

THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES IN POST-PANDEMIC TOURISM RECOVERY: A CASE STUDY OF CIKADONGDONG RIVER TUBING, MAJALENGKA REGENCY

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ABSTRAK

Pandemi COVID-19 telah memberikan dampak signifikan pada industri pariwisata di seluruh dunia, termasuk di Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran Source daya manusia (SDM) dalam pengelolaan destinasi wisata Cikadongdong River Tubing pasca pandemi. Terletak di kaki Gunung Ciremai, Kabupaten Majalengka, Jawa Barat, destinasi ini menghadapi berbagai tantangan dan peluang dalam menjaga kesejahteraan karyawan, mempertahankan produktivitas, dan menjamin kelangsungan operasional. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode observasi lapangan dan wawancara mendalam kepada ketua pengelola wisata Cikadongdong River Tubing. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengelola dan SDM lokal berperan krusial dalam meningkatkan minat wisatawan melalui peningkatan fasilitas dan penerapan protokol kesehatan yang ketat. Langkah-langkah konkret yang telah dilakukan meliputi pembangunan 2 gazebo, penambahan 6 kamar bilas dan ganti, peningkatan 3 jumlah kualitas kamar mandi, perluasan dan penambahan 2 lahan parkir, serta penyediaan 2 fasilitas cuci tangan yang memadai. Tantangan utama yang dihadapi adalah revitalisasi minat wisatawan dan adaptasi terhadap perubahan perilaku wisatawan yang lebih menitikberatkan pada aspek keamanan dan kebersihan. Faktor pendukung mencakup peningkatan standar kebersihan dan keamanan, pengelolaan lingkungan yang baik, serta inovasi dalam pengalaman wisata.

Kata Kunci: pariwisata pasca pandemi, Source daya manusia, Cikadongdong River Tubing

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the global tourism industry, including in Indonesia. This research explores the role of human resources (HR) in managing the Cikadongdong River Tubing tourist destination in the post-pandemic period. Located at the foot of Mount Ciremai in Majalengka Regency, West Java, this destination faces a range of challenges and opportunities in maintaining employee welfare, sustaining productivity, and ensuring operational continuity. Using a qualitative approach, this research includes field observations and in-depth interviews with the head of the Cikadongdong River Tubing management team. The findings reveal that both managers and local HR play a critical role in attracting tourists by enhancing facilities and implementing stringent health protocols. Notable improvements include the construction of two gazebos, the addition of six shower and changing rooms, the renovation of three restrooms, the expansion of parking areas, and the installation of two hand-washing stations.

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The primary challenge is revitalizing tourist interest and adapting to behavioral shifts that prioritize safety and cleanliness. Supporting factors include improved cleanliness and safety standards, effective environmental management, and innovations in the tourism experience.

Keywords: post-pandemic tourism, local human resources, Cikadongdong River Tubing

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the tourism industry globally, including in Indonesia. Since the onset of the pandemic in late 2019, it has induced significant changes across various sectors, including the role of human resources (HR) in diverse industries (Torres et al., 2022). According to Suwandi, (2021), this global crisis has compelled companies and organizations to rapidly adapt to uncertain conditions, presenting substantial challenges for HR professionals in maintaining employee welfare, ensuring productivity, and guaranteeing operational continuity.

Human resources (HR) are widely recognized as a critical factor in advancing the tourism sector. As Campbell et al (2003) argue, HR plays an essential role in the tourism industry, as it involves human capital, a vital resource for most organizations, particularly service-based ones. HR professionals are instrumental in achieving successful organizational performance. Consequently, the role of HR is both pivotal and complex, as it requires balancing business objectives with employee welfare, all while navigating economic uncertainty and unprecedented challenges related to occupational health and safety (Nurbaya & Maklassa, 2024).

A notable example of an affected tourism destination is Cikadongdong River Tubing, located at the foot of Mount Ciremai in Majalengka Regency, West Java (Ardiyana, 2019). This destination offers a unique and thrilling river navigation experience using rubber tires, attracting nature enthusiasts and adventurers alike. Cikadongdong River Tubing is recognized as a well-managed natural tourism site, making it a popular choice among travelers in Indonesia (Atikah et al., 2023). As such, tourism institutions in Cikadongdong must strengthen their crisis management systems and embrace digital technologies to enhance operational efficiency and respond swiftly to the pandemic's evolving challenges (Arun et al., 2021). The collaboration between tourism managers, employees, and local governments is essential in developing strategies to mitigate the pandemic's adverse impacts and ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for visitors.

