

TOURIST PERCEPTIONS ON DECISION TO STAY IN NATURE-THEMED OR OPEN ACCOMMODATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ERA IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

Aims: The purpose of the study was to determine consumer perceptions regarding the decision to stay in nature-themed or open-air accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic. **Study Design:** This research in the study was descriptive using a quantitative method. **Place and Duration of Study:** Jakarta, February-April, 2021. **Methodology:** The study population was consumers or tourists who have stayed in nature-themed or open-air accommodations. The researchers determined a sample size of 100 respondents. Data collection was performed using a questionnaire consist of statements answered by selecting a Likert scale. The univariate test utilized mean and standard deviation, which were then categorized. **Results:** The profile of 100 respondents who have stayed in nature-themed or open-air accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic most were females, by 56%. Dominant respondent age, including young people with jobs as new employees. This indicates that with a monthly expenditure budget that can belong to the lower middle class, this group has a good interest in staying in open accommodation during the pandemic. Based on these results, 74% of respondents answered questionnaires with high category results, so consumer perceptions were positive or good regarding decisions to stay in nature-themed or open-air accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study also indicated that the information obtained by respondents regarding nature-themed or open accommodation is excellent to be an option during the current pandemic, and hence, the respondent's perception was positive or good. Information related to nature-themed or open-air accommodation is believed to meet the physical and psychological needs of the damaging problems caused by restricting human movement. **Conclusion:** The conclusion of this study includes the characteristics of consumers selecting open concept accommodation, where both males and females have the same interest in staying in open or natural accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Most tourists being young is possible since the younger generation prioritizes tourism. Respondents have a good level of trust in the accommodation manager they have chosen and have implemented health protocol policies to maintain consumer safety. Accommodation with an open or natural concept is an option because tourists prefer a more relaxed atmosphere such as a new atmosphere and a cool atmosphere, have the elements that consumers need in the current pandemic, where they have to limit travel, advice is always to stay at home with a monotonous and boring atmosphere and view.

Keywords: Perception; Decision to Stay; Nature-Themed; Accommodation; Pandemic; Covid-19

INTRODUCTION

Since its emergence in early March 2020, positive cases of Covid-19 in Indonesia have increased both in number and evenly distributed areas in Indonesia. Although there has been a decline in cases (Berita Terkini, 2021) in early 2021, it cannot indicate a significant increase. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is about health problems and the emergence of the country's economic problems. Its impact on business is inevitable in the tourism sector and other fields. The tourism sector, especially the hotel industry, is also significantly affected by the decline in the occupancy rate, affecting the hotel's income. This is evidenced in the latest data from the Central Statistics

Agency (BPS), where the occupancy rate of quality hotel rooms in October 2020 was 37.48% compared to 2018 and 2019, which were generally always above 50%, with the lowest point data occurred in April 2020 by 12.67% (Hadiwinata, 2020). The decline was due to the Government's policy of restricting human movement both within and outside the city, and abroad to prevent the spread of Covid-19 cases and reduce the death toll. It also directly impacts the closure of many hotels in Indonesia (Rahma & Avianti, 2020), where based on research (Diayudha, 2020), as of April 2020, almost 50% of the hotels that were previously operating were closed.

After implementing the strict restriction policy for

several months, state economy and finance were declining, until finally, the government relaxed policies with the New Normal concept or adaptation of new habits during the Covid-19 pandemic by allowing small and large businesses reopened under several health protocols. The New Normal concept during the Covid-19 pandemic also applies to the tourism sector. It is undeniable that tourism is an essential need because for months staying at home, limiting movement makes people bored and even stressed. With the New Normal concept during the Covid-19 pandemic, tourism business actors swiftly took this opportunity with support from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy but still paid attention to the new needs of tourists during the New Normal. Indonesia's tourism trends in the New Normal period during the Covid-19 pandemic are the trend of vacations in the city with hotel staycations (Urbanasia, 2020) and the trend of holidays in the open (Widiyarti, 2020).

