

# Virtual Tourists' Motivation During COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract.** The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic affects greatly all aspects of life, including the tourism sector. The pandemic affects traveler's motivation in planning their canceled trip on a chosen destination. This paper aims to give alternatives in tourism using a virtual-based tourist destination in Indonesia. The method used is employing *Google Form* to know the travelers' motivation who want to take a virtual tour. While the sample is analyzed using probability sampling, in which the sample is taken by giving the same probability to each sample population. There are 80 samples who are the participants in virtual tourism. The result of this paper shows that these participants' marks on virtual tourism as a whole are as follows: 90% very good, 10% good, and 0% less than satisfactory. On the other hand, the participants' marks on the time of virtual tourism are as follows: 82% very good, 12% good, 6% less than satisfactory. This paper ends by concluding that virtual tourism during a pandemic can be considered as an alternative to boost the tourism sector.

**Keywords:** *tourist's motivation, virtual tourism, global pandemic.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Virtual reality tourism is different from other types of travel. This type of traveling only offers destination trips using image captured by virtual reality- and augmented reality-based technology. Travelers are deliberately made as if they are in the real-life situation of the places they are in, supported by sensory simulation such as voices, images, and touch.

Generally, for a traveler to go on a trip, they are motivated by several things, they are: a) physical motivation, traveling for health, relaxation, comfort, sports, and other, b) wants to know the culture, tradition, and arts of other places, c) social motivation, such as visiting friends, relatives, colleagues, go on a pilgrim. A traveler can be relieved from a tedious daily routine by taking traveling trips that give him a psychological pleasure.

*Virtual tourism* technology underwent rapid development during the pandemic that results in the

invention of virtual tour. This virtual tour technology allows the travelers to explore a place to get information about that place in a way that seems as if the travelers are in the place. With virtual reality, one can explore a place only using laptops, information kiosks, or other electronic tools without having to go to the destination.

Technological advances in virtual reality can to give tourists motivations in traveling, at further stages, virtual reality can be developed to be a personal assistant during traveling. Several steps in implementing this application include installing it in the tourist's smartphone that will determine their current location with GPS technology, if the destination is already known, then additional information will be given regarding the destination by virtual reality. From showing interesting places around the destination, ranging from accommodation, cultures, nearby interesting spots of interests, to nearby restaurants Seeing how many convenience and ease of access it offered, virtual reality tourism is right to be developed in tourism sector, including in Indonesia where there are so

many destinations.

Virtual reality (VR) technology is one of marketing media that is growing in this time, especially during the pandemic, that gives possibility for users to experience tourism through video and done in user's home. Very adaptive to the world of tourism, especially in this time of pandemic. Currently, enthusiasm from the travelers who have to stay put in their home to experience offered by Virtual Reality (VR) is quite high. Basically this virtual reality experience will be a significant help for everyone involved in tourism. That is, because this is an intangible product, so with this virtual reality, (VR) technology,

consumers or travelers are offered an experience as if they are visiting the real traveling destination.

Virtual Reality (VR) technology is the only technology that can help to promote a traveling destination, but it still has several weaknesses since the tourists still cannot directly experience the destination, only with visualization through virtual programs guided and ran by an operator who sells the product of tourism. Steps and programs virtual uses google maps and street view features using methods and steps as follows:

Table 1 Steps of Virtual Tourism for Travelers

Number	Elements	Element and engagability in virtual tourism
1	Registration Process	In the registration steps, the registration is done through organizer's account done by travelers that included identities and selections of destinations, and prices per package. After the registration, the travelers will receive password and username.
1	Traveler	Traveler or tourist in Virtual Reality is the main actor of tourism that is guided to location of places one is interested in or the destinations that already have been programmed before by tour guide and organizers. The travelers can search for locations that are reachable by google maps In the context of virtual tourism, tourists can be the driving factor towards exchange of knowledge and ideas in discussing about attractions that are offered in the event in order to establish a relation for better tourism.
2	Destination	Destination is the destination of the travelers in traveling, already determined by tour guide, which includes tourist attractions, accessibility, and amenities. There are drawings of routes and directions in the locations that existed in google maps that are marked with certain symbols and long colored lines.
3	Utilized tools	PC or Laptop, along with earphone if necessary, are the tools recommended for the travelers. For virtual tours using Zoom application, the participants are expected to install the application in their laptop or smartphones.
4	Assessment of the event (Feedback)	Activities done by travelers after the virtual traveling, such as filling questionnaires to improve future events. Cooperations to give feedbacks on the travelers' activities are to be expected.