In addition, residents in tourist areas face challenges in generating income from plantations due to their limited capacity to process crops. In contrast, the professionally managed Cikadongdong River Tubing destination plays a central role in revitalizing the production, distribution, and consumption processes of local tea plantations (Abdurohman, 2019).

Cikadongdong River Tubing holds significant potential in attracting tourists, with an average of 70 visitors daily and over 100 on holidays.

The primary challenges faced by this destination include the implementation of stringent health protocols, reduced visitor capacity, and a notable decline in the number of tourists (Dwina, 2020). To address these issues, prioritizing human resource development and training is crucial to ensure that employees possess the necessary skills to adapt to the evolving circumstances (Marayasa et al., 2017).

Creativity and innovation from both managers and employees are essential for developing products, services, and marketing strategies that can attract tourists during the post-pandemic recovery period (Tangkudung et al., 2024). This research aims to analyze the role of managers and human resources at Cikadongdong River Tubing in managing human resources in the post-pandemic era. Specifically, it seeks to explore the strategies employed by managers to enhance the tourism experience for visitors, as well as to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in managing local human resources at Cikadongdong during the post-pandemic recovery phase.

Research Method

This research adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing interviews and observations to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics and phenomena occurring at the Cikadongdong River Tubing tourism area in Majalengka Regency. Interviews were conducted with the head of tourism management to focus specifically on this destination. This approach was selected to provide a comprehensive insight into the situation, capturing the experiences, views, and interactions that characterize the tourism area (Nartin et al., 2024). Researchers also conducted direct field observations, documenting various aspects relevant to the research.

The primary informant for this research was the head of Cikadongdong River Tubing tourism management. Through in-depth interviews and participatory observations, the researchers aimed to gather rich, contextual data. Additionally, secondary data sources were collected from the official website of the Cikadongdong River Tubing tourism site (Renggo & Kom, 2022).

Data analysis was conducted systematically to identify emerging patterns and themes from the observations and interview results. This analysis not only describes the current conditions at Cikadongdong River Tubing but also offers broader insights into the factors influencing the sustainability and quality of tourism services at the location (Octaviani & Sutriani, 2019). Through this holistic approach, the research aims to contribute meaningfully to the development of sustainable nature tourism management strategies in the post-pandemic period, while providing

practical recommendations for stakeholders in addressing the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and the evolving dynamics of tourism.

Results and Discussion

Cikadongdong River Tubing is a popular water tourism destination located in Payung Village, Majalengka Regency, West Java. The destination offers an exciting and challenging activity where visitors can float on the river using rubber tires, all while taking in the stunning natural scenery along the waterway. The uniqueness of the Cikadongdong River lies in its generally calm flow, interspersed with sections of slightly faster currents. This combination provides an adventure that is both safe and exhilarating, making it suitable for all age groups while still delivering an adrenaline-pumping experience (Ardiyana, 2019).

In addition to the natural appeal, the facilities at Cikadongdong River Tubing are designed with visitor safety and comfort in mind. The site is equipped with experienced tour guides and comprehensive safety gear, ensuring that tourists can enjoy their tubing experience with confidence. The river route is carefully mapped, with particular attention given to areas with faster currents, which are closely monitored to prevent accidents and ensure the safety of all visitors.

Figure 1. River Tubing

Source: personal documentation



In an interview with Rio Faturahman, the head of tourism management, Cikadongdong River Tubing is regarded a community-managed tourism destination. The research revealed that all human resources involved in the management of this destination are local residents, with a workforce totaling 45 individuals. This community-based management approach strengthens the local economy and ensures that tourism activities are aligned with local culture and traditional wisdom.

Moreover, the integration of community-led management at Cikadongdong River Tubing contributes significantly to the sustainability of the destination (Ma'wa et al.). The local community has a direct stake in preserving the natural environment surrounding the area, which is the primary attraction of the destination. Environmental conservation efforts, such as tree planting, river cleaning, and effective waste management, are carried out responsibly by the community, who recognize the importance of safeguarding the environment for future generations (Butler & Boyd, 2000).

1. The Role of Local Human Resource

The role of local human resources in Cikadongdong River Tubing tourism is crucial in revitalizing tourist interest and rebuilding trust in the cleanliness and safety of the destination, especially in the aftermath of the pandemic.



Figure 1. Interview with Tourism Manager.

