

Reviving Spiritual Travel in Crisis: Strategic Use of Social Media by Tourism Agencies to Rekindle Pilgrim Courage during COVID-19 in Indonesia

I Dewa Gde Satrya¹, Cosmas Gatot Haryono¹, Ign. Ismojo Herdono¹, Kwan Hoong Ng²,
Thomas S. Kaihatu¹

¹ Universitas Ciputra Surabaya, Indonesia

² Universiti Malaya, Malaysia

cgharyono@gmail.com

Abstract. This research investigates the social media-enabled strategies adopted by two spiritual tourism agencies in Indonesia amidst the COVID-19 crisis to sustain their business by rekindling traveller confidence. An intrinsic qualitative case study approach is employed involving interviews with seven key stakeholders. Thematic analysis reveals that the creative use of YouTube for virtual pilgrimage simulations and religious content generation enabled continuous traveller engagement. By disseminating personalized information and forming online travel communities, the agencies overcame lockdown limitations and revived enthusiasm for future tours. The findings offer timely insights for tourism managers to harness digital platforms' affordances for crisis response, reputation management, and fostering traveller loyalty

Keywords: Communication crisis, Spiritual pilgrims, COVID-19, Spiritual travel agency, and Social media

1. Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia was one of the hardest-hit countries in the world, experiencing extraordinary shocks. The vicious circle of fear and panic makes the COVID-19 pandemic not simple (Ng & Kemp, 2020). Even though the government of President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) handled it well, it had a significant impact on all aspects of the Indonesian people's lives. Tourism is one of the industries that has had the greatest impact (Gössling et al., 2021; Handayani, 2022). In general, tourism is the industry that was the first to shut down and the last to recover from the shock.

The pandemic resulted in a dramatic decline in spiritual tourism, unprecedented by modern standards (Tsironis, 2022). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were numerous visits by Indonesian pilgrims to the Holy Land (Israel), Egypt, the Vatican, and several places of Virgin Mary apparitions in Europe. Specifically, the appearance of the Virgin Mary is a driving force for pilgrimage tours at the Roman Catholic Church (Nicolaidis, 2016). But when COVID-19 strikes, everything comes to a dead stop. All Indonesians (in fact, all people in any country) do not dare and are forbidden from traveling. The economic aspect was automatically halted.

Unfortunately, once the door that restricts outdoor activities is reopened, convincing the public to return to their usual pilgrimage becomes difficult (Bailey, 2022). Many people are still afraid of the conditions in other countries and do not feel comfortable traveling (Behsudi, 2020; Purba et al., 2021). Many Indonesian Catholics are still concerned about their health if they travel to the holy land or the Vatican, for example. Worries and fears of Indonesians present a challenge for spiritual travel agents (Kumar et al., 2022). They must be able to change the mindset of Indonesian Catholics if the spiritual pilgrimage tourism industry is to thrive again. Of course, this is not an easy situation to overcome. If it is not handled well, the crisis will escalate and the fear of traveling will always haunt customers.

If this condition persists, it will be difficult to recover and return to normal pilgrimage conditions. Of course, existing stakeholders will suffer as a result of this condition (Dileep et al., 2022), such as managers of spiritual pilgrimage tourist destinations, spiritual tourism travel agents, small, medium, and micro businesses surrounding tourist destinations, and others. This condition had a significant impact on them.

Surprisingly, not all stakeholders in the world of spiritual pilgrimage tourism remain silent about the current situation. Some respond and are willing to take risks to create conditions that allow Catholics to keep the coals of fire within themselves for pilgrimage. They are Stella Kwarta and Turisina. During the pandemic, they are attempting to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic by developing a good crisis communication strategy. They work hard to recognize opportunities and adapt to changes or problems as they arise. One of their methods is to use digital technology, such as the Internet and social media, to complete all of their work remotely. This is meaningful because, despite the collapse of the tourism and religious pilgrimage industries in Indonesia, several companies or operators were able to develop (Handriana et al., 2020).

The use of innovation in the tourism crisis itself has actually been widely applied in the world of tourism during the crisis and several studies have explored it. For example, in several studies, tourism researchers have seen how the effective use of advanced technology influences crisis response, communication, decision making, and overall crisis management (Bukar et al., 2022). There is research that has examined the use of technological innovation by tourism stakeholders in managing tourist destinations and policy makers in the COVID-19 crisis situation (Li et al., 2022). Apart from that, there is also research examining the central role of social media as the main platform for hotel crisis communication (Bingjie Liu-Lastres et al., 2022). However, there has been no research that explores the use of social media (especially YouTube) among spiritual travel tourism agents. There has been no research that specifically explores in depth the use of YouTube to revive the spiritual journey in times of crisis.

Therefore, this study tries to explain how appropriate and consistent crisis management can help in organizing pilgrimages and solving practical problems. The use of appropriate technology can help manage post-pandemic pilgrimages. The focus and main objective of this study is to reveal how, in a crisis, the two spiritual pilgrimage tour agents devised a strategy to revive the courage of spiritual pilgrims to travel abroad following COVID-19 in Indonesia.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Spiritual Pilgrimage

For some developing countries in the world, pilgrimage tourism is gaining a more prominent place in the tourism industry (Polus et al., 2022). Spiritual pilgrimages are generally interpreted as activities carried out by people to visit holy places, meet holy people, and attend religious events to fulfil rituals determined by their religion (Haq & Medhekar, 2022). They actively seek out non-ordinary experiences such as "transformation, enlightenment, and a change in life or awareness of an event" (Arceta, 2020; Collins-Kreiner, 2016).

In this context, these pilgrims generally emphasize self-transformation through the search for meaning (Digance, 2006). Spiritual magnetism can be found not only in temples or houses of worship, but also in situations triggered by "the people who attend, travel there, and the village or town that sends and receives pilgrims" (Preston, 1990). Pilgrims anticipate a new worship experience and an embrace of inner spirituality (Digance, 2006).