Source: Analysis, 2020

Virtual Reality (VR) technology and Augmented Reality (AR) can give opportunities for the travelers to really experience the destinations that are hard to reach and even never visited before. There are main advantages, beside its range and travelers' satisfaction, for example, they can interact with floras and faunas in exotic places, and witness the local cultures. Google

Street View is a feature of Google Maps that provides 360 degrees photos of nature, travel destination, route and paths all around the world. One more important this is we often try to promote Virtual reality to the consumers without actually seeing the real experience received from activities with virtual reality. This research measures the tourist's level of satisfaction in their travel using Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR).

Paths and routes are the most important part in

developing products of tourism in Virtual Reality (VR). Terms for routes and paths can be specially designed and developed in various destinations, especially for themed routes [1]. Virtual Reality (VR) through themed routes will connect the all nature themed destination or culture that are tied according to their specific themes. The destinations in such routes must be accessible by the tourists in their Virtual Reality (VR) activities. Nowadays, there are several travel agents that have already developed their programs in order to offer travels with certain themes even abroad using Virtual Reality (VR) with cultural attractions and nature themed attractions with their significantly cheaper travel packages.

The actors in tourism industry and educational institutions should be able to adapt with the new role, new way, and new expectations by reorganizing their tourism business strategy and tourism model, whatever that is deemed best. Furthermore, as we know today, digitalization is rapidly advancing even to beyond our own expectations, towards the new era of the development. Today, with social distancing (physical distancing), Work From Home (WFH) or Stay at Home (SAH) protocols in place, people can still communicate through web conference, so interactions are still maintained. The question is whether the tourism industry will implement today's digitalization. It needs to be said, that the future of the tourism industry will accelerate the usage and distribution of digital technologies to balance the protection of freedom and people's health care as users. In this context, we can further understand the characteristics of virtual travelers in traveling using virtual tourism, and their level of satisfaction in doing the virtual travel.

The analysis in this paper is one of the information that are widely accessed and referred while stay at home during the times of Covid-19 pandemic. Some alternative of the virtual activity is to learn more about the destinations. Using methods with the help of Google maps and street view feature to search for locations, tourists will be able to do the virtual traveling, while being able to know the distance and routes, forms of transportation that can be used, points of congestion, meeting points, and other things about the destination.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to gives an analysis of a social problem that will be observed in the times of COVID-19, the research tries to explore traveling phenomenon in times of the pandemic in the current time. The research describes the issues based on indicators as the base of the existence of the observed issues in a descriptive manner The base indicator is the interest on traveling, the motives

on virtual travel and how can such activity can be done virtually.

The first process of the activity is registration that must be directed towards the organizer and several other information. The *virtual traveler will be contacted further by e-mail and will be sent a link to join the Virtual Tour to the chosen destination*. Notification sent one day before the activity, that the respondent must enter the meeting room 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the activity with the rules and regulations that is implemented by the organizers, as follows: A) Participants must turn off their microphone during the briefing and they will be allowed to turn it back on when the interaction session begins, b) Respondents of virtual traveler are required to use the chat or raise hand feature if they have any question during the briefing. C) Attach a picture that can be used as virtual background in their respective Zoom accounts and this background can be used as the wallpaper.

Voting by the respondents of the virtual travelers is done with the experience gained from virtual traveler in Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) at several destinations such as virtual geotour in Gunung Sewu (Geopark Network) and virtual bersama wisata kreatif Jakarta at Kota Tua Jakarta and recreation at Nglanggeran tourist village, Gunung Kidul. The voting is based on the respondent's wishes and interests on the destination. The respondents are based on the number of participants of the geotour as determined by the number of incoming chats, and the final photo session at the end of the activity will be done virtually by all. Process of analysis will be done using patterns suggested by Milles and Hubberman [2] such as: data collecting, data reduction, data display and conclusion or verification.

