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# COVID-19 lessons for crisis management and recovery in the food service industry in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This study aims to examine the crisis management strategies employed by local restaurants in Indonesia during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, and to evaluate their effectiveness and applicability for future crises. Using Faulkner's Six Stages of Crisis Management framework, the research identifies five major themes: financial resilience, operational flexibility and service adaptation, digital transformation and customer engagement, long-term learning and strategic preparedness, and reactive crisis response. A qualitative, exploratory multiple-case study design was adopted, with data collected through semi-structured interviews involving restaurant owners and managers in Jakarta. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo 12, supported by member checking and peer review to ensure credibility. Findings show that Indonesian restaurant operators utilized both proactive and reactive strategies, such as financial restructuring, digitalization, and operational adjustments. The study also uncovers challenges related to government regulations and shifts in consumer behavior. The research concludes that adaptive business models and strategic preparedness are essential for resilience. Practical implications suggest that both policymakers and hospitality practitioners should integrate adaptive frameworks and digital tools to better prepare for future disruptions. This study contributes to the empirical validation of Faulkner's model in the context of real-world crises.

Keywords: COVID-19, strategy, Crisis management, Food service, Restaurant.

## 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Overview the Covid19 Crisis in Food Service Industry

COVID-19 remains an important issue in the restaurant industry due to its profound and lasting impacts. The impact of COVID-19 on this industry is significant, extending beyond operational changes to include public health [1] customer trust [2] regulatory adherence [3] employee well-being [4] and business sustainability [5]. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the need for early detection, rapid response, and effective communication in crisis management. By examining the strategies used in the food and beverage industry, valuable insights can be gained to improve future crisis responses. This study focuses on Indonesia's restaurant industry as an example of how businesses adapted, recovered, and built resilience to withstand future challenges. The early years was hard for this Industry in Indonesia. The issue of regulations from the government of Indonesia starting from Large Scale Social Restrictions [5] Presidential Decree No. 7, 2020, creating the taskforce specifically for the acceleration to reduce Coronavirus 2019 [6] Presidential Decree No. RI. 9, 2020, to anticipate the impact and strengthen the first stage of implementation of the taskforce for an acceleration of COVID-19 in Indonesia [7] Presidential Decree, No. 11, 2020, concerned the virus with emergency public health determination policy [8] and Presidential Decree No. 21, 2020, outlines large-scale social restrictions to expedite pandemic management, focusing on fiscal policy and financial system stability to manage

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COVID-19 and potential economic threats [9] has created challenges for restaurant industry to implement the dynamic of rules and regulations. The food and beverage business has seen numerous restaurants temporarily close, restricting their space, hours of operation, and services to takeaway or online ordering for delivery. Because shopping malls themselves have collapsed, restaurants—which are typically popular spots for social gatherings—have been forced to close as well [10]. In response to the crisis, businesses in the sector were compelled to navigate a rapidly evolving landscape marked by shifting consumer preferences, government regulations, and economic uncertainties.

In the second year of COVID-19, The food service industry has entered the "*New Normal*" era, characterized by significant crises like COVID-19, which will never return to normal [11] and denotes a new benchmark for the economy in food service industry [12]. The pandemic has led to a shift in customer behavior towards increased technological acuity, environmental consciousness, and digitalization [13]. Consumer behavior has evolved, with a preference for home eating, digital maturity, and value-oriented dining, as well as a growing interest in fast and casual dining [14]. Many restaurants need to reconsider and assess their business plans in light of the decline in patronage. Consequently, developing a strong business plan is essential [15].

For restaurant industry, a good strategy should have competent resources to survive under difficult conditions [16]. Innovation in a competitive environment, is a key of sustainability business strategy with the ability to transfer new ideas for the future [17]. Innovation characteristics and complex resources drive business promotion and create customer-oriented products and better business performance [18-20]. The survival of businesses requires innovative and proactive business capability besides risk-taking competency and the management of market-based resources [21]. The pandemic situation encourages the food and beverage business to be more competitive in marketing their products and various new business strategies [22, 23]. It is necessary to conduct research to comprehend how the food service industry performs strategies.

