Revitalizing Hospitality, Managerial, and English for Tourism Purposes Skills: Community Partnership Program for Hotel Employees in Merauke Regency

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Abstract

The COVID-19 crisis has negatively impacted almost all sectors, including tourism groups in the Merauke Regency area, especially the hotel sector. Hotels face several problem areas in the Merauke area, including in the managerial, technical, and English fields. The Community Partnership Program (PKM) is carried out with the aim of providing knowledge, insight, and abilities for the participants, namely employees of the Sunnyday Inn hotel in Merauke Regency. The implementation of PKM involves experts from community, private, and government organizations to provide training materials to participants. The chairman delivered the managerial competence material of the Merauke branch of the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association. Then, the technical competence material was delivered by the Swissbell Merauke hotel manager. Furthermore, English materials for tourism were delivered by academics. The PKM implementation results are expected to equip hotel employees to be better able to adapt, be creative, and have the agility to the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic so that hotel business activities can quickly recover in the new normal era and the post-pandemic era.

Keywords: hospitality, managerial, English for tourism, community partnership

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 virus has unleashed an unparalleled global crisis, impacting our political, social, and economic institutions in the few months after the Chinese government first reported it to WHO on December 31, 2019 (Carlsson-Szlezak et al., 2020; Fuchs, 2020). Globally, travel bans, community lockdowns, stay-at-home orders, mandatory or self-quarantine, and other business-specific restrictions have been issued and enforced (Adek et al., 2022; Gössling et al., 2020). The hospitality industry is nearing its end as the economic activities of the airline and lodging industries have been reduced to a fraction of pre-pandemic levels.

Both short- and long-term reactions are required, given the magnitude and intricacy of COVID-19's effects. There are early indications that information technology is being widely used, adapted, and generated in response to epidemics in order to identify some of the most critical problems in our daily lives, including those associated with employment, travel and leisure, business, and government. Technological improvements have greatly facilitated the development of tourist resilience (Gössling et al., 2020; UNWTO, 2021). Concerning pandemic-related issues, information technology appears, on the one hand, to be highly useful and, in many situations, even essential. On the other side, it is believed that the handling tactics and protocols for COVID-19 are both profitable and time-intensive (for instance, tourist screening, case and contact tracing, and online education and amusement during the lockdown).

In the new normal era, stakeholders in the tourism industry must have the flexibility to adjust and reset the business rhythm. In its administration, the tourist and service industry encompasses a variety of tourism-related elements, including hotels, restaurants, information centers, guiding, transportation, and souvenirs, among others (Yurko et al., 2019). As tourist accommodations, hospitality plays a significant part in tourism administration. In addition, to offering a place for travelers to stay, the hotel can also serve as a center for information and services regarding the local area and tourist attractions. In this instance, the capacity to

communicate, particularly in English, when offering information and services to guests, mainly foreign tourists, is one of the most crucial skills that hotel personnel and staff must possess (Zahedpisheh et al., 2017). In addition to assisting tourists in obtaining information, this communication skill will be necessary for encouraging international tourists to visit Indonesia, particularly the district of Merauke.

As the easternmost point of Indonesia, Merauke Regency possesses a breathtaking natural beauty. This district's beaches, lakes, national parks, islands, and historical site tours can attract the interest of local and foreign tourists (Fitriani & Betaubun, 2017). Wasur National Park, which offers ecological and cultural tourism, the exotic and charming Onggaya beach and Lampu Satu beach, the spectacular Rawa Biru Lake, the lovely Habe Island, and historical monuments and monuments are well-known tourist destinations in the Merauke region.

Merauke Regency's natural resources are a regional asset that will have a favorable influence if these tourism destinations are handled appropriately (Ninla, 2019). In addition, the district of Merauke includes an international airport that facilitates transit to and from Papua. Good governance would increase awareness of Merauke's tourism industry and attract both domestic and international visitors, thereby enhancing the district government's ability to boost the local economy in the vicinity of the tourist region. On the other side, insufficient management or a lack of focus by tourist stakeholders and the government will hinder the expansion of tourism in this region. This rule on tourism management is also governed by Government Regulation number 50 of 2011 addressing the National Tourism Development Master Plan 2010-2025, wherein the development of good governance is one of the orientations for tourism development (No, 50 C.E.).

The practitioner made a discussion and situation analysis with the hotel employees and staff in the district of Merauke. It was determined that the communication skills of hotel employees and staff in managerial, technical aspects, and mastery of English, particularly in the context of providing tourism information and promoting tourism, are still minimal. Few individuals are able to converse in English for some guest service scenarios.

