



Tour Guides and Porters' Survival Strategies during Covid-19 Pandemic in Arusha City, Tanzania

***CRN Charles Raphael, PhD**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3108-1344>

Department of Business Management, Tengeru Institute of Community Development, Tanzania

Email: crn201412@gmail.com

Visent Kipene, PhD

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-9840-725X>

Department of Business Management, Mbeya University of Science and Technology, Tanzania

Email: kipene2015@gmail.com

***Corresponding Author:** crn201412@gmail.com

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to establish strategies used to survive by 250 tour guides and porters during the Covid-19 pandemic in Arusha City. The study used the descriptive and explanatory survey designs. The study used a questionnaire and an interview schedule as sources of data. The analysis of data employed the content analysis, descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. The study concluded that the porters and tour guides used three survival strategies at high level, two at moderate level and one strategy at low level during the Covid-19 pandemic. The strategies were proved to be positive and significant for the survival of porters and tour guides during Covid-19 pandemic. The findings advocate for efforts of the tour guides and porters to do more savings, to diversify their tourism activities. They also need to undergo training to acquire appropriate skills, which can help them when they face similar crises and pandemics.

Keyword: Tour guide; porters; survival; strategies; Covid 19; pandemic.

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Introduction

Tourism and hospitality industry is one of business sectors growing vastly and quickly in Tanzania and worldwide (Tovmasyan, 2019; Kabonda, 2021). For instance, the industry's growth rate is 4.6% annually and it contributed 10% of the global GDP by 2017 (Mwamwaja & Mlozi, 2020; World Tourism Organization, 2020). With that growth, the tourism and hospitality industry has been providing numerous opportunities such as foreign exchange, employment, GDP and improvement of living standard. Specifically, the industry provides directly and indirectly foreign exchange and employment opportunities (Shidende *et al.*, 2019; Kristiana *et al.*, 2021). In Tanzania, the industry contributed 17.5 %

of the total GDP in 2016. It generated TZS 5 billion in 2019, following the increase of international arrivals (Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, 2020). By 2019, the industry created 1,550,100 jobs, 11.2% of the workforce in the country (Grobelna & Skrzyszewska, 2019; Kyara *et al.*, 2021).

COVID-19 pandemic affected the operational, commercial and financial function of the tourism and hospitality industry (Kabonda, 2021; Nyaruwata & Mbasera, 2021). Specifically, COVID-19 prevented revenue streams through travel restrictions, which as well affected destinations and source markets for tourists due to cancellation of international arrivals (Mwamwaja & Mlozi, 2020); Yang *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, the crisis caused cancellation or

decline of international arrivals due to travel restrictions (Mwamwaja & Mlozi, 2020); Yang *et al.*, 2020). Covid-19 caused employees in the tourism industry to become jobless, which eventually affected the tourism services for an unknown period (Mwamwaja & Mlozi, 2020); Yang *et al.*, 2020). Among the groups affected by the COVID-19 crisis in the tourism and hospitality industry are the tour guides and porters. These groups play the role of guiding, escorting and carrying luggage of the tourists and visitors (Melubo & Buzinde, 2016; Kabonda, 2021). The tour guides and porters escort tourists and interpret to them about the natural and cultural heritage of an area in the language of their choice (Cleth, 2015).

Tourism and hospitality industry is famous in Tanzania. The northern tourism circuit with famous national parks, such as Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, Kilimanjaro National Park, Lake Manyara, Tarangire National Park, Arusha National Park, Olduvai Gorge and Mkomazi National Park is the leading circuit in Tanzania with many tourism attractions (Kabonda, 2021). As a results, the industry has been a backbone to the economy and livelihood of the porters and tour guides in the Northern tourism circuit. Arusha City is one of the areas and the gateways to Tanzania's northern circuit perched under Mount Meru, and is the starting point for many Tanzanian safaris, and the base town for Kilimanjaro climbs (Brilliant Africa, 2024). Accordingly, the groups of porters and tour guides are mostly engaged in tourism and hospitality activities in Arusha City from which they couldn't avoid the hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of the hit by Covid-19 pandemic, the porters and tour guides went on with their lives (Kabonda, 2021). If the major economic activity for survival of the tour guides and porters was tourism and hospitality, how did they survive during the Covid-19 pandemic? Addressing this question is very important as it reveals the survival alternatives of the tour guides and porters, apart from tourism and hospitality especially during the pandemics. The given importance relies on economic diversification, resilience and sustainability of the human life during pandemics.