As is well known, the key to pilgrimage is ritual (Polus et al., 2022). As part of religion and civilization, rituals become something that is unique and cannot be left behind when performing pilgrimages (Schnell & Pali, 2013). The rituals performed are subjective depictions of deep personal meaning to the experience of transcendence experienced by pilgrims (Hill et al., 2000). So the destination, the whole series of pilgrimages, and the impact it causes will always be interpreted as something 'sacred' (Leite, N., & Graburn, 2009). Religious tourism has a positive impact on the socio-economic characteristics of a region, as well as the convergence of cultures (Hvizdová, 2018). Through pilgrimage activities, people gain a lot of spiritual experience and also experience healing (Klimiuk & Moriarty, 2021). People have found spiritual and physical healing. Generally, the secrecy of local wisdom is very prominent in this type of tourism (Nkwanyana, 2020).

2.2. Communication Crisis

In general, the recent Covid-19 pandemic is a crisis that must be anticipated and managed properly. A crisis is a situation that has progressed to the point where dramatic and extraordinary intervention is required to prevent or repair further damage (Seitel, 2007). The crisis itself always moves progressively, which entangles things around it quickly, and when it occurs concurrently with other crises, it results in a long crisis (Hart et al., 2001). No institution, group, or organization is free (never) faced with a crisis (Haryono & Wijaya, 2022).

In a tourism context, a crisis can hurt a destination's image, especially if it is dramatized or distorted through rumours (Liu-Lastres, 2022). Therefore, all tourism management entities must be ready to respond well to the crisis by implementing crisis communication strategies and designing recovery marketing campaigns (Pennington-Gray & Basurto-Cedeno, 2023). To formulate an appropriate and systematic response, a thorough understanding of the crisis at hand is required (Tanase, 2012). In particular, a deeper understanding of internal and external environmental conditions is required for strategy implementation to be stronger and more resilient (Schaedler et al., 2021). In the tourism context, crisis management is closely related to communication management and developing a dynamic

resilience framework for crisis management so that it can help tourism organizations gain resilience during times of crisis (Casal-Ribeiro et al., 2023).

Message management, which is frequently viewed as part of a "word game," is crucial in crisis communication. This message packaging is the most proactive aspect of a proactive crisis communication plan (Frandsen & Johansen, 2020). This is part of developing a transactive and dynamic crisis communication model in the tourism sector (Liu-Lastres, 2022). Tourism stakeholders need to consistently develop messages that can help and reduce public anxiety, thereby reducing confusion and psychological worries in the community (Ritchie et al., 2008). Therefore, a crisis communication strategy is needed so that communication messages can be constructed differently to focus public attention on relief and reassurance (Marsen, 2020).

The emergence of social media has made it easier for all parties in the world of tourism to manage messages (Liu et al., 2020). Tourism stakeholder can choose communication channels more freely to convey their communication messages compared to the previous period (Hysa et al., 2021). In this way, tourism managers can effectively and quickly meet customers' information needs, instill their trust in the company, and encourage purchasing decisions (Liu-Lastres et al., 2022). Recent studies show that message appeal and message effects can generate purchase intentions for tourism and hospitality products (Kim et al., 2021; Song & Yoo, 2016).

2.3. YouTube Channel as social media

YouTube is one of the most popular social media platforms today. YouTube users worldwide have reached more than one billion per month worldwide or about a third of the total number of internet users worldwide (Febriyantoro, 2020). YouTube has 1.9 billion active users and generates nearly 5 billion video streams per day across all video-sharing platforms (Bajandi et al., 2019). As a result, YouTube has become a vital communication channel for businesses and organizations.

YouTube, as a medium, empowers Internet users to be more creative and form new viewing patterns that are more appealing and accessible (Cha et al., 2007). Initially, the uploaded videos were mostly produced in an unprofessional (amateur) manner, in what they saw as a non-commercial environment. However, many YouTube creators nowadays produce their content very well and adhere to professional film production principles (Schwemmer & Ziewiecki, 2018). YouTube only became a money-making field in 2009, when YouTube creators, also known as YouTubers, started earning money by uploading videos and gaining micro-celebrity status. YouTube has become a website capable of distributing wide content and sharing viral content (Carvache-Franco et al., 2023).

In the tourism context, YouTube videos can be used by tourism stakeholders as a means of communicating tourist destination brands through their appeal and emotional value (Huertas et al., 2017). Through YouTube, the offer of intangible tourist destinations can be visualized. YouTube's audiovisual capabilities make it easier for tourist destination managers to market and create a positive image of tourist destinations (Jara-Amézaga, 2023). Thus, public perceptions and attitudes towards tourist destinations will be influenced by the content created (Chang, 2022).

Creating your own YouTube content is not easy because it requires dedication, technical skills, acting or public speaking abilities as well as branding and marketing skills (Tolkach & Pratt, 2021); If done correctly, it will generate great public attention and become an appropriate marketing communications tool for the organization (Boy et al., 2020). It must be acknowledged that social media has changed the way people communicate with each other in various situations, especially when collecting and processing large amounts of data and generating information for decision-making. So, in a crisis, tourism stakeholders need to make serious efforts to adapt to the crisis by maximizing social media platforms - including YouTube (Antony & Jacob, 2019). However, currently maximizing the use of social media in the crisis communication process in the tourism sector has become an integral part of the crisis management process (Barbe & Pennington-Gray, 2022).