Outdoor or nature-based tourism is predicted to be alternative tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic, supported by research data (Wachyuni & Kusumaningrum, 2020) of 66.4% of tourists choosing nature tourism as a destination choice of tourist destinations during and after the pandemic. Nature tourism tends to have the concept of an open and wide area to minimize the potential for crowds (Mediaini.com, 2020), tends to make consumers able to release temporary fatigue or fatigue, can minimize tourists while on vacation contracting the Covid-19 virus, and present new experiences for tourists during this pandemic. The concept of nature-themed or open-air accommodation is also one solution for employees who are lazy to work at home (NusaPedia.com, 2020). Therefore, the tourism and hospitality sector are currently making a new business strategy by offering lodging with the concept of open accommodation or the concept of open nature with a series of strict health protocols. Coupled with promo programs and several other business strategies, lodging with an open concept or open concept of accommodation is one of the new trends expected to increase the occupancy rate or the decision to stay of tourists at the hotel (Maharani, 2020).

In this case, choosing a hotel for tourists follows the theory of purchasing decisions through several stages (Supangkat & Supriyatin, 2017):

- 1) Problem recognition, which begins with tourists realizing their needs.
- 2) Searching for information on matters related to the fulfillment of needs obtained from various sources.

- 3) Alternative evaluation in which various possible product options consider function, quality, and others.

- 4) Purchase decision in which the decision has been made to make a purchase.

- 5) Post-purchase behavior, which is the impact of purchasing decisions on a product.

The purchase decision stage is influenced by tourists' perception of a product or tourist destination.

Perception is the process of receiving stimulus by individuals through the senses (Huda, 2017). It is vital to know consumer perceptions to create effective communication with tourists. Consumer perception is formed from internal and external factors. Internal factors that come from oneself give rise to the need for a product, such as psychology, interests, experience (Hikmah, 2013), age, income or income, and the tourists themselves (Trimayanti, 2017). External factors that come from outside oneself, affecting one's mindset (Chabib, 2017), such as product image (Hikmah, 2013), service, cleanliness, atmosphere, and condition of tourist destinations (Kalebos, 2016), travel costs, number of members of the tourists, age, income or income, the work of the tourists themselves (Trimayanti, 2017).

There are several previous studies related to the perception of tourists to the development of tourism products. Among others, most tourists were satisfied with the development of tourism products offered in Batang Regency, Central Java (Nurhayati, 2017) and perceptions of tourists and the public who agree on developing aspects and uses of urban forests as a Metro city tourism product (Sari, 2018). The positive perception of tourists on developing tourism products with the application of modern interiors with natural nuances at the Kusuma Argo Wisata hotel, Batu City (Wandansari & Anggraita, 2019). Most tourists and the public agree on Mandiangin Education Forest tourism (Nisa, Fauzi, & Abrani, 2014). It can be concluded based on these studies, and tourists generally have a positive perception of all types of tourism product development. No study has discussed the development of tourism products related to the current pandemic era, such as outdoor or nature-themed accommodation products. The purpose of the study was to determine consumer perceptions regarding the decision to stay in nature-themed or open-air accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research method in this study was descriptive

using a quantitative method. The study population was consumers or tourists who have stayed in nature-themed or open-air accommodations. The researchers determined a sample size of 100 respondents. Data collection was performed using a questionnaire. The questionnaire in this study asked for some data consisting of gender, age, occupation, and monthly expenditure, with 25 statements related to consumer perceptions regarding the decision to stay in nature-themed or open-air accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Twenty-five statements are answered by selecting a rating scale. The scale used was a Likert scale with Point 1 or Strongly Disagree (STS), Point 2 or Disagree (TS), Point 3 or Neutral (N), Point 4 or Agree (S), and Point 5 or Strongly Agree (SS). The data obtained were tested for validity, reliability, and univariate tests. The univariate test utilized mean and standard deviation, which were then categorized.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

