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# QUALITATIVE METHOD : ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING FOR SURVIVING BUSINESSES DURING THE PANDEMIC FROM EUROPE, USA, SOUTH AMERICAN AND INDONESIA COUNTRIES

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to find out the emerging and enduring business during the pandemic covid19 in some countries to be set as example for starting a new business or surviving the remaining ones. This research was conducted by interviewing and having video conferences to some respondents from Europe, USA, South American countries and Indonesia. This paper provides a good view on surviving and emerging businesses for the past a few month periods of pandemic. The results revealed that technology and creativity is the key to have a successful business during the pandemic. Rather than having your customers come to you, we should deliver our service to their homes and give good quality product and service.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, surviving, emerging, enduring businesses

## I. INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) was first reported in Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019, was recognized by China as a new virus in the third week of January 2020. The World Health Organization (WHO) initially described it as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) at the end of January, and finally on March 11th, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic of the highly transmissible coronavirus disease (WHO, 2020a, b, c, d, e) COVID-19, signaling its global spread. Since then, the rapid worldwide outbreak of the novel coronavirus has triggered an alarming global health crisis.

Many countries' governments have taken measures dramatically affecting the daily life of society. To slow down the transmission and spread of the coronavirus, the public health tactic of "social distancing" has been widely applied. Regions and even countries have been entirely locked down (ranging from contact limitations to full curfew); schools, universities and public facilities are shut down; and public events (including sports matches, concerts, exhibition and even marriages) are currently prohibited in most countries. These measures not only affect the populations' daily life, but have caused significant economic consequences in economies around the world. Stock markets have crashed dramatically (Baker et al., 2020), with economists consistently forecasting harsh economic recessions (Baldwin and Weder di Mauro, 2020; McKibbin and Fernando, 2020). Governments have set severe restrictions on firms in various industries, mandated social distancing and health protection policies and even locked down non-essential businesses in many countries, triggering simultaneous demand as well as supply-side issues (del Rio-Chanona et al., 2020).

Whereas demand in industries such as healthcare has skyrocketed, demand in industries such as restaurants, air transportation and tourism has evaporated. General buying power and consumption in private households have also been affected (Muellbauer, 2020). In just one month, 22 million people in the United States lost their jobs, unemployment rates more than doubled in Austria and 29% of all Swiss employees have been placed on short-term furlough (Kurzarbeit) due to the crisis. Decreasing consumer demand and spending may even worsen throughout 2020 with upcoming corporate layoffs and bankruptcies in many affected sectors.

Yet human mobility has led COVID-19 to spread to other countries as follows: Europe is currently the epicenter of the pandemic, with more reported cases and deaths than the rest of the world combined apart from China (BBC News, 2020). Certain countries have taken

specific steps, such as suspending their visa-on-arrival policy and instituting strict travel bans, to prevent the spread of the disease. Even so, COVID-19 has already brought potential economic ruin to Bali, Rome, Singapore, Barcelona and other destinations that were once tourist magnets (Neubauer, 2020). The impacts of this outbreak on the global tourism industry have been intensively debated across the academic community, industry practitioners and government departments as of late.

Currently, the USA has the largest number of infected people and death, and all these factors have made COVID-19 the worst pandemic in recent years. Shaw et al. (2020) identified the following characteristics of COVID-19:

- rapid spread;
- heightened vulnerability among aged and low immune people; and
- differential recovery rates in different countries and age groups.

In the interconnected world, the pandemic has not only affected lives but also had a strong impact on various sectors. The education sector is among the most frequently impacted service sectors from the pandemic, having already experienced SARS and MERS. The main reason for this is the closure of schools and universities, which disrupts the academic calendar and causes stress to parents and students alike. In response, many educational institutions have started offering online classes/courses and some have shifted their academic calendars to cope with this extraordinary situation.

Understanding this as the “new normal” while also thinking of possibilities for future pandemic or biological hazards and their impact on health, business, education, tourism etc. The purpose of this paper is to learn about the most affected and surviving business in some countries like USA, Australia, Turkey, Indonesia and some South American countries. The pandemic is far from over as the number of mortalities surges every day almost everywhere in the world, even though strict lock down has been applied. Businesses start to collapse, and people are losing their job since the companies cannot afford to pay their salaries. The Indonesian government then announced to ease the restriction and let some businesses to open with strict measures or Covid19 procedures.

