

# Business Continuity Plan for Tour Operators during the COVID 19 Crisis in Thailand

Jenasama Srihirun<sup>1</sup>, Jenjira Thumwong<sup>2</sup>, Chonticha Songjarern<sup>3</sup>, Kiattikul Sooksomsatarn<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Faculty of Business Administration and Accountancy, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

<sup>4</sup> Faculty of Information and Communication Technology, University of Phayao, Thailand

Email: <sup>1</sup>jenasama.srihirun@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>jenjira.tw@kkumail.com, <sup>3</sup>songjarern@kkumail.com, <sup>4</sup>ajkiattikul@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

This article aims to study and analyze the concepts and theories of the business continuity plans and the crisis management concept to be used as a guideline for the survival of tour operators during the COVID 19 outbreak in Thailand. According to the Scott Guidelines (1990); (2006) for data selection criteria, the content was analyzed and synthesized from secondary data. The study found that the business continuity management plan of small and medium tour operators does not yet have a systematic planning process. Nevertheless, there were steps to resolve the problem in the short term. Furthermore, it requires the cooperation of business stakeholders. Ten step-by-step business continuity plans (BCP) amidst critical conditions were used. While BCP for COVID 19 epidemic outbreak focused on the PPRR model: 1) Prevention, 2) Preparation, 3) Response, and 4) Recovery corresponding to the efficient communication, maintenance of health and hygiene, digital and technology linkage, social distancing, and compliance with the COVID 19 control measures following the policies of the respective governments. Moreover, there were four elements for the business continuity plans: 1) Risk Management Plan, 2) Business Impact Analysis, 3) Incident Response Plan, and 4) Recovery Plan.

## Keywords

Business Continuity Plans, Tour Operators, Crisis Management, COVID 19

## Introduction

The World Economic Forum's statistics report on Thailand's competitiveness in the tourism business in 2019 found that Thailand had 35.5 million foreign tourists entering the country annually, with a total of \$ 1,620 spent on tourism. According to the research, US dollars per person accounted for \$ 50.75 billion in tourism to the country, equal to 9.6% of Thailand's GDP, and employment in the service sector labor market for 2.44 million people. [1]. On High-Growth SME Support Initiatives in Nine Countries: Analysis, Categorization, and Recommendations, it was found that promoting SMEs with high growth must be a specific policy (High Growth SMEs Policy) in addition to the general SMEs promotion policy (SMEs Policy), which is an accelerator factor economic expansion for that country. [2]

For Thailand, several supporting factors have driven the Thai Tourism Industries' growth. By the National Strategy Framework, modern SMEs can access capital more easily by promoting competitiveness for businesses that have potential. This is highly volatile, both externally and internally, especially in rapidly changing global situations with many uncertainties, such as the dispute between the United States and Iran. The US-China trade war, Australian bushfires, Volcanic eruptions in the Philippines, Earthquakes in Turkey, Floods in Brazil, Locusts in North Africa. Lassa fever occurrences in Nigeria, PM2.5 dust in Thailand, and the global epidemic of coronavirus disease starting 2019 (COVID 19) has changed humanity's dynamics and lives worldwide. Living in a New normal.

The impact of the COVID19 outbreak on life and livelihoods worldwide is beyond measure as the war against the virus is ongoing, involving more than 210 countries, with more than 428,652 deaths and infections. The infection is estimated to be 7.7 million. [3] It resembles the Spanish flu epidemic that occurred after World War I in 1918.

Moreover, it has a wide range of economic, social, and environmental impacts. The Thai tourism industry was also directly affected.

This does not include digital transformation and technology disruption, and past crises such as the Persian Gulf War. The Tom Yam Goong Crisis in Thailand, The Hamburger Crisis in the USA, The Tsunami in Japan, SARS and Bird Flu epidemic in China, The Political Crisis of the Yellow-Red Shirt., etc.