3. Research Methods

The goal of this research is to look more closely at the strategic framework used by religious tourism operators in Indonesia to survive the post-COVID-19 pandemic as part of their crisis management plans. The qualitative research method was used in this study, with the intrinsic case study method. Qualitative research itself is a comprehensive research approach that emphasizes the importance of interpreting and comprehending experiences to gain a better understanding of individuals' social realities (Mohajan, 2018). A qualitative researcher must develop a high level of sensitivity in this context by participating in real-life experiences (Williams, 2007; Haryono, 2020). Stella Kwarto and Turisina, two spiritual tourism agents in Indonesia, were chosen as research subjects because both are companies that organize pilgrimage activities abroad and are still operating in Indonesia despite the COVID-19 pandemic. This fact shows that both companies have a strong desire to survive and continue to adapt to the crisis conditions they are facing amidst the failure of other similar companies.

This study's basic framework is divided into three stages: conceptualization, data collection, and analysis (Figure 1). The conceptualization stage is completed by formulating the research's direction and objectives. Following that, research areas are identified (Marian tourism agent, technology adoption, social media, and Covid-19). The research method (qualitative and case study) was then determined.

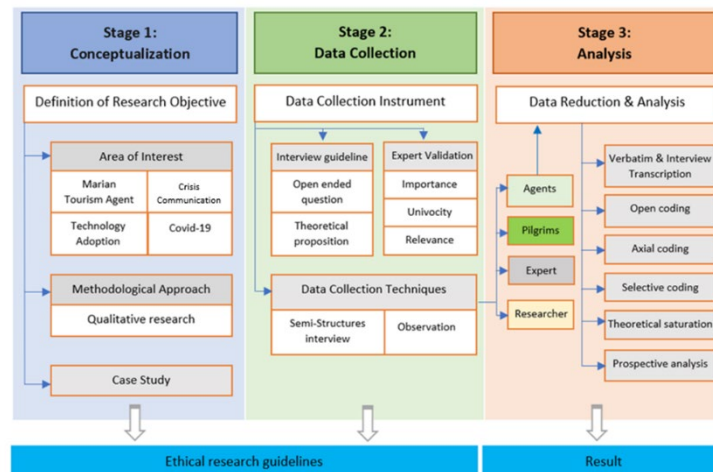


Fig. 1: Analysis Framework

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and observations. Before conducting the interview, we prepared the interview instrument (created an interview guide and obtained validation from experts) first. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview method with six respondents selected based on their responsibilities and level of authority (see Table 1). The interviews themselves were conducted from June to October 2022 and some of them (1-3) were conducted virtually (via Zoom facilities) due to the limitations of the situation at that time. However, this did not impact the depth of our interviews. We continue to apply strict health protocols for several sources that we can do directly (respondents 4-7). Meanwhile, observations are carried out by observing directly in the field. All activities in the field are observed, recorded, calculated, measured, and recorded to obtain the required data.

The analysis stage begins with data reduction which is carried out using the NVivo 11 application, a text-based analytical software that can be used to store policy material and organize data reading systematically, greatly helping our coding process (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Welsh, 2002). Next, the

researcher will analyze it using thematic analysis, which is an effective method for analyzing qualitative data in detail and finding interconnected patterns in the extent to which phenomena occur through the researcher's eyes (Nowell et al., 2017). So far, thematic analysis is considered a flexible method because this method does not depend on theory and epistemology so it can be applied to various theoretical and epistemological approaches (Byrne, 2022). The thematic analysis in this research was carried out through six stages, namely (1) familiarizing yourself with the data; (2) create initial codes; (3) constructing themes; (4) examining the resulting themes; (5) defining these themes; and (6) make a report (Braun & V. Clarke, 2006).

The researcher continued to analyze and interpret the data throughout this research process to identify emerging themes and achieve theoretical saturation. This approach involves determining saturation based on the level of theoretical insight gained from the data. Here, the researcher assesses whether the themes and patterns that emerge adequately explain the phenomenon under study (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The validity of this study is based on the certainty that the research results were carried out correctly from the perspective of the researchers, participants, or readers in general. So the main reference is not the number of respondents studied, but the trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility of the chosen informants (Elo et al., 2014). To minimize the possibility of subjectivity and at the same time maintain the validity of the data in this research, we used source triangulation, namely a technique for checking the validity of the data by examining or comparing data obtained from several sources representing several categories (Moleong, 2014), including institutions, congregations, and experts (Table 1).

Table 1: *Respondent classification*

<i>Category</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Number of Respondents</i>
<i>Owner Stella Kwarta (Agent)</i>	Jakarta	R 1
<i>Stella Kwarta (Agent)</i>	Jakarta	R 2
<i>Owner Turisina (Agent)</i>	Semarang	R 3
<i>Pilgrim</i>	Surabaya	R 4
<i>Pilgrim</i>	Jakarta	R 5
<i>Pilgrim</i>	Jakarta	R 6
<i>Religious pilgrimage expert</i>	Jakarta	R 7

Source: Researcher's elaboration

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Dark Clouds and Crisis Communication

Spiritual travel agents, as a sector that has had an extraordinary impact, must move quickly and immediately prepare the necessary anticipatory steps. Unfortunately, the pandemic is novel and has never occurred before. The pandemic has become a 'dark cloud' for the world of tourism. They automatically lack sufficient references to serve as a foundation for determining the strategic steps required in this crisis.

Organizational leaders (in this case Stella Kwarta Management and also Turisina) play a critical role in this crisis (Currie & Spyridonidis, 2019). Leadership responds quickly to changes and opens the organization to several relevant stakeholders, particularly in terms of information about the company's situation. Leaders take the risk of perseverance and encourage employees to work together to find a way out of the crises they face.

The world had turned very dark and uncertain. Prices increased, particularly the cost of transportation, which became extremely high. This is a major issue that is extremely difficult to resolve.

We are suddenly confronted with an uncertain world. Aircraft prices are skyrocketing. We must make the correct decision right away. (R3)

Decisions must be made quickly and precisely in this situation. To overcome the conditions they face, they rely heavily on instinct and take more trial-and-error steps. Companies must be able to plan good crisis communication in the event of a pandemic. Inevitably, all parties involved in the company's operations must be informed and comprehend the situation at hand.