The COVID-19 crisis was unprecedented in its impact on the restaurant industry, requiring operators to develop and implement new crisis management strategies. Further research is needed to assess whether these strategies remain applicable post-pandemic and if they can serve as models for future crises. This study aims to explore how the restaurant industry adapted to COVID-19, the relevance of these strategies in the post-pandemic era, and their potential as frameworks for future crisis management. The purpose of this study is to examine how restaurant industry in Indonesia implemented crisis management strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic, how these strategies evolved in the post-COVID-19 period, and how the restaurant's experience with COVID-19 has shaped its preparedness for managing similar crises in the future.

#### 1.2. Research Questions

- 1) How did the restaurant industry in Indonesia implement crisis management for COVID-19?
- 2) How did the restaurant industry in Indonesia implement crisis management in post COVID-19?
- 3) How did the restaurant industry in Indonesia's response to COVID-19 shape its future crisis management strategies?

#### 2. Theoretical Framework

#### 2.1. Crisis Management Theories

The primary framework used in this study is Faulkner [24] Six-Stage Crisis Management Model, which outlines a structured approach to handling crises through the following stages: Pre-event – Prevention measures to reduce risks, Prodromal – Early warning signs and initial responses, Emergency – Immediate actions taken during the crisis, Intermediate – Stabilization and operational adjustments, Long-term Recovery – Strategic recovery and rebuilding efforts, and Restoration – Returning to a new or improved operational state. Faulkner's model has been widely applied in crisis management research, particularly in the hospitality and tourism sectors [25, 26]. However, its application to local restaurants remains underexplored, particularly in emerging markets like Indonesia. Complementing Faulkner's model, this study also draws on Mitroff [27] Five-Stage Crisis Management Model, which emphasizes proactive crisis response. The five stages—signal detection, preparation, damage containment, recovery, and learning—highlight the importance of early intervention and long-term resilience. This model is particularly relevant to understanding how Indonesian restaurants adapted to government regulations and shifting consumer behaviors during and after the pandemic.

### 2.2. Crisis Typology and Business Adaptation

Crises affecting the food service industry can be classified using Lerbinger [28] Seven Types of Crisis, which include natural disasters, technological failures, confrontations, malevolence, management misconduct, deception, and misplaced values. COVID-19 falls into the category of natural disasters but also shares characteristics of confrontational crises, given the regulatory challenges faced by restaurant operators. In response to crises, businesses typically adopt proactive or reactive strategies [29, 30]. Proactive strategies, such as digital transformation, cost optimization, and customer engagement, enable businesses to stay ahead of disruptions. In contrast, reactive strategies, such as temporary closures, workforce reduction, and emergency funding, help businesses survive immediate challenges but may not ensure long-term sustainability. Studies on organizational resilience [31, 32] suggest that businesses with flexible operational models and strong crisis preparedness are more likely to recover successfully. The food service industry, particularly local and independent restaurants, often faces structural disadvantages compared to large chain restaurants, making resilience strategies even more crucial.

### 2.3. Regulatory and Economic Perspectives on Crisis Management

Government regulations played a critical role in shaping the crisis response of Indonesian restaurants. Regulatory adaptation theory Koop and Lodge [33] suggests that businesses must continuously adjust to changing policies to ensure compliance and operational continuity. During the pandemic, Indonesian restaurants had to adapt to lockdowns, social distancing mandates, hygiene protocols, and delivery-only operations [7, 34]. This study examines how these regulations influenced crisis strategies, highlighting the tension between compliance and financial viability. From an economic perspective, the resource-based view (RBV) of crisis management [35] suggests that businesses with strong financial reserves, digital infrastructure, and adaptive leadership are more likely to survive crises. COVID-19 disproportionately affected small and independent restaurants with limited resources, forcing them to rely on alternative revenue streams, government support, and digital marketing to sustain operations.

### 2.4. Gaps in Existing Research and Contribution of This Study

While previous studies have explored crisis management in the hotel sector [25, 36, 37] there is limited research focusing specifically on local restaurants in Indonesia. Existing literature primarily examines international restaurant chains or Western market responses [38, 39] leaving a gap in understanding how small, independent restaurants navigated the crisis. This study contributes to the field by applying Faulkner's Six-Stage Crisis Management Framework to the restaurant industry in Indonesia, analyzing proactive and reactive strategies adopted by restaurant operators in response to COVID-19, examining the role of government regulations and their impact on restaurant operations, exploring long-term recovery and sustainability in the post-pandemic food service sector.