Previous studies (e.g. Aburumman, 2020; Kabonda, 2021; Kristiana *et al.*, 2021) dealt with survival strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The revealed survival strategies include personal savings, the 5Ps marketing strategies (product, price, promotion, place and people), gifts and grants from

once served tourists, outsourcing method (expanding the outsourcing boundaries; using best practices, tools and technologies, integrating new features with existing systems, information confidentiality, transition from individual services to service packages and coverage of existing and new markets), subsistence allowances from employers and engagement in other income generating activities. However, Aburumman (2020), Kabonda (2021) and Christiana *et al.* (2021) researched about the industry of tourism and hospitality at large and not specifically on the tour guides and porters in the given industry. Even a study of Kabonda (2021), which addressed about tour guides and porters, only identified strategies without comparing their respective capacity power of being used by the tour guides and porters during the crisis.

This means that it is necessary comparing the power of using strategies directly related to tourism and hospitality and other strategies not directly related to tourism and hospitality during Covid-19. In this study, such direct and indirect strategies used to survive by the tour guides and porters during Covid-19 pandemic are termed as tourism and non-tourism strategies respectively.

Additionally, previous studies did not establish statistical relationships between strategies and survival of the tour guides and porters during COVID-19 crisis. This means that the given strategies were not tested if they could influence the survival of tour guides and porters. It was important to establish such facts for the sake of addressing aforementioned research gaps.

Methodology

Design

This study used the descriptive and explanatory survey designs. The descriptive design facilitated to identify and describe characteristics and trending status of the tour guides/porters and survival strategies respectively during COVID-19 pandemic. The explanatory design established the relationship between the identified strategies and survival during the COVID-19 crisis. This means that, the given strategies were not previously tested if they could influence the survival of tour guides and porters who usually depended on operation of tourism and hospitality before Covid-19.

Population and Sampling

The population of this study were tour guides and porters from Arusha city. The sample size of this

study was 250 tour guides and porters. The given sample size was obtained using multi-sampling techniques (purposive, stratified and convenient). The purposive technique was used to identify the tour guides and porters who best suited to attend the questions of this study due to their richness in information-related to the given questions. The stratified random sampling techniques was used to stratify the purposively selected tour guides and porters into strata, based on their background information in ensuring inclusion of almost every case of the tour guides and porters in the study. Finally, the convenience sampling technique was used to win the tour guides and porters who were readily available and willing to participate in the study. The absence of a sampling frame of tour guides and porters at the moment of this study dictated the use of the convenience sampling technique, which yielded 50 respondents.

Instruments

The study used a questionnaire and an interview schedule as sources of data. Data from the interview schedule supplemented the information from the questionnaire to come up with complete picture of what took place in the field.

Validity and Reliability

The validity of the instruments involved experts in the field of tourism and hospitality. Some experts went through the instruments and gave feedback on clarity of the instructions and items. They also gave

feedback on readability, relevance, and language used. The researchers incorporated their comments and then administered the improved instruments to the pilot study respondents. The pilot study took place with 10 tour guides, 10 porters and 5 leaders of the tour guides/porters. The results provided the Cronbach's Alpha of 0.7 and above, showing that the questionnaire was reliable.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The gathered data were analyzed using content analysis, descriptive statistics and the multiple linear regression. The content analysis and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the interview data and the descriptive data for the first research question, which sought to establish strategies used by the tour guides and porters to survive during the pandemic. Interpretation of the descriptive results in Table 2 was as follows: 1.00-1.49= very low, 1.50-2.49= low, 2.50-3.49= moderate, 3.50-4.49=high and 4.50-5.00= very high. Multiple Linear Regression established the relationship between the strategies used and the survival during the COVID-19 crisis.