Virtual Tourism in tourism science is one of human movements in traveling and recreational activities in virtual world using tolls from specific media devices. Activities in virtual tourism certainly cannot be separated from tracks and routes through certain technological features [3], [4], [5], [1]. Systems in virtual tourism is one of the simplest approach towards models of tourism as said by [6], that routing system featured in Google maps and Google street view is built from four elements that are tourist, tourist generating region, tourist destination region, and transit route.

Relating to the aforementioned suggestion, according to Leiper [6], the tourists can be called as travelers in virtual traveling, the tourist generating region is the origin of the travelers from various region and places with indefinite range, travel destination region is the destination of the virtual tourism activity and the transit route is the central point as a package in virtual tourism.series.

Utilization of virtual tourism has a significant meaning such as in the theory of traveling journey built on components such as: connections between the place

of origin and travel destination during the journey. Utilization of virtual tourism suggested by [6] is that the journey done by the tourists is not only in the form of a direct travel from the place of origin to the travel destination, but routes and other point of interests exist as transits or temporary stop. This idea has put traveling as a dynamic journey.

Based on that, characteristics and efficiency of a route in virtual tourism can be of significance to the quality of access and the number of traveler visitors to a traveling destination [1]. Routes in virtual tourism is the main component in travel industry [7]. Then according to [4], for economic development, routes can also be used to increase the spreads of traveler towards alternative travel destinations and can offer multiple new opportunities, such as: 1) business developments; 2) income; 3) 4) cultural and ecological conservations, 5) development capacity; and 6) infrastructure developments.

Virtual tourism can be done by the travelers after doing virtual travels at the chosen destinations based on their interests. Methods can be developed through forms and rating method and also scoring and scaling. Assessments from respondents is done by mentioning emails to specified accounts by specifying: 1) name, 2) organization or company, 3) city name 4) Contact number (WhatsApp & email). Results from the feedback used by the organizer to improve and fix their future activities as a traveling agent, respondents are requested to give feedback from their experiences during the event by filling out a specified form.

Assessments for question number 3 is about the willingness of the travelers to travel to the destination, either virtually, or physically. This question is an effective method to promote a destination. One of the forms of digital marketing strategy that can be maximized in the middle of Covid-19 pandemic is through website optimization. The existence of website itself significantly determines the tourists' considerations towards the products of tourism. This considerations existed because of the contents that the destination gives. For example, Nglanggeran destination asks the travelers if they want to visit the destinations with alternating answers that are 1) of course 2) possibly 3) no. For question number 4, where do the tourists want the next destination be is asked, for this question determines the interests of every participants and the goal is to be able several alternative places to travel to. The question can be chosen as an alternative for travelers. Question in point 5 describes and explains the route to the travel destination for the day. The result shows that the majority received the information from several sources such as: internet, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp. Friends/Family. WhatsApp 90%, Facebook 10% 90% of respondents received the information from WhatsApp Groups.

Several questionnaire-based questions offered by the

organizers as the traveling company. The virtual tourism activity is done at the destination that has a large amount of respondents and interests, such as Nglanggeran destination that numbered at 80 participants. Question number 1) Assessment towards the virtual tour experience. This question is more focused on communication and interpretation between respondents with tour operators as the guides and organizers. The main technicalities are as if the virtual tour is done in reality by the tourists in one large group (number of participants) that have done travel journey from initial/meeting point to first gathering at the destination As soon as they arrived, they will be given to the local guide through travel awareness groups in the destination.

The result of the analysis shows that virtual tour experience shows that among the 82 respondents, 62% answered very satisfied 20% answered satisfied, 12% answered unsatisfactory, and 6% answered very unsatisfactory. Experiences felt by the respondents with very satisfied response shows that virtual tour has a high substance and scale value. Many factors such as performance from the destination and the clarity in the narrative given by the organizers in storytelling, including the attraction of contents from the destination.

