



CHSE Hotel Certification: Polemics and Adaptation After Pandemic in Indonesia

Addin Maulana^(✉), Imam Nur Hakim, Basuki Antariksa, Sri Milawati Asshagab, and Fauziah Khoiriyani

The National Research and Innovation Agency of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia
addin.maulana@yahoo.co.id

Abstract. Recently, a polemic emerged on the Indonesian government's policy regarding the implementation of Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environmental Sustainability (CHSE) certification. Through literature studies and expert interviews, this study aims to identify the problems that occur in the implementation of health protocol certification in the hotel industry. This study found that CHSE has some weaknesses in terms of their legal products. Problems arise as a result of the discourse on the transition of implementation from what was previously voluntary to mandatory, and the existence of similar protocol certification standards. To reduce problems while ensuring the application of health protocols in the hotel industry, the CHSE should refer to the regulations drawn up by the Ministry of Health regarding the implementation of health protocols in the hotel business sector to avoid overlapping. The substance of these regulations must also clearly regulate the implementation of certification in the field. There is a need for mutual consensus among stakeholders to elaborate on various standards, and it is not only in responding to the current situation. These measures should be implemented to increase legal power and efforts to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of health protocols in the hotel industry as a new standard during the new normal. In addition, elaborating on the global standards that hotels with international chains generally use can make it easier for the government to accelerate the implementation of cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability aspects in the Indonesian hotel industry.

Keywords: CHSE · Hotel Industry · Tourism · Pandemic · Certification

1 Introduction

The health crisis will affect the tourism industry [1], especially in influencing the perception of tourist risk, resulting in a sudden decline in tourism demand, with significant socio-economic impacts, especially in tourism-dependent countries [2]. The Covid-19 pandemic is considered to be the worst global health crisis since the 2nd World War, which disrupted the world economy [3] and labor market [4]. According to the World Labor Organization (ILO), there has been a loss in labor income in the range of USD 860 billion to USD 3.4 trillion [5]. Based on some global projections, more than 100 million people have lost their jobs, and there has been a decline in GDP of US\$2.7 trillion in the

travel and tourism sector [6]. In fact, the impact of COVID-19 is five times worse than the 2008 financial crisis [5].

As a part of the tourism ecosystem, the hotel industry is plagued with uncertainty and destruction in terms of both market and company performance [7, 8]. This pandemic has lowered the stock prices of hotels in the world [8]. Consequently, several hotels were forced to close their businesses either temporarily or permanently, and many hotel employees lost their jobs.

In addition to this direct impact, COVID-19 can change hotel customer preferences and behavior, causing the hotel industry to re-identify customer needs and develop products [7]. One of the mitigation efforts made to eliminate the destructive impact of COVID-19 is to strengthen hotel attributes related to the pandemic, such as cleanliness, hygiene, safety, and security [9].

In Indonesia, mitigation policies aimed at accelerating the recovery process in the hotel sector are implemented by using voluntary CHSE standards. The goal is to rebuild the trust of potential visitors through positive policy messages, as in the hotel industry during this time of crisis [10]. In addition, providing hotel customers with appropriate information regarding risk-reduction strategies can reduce their perception of health risks during the decision-making process [11]. Therefore, the CHSE policy is an anticipatory policy initiated by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (MoTCE) through the standard CHSE protocol in the hotel ecosystem during the Covid-19 pandemic. This policy is based on the Regulation of the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy / Head of the Tourism and Creative Economy Agency Number 13 of 2020 on Standards and Certification of Hygiene, Health, Safety, and Environmental Sustainability of the Tourism Sector during the 2019 Corona Virus Disease Pandemic Handling Period (PERMEN CHSE). The implementation was then returned to the local government.