Results and Discussion

This section presents results and discussion, guided by research questions.

Demographics of Tour Guides and Porters

Among the surveyed 250 tour guides and porters, 60% were males while 40% were females (Table 1).

Table 1: Personal Information

Information	Scale	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	150	60.0
	Female	100	40.0
	Total	250	100.0
Age	21 – 24 years	50	20.0
	25 – 29 years	70	28.0
	30 – 34 years	90	36.0
	35 – 39 years	25	10.0
	40 and above years	15	6.0
	Total	250	100.0
Specialization	Tour Guide	100	40.0
	Porter	92	37.0
	Both Tour Guide and Porter	58	23.0
	Total	250	100.0
Marital Status	Single	79	32.0
	Married	151	60.0
	Widow	11	4.0
	Divorced	9	4.0
Total	250	100.0	

The range of ages of the surveyed tour guides and porters were between 21 and 40 and above years.

Particularly, 20% of the tour guides and porters were in the age group of between 21–24 years, 28%

were between 25–29 years, 36% were between 30–34 years, 10% were between 35 and 39 years and 6% were 40 and above.

Tour guides constituted 40%, porters 37% and 23% were both tour guides and porters. The results further display that 32% of the tour guides and porters were single, 60% were married, 4% were widows and 4% were divorced. Therefore, the majority of the surveyed tour guides and porters were male, had the age between 30 and 34 years old and were married.

Research Question 1: Which strategies did tour guides and porters use for survival during the covid-19 pandemic?

This research question is answered by qualitative data as well as data from Table 2. Qualitative data shows that personal saving is one of the strategies used by the tour guides and porters for survival. This means that the tour guides and porters saved some amount of money when they received their salary and allowances from their employers. One respondent reported, “I usually save some amount of money for every salary or allowance I get paid out of my work. I do so because the saving helps me when I don’t get customers or when it is not the pick period” (Interviewee P, 22 July, 2023).

Furthermore, gifts and grants is another strategy reported during the interview session. The tour guides and porters mentioned it as being used by them during the pandemics. During their usual

responsibilities and duties, the tourists gave the tour guides and porters some grants and gifts, especially when they got satisfied with the service provided. The given grants and gifts were in terms of foreign currency and sometimes in terms of tangible materials like cameras, binoculars, cellular phones and laptops. The given gifts and grants became very helpful to the tour guides and porters during Covid-19 pandemics. One respondent reported,

When I satisfy my customers (tourists) in the service that I give, the tourists provide me grants and gifts. I usually save these grants or I sell whatever gifts they give me and save the money for future use when there is no customers” (Interviewee J, 22 July, 2023).

Moreover, subsistence allowance is one of the survival strategies used by the tour guides and porters during the Covid-19 pandemic. The conducted interviews revealed that the tour guides and porters are sometimes paid subsistence allowance that upkeep them when providing service to the tourists in different destinations. These are the allowances paid apart from the salary. One respondent reported, “I usually get subsistence allowance for specific activity apart from the ordinary ones. I always keep the given allowance for it to help me during the time when things are not okay” (Interviewee K, 19 July, 2023).

Table 2: Survival Strategies Used by Tour Guides and Porters during the COVID-19

SN	Variable	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean Interpretation
1	Small business and Entrepreneurship	4.452	.565	High
2	Sedentary Livestock Keeping	4.204	.619	High
3	Subsistence Small Scale Farming	4.105	.593	High
4	Personal Saving	3.791	0.914	High
5	Gifts and Grants	3.313	0.736	Moderate
6	Subsistence Allowances	2.083	1.312	Moderate

Besides, the interviews results portray that there are other strategies which are not generally tourism-oriented used by the tour guides and porters during the Covid-19 pandemic. In other words, they are income generated by the tour guides and porters through non-tourism activities. These activities are small business and entrepreneurship, sedentary livestock keeping and subsistence small scale farming. The activities became the survival strategies of the tour guides and porters during the Covid-19 pandemic. Doing

such activities advocate diversification of income generating activities of the tour guides and porters. One respondent reported,

When they stopped tourism due to Covid-19 pandemic, I had to survive using income generation from other activities like small business and entrepreneurship, sedentary livestock keeping and subsistence small scale farming. I have been always doing these activities to diversify the income that I get from my

core activities of tour guiding. It is during the pandemic when I realized the strong help of these other activities (Interviewee C, 10 July, 2023).