We have no prior experience with this type of situation. We can and have done so with relative ease in a war situation. However, the Covid-19 pandemic is completely new to us... (R2)

This situation put them in an emergency, necessitating a firm company policy or decision. They had to wrack their brains to find the right solution to this unexpected problem. They are in the midst of a crisis that needs to be resolved as soon as possible (Bundy et al., 2016). In a crisis where no one is allowed to work together, the company's operations immediately cease. Due to Covid-19 activity restrictions, all planned tourist trips have been canceled. Even though many pilgrimage trips to the Holy City of Jerusalem and various pilgrimage destinations in Europe have been planned for 2019.

Frankly, we were confused at the beginning but continued to look for ways to survive. The important thing we remember is that we have to survive at all costs. (R3)

This is a separate challenge for travel agency managers in Indonesia to figure out how to keep pilgrims from withdrawing money they have deposited for travel plans that should take place in 2019 and 2020. This is a huge and difficult challenge for them. They realized that if they could persuade the customer not to withdraw the money they had deposited, it would be a "guarantee" for the business's survival after the pandemic. Therefore, they must also conduct crisis communication with external and internal parties simultaneously. This is important to be able to save relationships and calm customers amidst the uncertainty of existing conditions (Eriksson, 2018).

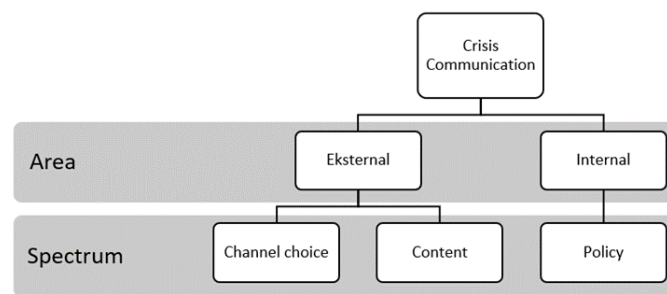


Fig. 2: Spectrum Crisis Communication in Stella Kwarta

Stella Kwarta has tried in an organized manner to take two strategic steps, *The first step* (Figure 2) is to ensure that the prospective pilgrims remain with the travel agent (external crisis communication). They are working hard to ensure that the desire to make pilgrimages remains 'burning' in the hearts of their customers during the pandemic. They seek out ways to be constantly in the presence of potential pilgrims. They must be present in their midst to keep the desire to make pilgrimages alive amid the difficult circumstances that existed at the time.

We were completely perplexed by COVID-19's initial conditions. But, whatever the circumstances, we are aware that we are in their midst. Otherwise, they will lose interest in

making pilgrimages and will withdraw their deposit. It is detrimental to our company's growth.
(R1)

These spiritual pilgrimage travel agents must persuade people not to withdraw their savings for the pilgrimage. If the prospective pilgrims do not withdraw their money, the company's future is somewhat assured. At the very least, the company is not required to return the money that has been deposited and can be set aside for future pilgrimages. This also concerns the company's sustainability in the event of a sudden pandemic that is not well anticipated.

Second, the company communicates extensively with its employees about the current situation and how to handle it. Management considers this step to be critical and urgent to clarify the situation quickly and ensure that employees understand the company's actions, including communicating the company's policy on laying off all employees after six months of attempting to continue paying employees' salaries. They openly communicate this strict policy to all employees.

We try to communicate with employees as best as possible so that all employees understand the existing situation. We assured them that the company was not operating as usual, including in terms of payroll, because conditions did not allow it. (R2)

It is not easy to communicate that the company is no longer able to pay employee salaries. It takes a unique method and technique to ensure that the message is easily understood and accepted by employees. This necessitates a unique strategy that must be meticulously planned. It is difficult to get all parties to understand the company's situation. This is one form of the company's efforts to understand its internal environment (Schaedler et al., 2021) as well as the company's efforts to develop a dynamic resilience framework in crisis management (Casal-Ribeiro et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, the Turisina spiritual tourism agent employs no special tactics when dealing with COVID-19. They are more likely to be sporadic, to do what is obvious, and to simply follow government orders. They are more likely to emphasize the social aspect, specifically making sure customers are comfortable and continue to trust Turisina. One of the steps taken is to organize Virtual Tours for their followers to locations that are rarely discussed or visited.

Amid uncertainty caused by Covid-19, we are taking more social steps. We hope to entertain them by providing a virtual tour. (R3)

The purpose of organizing this virtual tour is not to provide "spiritual services." But only for entertainment purposes, so that customers do not feel pressured or afraid amid these uncertain times. Turisina believes that maintaining good relationships with customers during the crisis will have a positive impact on customer loyalty (Khan et al., 2022). What they do is a form of care wrapped in creative thinking and utilizing new tools so that they hope to be able to answer customers' urgent needs today and build stronger relationships in the COVID-19 era (Diebner et al., 2020).

4.2. Unintentional Innovation Adoption

In an uncertain situation, the company continues to try to build the trust of consumers who have paid money for their spiritual pilgrimage to the company. Various ways were used to show that the company still existed and the money they deposited was safe so that whenever the pandemic subsided, they could immediately go on pilgrimage to the holy land or other spiritual pilgrimage destinations in the Middle East and Europe. What these two companies are doing is part of their efforts to show that they are not leaving during the crisis and that they are still there for their customers (Zimal & Aysar, 2021).

Turisina is one of the spiritual pilgrimage agents who arrived on YouTube late. Turisina is the latest Indonesian travel agency to adopt technology by the end of 2020. They did not use the Turisina account directly at first. Instead, use the account owner or founder of Turisina. The first YouTube event is a virtual pilgrimage to Rome's Basilica of Santa Pudeziana.

We see YouTube as a way to connect people's desire to go on pilgrimages. We, like other agents in Indonesia, have finally decided to organize a virtual pilgrimage because the government has not yet opened the borders. (R3).