For this reason, the study of Business Continuity Plans (BCP) and crisis management, it is an important and necessary tool for Thai tour operators in a critical situation and a guideline for forecasting directions and finding strategies for planning the rehabilitation of business operations after the crisis.

## Objective

To study and analyze the conceptual theories of the Business Continuity Plans and the Crisis Management concept and apply it as a guideline for Tour Operators survival from the COVID 19 outbreak in Thailand.

## Study Methods

To achieve the objectives of this study. It had established criteria for document selection according to Scott's guidelines (1990); (2006) as follows: 1) Authenticity, 2) Credibility, 3) Representativeness, and 4) Meaning. [4] The content scope focuses on the theoretical concepts related to Business Continuity Plans, Crisis Management, Tour Businesses, and the COVID 19 outbreak situation, used as a tool for analysis and synthesis.

The educational process was as follows: 1) Data collection from books, journals, academic and research articles 2) Content analysis and synthesis 3) The data obtained from the analysis was used as a base for thinking about the

content synthesis framework for obtaining the Business Continuity Plans for Tour Operators in the COVID 19 crisis in Thailand.

### Literature Review

#### Business Continuity Planning (BCP)

—Business Continuity Planning (BCP) aims to prepare, procure and maintain, control, and competence for the organization's overall management that can continue during a disruption. The International Labor Organization's report [5] proposes four pillars (4Ps) to develop BCPs: People (safety and security), Process (internal processes such as supply chain, logistics planning), Profit (management of risks to products/services) and Partnerships. With the massive loss of life and capital, the COVID-19 epidemic demonstrates society's incredible ability to stand together to face unprecedented and insurmountable challenges. [6]

A Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is a plan that has processes in managing the business to be carried on continuously, Redundant even though the business is in an unusual state or in a critical state Experiencing threats from external and internal factors, which are problems and obstacles for business operations The Business Continuity Plans (BCP) that adhere to ISO22301 standards following the business continuity management standard consists of 10 steps used in the preparation of BCP as follows: [7]

- Step 1) Set goals, scopes, and teams
- Step 2) Key Activities and Recovery Goals
- Step 3) Essentials for the restoration of core activities
- Step 4) Risk Assessment - Understand the disaster situation.
- Step 5) Prevention and mitigation
- Step 6) Urgent response in the event of a disaster
- Step 7) Business Continuity Strategy for a Fast Recovery
- Step 8) Be financially prepared.
- Step 9) Practice to optimize the BCP and
- Step 10) Continuous review and development

(Asia-Pacific Economic Corporation: APEC, 2014)

#### Business Continuity Planning (BCP) for Tourism

The Cayman Islands Department of Tourism had set a Business continuity planning tool for their tourism businesses. Lead and guide for their tourism micro, small, and medium tourism companies. [8] —We are now in an unprecedented business environment for the Cayman Islands, where many of our tourism businesses are facing the closure of our borders in March. —While it cannot be guessed, it is likely to be a catalyst for the safety of our country and the well-being of our people. Every travel business has to plan for a major disruption beyond the hurricane season. In the first half of 2020, we will face earthquakes, fires, and global pandemics. Their Business Continuity Planning consisted of business profiles, key product & services, employee & essential roles-tasks, key customers, business impact analysis, recovery plans, COVID-19 business resumption strategy, Emergency responses, etc.

For the Tasmanian Business Continuity Plan, in general, starting with 1) identify damages that may affect the business. 2) Incorporate these mitigation strategies into your business continuity plan. 3) Get insurance with the level of coverage appropriate for the business. [9] Emergency information, communication, preparation, and recovery planning are provided for staff, business visitors, and guests.