The above qualitative interview results are supported by the quantitative data. Table 2 indicates six major strategies used for survival by the tour guides and porters during Covid-19 pandemic. These survival strategies include highly used strategies, such as small business and entrepreneurship (4.452), sedentary livestock keeping (4.204), and subsistence small scale farming (4.105). In addition, the results reveal that the tour guides and porters used other survival strategies such as personal savings (3.791), gifts and grants (3.313) and subsistence allowance (2.083). These results imply that small business and entrepreneurship, sedentary livestock keeping, subsistence small scale farming and personal saving were used at high level (mean scores: 3.50-4.49) as survival strategies. Alternatively, gifts and grants were used at moderate level (mean scores: 2.50-3.49) while subsistence allowances were used at low level (mean scores: 1.50-2.39).

These results are supported by a previous research done by Kabonda (2021) in Tanzania about porters and tour guides at Kilimanjaro National Park. In addition, the survival strategies that are noted in Table 2 in the study at hand are supported by studies of Smart et al. (2021) and Tuzovic et al. (2021) in Malaysia, which revealed that the micro-level coping strategies used during Covid-19 pandemic were non-tourism strategies including cost-saving, marketing and reducing human resources.

Research Question 2: What was the Influence of used strategies on the survival of tour guides and porters during Covid-19 Pandemic?

To answer this research question, a Multiple Linear Regression was performed to predict survival of the tour guides and porters out of tourism and non-tourism strategies. In all cases (Table 3), the p-value was lesser than the critical value (.05), meaning all the listed strategies in the table were significant predictors. The adjusted R was .570, which means the model explained 57% of the variance in the survival.

Table 3: Relationship between the Strategies and Survival during Covid-19 Pandemic

	B	t	Sig.
(Constant)	6.09	19.001	<.001
Personal Saving	.351	6.137	<.001
Gifts and Grants	.347	6.133	<.001
Subsistence Allowances	.101	2.195	<.029
Small business and Entrepreneurship	.482	6.268	<.001
Sedentary Livestock Keeping	.513	8.309	<.001
Subsistence Small Scale Farming	.417	5.369	<.001
Multiple R		.838 ^a	
R Square		.591	
Adjusted R		.570	
ANOVA (F, SIG.)		49.75 (<.001)	

The results indicate that both tourism and non-tourism strategies had a significant and positive relationship with the survival of the tour guides and porters during COVID-19 crisis. These results imply that the more the tour guides and porters used both tourism and non-tourism strategies, the more they had chances for survival during the COVID-19 crisis. These results align with those by Mbatha et al. (2021) that alternative employment was among the survival strategies during the COVID-19 crisis. Besides, non-tourism strategies are proved to have worked out during Covid-19 as alternatives for surviving the pandemic among the people who

depended on tourism and hospitality industry (Kabonda, 2021; Smart et al. 2021; Tuzovic et al., 2021).

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study concludes that the porters and tour guides used three survival strategies at high level (small business and entrepreneurship, sedentary livestock keeping and small scale farming). They used two at moderate level (personal saving, gifts and grants) and one strategy at low level (subsistence allowance) during the Covid-19 pandemic. All the strategies were categorized as

tourism (personal saving, subsistence allowances gifts and grants) and non-tourism (small business and entrepreneurship, sedentary livestock keeping, and small scale farming). The strategies were proved to be positive and significant for the survival of porters and tour guides during Covid-19 pandemic.

The findings advocate for more efforts of the tour guides and porters in doing more savings, diversify their tourism activities and having training on professional resilience and adaptation strategies for the tour guides and porters to acquire skills which can help them when they face similar crises and pandemics.

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