Even though they are late adopters, they believe that YouTube is the right means to touch and greet their customers. YouTube's high audiovisual capabilities compared to other social media make them confident in using YouTube as a means for corporate crisis communication programs and attracting large public attention (Boy et al., 2020). This can be understood because as a social media, YouTube provides more opportunities for its users to greet them audio-visually (Bajandi et al., 2019).

Stella Kwarta, on the other hand, is a pioneer in the use of social media among religious tourism agents in Indonesia. Stella Kwarta looked for various ways to deal with the pandemic as soon as it hit Indonesia and restrictions on outside activities were imposed. Stella Kwarta finally chose the YouTube channel as their main media after experimenting with various methods to stay in touch with her customers. This medium was chosen by chance. Initially, they attempted to use the Zoom application to build communication with potential pilgrims during the pandemic. Due to the limited number of devices, various devices were tried before deciding on YouTube.

Initially, we offered online tours to convince customers that we were with them via Zoom. It turned out that there were quite a lot of participants so zooming was no longer possible, We tried various media and finally, we saw that YouTube was the most effective. (R1)

So far, they are not used to using YouTube. They have only been active on social media and have not used YouTube at all. They even don't have a YouTube account. However, due to the urgency of the situation, they moved quickly to study it and create some interesting content for their initial content on YouTube.

We don't usually make videos when accompanying pilgrims to pilgrimage sites... But as tour guides, we used to tell people about it. This guide experience becomes our major capital. (R2)

In a crisis, Stella Kwarta's adoption (as explained above) does not take long because the innovation diffusion process is carried out (Posey, 2020). They (more precisely) adopt innovations through a trial-and-error process. In this case, no team has been formed specifically to investigate what innovations can be developed. Instead, they rely solely on top management (3 people) to find ways to escape the current situation.

They simply rely on what they know and experiment. Adopting a YouTube channel requires no special considerations. They only see the pragmatic aspect, which is well-liked and easily accessible. They believe YouTube will help them easily viralize what they program because it has advantages in terms of appeal and emotional value (Huertas et al., 2017). Apart from that, in many ways, they also believe that people's perceptions and attitudes towards spiritual pilgrimage tourist destinations will also be influenced by the content they create on YouTube (Chang, 2022). These factors ultimately support the strategy of using YouTube channels to establish communication with their customers. However, this unintentional adoption of technology has had a significant impact on customer trust in the company. This is inextricably linked to the fact that technology is a component of culture and is often a predictor of the magnitude of the changes that occur (Rahman & Anwar, 2022).

When viewed from the innovation adoption process as previously described by Morgan E. Rogers (2003), what Stella Kwarta does is relatively simple (Figure 3). The adoption of innovation is not as linear as is usually the case with a fairly complex process (Robertson et al., 1996).

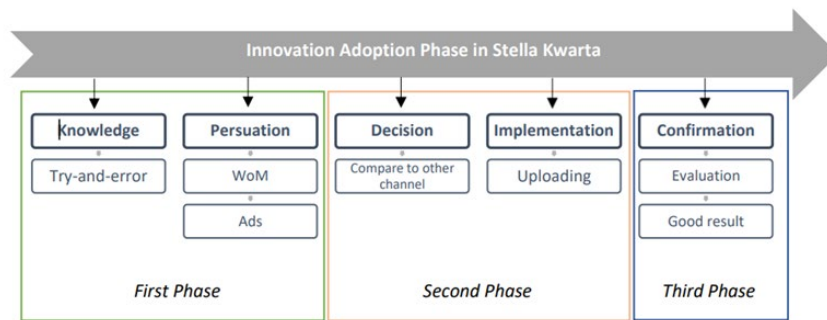


Fig.3: Innovation Adoption Phase

The knowledge and persuasion stages about the product occur concurrently. When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, both of these processes occurred in the surrounding environment, both through word of mouth and existing advertisements, as well as observations from various other business fields. Then it was trial and error to find the right meeting point for Stella Kwarta, especially in terms of the type of content, duration, and the best time to upload it.

When multiple attempts and errors have failed to persuade management, the decision stage is initiated. The ability of YouTube to accommodate a high level of participation is the primary reason for adopting this technology. Following the decision, the next stage is implementation. What had been planned was carried out at this point, and the results were quite surprising. Many people prefer and even request that they discuss other destinations in Europe and Asia in addition to the general ones (Holy Land, Vatican, and Lourdes). The evaluation results show that the general public is very interested in spiritual pilgrimage destinations in Indonesia. Then, right away, a new, more sustainable plan was devised.

4.3. Rekindle the Courage of Spiritual Pilgrims

We discovered in interviews and focus groups with pilgrims that these two options were extremely difficult for them to choose from. Sufficient cash is required amid the Covid condition, where work and business have mostly ceased. Not to mention the need for health (for those affected by Covid-19), which requires them to save enough money. It is not surprising that some people are forced to abandon their dream of visiting the Holy Land by withdrawing the money they have deposited.

Because the business had stalled and we needed cash, we were forced to take the money we had already paid. I put off my dream of going on a pilgrimage; what matters now is that my family is safe. Later, if time allows, I will work on it. Fortunately, the travel agent is very accommodating and willing to withdraw funds. (R7)

This condition must not be overlooked. Both Stella Kwarta and Turisina anticipate this by establishing effective communication channels with prospective pilgrims. It is hoped that Stella Kwarta, their chosen pilgrimage agent, will always provide updates and information to the public via this communication channel. Furthermore, it offers online content about spiritual pilgrimages.