#### 2.5. Conceptual Framework

This study adopts [24] Six-Stage Crisis Management Framework—Pre-event, Prodromal, Emergency, Intermediate, Long-term Recovery, and Restoration—to analyze crisis management strategies in Indonesia's local restaurant industry during and after COVID-19. Faulkner's model is applicable across industries and provides a comprehensive approach to crisis response, from immediate actions to long-term adaptation. Findings from this study highlight five key themes that align with Faulkner's framework:

- 1. Reactive Crisis Management and Strategy Formation Restaurants responded to early crisis signs and rapidly adapted to government restrictions.
- 2. Financial Resilience Cost-cutting and cash flow management were critical to surviving the immediate financial impact.
- 3. Operational Flexibility and Service Adaptation Restaurants adjusted business models, including menu innovation and service modifications.
- 4. Leveraging Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement Digital adoption, such as online ordering and marketing, became essential for survival and long-term growth.
- 5. Long-term Learning and Strategic Preparedness Lessons from the crisis led to improved contingency planning and business resilience.

This conceptual model illustrates how Faulkner's framework is implemented in real-world crisis management, offering insights into how local restaurants adapted and developed sustainable business strategies in the wake of COVID-19.



Figure 1.

Crisis Management Strategies of Indonesian Local Restaurants in Covid-19 Conceptual Framework.

# 3. Methodology

This study examines crisis management strategies adopted by local restaurants in Indonesia during and after COVID-19. This chapter outlines the research methodology, covering research design, sample selection, data collection and analysis methods, ethical considerations, and limitations. A systematic and transparent approach ensures the replicability, reliability, and validity of the findings in understanding crisis management within the food service industry. This study adopts a qualitative multiple-case study approach, focusing on local restaurants in Jakarta. The constructivist paradigm underpins the research, as it explores how restaurant operators experienced and responded to the crisis. Given the complex and evolving nature of crisis management, an inductive approach was selected to derive patterns and themes from the data [40]. A multiple-case study approach [41] was chosen to compare various crisis responses across different restaurant types, locations, and operational scales. The explanatory case study method is employed to understand why and how certain crisis management strategies succeeded or failed in different restaurant settings. This approach enables cross-case comparisons, enhancing the generalizability of findings beyond individual cases. This study employed purposive sampling to select local restaurants in Jakarta that implemented distinct crisis management strategies. The selection criteria included locally owned restaurants, at least five years in operation before the pandemic, and those that experienced disruptions and adopted adaptive strategies. Additionally, theoretical sampling [42] ensured diversity in financial resilience, operational flexibility, digital transformation, and longterm crisis preparedness, allowing comparisons between successful and struggling businesses during the crisis. Based on Ellis [43] and Yin [41] a sample size of 6–10 restaurants was determined to be sufficient for in-depth qualitative analysis while allowing for thematic saturation. The study focuses on restaurant operators in Jakarta, Indonesia, as the city was among the hardest-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic [44]. Jakarta's food and beverage sector, which contributed IDR 1.14 trillion in tax revenue [45] faced severe economic challenges, making it a critical case for crisis management analysis. Eight restaurant operators, representing different restaurant formats (cafés, family restaurants, upscale dining, independent eateries, and local chains), participated in this study. Their diverse backgrounds allowed for a nuanced analysis of financial, operational, and strategic adaptations.