As the new normal applies, there are some changes in our daily routine and surrounding such as working from home and even if employees have to go to their office, they will do it in every other day. Schools and colleges have been shut and now students have to study from

their homes using zoom, google meet and other platforms. In many offices especially in front office area where they have direct contact with customers and clients, they are installing a partition as protector among themselves, and wearing mask or face shields is already mandatory.

One of the most noticeable ways in interaction is that people keep their distance and in public places there are notices for physical distancing to the impact of the virus. People are no longer shake each other hands or hug when they meet. In Indonesia since most of its population is Moslem now, they can pray in their mosques after almost three months of shut down but they have to keep their distance and it is obliged to bring their own praying rugs.

The new normal also changes people habit, the extended lock down makes family members close to each other and they start doing chores around the house such as cleaning their rooms and furniture, fixing and renovating their houses, making cakes and trying new recipes and even gardening or breeding duck, chicken and fish. People are now more aware on hygiene and health by washing their hands, taking showers after going out, jogging, biking and sun bathing early in the morning. For most of the Moslem in my country this situation makes them become closer to God by reciting Quran and learning more on Syariah of Islam.

The new business landscape offers little more than painful choices. Being shut down or running minimal operations may turn out to be less stressful than facing the challenges ahead—new rules for safe operation, huge debts, uncertain ability to retain a workforce, working productively with social distancing, data security and privacy concerns, disrupted supply chains and unknown demand

All of the choices are made more painful because owners have to proceed with limited or nonexistent resources. An owner had nothing to do with the crisis, yet everything about how they do business has suddenly downshifted. Understandably, anxiety is rampant, and emotional responses range from fear to anger to bitterness and resentment. These reactions can be so all-consuming that they prevent owners from taking timely or effective action. They can also lead to impulsive, aggressive and ultimately self-defeating responses. For example, some owners may rush into action on their own. This bunker mentality disconnects them from employees, suppliers, customers and the community. As a result, they lose the trust of potential partners.

While Covid-19 *is* a natural disaster, it is also a social and economic crisis that business owners do have some control over. They cannot change the situation, but they can choose

their response. Owners may look to government to help them recover, feeling that this is fair and just. After all, they reason, everyone will benefit from a recovery, and conversely, if many businesses fail, everyone will experience pain. Adding to the pain of the pandemic, there are new waves of social unrest, and some closed businesses are being threatened and looted. This has led to an intense societal debate on what measures can have the greatest impact and how we can best strengthen our social and economic fabric.

## II. LITERATURE/THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

According to Hunger and Wheelen (2011: 53-54): Environmental scanning is monitoring, evaluating and disseminating of information from the external and internal environment to key people within the corporation. A corporation uses this tool to avoid strategic surprise and to ensure its long term health.

- According to Aguilar (in Choo, 2001): Environmental scanning is the acquisition and use of information about events, trends, relationships in an organization's external environment, the knowledge of which would assist management in planning the organization's future course of action.
- According to Wright, Kroll & Parnell (1998: 31): Environmental scanning is the gathering and analysis of information about information trends.

From some of the above meanings, it can be concluded that Environmental Scanning is a process of decision making, analysis, deciphering information and how an organization uses external company information that involves a number of people in the company. Fahey and Narayanan (in Morrison, 1992) argue that an effective environmental scanning should be able to help decision makers know the potential changes that occur in their external environment. Environmental scanning provides strategic investigations that are useful in making strategic decisions. The consequence of this activity is an increased understanding of the impact of change on the organization, helps predict, and brings hope for good change in decision making.

Much of the media attention on the impact of Covid-19 on education has had a negative perspective without considering the positive effects in terms of a rapid increase in digital skills and practices (Parnell et al., 2020). Educators have had to be innovative and this represents a unique opportunity to change the existing status quo. Moreover, the prolonged

and enduring nature of Covid-19 has created a societal challenge. Despite the major shift in society resulting from the Covid-19 crisis there is expected to be knowledge spillover benefits that affect other aspects of society. This is due to the need for innovation and creativity in how to handle the crisis (Ansell and Boin, 2019).

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

We conducted qualitative expert interviews to answer our research questions (Kvale, 1983; Neergaard and Uihøi, 2007) and obtain an “understanding” (Outhwaite, 1975) about business people’s reactions to the COVID-19 crisis. Qualitative research designs are particularly suitable for analyzing these kinds of novel social and economic cases. Including multiple cases allowed for a robust research approach with more generalizable findings (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2013, 2017). The nature and scope of this pandemic as a specific type of crisis are unprecedented. This means that a qualitative methodology is required that can extend existing theory (Bansal and Corley, 2012; Bluhm et al., 2011; Brand et al., 2019; Graebner et al., 2012).