The results of the interview revealed that tourism managers at Cikadongdong River Tubing emphasize a collaborative approach to managing post-pandemic tourism. They have adopted a work pattern that involves intensive cooperation between managers and tourism human resources. Whenever significant issues or decisions arise regarding the development of tourism infrastructure, the managers prioritize in-depth discussions and inclusive meetings. This approach strengthens communication and fosters collaboration between managers and local tourism staff (Priambodo, 2023).

The in-depth discussions provide an opportunity to explore diverse perspectives, consider the interests of various stakeholders, and evaluate the long-term implications of each decision. Regular meetings serve as a forum to address emerging issues, where managers and tourism human resources work together to identify context-specific solutions, taking into account factors such as environmental sustainability, social impacts, and the needs of tourists.

This approach reflects a commitment to proactive and transparent problem management. By directly involving local human resources in the decision-making process, tourism managers ensure

that decisions align with the aspirations and needs of the community while adhering to professional and industry standards. Overall, the collaborative approach, characterized by in-depth discussions and regular meetings, is a strategic effort to ensure that tourism infrastructure development is conducted with consideration for various aspects, ultimately supporting the sustainability and well-being of local communities (Putra, 2020).

2. The Concrete Performance of Local Human Resources

The results of discussions and routine meetings held by managers and Human Resources (HR) to support the post-pandemic development of tourist destinations reveal a range of efforts aimed at improving facilities to re-attract tourists and ensure their comfort and security. Some of the concrete measures undertaken by managers include:

A. Gazebo Construction



Figure 1. 2 Gazebos are Built

Source: https://www.instagram.com/cikadongdong_rivertubing/

The management constructed two gazebos in the tourist area, where none previously existed. These gazebos were strategically designed to promote social distancing and serve as resting spots for visitors seeking shade after engaging in activities such as rafting. In addition to providing comfort, the gazebos offer an ideal vantage point for visitors to appreciate the surrounding natural scenery, as they are positioned in locations with the best views. Beyond serving as rest areas, these gazebos are frequently utilized as gathering points for families or groups of tourists, allowing them to share stories and experiences. With the addition of these two gazebos, the management aims to enhance the overall quality of the tourist experience, making it more enjoyable and memorable for every visitor

B. Addition and Improvement of Restroom Facilities



Figure 2. Addition of Washroom Facilities

Source: https://www.instagram.com/cikadongdong_rivertubing/

Proper restroom facilities are essential for ensuring visitor comfort and satisfaction. In response, the management has renovated and enhanced the quality of these facilities to maintain optimal cleanliness and comfort. Key improvements include the addition of six shower and changing rooms, expanding from the original three restrooms. Furthermore, routine maintenance is carried out by trained cleaning staff, responsible for regular cleaning and disinfection in accordance with strict health protocols. Periodic inspections are also conducted to ensure that all facilities are functioning properly and remain in a clean condition. Through these efforts, the management aims to provide a more comfortable and hygienic experience for visitors while adhering to high health standards. The improvement of restroom facilities not only enhances visitor comfort but also underscores the management's commitment to the health and safety of tourists.

C. Expansion and Addition of 2 Parking Lots



Figure 3. Expansion of the Parking Lot

Source: https://www.instagram.com/cikadongdong_rivertubing/

To accommodate the growing number of visitors using private transportation during the pandemic, the management has taken significant steps by expanding and adding two new parking

areas, increasing the total from one to three. This initiative was implemented to ensure that every visitor can find an adequate parking space, eliminating concerns about availability. With the enhanced parking capacity, the management aims to accommodate more tourists, allowing them to enjoy their visit with greater comfort and peace of mind. This development also reflects the management's ongoing commitment to improving services and meeting the evolving needs of visitors.

D. Provision of 2 Hand Washing Facilities.



Figure 4. Addition of Hygiene Facilities.

Source: https://www.instagram.com/cikadongdong_rivertubing/

The Cikadongdong River Tubing management ensures the strict implementation of health and hygiene protocols to safeguard the safety and comfort of all parties involved. As part of this effort, the management has installed one hand-washing station at the entrance and another within the tourist area, both equipped with antiseptic soap. This initiative aims to minimize the risk of disease transmission and uphold high hygiene standards. Providing adequate hand-washing facilities is a top priority, designed to ensure easy access for both visitors and staff, enabling effective hand hygiene practices. Through this measure, the Cikadongdong River Tubing management reaffirms its commitment to fostering a safe and hygienic environment for tourists.