The profile describes the characteristics of respondents who have stayed in nature-themed or open-air accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Of 100 respondents, most were females, by 56%. With a small difference in numbers, it can be concluded that the two groups of respondents had the same interest in staying in nature-themed or open-air accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Most of the respondents were 18-25 years, by 55%. The dominance of young tourists is plausible at a young age. The younger generation prioritizes tourism; according to Salsabila (2019), the younger generation likes to spend their money on tourism activities. There is an assumption that they still have a low risk of contracting the Covid-19 virus as long as they maintain their stamina. They will avoid the virus even if they stay outside the house. Most of the respondents with the latest education are SMA/SMK/MA, for 53%. This is related to the dominant respondent age, including young people with the last educational background of SMA/SMK/MA. Most of the respondents with the respondent's job as employees for 40%. This is related to the dominant respondent age, including young people with jobs as young employees. Also, most of the respondents had monthly expenditure characteristics of Rp 2,000,000 (30%) and Rp 2,000,000 - Rp 4,000,000 (28%). This is related to the dominant respondent age, including young people with jobs as new employees. This indicates that with a monthly expenditure budget that can belong to the lower middle class, this group has a good interest in staying in open accommodation during

the pandemic. It was followed by testing the statement data as follows:

The validity test in this study, with the help of the SPSS program, used the product-moment correlation formula. All the calculated that *r* values were greater than the table *r* values, which were more than 0.197, indicating that all statements were valid. Reliability test with the help of the SPSS program using the Alpha Cronbach formula. All values obtained were over 0.60, which indicates that all statements are reliable.

The researchers took three categories in this study to categorize the measurement results - Low Category, Medium Category, and High Category. The guideline formula for the measurement results category used in this study is as follows (refer to table 1):

Table 1: Guideline Formula for Measurement Result Category

Category	Formula
Low	$X < M - 1SD$
Medium	$M - 1SD \leq X < M + 1SD$
High	$M + 1SD \leq X$

Source: Azwar, 2012

where:

M = Mean

SD = Standard Deviation

The questionnaire has 25 statements. The lowest possible score was acquired with a minimum scale value of 1, i.e., 25. A scale value of 1 is "strongly disagree" = $1 \times 25 = 25$ (), while the highest possible score was obtained with a maximum value of a scale of 5, i.e., 125. The value of a scale of 5 is "strongly agree" = $5 \times 25 = 125$ ().

Data Range Formula: $() - ()$

: $125 - 25$

: 100

Mean Formula: $(-) / 2$

: $150 / 2$

: 75

SD Formula : $Range / 6$

: $100 / 6$

: 16,6 rounded up to 17

Based on the Data Range, Mean, and Standard Deviation results, it was continued by calculating the category of measurement results, as presented in the following table 2:

Table 2: Calculation for Measurement Result Category

Category	Formula
Low	$X < M - 1SD$ $= X < 75 - (1 \times 17)$ $= X < 75 - 17$ $= X < 58$
Medium	$M - 1SD \leq X < M + 1SD$ $= 75 - (1 \times 17) \leq X < 75 + (1 \times 17)$ $= 75 - 17 \leq X < 75 + 17$ $= 58 \leq X < 92$
High	$M + 1SD \leq X$ $= 75 + (1 \times 17) \leq X$ $= 75 + 17 \leq X$ $= 92 \leq X$

Source: Processed Data, 2021

From the calculation table for the category of measurement results above, the guidelines for the category of measurement results can be determined as follows (refer to table 3):

Table 3: Guideline of Measurement Result Category

Category	Score
Low	1-57
Medium	58-91
High	92-125

Source: Processed Data, 2021

The guideline for the result category of the questionnaire measurement of 100 respondents was obtained. There are three categories: low, medium, and high. In table 4, the following categories are the results of the questionnaire measurement of 100 respondents answering the questionnaire:

Table 4: Univariate of Total Statement

No	Univariate Total P	Amount	Percentage
1	Low Category	2	2%
2	Medium Category	24	24%
3	High Category	74	74%
Total		100	100%

Source: Processed Data, 2021

The table shows that from 100 respondents, two were in a low category (score 1-57) with a percentage of 2%, 24 were in a moderate category (score 58-91) with a percentage of 24%, and 74 were in a high category (score 92-125) with a percentage of 74%.