The voluntary implementation of the CHSE is based on many underlying scientific approaches. Scientific findings that focus on risks and health issues have become important considerations [12] and determinants of tourist-visiting decisions [13]. Hotel visitors are even more sensitive to *cleanliness and hygiene* [9]. Efforts to accommodate these changes have led hotels to give the highest priority to the safety and health of their guests (including team members and business partners) in response to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic [14]. These efforts control the feelings of fear and anxiety of visitors [10, 15] as essential elements in making decisions to stay at a hotel [14].

However, there is a polemic between the interests related to the implementation of CHSE in this practice, from the perspective of both government stakeholders and legal products. This study aims to ascertain an effective regulatory umbrella scheme for CHSE policies, find solutions to the CHSE polemic in the hotel industry, and prepare solutions to the challenges of CHSE in the future.

2 Literature Review

Conceptually, there is no consensus regarding the meaning of a crisis. A crisis is defined as a turning point that creates threats, losses and opportunities [16]. Another definition states that a crisis is defined as an event or occurrence that is unexpected and capable of disrupting normal activities; therefore, immediate action is needed to overcome it [17].

In the tourism industry, a crisis is a major event that disrupts the routine functions of the tourism industry. The tourism sector is very vulnerable to crises. The tourism sector is not one of the first steps in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This sector is not a part of the mandatory expenditure group. If there is a threat to 'biological and physiological needs,' holiday plans are the first to be changed or canceled by the traveler [18]. Disruptions or fundamental changes can occur after a crisis in the tourism industry and threaten the survival of an organization. Therefore, an appropriate strategy is required to reduce the losses incurred and create better conditions. At the national level, countries can be involved in ensuring rapid recovery and an appropriate response is provided by the parties concerned [19].

Over the last two decades, many crises have affected the world, and tourism has proven to be one of the most vulnerable sectors to such shocks. For example, terrorism attacks (the WTC tragedy in 2001, the Bali bombings in 2002 and 2005, and the Paris terror in 2015), civil unrest (among others in Egypt, Greece, Israel, Thailand, Tunisia, Hong Kong, and Turkey)[20], natural disasters (earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions), global economic crises (2008–2010), and pandemics (SARS, H1N1, Avian Influenza, and MERS) [6, 21]. These events affect the destination's image. It reduces tourism sector revenues in a short to a long period, depending on the handling of the crisis [6, 20].

Different crises also imply different handling actions. In the case of COVID-19, governments in many countries have adopted crucial protective measures to suppress the spread of the pandemic, including washing hands, wearing face masks, doing lockdowns, and social distancing [6, 15]. This is because the rates of transmission and mutation of COVID-19 are very high. For example, in Vietnam, a "super spreader" spread COVID-19 to 122 people within 17 days [22]. In addition, the severity of people's suffering can be very high. Even if a person can avoid death, the person concerned can experience permanent lung function damage of up to 20%-30% [17] and have heart function disorders, even if they have no history of the disease [23].

Meanwhile, to restore the tourism sector which has been hit hard by COVID-19, in May 2020, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) issued guidelines on a global scale that contain seven priority actions, one of which is to restore public trust through safety and security. The guidelines also direct health and hygiene protocols to be implemented by cleaning surfaces more often with disinfectants [24].

In line with the above guidelines and to ensure that the products and services provided meet the CHSE dimensions in November 2020, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (MoTCE) issued a CHSE PERMEN [25]. Under this regulation, hotels are among the tourism businesses targeted for CHSE certification.

Some of the stages that must be passed to obtain CHSE certification are as follows [26]:

1. Independent registration online on the official website chse.kemendparekraf.go.id
2. Filling out business identity form
3. Self-assessment
4. Self-declaration based on the statement letter format provided
5. Certification Application
6. Audit/assessment by a competent certification body

7. Certificate decision making
8. The granting of a CHSE certificate from a certification body to businesses that have met 85–100% of the CHSE implementation criteria and indicators that are valid for one year and can be extended through a re-assessment process
9. Labeling Indonesia CARE (I Do Care) by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy.