No	Outlet	Type of Restaurant	Type of	Name	Position
			Ownership		
1	Kolary Coffee and	Independent Coffee	Sole	Mr Darwin	Founder and
	Kitchen	Shop	Proprietorship	Tenironama	CEO
2	Selah Ristorante	Upscale authentic	Joint Venture	Mr Ardhanta	Co Owner
		Italian Restaurant		Satriya Winarko	
3	Nunga Coffee and	Independent Coffee	Sole	Mr Riynold	CEO and Owner
	Eatery	Shop	Proprietorship	Aberson Pardede	
4	Baliqui Restaurant	Independent	Sole	Mr Sarim	Owner
		Family Restaurant	Proprietorship		
5	Filosofi Kopi	Local chain Coffee Shop	Partnership	Mr Fathin	Operational
				Perdana	Manager
6	On Eleven	Upscale Restaurant but	Partnership	Mr Amiyogie	Corporate
		located in Ascott Hotel	-	Nugraha	Manager
7	Dapoer Balakenam	Independent	Sole	Mr Antonius	Group Head
		Family Restaurant	Proprietorship	Shando Soendoro	Chef
8	Baca Kopi	Independent Coffee	Sole	Mr Akhmad	Owner
		Shop	Proprietorship	Yusuf Mubarok	

**Table 1.** List of Participants.

This study utilized semi-structured interviews with restaurant owners and managers, allowing flexibility while ensuring a consistent thematic structure. The interview protocol focused on three key areas: initial crisis response (Pre-event, Prodromal, and Emergency Stages), post-pandemic recovery strategies (Intermediate and Long-term Recovery Stages), and future crisis preparedness and lessons learned (Restoration Stage). A thematic analysis approach [46, 47] was used to systematically identify crisis management patterns. The analysis followed four key coding stages: Familiarization with data by reviewing transcripts for emerging patterns, First-Cycle Coding to assign preliminary labels (e.g., financial strategies, digital adaptation), Second-Cycle Coding to group related codes into higher-order categories (e.g., resilience, transformation), and Thematic Categorization to align findings with Faulkner's Six-Stage Crisis Framework. This was followed by Within-Case Analysis, examining each restaurant's crisis response in detail, and Cross-Case Analysis, comparing strategies across different cases to identify commonalities and variations in resilience and adaptation.

#### 4. Results and Discussions

## 4.1. Reactive Crisis Management and Strategy Formation

The COVID-19 pandemic caught many restaurants unprepared, forcing them to adopt reactive strategies to survive. Initially, most restaurant operators underestimated the crisis, assuming it would be short-term. However, as government restrictions were enforced, many businesses formed crisis management teams to assess risks, adjust operations, and comply with new regulations. Additionally, they had to adapt communication strategies to maintain transparency and trust with employees and customers, ensuring business continuity amidst uncertainty.Example: Selah Ristorante implemented *"car dining"*, allowing customers to eat in their vehicles while receiving regular restaurant service. Similar to previous research [30] this study found that preparedness is crucial in crisis management. However, unlike large hospitality businesses, small independent restaurants had minimal contingency planning, making them more vulnerable.

4.2. Financial Resilience

Edelweiss Applied Science and Technology ISSN: 2576-8484 Vol. 9, No. 5: 2423-2431, 2025 DOI: 10.55214/25768484.v9i5.7483 © 2025 by the authors; licensee Learning Gate The sudden loss of revenue during the pandemic posed a major challenge for restaurant owners, forcing them to adopt cost-saving strategies such as downsizing staff, negotiating rental agreements, and optimizing inventory management. To sustain operations, many businesses diversified their revenue streams by offering frozen food, catering services, and packaged meal deliveries. While some restaurants received government assistance, others struggled due to unclear regulations and limited access to relief programs. Example: Dapoer Balakenam introduced a frozen food line that accounted for 25% of its revenue post-pandemic, and Baca Kopi minimized costs by implementing direct delivery services, reducing reliance on third-party apps. This aligns with Lanzolla and Markides [35] Resource-Based View (RBV), which suggests that businesses with stronger financial reserves and adaptive revenue models are more resilient during crises.

#### 4.3. Operational Flexibility and Service Adaptation

Adapting operational models was essential for business continuity, leading many restaurants to shift from dine-in to takeaway and delivery services. To improve efficiency, businesses streamlined their menus, reducing costs and optimizing offerings for delivery. Additionally, some restaurants utilized outdoor seating areas to attract customers while ensuring compliance with health and safety regulations. Example: Baliqui used its outdoor dining concept to reassure customers about safety, and Nunga Coffee reduced menu complexity to focus on high-demand products. Previous studies [25] emphasize the role of agility and adaptability in crisis management. The findings here confirm that restaurants that adapted quickly were more successful in retaining customers.