Additionally, the Industrial Revolution era 4. 0 is currently influencing the evolution of tourism trends. The results of interviews with stakeholders from the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association (PHRI) were done. They indicate that the existence of e-commerce or online commerce requires hotel employees and staff to master English language skills for tourism. Moreover, they need to understand the services and digital operations such as online ticket booking and the ability to conduct online promotions through social media using persuasive English. However, hotel workers and employees in the district of Merauke continue to possess relatively low copywriting skills for promotional purposes. Therefore, conducting managerial, technical, and English training for tourism and services for hotel employees and staff is anticipated to promote tourism growth, particularly in the district of Merauke, particularly in the new normal period.

METHOD
Identification of the Problem's Scope

This step is used to determine the extent of partner difficulties. Analysis of Critical Success Factors (CSF) was used to collect data empirically. Identify numerous performance elements in the form of particular conditions or circumstances that must be met by the organization and monitored to keep the organization competitive and successful, affecting work results (Ahmed & Manab, 2016; Fahri et al., 2015). This study is used to plan measures that will be taken against partners so that the actions performed will have a greater impact on partners' business continuation (Sunnyday Inn hotels). The research team was able to implement a work plan that comprised management, technical, and English training for tourism in the new normal era following the analysis.

The proposal team requires data to build training programs or activities for partners. Observation, documentation, and focus group discussions were utilized to collect data. Next, the data were utilized for partner training materials. In addition, the partners will play an active role and collaborate with the proposing team to collect the required data.

Design

During this phase, the training model's agreed-upon design activities are carried out in order to address various partners' top priorities. This phase involves the design of managerial, technical, and English training models for the tourism industry. The proposing team produces training materials, which are subsequently incorporated into an agreement with partners for the execution of training activities. The proposed team then produces the training materials that will be used to instruct the participants. In addition, the presenters will review numerous pieces of literature to support the focus of the discussion, which includes management, technical, and English skills for the application of PKM, which are obtained from a variety of references ranging from books to academic journals.

Implementation

The presenters provided training in the form of managerial, technical, and English language skills for tourism to the partners, who were modified during the design phase. The training aims to enhance the partners' knowledge and capacity to become hospitality workers with solid, technical, and English managerial abilities. Following the training, the evaluation will consist of guided reflections to determine the level of comprehension and efficacy of the PKM program implementation. Twelve participants with educational backgrounds ranging from high school to bachelor's degrees participated in the program. Positions held by participants include personnel, marketing, and management. The training was conducted at the SunnyDay Inn Hotel in Merauke.

RESULTS

As a speaker for the PKM program, the training program is implemented by involving the tourism organization PHRI, the tourism industry sector Swissbell Merauke Hotel, and the education sector. The purpose of the involvement of the three stakeholders is to link and match community, commercial sector, and government-related groups. Participants in the PKM program include hotel employees, managers, and academics (see Figure 1). Hotel personnel are anticipated to effectively implement the training's outcomes, particularly in support of the new normal period and adaptability for industrial recovery.

Figure 1. Participants in PKM Training Program

The first materials were provided by the head of PHRI's Merauke branch (see Figure 2). The information offered was pertinent to hotel management, particularly in the new normal era. The speaker stated that innovative thinking is necessary for the survival of the industry, particularly during the COVID-19 epidemic. Offering creative new types of businesses, such as online food sales by hotel restaurants, staycation promotions to the public to increase hotel occupancy, and expansion of service types, such as massage services to exclusive meeting events with reference to the implementation of health protocols, were several steps in the industry's recovery.

Figure 2. Presentation of Administrative Materials by the PHRI Merauke Chairman

Figure 3. Presentation of Technical Capability Materials by Swissbell Merauke Hotel Manager

The operational manager of the Swissbell Merauke Hotel provided additional information regarding the technical capabilities of hospitality in the new normal era (see Figure 3). In order to survive the COVID-19 epidemic, the hotel staff must acquire new technical skills, as explained by the presenter. Among the technical skills that must be mastered are knowledge of Health standards and COVID-19 prevention. Technical capabilities include maintaining a safe distance between guests, ensuring that guests adhere to health regulations, and managing rooms and restaurants according to COVID-19 preventive standards.

The last content was then presented by lecturers from Universitas Sebelas Maret by incorporating discussion season with the participants (see Figure 4).

