality industry. As the COVID-19 pandemic has gradually been controlled and restrictions have eased, the strategies implemented during this period can still be highly beneficial for Amanjiwo Resort in the post-pandemic era. The lessons learned from the adaptability required during the pandemic, such as flexible pricing, increased promotional efforts, and personalized guest services, can be adapted to a more stable environment to further enhance the resort's market position. For instance, the expanded frequency of Train Journey trips, which was initially introduced to accommodate pandemic-related travel restrictions, can now serve as a key differentiator in attracting tourists seeking unique, immersive travel experiences. Similarly, the dynamic pricing model, once used to manage demand during fluctuating circumstances, can be optimized for peak seasons and special events, ensuring that the resort maximizes revenue without deterring potential guests.

Moreover, the promotion efforts that were focused on reaching travel agents and leveraging social media platforms during the pandemic can now be maintained to target a wider audience, including international travelers, who are increasingly eager to experience local and authentic offerings. The personalized service model, which became crucial in maintaining guest satisfaction during the pandemic, can now be further refined to meet the growing expectations of guests looking for memorable, customized experiences. As the tourism industry rebounds, these strategies will help Amanjiwo Resort not only recover but also thrive in the post-pandemic market, ensuring long-term success by maintaining a competitive edge and a strong brand reputation.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the strategy of the Train Journey tour package implemented by Amanjiwo Resort to increase hotel occupancy during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis was conducted using the marketing mix theory (7P), as developed by Kotler & Armstrong (2012). The results revealed that the resort employed a comprehensive marketing strategy, focusing on enhancing the product (Train Journey), adjusting pricing strategies, refining promotional efforts, expanding geographical reach, and ensuring personalized services for guests. Specifically, Amanjiwo Resort focused on increasing the number of trips for the Train Journey, maintaining pricing alignment with the room type, and expanding the route options to attract more guests. Furthermore, the

resort's approach to promotional efforts, including selective media channels, and targeting travel agents, was crucial in reaching the appropriate audience. The collaboration with PT KAI (Indonesian Railways) ensured smooth logistics and the luxury experience for guests. These strategies were crucial in maintaining a higher occupancy rate during the challenging pandemic period, and the lessons learned can continue to benefit the resort in the post-pandemic era.

This research has some limitations. First, it focuses on a single resort, which may not fully represent broader trends in the hospitality industry. Second, due to the pandemic, direct observations and interviews were limited, particularly in public spaces like train stations, which restricted the data collection process. Lastly, the study relied primarily on qualitative data, such as interviews and observations, which could be influenced by interviewer bias or limited participant perspectives.

While this research provides valuable insights into the strategies used by Amanjiwo Resort during the pandemic, it does have certain limitations. One limitation is the focus on a single resort, which may not fully represent the broader trends within the hospitality industry. As the study was conducted during the pandemic, there were restrictions on direct observations and interviews, especially in public spaces such as the train stations. This limited the scope of data collection and may have affected the comprehensiveness of the findings. Additionally, the research relied heavily on qualitative data, such as interviews and observations, which can be subject to interviewer bias or limited participant perspectives.

This study provides a basis for future research on marketing strategies in the hospitality sector, especially post-pandemic. Future studies could expand the sample size to include multiple resorts for broader comparisons and conduct quantitative research to evaluate the effectiveness of the Train Journey strategy in terms of guest satisfaction and revenue. Research could also focus on the long-term effects of pandemic-related strategies on guest experiences and brand loyalty, as well as the integration of sustainable practices in tour packages and their impact on profitability and guest perception. These insights would help both Amanjiwo Resort and other hospitality players adapt to the post-pandemic landscape.

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