#### Business Continuity Planning (BCP) for Post-COVID

Business continuity planning for the epidemic should begin early and focus on the four-stage epidemic planning using the PPRR model: 1) prevention, 2) preparation, 3) response, and 4) recovery [10]. The proposed actions should be consistent with the workplace relationships and existing health and safety frameworks. In the planning stage, you must: 1) Identify core services and essentials to maintain supply chains. 2) Identify staffing arrangements such as telecommunication, succession planning, and skill crossings. 3) Protect the health of employees. 4) Develop communication strategies for employees, customers and suppliers. 5) Consider financial implications such as cash flow, cost increases, and insurance coverage. 6) Make contingency plans for the unexpected. 7) Schedule tests and plan improvements. There are four elements for the business continuity plan: 1) Risk Management Plan 2) Business Impact Analysis 3) Incident Response Plan and 4) Recovery Plan. [11] Developing a business continuity plan for the post-COVID 19 is a way to ensure that the organization could continue operating even when the business environment is in crisis. From the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic. Many organizations use a hybrid infrastructure that integrates an on-premises platform and the cloud or the internet. [12] It's a great way to take advantage of new technology while reducing costs. However, it also means that you need to develop a plan to ensure employees have continued access to the tools and information they need to do their job, even when working remotely.

COVID 19's Business Continuity Plan: Five ways to reshape a global company require forward-looking and proactive decisions to maintain business continuity and build resilience. [13] 1) Continuously prioritize public safety and participation. Keeping employees safe and well in the workplace is essential. Companies must start or expand flexible work arrangements and other policies that allow people to work remotely and safely. New resources used in work must be allocated. Besides, companies must establish consistent communication. 2) Adjust strategy for business continuity. Most businesses are likely to experience significant disruptions in their normal operations and face lower operating performance throughout the COVID 19 crisis at the beginning of this crisis. It is important for companies. The Evaluate short-term liquidity. Companies will want to instill discipline in monitoring short-term cash flows to anticipate cash flow pressures and intervene promptly—strict discipline in working capital, especially debtor collection and inventory building management. 3) Communicate with relevant stakeholders. Clear, transparent, and timely communication is essential to building a platform to transform the business and to receive ongoing support from customers, employees, suppliers, creditors, investors, and regulators. 4) Make the most of government support

policies. The central and local governments in China have issued financial, social security, and tax-related policies to companies, including the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) interim policy on refinancing recently listed companies in the United States, United Kingdom. Moreover, many other developed countries have announced amendments to tax and financing policies. 5) Build flexibility to prepare for the new normal. Once the COVID 19 outbreak is controlled, companies need to review and renew their Business Continuity Plan (BCP) to assess how existing BCPs are working. If there are defects, companies must identify the root cause, such as the timeliness of their action and lack of infrastructure. Labor shortages or environmental issues outside the company need to be reviewed and rethink their internal approaches, based on the lessons learned and a solid contingency plan, to build resilience and respond to future crises must be done.

### Crisis Management and Tour Operators

Crisis according to the Dictionary of the Royal Academy of Sciences (1999), means "critical to danger" is defined as "critical event," while the Oxford dictionary describes the meaning of crisis as "A time of serious trouble." Alternatively, the dangerous moment is a time to make decisions. Crisis types are classified into two categories: 1) Natural crisis and 2) Human-induced crises. [10] Crisis Management in the Tourism Industry Beating the Odds? The textbook by Christof Pforr & Peter Hosie (2009) presents the PPRR Crisis Management Model, which focuses on 1) Prevention, 2) Preparation, 3) Response, and 4) Recovery. Also, the two types were divided into six factors related to tourism [10] [14] [15] [16] [17] [18] as shown in fig. 1