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Figure 4: Discussion Activity with The Participants

Tourism-specific linguistic elements are incorporated into the offered material. In addition, intercultural skills necessary for interacting with foreign tourists were imparted. Among the English-language items are:

Important cultural values

- Self-awareness and spatial awareness — what validates an individual's sense of identity in a given group? What is the proper amount of space between individuals in terms of distance or proximity?
- Communication and language – consider verbal and non-verbal communication and appropriate body language.
- Dress and appearance - unique or distinctive outerwear, standard clothing for various occasions, such as commercial or religious, and so on.
- Food and eating habits — choice, serving, dietary or religious requirements, and eating utensils, chopsticks, or hand use.
- Time and time awareness — the perception of time that is accurate or relative, precise or ordinary.
- Relationships - how are personal and organizational ties formed (e.g., based on age, gender, status, income, and power)? Family arrangements, use of titles, and so on.
- Values and standards – traditions, conventions, and practices.
- Religious and spiritual beliefs and attitudes - spirituality, faith, etc.
- Mental processes and learning - thinking and reasoning styles, organization, and information processing.
- Work habits and practices - attitudes towards work and labor, predominant types of work, compensation and promotions, and so on.

Examples of cultural differences

- In America, people shake hands and even hug. However, in India, people just join hands to say 'namaskar'.
- Direct eye contact is considered a sign of honesty in North America. Asians consider direct eye contact a symbol of disrespect.
- A thumbs-up sign indicates that something is acceptable or you agree in America and much of Europe. This attitude is considered disrespectful in a large number of Asian and Islamic countries.
- Raising your hand indicates a stop in America or England. This gesture is often used in some Asian countries to ask permission to speak.

What to Do in Intercultural Communication

- Avoid making assumptions or making misunderstanding jokes.
- Use symbols, diagrams, and illustrations.
- Avoid slang and idioms, instead choosing terms that convey only the most appropriate denotative meaning.
- Check their cultural perception.

- Consider cultural and regional differences.
- Always say what you mean and mean what you say. Ensure that your communications are appropriate for the intended audience and that you use language they can understand.

Prohibition of Intercultural Communication

- Apply the same method globally.
- Regarding conventional knowledge and practice as 'regressive'.
- Allowing cultural differences to escalate into a cause of contention, hindering the process or work.
- Failing to understand the enabling and counteracting culturally dependent forces.
- Understand language boundaries.

After the implementation of the content delivery session, the moderator led the training participants in an interactive discussion. The discussion session began with the presenter inviting participants to reflect on their comprehension of the delivered content through a series of questions. The session then continued with question-and-answer sessions. The discussion session went well, with participants actively asking and sharing ideas on hotel management during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as intercultural competence-related features of the English language.

Tourism and hospitality have risen considerably in recent years. During those years, tourism saw significant transformations with increased vitality. Many business actors in the tourism and hospitality industry are attempting to diversify their offerings to fulfil the needs of travellers. This increase is required because sustainable transformation in the management of tourism sites plays a crucial role in enhancing their competitive advantage worldwide.

Increased competition, the introduction of new tourist attractions, and breakthroughs in information technology, which have impacted the tourism industry, have led to significant advancements in tourism development services. Therefore, new approaches and strategies are required to apply the present management system that provides efficient and effective administration of the tourism industry to achieve sustainable development in tourist sites supported by quality lodging.

DISCUSSION

Tourism and hospitality are likely the two most culturally significant fields of study, as both industries require regular and robust social interaction and cross-cultural dialogue between customers, employees, and managers (Lieberman & Gamst, 2015; Zid et al., 2022). Tourism and hospitality are strongly influenced by culture for two basic reasons. Tourism and hospitality activities are becoming increasingly international as the number of participants from various nations and cultures rises. Second, tourism and hospitality services occur in a social servicescape defined by frequent and intense social contact or interaction between service providers and customers and between service providers themselves (Wang et al., 2022).

Human resource management in the labour-intensive hospitality industry is more difficult and largely dependent on effective communication. It depends on the communication skills of its employees to give satisfactory services (Radojevic et al., 2018). There are numerous reasons why hotel workers in the present era should focus on these interactions and the available managerial prospects. Experiencing cultural variety is usually a primary travel motivation (Steiner & Reisinger, 2004). Second, many hotel brands are seeking expansion prospects in international markets. Thirdly, effective human resource management is crucial for a business's profitability and competitive edge.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Significant changes have been brought about by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in the tourism business. At the onset of the development of the COVID-19 virus in Indonesia, hotels, a key backer of the tourism sector, experienced extraordinary shocks in the form of low occupancy rates. The survival strategy pushes hoteliers to be more innovative and adaptable in order to revive sales activity. It is anticipated that the Community Partnership Program, which has been implemented, will enable hotel staff to restore sales activities with greater agility. The training consists of management, technical, and English language skills for tourism and is provided by numerous speakers with diverse scientific and professional backgrounds, is

designed to enhance the hotel staff's knowledge, understanding, and capabilities. One hotel in Merauke carries out PKM in a restricted capacity, which is later intended to be carried out on a larger scale. In addition, it is anticipated that future training will engage professionals from other disciplines, such as inviting the tourism office and tourism managers.

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