To be honest, I was worried when I wanted to make a pilgrimage after the government opened its doors to foreign countries. We are afraid that there are still many people abroad who get Covid and I can get it. (R6)

Stella Kwarta's management understands the importance of being present in the presence of their customers if they do not want them to withdraw their deposit money. They consider the various contents that they will create to facilitate communication between Stella Kwarta and its customers. Starting with

zooming together to make friends, and then creating groups on social media, they eventually discovered an unintentional strategy, namely running a virtual tour on YouTube. Even though it was late, this step piqued the interest of potential pilgrims. They liked and enjoyed Stella Kwarta's virtual pilgrimage.

Turisina emphasizes spiritual aspects as a method of approach. Turisna attempted to build understanding among customers and even Turisna's internal employees to see this 'dark' condition as part of God's plan in a condition that was not desired by all parties. Turisina desires that all parties place themselves in God's plan. The Turisina manager believes that the Covid-19 pandemic is part of God's plan. The emphasis is then more on the spiritual approach.

Current business prospects are difficult because there are many unexpected things in this world. But we believe that God always guides our business, including our customers. We believe our sustenance comes from God's Hand, so God must have arranged it for us. (R3)

Whatever approach they take, the goal is to keep and rekindle the courage of spiritual pilgrims to travel abroad. As is well known, the general public's psychological condition in Indonesia is still traumatized and is always imagined by the extraordinary number of COVID-19 victims, which exceeds 150,000 cases (BBC, 2022). It is not surprising that many Indonesians are still very afraid to travel abroad (including on pilgrimages). They are concerned that going abroad will cause him to contract COVID-19.

As a result, Stella Kwarta began inviting the public to participate in virtual tours. The locations commonly visited in pilgrimage activities are explained in great detail via YouTube media. Prospective pilgrims are guided to the pilgrimage site using photo documentation and well-structured explanations. This virtual tour is packaged interestingly and accompanied by very detailed explanations to ensure that things that should be experienced and encountered in a live tour (in fact) are not missed. The goal is to pique prospective pilgrims' interest and inspire them to embark on pilgrimages.

Of course, this is not an easy task for the Stella Kwarta team. Furthermore, they have limitations in terms of destination stock videos. The majority of their documentation consists of photographs. It is critical to construct a good narrative for the content presented to remain interesting. Stella Kwarta uses her photos to create content with a variety of interesting special themes (Table 2). Stella Kwarta categorizes their content as follows: Stella Biblical Journey with Father Joseph (virtual tour and Bible reflection from the holy land with guidance from Father Joseph Susanto), Stella Biblica Sharing (virtual tour and sharing of spiritual knowledge), Stella Blessing from the Promised land (virtual tour and reflection on life from the promised land), Stella Pilgrimage Series (virtual tour of saints), Stella Pilgrimage Series Live (virtual tour of a saint (a visual glimpse of the pilgrimage), Stella Tour Highlights, Stella Pilgrimage Series Live (virtual tour of saints in real-time), and Stella Special Program (virtual tour with special themes) (a visual glimpse of the pilgrimage).

Table 2: Stella Kwarta YouTube Content Category

No	Content Category	Number of Video	Video Content Title
1	Stella Biblical Journey with Father Joseph	15	Old Cairo, Perjalanan ke Sinai, Mt. Sinai, Death Sea, Area, Bethlehem, Mount of Olives, Mount Zion, mt. Moriah and Golgotha, Jaffa Caesarea and Mt. Carmel, Mt. Tabor and Hermon, Cana and Nazareth, Tabgha, Mt. of Beatitudes and Capernaum, Mt. Nebo and Petra, Hebron and Bethany.
2	Stella Biblica Sharing	2	<i>Doa Bapa Kami dalam Bahasa Ibrani, Mengapa Natal Dirayakan Tanggal 25 Desember?</i>
3	Stella Blessing from the Promised Land	23	From The Old City of Jerusalem to The city of Jerusalem, <i>Dari Bukit Zion Sampai ke Ujung Bumi, Model Kota Suci Jerusalem Dari Jaman Yesus</i> , Old Cairo, Cairo, Sinai Desert, Mt. Sinai, Dead Sea Area, Jericho, Bethlehem, M. Zion, mt. Moriah, Pool of Bethesda and Garden Tomb, Bethany, Jaffa and Caesarea Maritima, Haifa and Muhraka, Nazareth and Mount Tabor, Cana and Sea of Galilee, Tabgha, Capernaum and Mt. Beatitudes, Capernaum (II) and Garasa, Banisa and Mt. Hermon.
4	Stella Virtual Pilgrimage Series	32	Lady Medjugorje and East Europe Pilgrimage, <i>Mengenal St. Faustina dan Kerahiman Ilahi, Napak Tilas Kisah Hidup Santa Faustina</i> , Pilgrimage to Auschwitz and Birkenau, <i>Kisah Penampakan Bunda Maria Medjugorje, Kisah Penampakan Bunda Maria Fatima (Seri 1), Kisah Penampakan Bunda Maria Fatima (Seri 2)</i> , Ignatius de Loyola, Saint Bernadette, Spain Pilgrimage, <i>Kota Asisi-Santo Fransiskus dan Santa Klara, Kota Padua dan Santo Antonius</i> , Santiago de Compostela, Camino de Santiago French Way, <i>Penampakan Bunda Maria di La Salette</i> , Virgin of Revelation, Rome and St. Paul, <i>Santa Maria Maggiore and Church of St. Alphonsus Liguori, Makna ziarah-Belajar dari Keluarga Kudus Nazareth</i> , Rome and ST. John Lateran, Monte Cassion, Pompeii and Lanciano, San Giovanni Rotondo and Monte Sant' Angelo, Loreto and Siena, Lisieux, Paray Le Monial, Malta(serie-1), Malta (Serie-2), Sicily Pilgrimage, St. Francis Xavier, Nagasaki and Goto Island, Lady of Akita.
5	Stella Pilgrimage Series Live	3	Live Pilgrimage from Jerusalem, Live Pilgrimage from Lourdes.
6	Stella Tour Highlights	3	Cairo-Holyland-Jordania-Dubai by Stella Kwarta Wisata, Lourdes Highlight Tour, Fatima Highlight Tour.
7	Stella Special Program	18	<i>Adorasi dan Penyembuhan, Bunda Maria dari Guadalupe</i> , 800 Years Franciscan in The Holyland, O Yerusalem, <i>Santa Perawan Maria Bunda Allah dalam Perspektif gereja Timur, Belajar Doa Salam maria Dalam bahasa Arab</i> , Hebrew-Aramaic Root of The Lord Prayer, <i>Naskah-Naskah Laut Mati: Bukti Keashian Kitab Suci, Misa Jumat Pertama dan Adorasi, Ziarah Virtual Fatima, Basilika St. Yohanes Lateran dan Gereja Scala Santa, Konka Doa Yang Mulia, Raja Empat, Siena and Bologna, Dipulihkan Bersama yesusMenelusuri Jejak Kekatolikan di Manado</i>
Total		96	