#### 4.4. Leveraging Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement

Technology was crucial in maintaining customer relationships and ensuring business continuity, with many restaurants enhancing their presence on social media platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook. Personalized engagement through WhatsApp promotions and loyalty programs helped sustain customer loyalty, while some businesses expanded into e-commerce, selling frozen food and packaged items to diversify revenue streams. Example: Filosofi Kopi collaborated with Element Bike to launch coffee-themed bicycles, increasing brand exposure, while Baca Kopi used WhatsApp and Instagram for direct marketing and promotions. Consistent with prior research Le and Phi [26] this study confirms that digital transformation was not just a temporary response but became a permanent part of post-pandemic restaurant operations.

#### 4.5. Long-Term Learning and Strategic Preparedness

Restaurants that learned from the crisis are now better prepared for future disruptions by prioritizing cash flow management and contingency planning. Many have diversified their product offerings, making frozen food and retail items permanent revenue streams. Additionally, hybrid business models that integrate both online and offline services have become key to long-term sustainability. Example: Dapoer Balakenam retained frozen food sales as 25% of total revenue, ensuring financial stability, and Kolary Coffee developed multiple brands under one kitchen to maximize resources. This result supports [32] who argue that organizations that integrate crisis learning into long-term planning become more resilient.

#### 5. Conclusion

#### 5.1. Summary of Findings

To answer the research questions, this study found that many restaurant operators were initially unprepared for the crisis, leading to reactive crisis management and rapid adaptation to government restrictions. Financial resilience was crucial, with businesses implementing cost-cutting measures and diversifying revenue streams through frozen food, delivery services, and online sales. Operational flexibility also played a key role, as restaurants shifted to takeaway models, optimized menus, and utilized outdoor dining. Additionally, digital transformation and customer engagement became essential for sustaining revenue. Post-pandemic, long-term learning and strategic preparedness have remained priorities, with many businesses retaining crisis-era innovations for future resilience. The findings highlight that restaurants embracing change and innovation were more likely to survive and recover successfully.

## 5.2. Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This study enhances both theoretical and practical understanding of crisis management in the restaurant industry. Theoretically, it extends [24] Six-Stage Crisis Management Framework to small and independent restaurants, highlighting their reliance on reactive strategies due to a lack of contingency plans. It also underscores digital transformation as a key factor in long-term business sustainability. Practically, the study provides insights for restaurant owners, managers, and policymakers on building resilience through financial preparedness, operational flexibility, and diversified revenue streams. Policymakers can use these findings to create clearer, more consistent regulations and better support mechanisms for small businesses during crises.

### 5.3. Managerial Implications

This finding highlights key implications for restaurant managers. Developing a crisis contingency plan is crucial to minimize disruptions, as lack of preparedness led to delayed responses and financial strain. Diversifying revenue streams, such as frozen food, delivery services, and online sales, enhances business stability during crises. Additionally, investing in digital transformation—including online marketing, digital payments, and social media engagement—helps retain customers and ensures longterm competitiveness in a digital-driven market.

### 5.4. Future Research Directions

Future research could compare crisis management strategies between small independent restaurants and large chains, as differences in financial resources and contingency plans may lead to varying responses. Additionally, studies should explore long-term consumer behavior changes post-pandemic, particularly the persistence of online food delivery and digital payments. Lastly, further research could examine the role of government policies in business resilience, analyzing how financial aid, tax relief, and regulatory adjustments impact crisis recovery in the food service sector. Understanding these factors would benefit both industry practitioners and policymakers.

## **Data Availability Statement:**

Would it be permissible to include a Data Availability section in the article? The dataset related to this study is available on the Zenodo repository and can be cited as follows:

Subakti, A. G. (2025). Crisis Management in Local Restaurant Mind Mapping. Dataset is available from Zenodo repository, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15396401

## **Transparency:**

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

### **Authors' Contributions:**

Agung Gita Subakti: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Validation, Visualization, Writing, Original Draft Preparation, Review and Editing; Hamimi Omar: Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project Administration, Supervision; Ahmad Edwin Bin Mohamed: Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project Administration, Supervision.

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