Crisis Type related to Tourism		
Explanation	Crises	Environmental Crisis:
		Crises such as natural disasters, pollution and health phobias: The Tsunami in Japan, SARS in Asia, Australian Bushfires, Volcanic eruptions in the Philippines, Earthquakes in Turkey, Floods in Brazil, Locusts in North Africa, Lassa fever in Nigeria, PM2.5 dust in Thailand and the global epidemic of the coronavirus disease (COVID 19)
	S	Economic Crisis:
		Crises such as recession, rising costs and unprofitability, economic volatility, competition and barriers to trade. for example, The Tom Yum Kung Crisis in Thailand (1997) and Hamburger Crisis in USA.
	Made	Political Crisis:
		Crises such as terrorism, government policy and international relations. for example, the dispute between the United States and Iran, The Red Shirt & Yellow Shirt of Thai Political Issues in Thailand and Bali Bombing in Indonesia.
		Socio-Cultural Crisis:
		Crises such as unrest, crime and cultural conflicts. for example, 911 terrorism in USA.
		Technological Crisis:
		Crises such as Computer system failure, fire, mechanical failure, and transportation accidents.
		Commercial Crisis:

Crises such as Regulations, government intervention, competition, labor disputes, management decisions, and human error.
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**Fig. 1 Srihirun J., Adapted from COMCEC. (2017) UNWTO. (2011) Campiranon K. (2009), Henderson, J. (2007), Glaesser, D. (2006).**

From research on the topic of the leadership of tour operators in crisis management and the formulation of modern tourism strategies to produce creative competitiveness in the region of the Thai tourism industry.

[19] This study looked that from the past to the present leadership of tour operators in the Thai tourism industry in terms of crisis management, it was found that there was a lack of vision and creativity in proper management with situations. There were limitations in planning, long-term solutions, and no proactive plan. Integration in solving the problem is not yet fully possible and it did not receive effective cooperation and coordination with stakeholders.

However, looking at the future leadership of Thai tour operators in terms of crisis management, the results of the research showed that leaders who are entrepreneurs in the Thai tourism industry must be creative, proactive, seeking new markets, broad vision and knowledge. Having the ability to resolve crisis situations by making urgent decisions, coordinating with the public and private sectors to assist tourists affected by the crisis. Build cooperation with the media and use modern technology in terms of strategic leadership in crisis management, Leaders have to be responsible for making quick decisions. Strengthening participation in both the public and private sectors is required.

In the future the results found that the leadership of Thai tour operators must be bold enough to make quick and decisive decisions. They must also: be creative; Able to communicate using modern technology; Exhibit wide vision and up-to-date knowledge of many fields; and have the skills and confidence to come back.

Strategies for the new era in the Thai tourism industry: Travelers expect that during a crisis their safety should be ensured as much as possible. They saw that the most appropriate post-crisis integrated marketing tool was the national identity. In the tourism business, it is expected that during a crisis, there should be direct communication with tourism operators regarding promotions. Furthermore, changes in tourism programs for safety required the most appropriate post-crisis mixed marketing communications their Internet at the highest level. [20]

The tour operators and tourists have agreed that from experience, Thailand communicated in the financial crisis. The most prominent and important tourism destination was that Thailand had a rapid response to the crisis. They used two-way communication to provide tourists with information and allow them to inquire about the situation. Besides, Thailand provided information about the crisis, what happened, when, where, and how violent it occurred. Further advice tourists on how they should behave to be safe. This can be explained by the Crisis Communication Principle of Kathleen Fearn Banks (2002) that if a crisis occurs, the responsible person needs to assess the situation