Employing qualitative interviews enabled us to closely capture various subjective experiences during the pandemic (Graebner et al., 2012). As we searched for specific and ad hoc rather than standardized and established reactions to this crisis, the interviews added vividness, concreteness and richness to the research phenomenon (Bluhm et al., 2011; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Graebner et al., 2012).

#### **Sample**

We employed a purposive sampling technique (Guest et al., 2006; Morse et al., 2002), interviewing key informants such as teacher, nurse, psychologist, businessman, lawyer, banker, building contractor etc. This approach allowed for maximum variation, following the principles of appropriateness and adequacy (Gaskell, 2000; Seawright; Gerring, 2008). We were able to gain insights regarding both similarities and contrasts among the cases (Guest et al., 2006). The respondents represented location in Germany, Paraguay, USA, Australia, Brazil, Luxemburg, Turkey, Indonesia, Chile, Guatemala. As is common in qualitative research, the data analysis started directly after each interview until saturation was reached after 10 interviews, i.e. further data collection did not generate new insights (Boddy, 2016; Eisenhardt, 1989; Guest et al., 2006; Morse et al., 2002).

## **Data collection**

We conducted semi-structured interviews with the respondents from August 6th to 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020, i.e. during the current peak of the crisis in the countries under investigation. These were based on an interview guide which allowed the interviewers to spontaneously react to the respondents' statements (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Guest et al., 2006; Neergaard and Ulhøi, 2007). Due to the social distancing measures or even general quarantine, the interviews were conducted by WhatsApp and the digital communication tools Zoom. The interviews were recorded with the respondents' consent, lasting on average 20 min and the discussion about 2.5 hours.

## **Data analysis**

The interviews were transcribed word for word, ignoring special linguistic and phonetic characteristics such as slang and gap fillers ("uh", "hmm", etc.) to focus on the interview content alone. We independently read the transcripts and coded the data in an open manner (Miles et al., 2014; Corbin and Strauss, 2014) to determine how some businesses affected and thriving during COVID-19 crisis. We iteratively analyzed the data until common themes emerged and could be verified through feedback loops. To ensure reliability and validity of the findings (Kirk et al., 1986; Morse et al., 2002; Sousa, 2014), we read and coded the data independently and compared, discussed and revised our codes iteratively before we consolidated them.

## **IV. RESULT**

Results from discussion using zoom to 10 people from the following countries:

### **Ruben, Paraguay**

I could think right now: delivery services, including food and drugs; on line courses - personal classes; personal training - including physical, psychological and spiritual training - home supplies. In PARAGUAY, the trends are the same: doctors, dentist, shrinks, even financial consultants now go on line and home visiting. Factories also re-invented themselves to produce Coronavirus's lifestyle products, from alcohol to masks, and the "on line demand" had pushed techno innovators to come up with apps and other software to get people more connected. Improving your home to fit your commercial needs is something that moves

carpentry and other constructions needs. Pedicure, manicure, hairdressing, haircuts are now coming to you instead of you going to them. We have a kind of Uber for everything: taking a kid somewhere, ladies only, pick and drive your own car, bike package delivery and so on.

### **Sharee, Australia**

Thriving business since pandemic is DIY renovations. Bunnings one stop shop for plants, paint, soil, timber, plaster, tiles etc. Online home decor suppliers. Chiropractors...because beauty and spa shut. Everyone going there for "medical" massage? Lol. My husband's business thriving is elevators. he installs and services...plenty of both happening. But service increased as demand increased as only 4 people allowed in a lift at a time, apartment strata who were not happy with their elevators have come running to us. We've just employed an additional 3 men to cope this week. People home and using lifts more than ever. Lots of tele consults here too, neighbors and friends picking up flu vax via phone consult...then coming here with their vaccine for me to jab them. Staying out of clinics where possible. Many companies diversified to mask making. Our alcohol and beer distillers went into hand sanitizer production. Govt have launched heaps of free tele education to keep those without jobs learning skills.

### **Karen, USA**

I'll find the Information for Ohio as the state created a program for businesses to switch to making masks, mask sterilizing machines and ventilators and other needed supplies. My daughter is an instructional designer at Ohio State University and had to over 10,000 courses online in several weeks.