Based on the Circular Letter of the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy/Head of the Tourism and Creative Economy Agency Number SE/4/MK/2021, PERMEN CHSE is in the revised process, one of the aspects is the extension of the certificate expiry date.

Tourism policy, like in any other field, may create conflicts of interest among stakeholders. This involves beliefs and values regarding what is considered to be good or bad. The problem is that the policy cannot be separated from politics, which creates a situation explained by Lasswell (1958) about ‘who gets what, when and how’ [1, 2]. During the current crisis, several researchers advise the implementation of Covid-19-branded destination safety [3]. However, according to Kim and Liu (2022), if tourists have a high degree of trust in the hotel management, they will reduce their perceived risk, even if a social distancing policy is not strictly implemented [4].

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused tourism to suffer from under-tourism [5]. Any policy to limit the number of tourists visiting a destination may generate protests, particularly from the industry side. Moreover, according to some experts, international tourism may return to its pre-pandemic level after 15 years [6]. Even, more general notions about whether we should begin to develop ‘de-growth’ or ‘business as usual’ policy after the pandemic, are still an ongoing debate [7, 8].

3 Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach, with an emphasis on the “how” question to obtain answers from the data collection process regarding the phenomenon of the object of research [27] by describing the situation or behavior towards a problem [28].

To collect the data, researchers used primary and secondary sources. Primary sources were obtained through interviews, while secondary data were obtained from literature related to the implementation of CHSE in the world and Indonesia. The primary data in this study were obtained through unstructured interviews with one of the tourism policy observers from the MoTCE and two hotel managers from both local and international chains in Indonesia. Secondary data were obtained by searching for scientific journals and other relevant sources. The two types of data were then analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques in four stages: (i) data collection and reduction; (ii) data categorization and presentation; (iii) synthesis and verification; and (iv) formulation of conclusions and recommendations [29].

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 CHSE Hotel Application Regulatory Umbrella

MoTCE has set hotel business standards in the Regulation of the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia Number PM.53/HM.001/MPEK/2013 on Hotel Business Standards (PERMEN PM.53), and Regulation of the Minister of Tourism Number 12 of 2019 on the Second Amendment of the Regulation of the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Number PM.53/HM.001/MPEK/2013 (PERMEN 12/2019). Article 2 letter B stated that protecting guests, hotel entrepreneurs, workers, and the public, to safety, health, comfort, security, convenience, and environmental preservation is the purpose of hotel business standard [26]. However, the PERMEN was not included in the Considering or Observing the CHSE PERMEN section.

Concerning CHSE, in Annex I letter IA to the Regulation of the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia on Hotel Business Standards, it is stipulated that one of the absolute criteria that must be met is the maintenance of sanitation, hygiene, and the environment. However, in the letter IB, it is also stated that these three factors are not absolute criteria. This confuses people who read the rules in question. When the Covid-19 pandemic occurred, the government set regulations specifically to regulate the CHSE issue, namely PERMEN CHSE [25].

If the PERMEN for Hotel Business Standards is compared to the PERMEN CHSE, the PERMEN CHSE is clearer and more detailed in regulating sanitation, hygiene, and environmental issues. For example, in Annex I to the PERMEN CHSE Number 3, Item B.1.12, it is stipulated that hotels must have a food management system that meets the requirements of food hygiene and sanitation, which is free from physical, chemical, and bacterial contamination. This arrangement does not exist in the Hotel Business Standards Regulation.

In addition, the arrangements in PERMEN CHSE are much broader than those required to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. This is primarily related to safety and environmental preservation. For example, in PERMEN CHSE Number 3, Item C.1.6, hotels must provide an adequate water source for firefighting needs. Another example is in Number 3, Point D.1.3, which stipulates that hotels must have an energy utilization mechanism to maintain environmental balance and sustainability.

In Article 13 of PERMEN CHSE, a certification system applied is valid for a year and can be extended through a re-assessment process. The certification cost for the first time is the responsibility of the State Budget (APBN), while next time it must be the responsibility of the hotel entrepreneurs.