Source: Researcher's elaboration

While Turisina is more likely to use YouTube to reach out to the public, it is a little late in comparison to other spiritual pilgrimage agents (late 2020). They primarily use YouTube to present a series of virtual visits to various locations where Eucharistic miracles occurred, accompanied by a deepening of faith in the Eucharist. Overall, the content on YouTube Turisina can be divided into five categories: Religious music (music that affirms Catholic faith), Virtual pilgrimage (virtual tours to Catholic religious destinations in Rome, Italy), Pilgrimage eucharistic miracles (virtual tour of virtual visits to places where Eucharistic miracles occurred accompanied by deepening of faith about the Eucharist), Walking and Praying (Videos of several spiritual tourism destinations in Italia), and Pilgrimage of 7 Churches in Rome (Virtual pilgrimage to seven churches in Rome).

Table 3: Turisina YouTube Content Category

No	Content Category	Number of Video	Video Content Title
1	Religious Music	3	<i>Tuhan Kasihanilah Kami, Salib Kecilku, Salam Maria.</i>
2	Virtual Pilgrimage	23	<i>Camino Santiago De Campostela, Ziarah Bersama Santo Ignasius dari Loyola, Ziarah Bersama Santo Domenikus Guzman, Bermisi Bersama Para Migran Di Hongkong, Ziarah Bersama Santo Laurentius Kesatria Kristus Pemberani, Ziarah Bersama Bunda Maria Penolong Abadi di Cori-Italia, Ziarah Bersama Bunda Maria Menangis Darah, Ziarah Bersama bunda Maria Penolong Dalam Kesusahan, Ziarah bersama Bunda Maria In Portico In Campitelli, Bermisi Ke Rumah Rret Shek O-Hongkong, Ziarah Bersama Bunda Maria Dari Gunung Karmel, Ziarah Bersama Kerahiman Ilahi, Ziarah Bersama Santo Vicentius Dan Santo Anastasius, Ziarah Bersama Yesus Yang Disalib Membawa Kemenangan, Ziarah bersama Salib Yesus yang Membawa Kebangkitan, Bermisi Di Kota Roma-Italia, Ziarah Bersama Bunda Maria Pengantara Segala Rahmat, Ziarah Bersama Salib yesus Yang Ajaib, Ziarah bersama Santa Serapia Dan Santa Sabina, Bermisi Di Oies-Sud Tirolo italia, Ziarah Bersama Bunda Maria Penolong Dalam Bahaya, Ziarah Bersama Santo Yosef Freinademetz Pejuang Misi Di China, Ziarah Bersama Santo Eustachio Pejuang Dalam Iman, Ziarah Bersama Bunda Maria Dari Gua Cese.</i>
3	Pilgrimage Eucharistic Miracles	2	Concattedralle Di San Paolo Apostolo-Alatri, Basilica Santa Pudenziana-Roma
4	Walking and Praying	5	<i>Berjalan dan Berdoa di Santuario Santa Maria Goretti-Nettuno, Berjalan dan Berdoa di Santuatio Bunad Maria dari Fatima, Berjalan dan berdoa di Abbazia San Nilo-Grottaferrata, Berjalan dan berdoa di Via Sacra-Rocca Di Papa, Jalan Salib Ke Bukit Doa Santa Rita Di Roccaporena.</i>
5	Pilgrimage of 7 Churches in Rome	7	<i>Ziarah 7 Gereja Di Kota Roma (1): Kamis 01 Oktober 2020, Ziarah 7 Gereja Di Kota Roma (2): Kamis 08 Oktober 2020, Ziarah 7 Gereja Di Kota Roma (3): Kamis 15 Oktober 2020, Ziarah 7 Gereja Di Kota Roma (4): Kamis 22 Oktober 2020, Ziarah 7 Gereja Di Kota Roma (5): Kamis 29 Oktober 2020, Ziarah 7 Gereja Di Kota Roma (6): Sabtu 31 Oktober 2020, Ziarah 7 Gereja Di Kota Roma (7): Minggu 01 November 2020.</i>
Total		40	

Source: Researcher's elaboration

What's interesting is that, while the two agencies' content presentation styles and models differ, there is one striking similarity, namely the use of pastors in their content. The use of opinion leaders is quite effective in gaining the trust of pilgrims who want to return to pilgrimage. Their presence catalyzes for these aspiring pilgrims to overcome the fear that has bound them (Feldman, 2017). The experience and knowledge conveyed in this virtual tour inspire them to re-open their minds to the fact that we have entered a normal era and can resume normal activities. In addition, when choosing YouTube, they present several interesting images to visualize the pilgrimage destination well. This is of course very appropriate because YouTube itself has good abilities in presenting and creating a positive image of tourist destinations (Jara-Amézaga, 2023).