Assessment towards the virtual tour organizers by 82 participants as the respondents, Virtual Tourism Material: 76% Very good, 17% Good, 7% Could be improved, 0% Very bad. The assessments are focused towards the virtual tourism organizers and management from timing aspect, guide aspect, and materials aspect. This assessment focuses towards the readiness of the organizers in managing the virtual tourism activity, because the organizers must know one's motivations in doing the travel, surely they are moved by their motivation in order to travel. Motivation is one the most basic thing in the study on tourist and tourism, as motivation itself is the trigger in the process of traveling.

Research on Virtual Tourism Guide: 90% very good, 10% good, 0% could be improved as mentioned above, that motivation is the driving factor for the tourist, and the next motivation is of the external one that is the pulling factor based on the attributes of the destination. The guide must know the important value from one's decision for their decision on traveling that is determined by the factors' strength, either the push factor, and the pull factor. In general, pushing factor is of social-psychological one, or as person specific motivation, meanwhile the pull factor is the destination specific attributes. The push factor's existence resulted in someone's will to travel, but still not knowing the destination that they will go to.

Assessments towards Virtual Tourism time management: 80% Very good, 12% Good, 6% Could be improved, shows that the organizer's role in time management is very significant for the tourists only have a limited amount of time even though it's done virtually.

The execution of virtual tourism relatively takes a shorter amount of time while being able to reach the entire spots of interest at the tourist destination. The next time management will be a 15 minutes questions and answers session, this can be further managed based on the time given by the moderator (guide) through chat that is collected selectively. As the travel destination staff, especially for tourism villages, the exact coordinate in Google Maps must be ensured in order to achieve easiness of travel to the tourism village for the tourists. Besides that, there are strategies to further optimize this Google Maps feature.

Assessments towards travelers' willingness for traveling for both virtual tour and reality traveling: willing to revisit 80%, not willing to revisit 7%, no answer 7%. Tourist's motivation in traveling will

Assessments towards favorite guides. A. 78% B 12% C 10% are the respondents' choice after several times of tourism activity. The goal of this is to know and to select the guides that are capable to communicate with the tourists. This is a very important role for the guide in communicating with the travelers directly even though it is done virtually.

The goal is to know about information regarding virtual travel route as a strategy to collect interests and motivations of the tourists in doing the journey, that are collected from platforms such as: Internet: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Friends/Families, etc.

The collected result are: 90% WhatsApp, 10% Facebook and Instagram. Procedures and regulations about information that are obtained by tourists before traveling, according to them are very good. Information on routes and destinations must be known earlier by the travelers. In the era when social media develops rapidly, the information can be obtained very quickly, for example through WhatsApp group.

Virtual tourism activities in recent times has received a lot a lot of interest. This is the result of the government's policy on Covid-19 and the temporary closing of public venues. People are told to work from home. There are a lot of diversities in respondents' answers from the entire questions in responding towards virtual tourism.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Travelers are interested in virtual tourism as an alternative during the COVID-19 pandemic. In tourism science, virtual tourism is a type of tourism in which a traveler carries an activity and takes a trip virtually using several media tools. There are six important aspects to take into account when considering a virtual tour: a) tour guide, b) virtual tour's material, c) time, d) virtual tour experience, e) travelers' willingness to take another trip, and f) information about the virtual tour. Those six aspects play a significant role in increasing motivation

for traveling. There are a *virtual reality*- and an *augmented reality*-based technology that helps to boost motivation. *Augmented reality* is a technology that allows us to blend a two- dimensional figure with a three- dimensional figure together into a three- dimensional reality. This technology could give a more realistic atmosphere for travelers unable to reach their destination trip, for example, travelers are able to interact with plants and animals in an exotic place. During the COVID-19 pandemic, website optimization could be used as a marketing strategy since there is still a lot of tourist village websites that have not been utilized enough. The optimization of the website would help to promote what the villages have to attract more travelers.

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