Based on these results, 74% of respondents answered questionnaires with high category results, so consumer perceptions were positive or good regarding decisions to stay in nature-themed or open-air accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Nature-themed or open-air accommodations are intended as cottages

(bungalows), glamping (glamorous camping), villas in the middle of rice fields, and other types of nature-themed accommodation. Nature-themed or open-air accommodations are generally permanent / semi-permanent buildings intended for personal tourists, not in large groups with adventurous types of tourists. It follows Kusumaningrum & Wachyuni (2020), stating that the drifter type dominated the tourism typology during the pandemic, and there was a shift from mass tourism to private tourism. This study also indicated that the information obtained by respondents regarding nature-themed or open accommodation is excellent to be an option during the current pandemic, and hence, the respondent's perception was positive or good. Information related to nature-themed or open-air accommodation is believed to meet the physical and psychological needs of the damaging problems caused by restricting human movement. Most of the reviewed studies reported adverse psychological effects of quarantine, including symptoms of stress, confusion, anger, frustration, boredom, financial loss (Brooks, Smith, & Webster, 2020). In addition, staying in nature-themed or open-air accommodation during a pandemic is possible, with a low risk of being exposed to the virus, given that the discipline applies health protocols so that people can relax safely (Arum & Handayani, 2020) and attach importance to safety, cleanliness, and beauty aspects to meet the demands of tourists (Wachyuni & Kusumaningrum, 2020). Another supporting research is that with the assumption that the COVID-19 pandemic is the impact of indifference to the natural human environment, the hotel industry has begun to pay attention to the relationship between environmental problems and consumption behavior. Recent research demonstrated that consumers' environmental concerns increased the perceived value of nature-themed hotels and green hotel brand trust is an essential predictor of willingness to pay more and willingness to sacrifice to stay at nature-themed hotels (Jian et al. 2020).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study includes the characteristics of consumers selecting open concept of accommodation, where both males and females have the same interest in staying in open or natural accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Most tourists being young is possible since the younger generation prioritizes tourism. The dominance of the final educational background of SMA/SMK/MA relates to respondent age. Most working background as a young employee relates to respondent age, where

most were young and in the lower middle class. The univariate test results show that 74% of respondents are in the high category, so consumer perceptions are positive or good regarding the decision to stay in open or natural accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Respondents have a good level of trust in the accommodation manager they have chosen and have implemented health protocol policies to maintain consumer safety. Accommodation with an open or natural concept is an option because tourists prefer a more relaxed atmosphere such as a new atmosphere and a cool atmosphere, have the elements that consumers need in the current pandemic, where they have to limit travel, advice is always to stay at home with a monotonous and boring atmosphere and view.

Researchers can give suggestions related to research on consumer perceptions regarding decisions to stay in open or natural accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic, among others, can be continued with further research related to tourism trends during the pandemic. Accommodation entrepreneurs can develop an open concept or nature as one of the innovations in dealing with the tourism crisis during the pandemic by implementing strict hygiene protocols and health protocols and full awareness. As well as the importance of information obtained by potential consumers in influencing perceptions and purchasing decisions, accommodation entrepreneurs can provide detailed information about health protocols and hygiene protocols that have been carried out to convince tourists to interpret the results and discussion of research more comprehensively.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

Authors' Contributions

This work was carried out with the cooperation of all authors. The DA authors designed the study, wrote the protocol, wrote the first draft of the manuscript and analyzed the results. Authors GC managed the literature search and research data. All authors read and agree to the final manuscript

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