If the MoTCE wants to implement a policy to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic in the hotel business sector, it is sufficient to refer to the Decree of the Minister of Health Number HK.01.07/Menkes/382/2020 on Health Protocols for Communities in Public Places and Facilities in the context of Corona Prevention and Control Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) (KEPMEN PROKES). In Annex to Chapter III, KEPMEN PROKES sets out the health protocols that need to be implemented in a hotel environment. Thus, it is sufficient for MoTCE to formulate its policies in more detail. In connection with this, it is interesting to note that in the Considerations on the PERMEN CHSE, there is no reference to the KEPMEN PROKES. According to the tourism policy observers

in the research interviews, these overlapping rules cause legal problems, especially if technical problems are found in the field in the future.

The above discussion concludes that PERMEN CHSE overlaps with other regulations and is deemed to have not paid sufficient attention to legal considerations in its formulation. Therefore, in the revision process of the PERMEN CHSE, the involvement of various stakeholders is crucial and necessary to perfect the contents of the regulations.

4.2 The Polemic of CHSE Application in the Hotel Industry

The hotel industry is experiencing cash flow pressure [31]–[33], and amid efforts to recover demand in Indonesia, the idea arose to make CHSE as a must-have. This has led to polemics in several areas, including West Java Province [34]–[36], West Nusa Tenggara Provinc [37, 38], DKI Jakarta Province [32, 39], Indramayu Regency [40], Batu City [41]–[43], Lampung Province [44], North Sumatra Province [45, 46], and Special Region of Yogyakarta Province [33].

Several objections were raised by the Association of Hotel Industry in Indonesia (PHRI), including the insignificant impact on the interest of visiting guests and its mandatory nature, carried out independently, and paid.

A CHSE certificate valid for one year is considered too short [34, 35, 41]. The discourse on including CHSE in the licensing service system in Indonesia and making it a mandatory requirement [32, 35, 36, 39, 41, 44] is felt to be a burden during a pandemic. This policy is considered capitalist because it benefits only certain parties [32]. The APBN that finances CHSE certification will be more productive if it is used to help the tourism sector in other ways to attract guests [47]. Responding to the polemic regarding the nature of CHSE certification activities for the hotel industry, the MoTCE emphasized that CHSE is voluntary [48]–[50]. However, in the PERMEN CHSE, no article or paragraph states that the certification is voluntary.

Although the government provides it for free [49], this does not mean that hotel managers do not incur costs to prepare their properties according to the CHSE standards [37, 40, 41, 45, 51]. This is considered impartial to the industry that is currently in a slump [39, 46, 52], and hotel occupancy is not yet stable [40, 41], they will have to spend IDR 10 to 15 million [33, 35, 41, 43, 45, 52]–[56] to obtain a certificate. In response, MoTCE stated that this certification is financed in several ways: it can be paid independently, funded by the government, or through other certification bodies [49, 50]. However, it is also important to note that hotels adjust to the prevailing standards and money [55]. In addition, PERMEN CHSE itself explained that financing through the APBN is given only in the first year. Thus, there is no clarity regarding the financing mechanism in subsequent years.

The Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy stated that the polemic occurred due to a lack of communication between the government and industry [49]. However, when viewed from the substance aspect of PERMEN CHSE itself, various questions may arise regarding its implementation, such as if the certification is mandatory or voluntary, whether or not there is an obligation to pay certification fees, conformity between the standards set out in PERMEN CHSE with international standards that have been applied, and so on.

The two hotel managers also confirmed the polemic that arose from the implementation of the CHSE certification in the interviews. They justified the costs involved in meeting CHSE requirements, although they did not provide an overview. The hotel had cash flow problems because there were still costs that must be paid even though it was not fully operated at the head office where it was sheltered. In addition to meeting CHSE standards, they had to refer to the health protocol standards set by the head office.