Another interesting thing to see from the two agencies is the choice of messages that are simple and easy to understand. In terms of the titles of the videos uploaded, even though some of the video titles uploaded by Stella Kwarta are in English, the words chosen are quite simple and you don't need more understanding of English to understand them. Meanwhile, Turisina uses Indonesian in all uploaded video titles. If the video title is easy to understand, the message will be easy to understand too. In the context of communication during a crisis, developing clear and direct messages to the problem will be able to help reduce people's anxiety (Ritchie et al., 2008). This is important to reduce the dramatization and distortion of the developing situation (Liu-Lastres, 2022).

Based on the findings above, it is clear that Stella Kwarta and Turisina, as spiritual pilgrimage travel agents, did not remain silent and succumbed to the situation. Despite their slightly different perspectives, they both struggle to survive amid the storm. They want to be present among their customers during the crisis. They tirelessly strive to be present and proactively provide clear messages through crisis communication (Frandsen & Johansen, 2020). Through a process that is not easy and full of challenges, they consistently try to build a crisis communication strategy by constructing messages and connecting with customers so that they are calmer (Marsen, 2020).

The use of YouTube as a means of corporate communication cannot be separated from the fact that YouTube provides more engagement for its users (Yang et al., 2022). Through the use of YouTube, customers can give Likes, Shares, Comments, and Followers. Users can actively interact with content posted by Stella Kwarta and Turisina. Even user engagement can be measured through various specific metrics (White et al., 2022). Through this engagement, these two spiritual tourism agents can ensure whether the content they present is relevant to the followers of the social media accounts they manage (Abdi, 2023).

According to researchers, Stella Kwarta appeared to be more agile in responding to the pandemic in this case. Stella Kwarta responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has devastated all human life, with two very decisive strategic steps: *first*, building good crisis communication with prospective pilgrims (external parties) and employees (internal parties). They carried out the crisis communication they devised by emphasizing openness and transparency (Haryono & Wijaya, 2022). This is critical so that related parties (internal and external) can understand and interpret it correctly. *Second*, quickly looking for a cure. The only way to overcome the current crisis is to start implementing innovations (Scotti et al., 2022) right away (using YouTube). These two steps are critical to the long-term viability of the company's operations after the pandemic has passed.

They must be willing to adapt to new environments and conditions (Ludvigsen & Hayton, 2020). The use of YouTube media (even if done inadvertently) is a tangible manifestation of the company's quick response amid a crisis. Maximizing the use of this technology (Van de Ven, 2016) demonstrates management's persistent effort to see opportunities and adapt to changes or problems that arise.

In times of crisis, the public tends to seek guidance on which to base decisions. Stella Kwarta and Turisina (although a little late) strive to be available to their customers during times of crisis (Effiong,

2014). In the face of a crisis, they believe in always being present with their customers (of course by what their portion should be). This strategy is also an effective way to maintain control of the company's reputation during a crisis (Courtright & Smudde, 2009).

It is very interesting to capture the adoption of innovations that have occurred at Stella Kwarta. The adoption of innovation at Stella Kwarta during the crisis was not a lengthy process. However, it is very short and does not take long. This is also because there were not many people involved in the process (only three people). This small team makes everything run more smoothly and efficiently (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). However, the risk is that the burden that must be carried grows heavier as each member of the team must multitask. Practically, the five stages of innovation adoption (Rogers, 2003) that are generally observed are only passed through three stages. The first stage summarizes Rogers' two stages, namely knowledge, and persuasion; the second stage summarizes two things as well, namely decision and implementation; and the third stage remains on confirmation.

The decision to adopt technology (YouTube) helps spiritual pilgrimage agents to effectively and quickly meet customer information needs and instills confidence in pilgrims to return to traveling abroad after COVID-19. This strategy can of course increase people's confidence in making purchasing decisions. Messages that are easy to understand and simply constructed encourage consumers to return their interest in purchasing the tourism products they sell (Song & Yoo, 2016).

5. Conclusion

The difficult situation during the COVID-19 pandemic has encouraged the spiritual pilgrimage agent companies to continue to adapt to all existing conditions to convince the public to return to pilgrimage. The biggest challenge is finding the right means of communication so that they are always beside prospective pilgrims during the pandemic so they can maintain communication and relationships. Social media is the tool that is felt to be the most appropriate in this situation. Apart from its ease of access and ability to reach many targeted audiences, social media also provides two-way interaction and customer engagement. YouTube is the right choice for managers of spiritual tourism agencies in Indonesia to always be close and maintain the spirit of pilgrims. YouTube is felt to be able to visualize messages correctly and influence the public emotionally. Even though it was difficult at first because they weren't used to it and didn't understand the characteristics of YouTube at all, they learned tirelessly and were finally able to present content that could greet consumers warmly.

The study elucidates pertinent crisis management and communication practices for tourism agencies by spotlighting two exemplars sustaining operations during adversity. Their social media pivot aligned with situational complexities and traveler anxieties. This manifested in dispelling fears through virtual spiritual immersions, facilitating travel dreaming through rich contents and guidance from trustworthy entities like pastors.

By analyzing real-time innovation adoption enabled by consumable simulated tours and emotional healing, tourism managers can integrate digital and physical experiences more strategically in event of exigencies while furthering societal value. However, more in-depth inquiries across geographies could uncover nuances within localized religious tourism ecosystems. Investigating traveller perspectives can also enrich stakeholder orientation.

The main limitation of this research is that the scale of development of Marian pilgrimage destinations developed in this research is rather narrow in location, namely only around the islands of Java and Bali. Thus, the generalizability of the findings of this research is limited to the Java and Bali regions. So for further research that uses this research as a reference, it is necessary to consider the limitations of the generalization of this research. Especially if the research uses a development scale outside Java and Bali. However, as identified in the literature review, the researcher hopes that this can be used to see and explain several Marian pilgrimage destinations in other parts of the world. Although

of course, this study does not attempt to confirm the development of Marian pilgrimage destinations in other regions.

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