### **Ole, Guatemala**

We, the psychologists, have now a big demand for online consulting, as people are now seeing it as a good alternative and studies show that it really is a good alternative for many. It's a good thing for me, because I can also offer therapy to Norwegians with a very competitive price and because of the time difference I can offer my services at hours when most Norwegian clinics are closed, late afternoon and nights, and don't forget computer programmers, lots of businesses have been in need of upgrading or launching an online service

### **Anne, Luxemburg**

Good morning everyone. This is my morning assignment . That's an interesting research and from what I read so far, reactions are quite similar around the globe: the burst of e learning, all kinds of services, masks making, medical tele working, hydro alcoholic gel from different companies, online conferences and because we need some distinction, you find plexiglass everywhere: to separate counters from costumers or tables in some restaurant. This is already a "trend". Not sure those plexiglasses will disappear one day! But, when you investigate a little further, the real "thriving business" here are the swimming pool business and the gardening. Lots of people have realized or decided not to go on vacation this summer and with the global warming, the very hot summers we've had for the past years, families have invested in a swimming pool. There isn't a single pool left to install and if you found one, no company would have time to do the job! Not in Luxemburg, France or Belgium! We didn't want a pool, just new trees in the garden and it was also the case. No vacation so people are taking care of their house: inside and outside! No trees or specific plants for months. Have a beautiful day guys and talk soon? Electric bikes are the hit around here due to the fact that the area is a little hilly. In some restaurants, when the place is narrow and if the owner doesn't want to reduce the number of tables, you can use plexiglasses. It's weird at first and then, pretty cozy. You feel like in a booth.

### **Andrea, Chile**

Hi everyone. Here All the restaurants are close. (Just pick-up and delivery). Schools and universities are closed. On line you get Psychiatrist psychologist, physical therapy, and some doctors. Most of Santiago is on lockdown but my Suburb is on stage 2. (report from Chile)

### **Yosi, Germany**

Here in Bavaria definitely the bottled beers from Augustiner brewery. During lockdown people continued to have their beer at home instead of at a pub. Bicycles, not fancy ones like Brompton, because the weather is nice and a lot of people avoid commuting by bus and train, and also campers small and big as people avoids hotels or because no hotels are available yet. Campers for holidays and bicycles for transportation.

### **Banu, Turkey**

Turkey has hard time during this pandemic time, production has stops and everybody must stay home, education also stops and only internet and communication companies increase their sale. Other products which also increase their volume such as mask or face protector, retail market with adaption by delivery system, techno company is growing strong become

unicorn. Tourism is having hard time also but since August it started to be better since international airports were opened.

### **Jorge, Brazil**

In Brazil, the most affected sector was education, more than 1000 teachers are unemployed. To solve the problem, local government invest on teacher development and training for blended learning is more listening using latest technology so the classes were more dynamic.

### **Zaenol, Indonesia**

Everyone now is doing online sales. Be that of culinary products, services (Acil Sayur Online etc). And that's the challenge! Everybody is doing it. How do they survive and win customers choice when there are so many competitors doing things you do?

Conventional restaurants, food stalls, “warungs” are also offering deliveries. On more personal survival, I think Forex Trading business is not getting affected by the pandemic. You still can make money if you're a very trader and know what you're doing. Stock trading? Mutual Fund? All are going south. Sorry if what I mentioned doesn't satisfy your research.

### **Werhan, Indonesia**

As a lawyer, I notice that the number of people who want to take their cases to the court drops significantly. People tend to postpone their legal cases and wait until the pandemic is over. Payment of lawyer's fee drops and not smooth. I think Personal Tutor (like a private teacher/instructor) is also in high demand, specifically when most, if not all, kids should study from home. Parents are struggling to supervise and advise their Youngs to understand and comprehend study materials given by the 'formal' teachers via online. Subjects like Math, Physics, Biology, and most of science majors need a patient tutor to re-explain them to those kids...

## **V. DISCUSSION AND CONCUSSION**

Covid19 is inevitable, so we have to learn to live with it. Due to the pandemic, people play safe in conducting their businesses such as installing plexi glass or partition in offices and restaurant, shifting their work schedule and by delivering their product to customers. Many industries are now changed for the shake of pandemic such as textile business now produces masks, beer factory starts to make hand-sanitizer etc. Psychiatrist psychologist, physical

therapy, and some doctors are done mostly online or tele-consult. Pedicure, manicure, hairdressing, haircuts are now coming to you instead of you going to them, Education changes dramatically and now everything is online. If you continue with your existing business quality and service should be improved and use technology for your marketing. Observe what people need to launch a new business

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