From the above findings, it can be concluded that the spirit of changing businesses by focusing on the safety and health of both guests and employees is reflected in the policies issued by the government and industry. This finding is consistent with those reported by J. J. Kim that addressed mitigation carried out by the hotel industry [9]. Industries that rely on income from customers who stay or use their facilities must change their business patterns along with changes in customer preferences due to the pandemic as stated by F. Hao, et al. [7].

In this case, the government can provide practical solutions that focus on saving cash flow from the hotel industry, such as tax components, loan interests, and others. This is expected to help reduce the fixed costs incurred by the hotel even if it is not operating either entirely or partly.

It is necessary to evaluate the components of the CHSE rules that are more friendly with the hotel business pattern that has been applied previously. After all, the cost consequences should be minimized. The evaluation needs to involve as many industries and associations as possible in decision-making to simplify business rules that are adaptive to the pandemic.

4.3 Adaptation of CHSE Certification After the Pandemic

Although CHSE certification is the main strategy for MoTCE to adapt to new habits in the hospitality sector [57], entrepreneurs believe that CHSE is only a *marketing gimmick* that has not yet experienced its impact on the hotel business [32, 39, 52, 54, 55, 56]. They also stated that the relaxation of the policy on restricting people's movements caused an increase in the current number of guests [35, 54]. CHSE is not a major consideration for guests wishing to stay [34, 35, 56]. Hotel guests are more considerate of references, rankings, reviews, and comments from people on social media as their main consideration, even though they stay during a pandemic [58]. Several hotel business actors have also stated that the hotel's CHSE certification is not guaranteed for crowded visitors. The number of tourists has decreased because they feel burdened by the rapid test costs [59].

Without CHSE, the hotel sector has implemented strict health protocols, from the process of entering the hotel area to visitors entering each room [45, 46]. The CHSE has become a hotel best practice and includes the application of appropriate health standards, food safety management systems, and the Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series 18001 (OHSAS) [32, 39, 44, 56]. OHSAS itself has been integrated with management system standards ISO 9001 (quality) and ISO 14001 (environmental)[60]. In addition, the hotel industry must meet ISO 15001 (energy management) standards [61]. Moreover, hotels with international chains have their own standards to ensure the safety and health of guests and contribute to environmental sustainability.

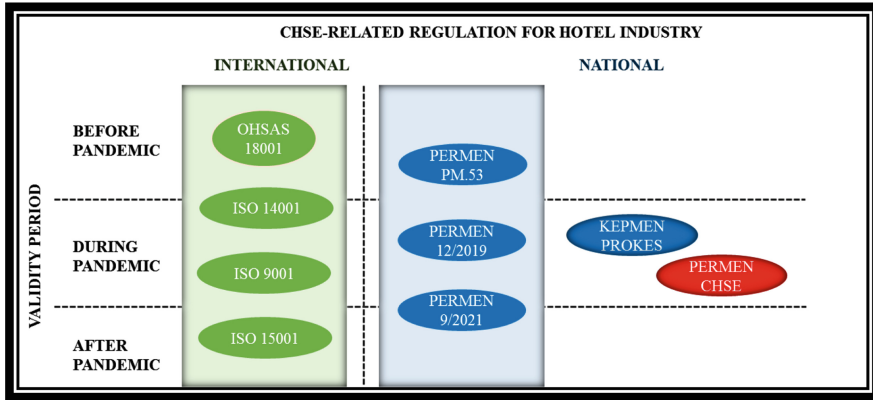


Fig. 1. Validity Period of CHSE-Related Regulation

In addition, the government stipulated the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Regulation Number 9 of 2021 concerning Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism Destinations (PERMEN 9/2021), which, among other things, has adopted international standards established by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). The substance of the Guidelines for Sustainable Destinations has been adapted to the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In response, MoTCE stated that this certification would later become a National Standard formed in collaboration with the National Accreditation Committee (KAN) [49, 50]. The problem is, based on the scope of the regulation that saw from the name of the PERMEN CHSE, which contains the formula "...in the Handling Period of the 2019 Corona Virus Disease Pandemic" the PERMEN gives the impression that it was made only temporarily or during the pandemic period. This means that when the Covid-19 pandemic ends or when the pandemic becomes endemic, the substance of the PERMEN CHSE is no longer relevant and, therefore, must be revised according to conditions on the ground. The same applies if herd immunity is realized.