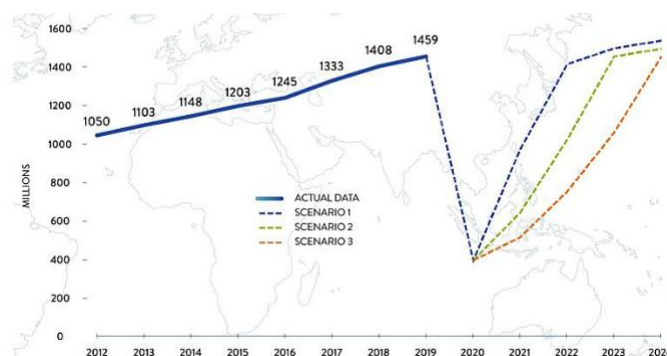


and determine the communication guidelines. Under the realities of the crisis, and the crisis management plans have to be specific to the situation each time. Although the pad elements are similar, the information taken in the Operation as each situation is different. Every organization can encounter a crisis that, However, the organization needs to understand the kind of crisis it is and how it affects the organization. It will lead to the development and formulation of a communication plan. In a crisis, the public relations department and the relevant executives will define a communication plan. The action plan may include [21] 1) Determination of objectives 2) Crisis communications team 3) Crisis information that may occur to the organization 4) Guidelines for selection of informants (Media spokespersons) 5) Lists of emergency teams and personnel by region 6) Media Manual 7) Negotiator with relevant units 8) Establishment of a control center 9) focus on key communications

### The Impact of the COVID 19 Outbreak on the Tourism

Assessing the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on international tourism [22]1) The world is facing a global health, social, and economic emergency due to the COVID-19 epidemic.2) Travel and tourism are among the most affected sectors, with a sharp drop in foreign demand amid global travel restrictions, including many of its borders closed. 3) As a result of the COVID 19 epidemic, international tourism export revenues were \$ 935 billion, more than 10 times the loss of 2009 under the impact of the global economic crisis. 4) Asia and the Pacific saw an 82% drop in arrivals in January-October 2020, the Middle East dropped 73%, while Africa is down 69% in the ten months. International arrivals in both Europe and America decreased by 68%. 5). In contrast, international travel demand continues to decline; domestic tourism continues to grow in large markets such as China and Russia, where demand for most domestic air travel has returned to pre-COVID levels.

6) Based on current trends, UNWTO expects international arrivals to drop 70% to 75% for the full year 2020, meaning international tourism will return 30 years ago. 7) The estimated decline in international tourism in 2020 is equivalent to an estimated 1 billion loss of tourists and \$ 1.1 trillion in international tourism revenues. This drop-in international tourism could result in an estimated economic loss of over \$ 2 trillion in world GDP, more than 2% of the world's GDP in 2019. 8) Looking ahead, the vaccine's announcement and launch are expected to increase consumer confidence and help reduce travel restrictions gradually. 9) UNWTO's extended situation for 2021-2024 suggests a recovery in international tourism in the second half of 2021. However, a return to 2019 levels in terms of international tourist numbers may take 2.5 to 4 years, as shown in fig. 2



**Fig.2 UNWTO's 2021-2024 Scenarios: 2.5 To 4 Years to Recover 2019 Levels International Tourists Arrivals**

The recovery time for each situation is summarized as follows:

Scenario 1: Recovery in 2.5 years (mid-2023)

Scenario 2: Recovery in 3 years (end of 2023)

Scenario 3: Recovery in 4 years (end of 2024)

Thai Military Bank (TMB) Analytics assessed the impact of the COVID19 situation in Thailand on the trade and tourism sectors in the first quarter of 2021 based on three factors: 1) epidemic site severity, 2) dependence on trade and tourism, and 3) cases. From provincial economic activity (GPP), it was found that overall, Thailand had a 22% dependence on trade and tourism on GDP. Additionally, 6.9 million people are unemployed, which is expected to reduce the nation's total income by more than 140 billion baht. The Thai government has stepped up remediation measures for those affected by the economy according to the level of business impact in each area, which employs 6.9 million people, including measures to help with the cost of living. Strictly to bring the epidemic situation back to normal as soon as possible. [23]