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Local Human Resource Employment

The primary challenge faced was revitalizing tourist interest and rebuilding trust in the cleanliness and safety of tourist destinations. According to Mr. Joko, a visiting tourist, the facilities and services at the Cikadongdong River Tubing destination were satisfactory and adequate. He noted that the entrance ticket price was affordable, the toilets and changing rooms were clean, there was a variety of MSMEs, and the parking area was spacious. Additionally, Mr. Joko praised the natural beauty and scenery encountered during the tubing activity on the Cikadongdong River.

He expressed his satisfaction with the experience and indicated plans to invite his family for another visit in the future.

The shifts in tourist behavior after the pandemic have presented a significant challenge, with safety, cleanliness, and health factors now being prioritized when selecting a destination (Salimah et al., 2023). A crucial supporting factor in addressing this shift is the enhancement of cleanliness and health standards at tourist destinations. Implementing rigorous hygiene protocols, such as placing hand sanitizers at strategic points, conducting regular cleaning in public areas, and ensuring the sanitation of equipment used by tourists, is essential for fostering a sense of security. Additionally, obtaining CHSE (Clean, Health, Safety, and Environment) certification from government bodies or relevant institutions is an important step in demonstrating that a tourist destination meets recognized hygiene and health standards (Listyorini & Hakim, 2023). Furthermore, enhancing the security of tourist areas by employing security personnel can significantly contribute to visitors' sense of safety.

Effective environmental management plays a crucial role in restoring tourist confidence. Efforts in environmental conservation, such as tree planting, river maintenance, and ensuring environmental cleanliness, help create a beautiful and sustainable tourist destination. Additionally, implementing proper waste management by providing adequate trash bins and educating visitors on the importance of maintaining cleanliness is essential for cultivating a clean and healthy environment (Sutirto & Supriadi, 2017).

Furthermore, communication and education for tourists are equally important. Providing transparent information about the health and safety protocols implemented at tourist destinations can enhance tourist confidence. Educating visitors on the significance of adhering to health protocols while traveling, and offering guidance on maintaining cleanliness and safety during their visit, can contribute to a safer and more comfortable experience (Sari & Soegiarto, 2022).

Innovation in the tourism experience is also essential to attract visitors (Jerubun & Nugraha, 2024). Enhancing facilities such as clean restrooms, comfortable rest areas, and hygienic dining areas can significantly improve the tourist experience. Offering a variety of safe and engaging activities, including supervised tubing, guided nature tours, and environmental education programs, can make the destination more appealing and secure. Effective promotion and marketing are vital in rebuilding tourist interest (Basuki, 2021). Promotional campaigns that highlight the safety and cleanliness of tourist destinations through social media, websites, and other digital platforms can draw tourists. Encouraging visitors to share positive testimonials and reviews about their experiences can further help build trust and attract potential tourists.

Conclusions

The management and human resources at Cikadongdong River Tubing have adopted an intensive, collaborative approach to address the challenges posed by the pandemic. They prioritize effective communication and close cooperation through in-depth discussions and inclusive meetings, ensuring that all important issues and decisions related to the development of tourism infrastructure are collectively addressed. This approach allows for the exploration of diverse perspectives and takes into account the interests of all stakeholders involved.

A significant challenge faced by Cikadongdong River Tubing is the changing behavior of tourists, who now prioritize safety, cleanliness, and health when selecting a destination. This shift has prompted the management to ensure that the tourist destination adheres to high standards of cleanliness and safety. Additionally, the decline in visitor numbers due to travel restrictions has added pressure on the management to continue attracting tourists and maintain the operational sustainability of the destination.

Despite the considerable obstacles and challenges posed by the pandemic, Cikadongdong River Tubing Tourism has made notable efforts to provide an unforgettable experience for visitors. These efforts include the construction of two gazebos to enhance visitor comfort, the addition of six shower and changing rooms, the improvement of three restrooms, the expansion of the parking area with two new lots, and the provision of two hand-washing stations.

Through a proactive and open approach, the management and human resources of Cikadongdong River Tubing have succeeded in maintaining tourist trust in the cleanliness and safety of the destination. This effort provides valuable insights for other tourism managers, demonstrating how human resources can be creatively and innovatively managed to support the recovery and development of tourism post-pandemic. Furthermore, the findings of this research contribute to the growing body of literature on human resource management and innovation within the tourism industry.

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