Besides giving a "temporary" impression (see Fig. 1), PERMEN CHSE also shows inconsistencies or a mismatch between the name PERMEN CHSE and its substance. It is not only related to the issue of handling the Covid-19 pandemic but also setting standards of cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability. Thus, the substance of PERMEN CHSE does not differ from the hotel business standard in general. Concerning Covid-19, if the condition of herd immunity has been achieved, then the obligation to wear masks and practice social distancing may no longer be necessary. Thus, KAN must be able to immediately change the substance of the national standard.

Considering the facts above, it appears that PERMEN CHSE must be updated to reflect current circumstances and be more relevant. The government can introduce PERMEN CHSE as an adaptive regulation. According to Benneer and Wiener, adaptive regulations may be adjusted or altered following (and to fit for) new situations. In other words, regulation is not considered a one-time action that cannot be reversed unless it is implemented over a long time [62].

Before adapting to new circumstances, the government should recognize and consider relevant international and local regulations so that there are no overlapping or unclear regulations that stifle the hotel industry's growth. To avoid confusion between businesses and consumers about widely recognized and scientifically accepted quality standards, indicators in national standards must be adapted to those widely recognized at the international level or based on information in scientific publications. The use of disinfectants on the surface of the human body (which should be antiseptic) is one example that has caused consternation in society. Errors and ambiguities are the results of a lack of knowledge of connected scientific facts and consistent regulation.

Furthermore, there is a need for stakeholders to reach a consensus on the various standards utilized by the hotel sector to respond to a pandemic and endemic situation until the endemic is over. Consequently, the hotel industry will have trustworthy standards to apply in any situation in the future. Constructive proof and explanation that marketing gimmick is not the primary goal of implementing CHSE also need to be provided in conjunction with the integrated efforts above.

5 Closing

The pandemic requires business actors to adjust to the demands of new customers, particularly to guarantee their safety and health. Business certification related to customer protection, which regulates health protocols, is expected to be a solution for surviving the hospitality industry during the pandemic carried out by the Indonesian government. However, it is necessary to address the sustainability of this policy when the pandemic ends while anticipating the possibility that another pandemic will appear in the future.

If the Covid-19 pandemic has completely ended, the government needs to review the scope of the PERMEN CHSE. The name PERMEN, which seems like it was only made for the pandemic period, makes this regulation seem *unsustainable*. In the future, the government should integrate CHSE indicators with existing hotel business standards and guidelines to develop sustainable tourism destinations. Thus, CHSE certification is again single and includes everything needed to meet hotel business standards and can be applied by hotel businesses when the pandemic is over. If CHSE certification continues to be established separately, it will be a burden to the hoteliers and will not have a significant impact on improving the quality of service in the business sector.

This research provides a novelty that can improve CHSE capabilities, especially regarding the Hotel Application Regulatory Umbrella, saving hotel budgets to be more effective in their implementation, thus making CHSE certificates more adaptive after the pandemic.

This research should be a reference for the government about the picture that occurred regarding polemics and challenges to the determination of the CHSE certification policy after the Covid-19 pandemic ends and what steps must be taken to overcome these polemics and challenges. The author believes that this study still has limitations, especially regarding the perspective of hotel guests on CHSE certification and its sustainability during the end of the pandemic which needs to be discussed in further research. The author encourages studies related to the sustainability of this certification to be conducted from different perspectives, both from data sources and different research methods.

Authors' Contributions. All authors contributed equally.

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