From interviews with Thai tourism leaders in the article to revive Thai tourism in 2021 through the "COVID 19" nightmare crisis, Deputy Governor of Marketing Communications, The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). Revealed the tourism market's direction after the new year, the COVID 19 crisis that the Thai tourism sector will not be the same. After this, it is expected that market competition increases, entrepreneurs have to adjust a new business vision model. —You need to turn your attention to the local market, reduce your dependence on a niche market, use digital technology to meet today's needs of online travelers, develop your business personnel, new skills, and increase your retention skills. Furthermore, improve quality. Besides, the hygiene factor should be included in the marketing plan or the risk management plan. TAT has set up a domestic marketing strategy focusing on stimulating Thai tourism in Thailand under the Health & Hygiene framework. Domestic stability and sustainability focus on promoting hygienic tourism in the New Normal era in line with health destinations. International market: TAT emphasizes building confidence and creating a new image of Thailand as a Top of Mind Destination, emphasizing communication to build confidence in the image of Thai tourism's safety through the Amazing Trusted Destination

campaign and produce advertising films. The name "Travel through Thailand" to take care of the hygiene of tourists.

The Chairman of the Krabi Tourism Industry Council commented that Thailand's tourism sector would begin to recover. In the fourth quarter of 2021, the beginning of the year, foreigners cannot travel yet. Having a vaccine in the country is considered to build confidence among foreigners. The President of the Chiang Mai Tourism Business Association said Chiang Mai is one of the five tourism cities in the country, with 70 percent of its GDP derived from tourism revenues prominent.

Last March, COVID 19 coming to the tourism business is having a serious problem, not even one trip abroad. In the past, the government had the policy to stimulate tourism by launching a project to share happiness. Projects that we traveled together but helped stimulate the economy to a certain extent. The tourism sector analyzes the direction in 2021. Many agree that in 2021 foreigners will certainly not visit, so entrepreneurs have to adjust to survive. In contrast, the government had to reach out to help with the moratorium for the tourism business for a period of 3 years. Director of TAT, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Office, informed that the tourism promotion activities must be revised and canceled. Alternatively, postpone them as appropriate, in line with the situation, emphasizing the New Standard, Safety and Health, or SHA. Meanwhile, the Chief Executive Officer of Pattaya City, Chonburi Province, agreed that a new round of COVID 19 Aid must be adjusted to stimulate the economy and travel in 2021 to increase safety in line with the Thai government's safeguard measures. [24]

### Discussions

Factors that will facilitate the recovery of tourism in the crisis of tourism operators. There are five things to consider: 1) Pandemic: How long will the pandemic last, and when will there be a cure or vaccine? 2) Removal travel restrictions and travel blocking measures When and how will countries begin to relax restrictions? How will social distancing rules affect tourism supply? 3) Consumer and business confidence: How long will it take consumers to make repeat trips? How will travel behavior change? 4) Economic impact: How deep will the global recession be, and how long will it last? How will consumer spending decisions be? 5) Government measures: How are government measures supporting tourism?

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the study found that the business continuity plan for tourism operators in the face of the COVID 19 crisis in Thailand. Internal factors related to their organization should be considered, and also external factors, namely, within the organization itself, should have a measure of supervision and risk management. There must be a step-by-step business continuity plan in critical conditions. This can be summarized as follows. Step1) Set goals, scopes, and teams. Step2) Key Activities and Recovery Goals. Step3) Essentials for the restoration of core activities. Step 4) Risk Assessment - Understand the disaster and crisis. Step 5) Prevention and mitigation. Step 6) Urgent response in the event of a disaster. Step 7) Business

Continuity Strategy for a Fast Recovery Step 8) Be financially prepared. Step 9) Practice to optimize the BCP, and Step 10) continuous review and development. While Business continuity planning for the epidemic COVID 19 outbreak should focus on the PPRR model: 1) Prevention, 2) Preparation, 3) Response, and 4) Recovery corresponding to the efficiency communication, maintenance of health and hygiene, digital and technology linkage, social distancing and compliance with the COVID 19 control measures following the policies of the respective governments. Moreover, there are four elements for the business continuity plan: 1) Risk Management Plan, 2) Business Impact Analysis, 3) Incident Response Plan, and 4) Recovery Plan.

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