



THE GO REASONS TO TRAVEL DURING CRISIS

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the unique reasons for individuals to travel during the restriction period. This study used a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with eleven informants who are millennials who were selected to participate in the research. The qualitative data from the in-depth interviews were analysed using theme code or 'coding'. The data were separated into several key themes and converted into qualitative study results. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis techniques. The participants in this research revealed their purpose for travelling during MCO. From the eleven respondents, seven thematic analyses have been found. Themes such as manageable risk, spouse obligation, obsession, escapism, work-related, place attachment and promotion are among the themes that were found in understanding the reasons for travelling during MCO. Although the informants are aware of the risks involved for travelling during MCO due to Covid-19 outbreak, people cannot escape from choosing to travel and managing the risk of being infected. The study concludes with some implications for tourists, and government that could be useful in protecting the tourist.

Keywords: **Crisis, Covid-19 and MCO**

1. Introduction

Tourism industry has been identified as a key driver in the services sector. In the 11th Malaysia Plan (MP) will focus on capturing high yield tourists to stimulate the industry's contribution to the economy. Domestic tourism will be harnessed to further increase the vibrancy of the industry. The aim is to increase visibility by highlighting Malaysia's uniqueness and strengths through targeted promotional activities. Tourist arrivals to Malaysia are targeted to grow at an average rate of 4% per annum to reach 36 million in 2020. Receipts are targeted to grow at

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an annual average rate of 13.6% to reach RM168 billion in 2020. The tourism industry is projected to provide 2.34 million jobs cumulatively through the 11th MP.

Notably the high contribution of the tourism sector to the economy, government are arranging strategies to pursue enhancing tourism sectors. The more focus is given to the ecotourism industry as the premier segment. By leveraging the local biodiversity assets through extensive branding and promotion, this could gain and improve the local community economy and the same time improve and decrease the poverty issues among the locals. At the same time, heritage sites and cultural products will be leveraged upon to enhance tourist experience. While, meeting, incentives, conventions and exhibition (M.I.C.E) will continue to play a pivotal role in attracting high spending tourists to the country. Apart from that, promotional campaigns will be intensified to promote Malaysia as top-of-the-mind shopping destination in Asia Pacific.

Despite of the efforts of bringing Malaysia's destinations to the world, the hit of pandemic especially Covid-19 has changed the world tourism landscape. The detection of the virus is named as Covid-19 was confirmed in Malaysia on 25 January 2020, which involved three Chinese citizens, who had entered Johor Bharu, Malaysia via Singapore on 23 January 2020. From a total population of 32 million, Malaysia reported 6002 COVID-19 infections cases, with 102 deaths as per end of April. Subsequently, the seriousness of this virus has led the World Health Organisation (WHO) to declare that the COVID-19 outbreak to be a global health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020.

Even with the outbreak, the number of people choose to travel even the restriction imposed by the governments. But still the pandemic reach Malaysia due to the inbound travel where the tourist visits and stays in Malaysia. Thus, this research intends to investigate the possible reasons of travelling or moving from one place to one place, even when the danger and risk is higher. The next section will discuss what established reviews of the matters.

2. Literature Review

The outbreak of COVID-19 has exposed a major risk to Malaysia tourism industry including Visit Malaysia 2020 (VM2020) campaign. Reported that, 50% of Malaysia's tourists are originate from Singapore and China. The increasing cases of COVID-19 in both countries has led to the cancellation of many tours, which has already led to a large drop in the number of tourists to Malaysia. In order to fully contain the virus, The Prime Minister of Malaysia announced the 4 phases of Movement Control Order (MCO) as they expected the number of COVID-19 cases

would continue to increase (Prime Minister's Office, 2020). The prohibitions during the MCO will further contract Malaysia's tourism industry and therefore effective policies to assist the industry players are imperative.

Airline industry players has highlighted that the current travel bans and have put the loss-making carrier at risk of bankruptcy. All three Malaysia's major airlines namely, AirAsia, Malindo Air and Malaysia Airlines have initiated a salary cut range from 10% to 100% and unpaid leave depending on the salary range and position. The airline industry faced its gravest crisis when the Government of China denied entry of foreigners, effective from 29 March 2020 until further notice. Foreigners are currently not allowed to enter the country (Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). Besides, the Chinese authorities also imposed stricter rules on foreign airlines, where foreign airlines are only allowed to offer one flight per week, and such flights cannot be more than 75% seat capacity. The drastic loss of both revenue and profit for all three major airlines which has resulted in a high risk of bankruptcy has caused the airlines to ask the government of Malaysia to step in to provide support to the airline industry. Similarly, a number of one hundred seventy thousands of hotel rooms had been cancelled during the outbreak. This contributes to a loss of revenue amounting to more than sixty-eight million. The high number of rooms cancellation are in Kuala Lumpur, Sabah and Sarawak.

The outbreak of COVID-19 has hugely and adversely impacted Malaysia's tourism industry, As tourists from around the world are cancelling bookings and delaying travel plans to Malaysia due to worries about the virus. In addition, the number of tourists has declined due to the Malaysian government imposing travel restrictions and bans. Thus, it calls for a Malaysia government to introduce economic stimulus package to assist the tourism industry to sustain throughout this challenging period.

3. Methodology

In this research, the research chosen to be aligned with the qualitative method. The choice of the research us aligned with qualitative because it involves exploration and description study. The form of description and exploration is used to connect with the lack of literature related to the tourist behaviour, especially in the context of studies of crises. In addition, this study orientation approach is able to explain the studies that are consider limited in the context of millennial in Malaysia.

Furthermore, this study uses in-depth interview as its main method, with the exception of literature reviews and observations. The form of interview used is an unstructured interview with informants. The interview method provides a leeway for the researchers to delve into issues in tourist behaviour pertaining to the travelling during

crisis. Furthermore, these unstructured interviews allow researcher to ask a wider range of question while the informants answer the question freely. In addition to in-depth interview, the researchers are observing the repetitive words used by the informant to identify the suitable theme or coding for the respective informant.

The analysis unit selected for this study, is the millennial who born between 1980 to 1995. The selected informant for this study is an individual who travels during pandemic; between March 2020 - November 2021. Apart from that, frequency of travelling during the designated period and vaccination status also questioned to the informants who are participated in research.

Since the data obtained is in the form of a text (interview), the researcher first rewrites and transcribes the interview session in the form of text. Next, the researchers used the method of manual qualitative data analysis to store text transcripts of interview result with study informants in the form of more structured data bank.

The researcher used the Atlas.ti software to produce a coding. The initial steps in analysing qualitative data are coding, combining the codes into broader categories, arriving at the themes and finally interpretating the results (Creswell, 2007). The study uses thematic content analysis to identify themes and categories. The study followed the guidelines for the iterative process of reading, coding, discussing and reading again (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Data analysis was done where each interview script was read manually and identified into themes manually.

4. Results and Discussion

Involve with tourist activities is inextricably linked to risk especially during when the whole world is combating with pandemic. Move from one place to another places which are distant geographically or culturally is always characterized by a probability of occurrence of risky situations, be it random incidents, or events of medical, environmental, political, or social nature. Risk is a kind of action connected with choice (and not inevitable fate), and it is to a smaller or larger extent marked with the calculation of uncertainty (gains or losses) while realizing particular intents (Dake, 1992; Renn, 1992; Jaeger, Webler, Rosa & Renn, 2001). Even though the risk of traveling outweighs the benefit; during Covid-19, some individual still choose to travel and perform tourism activities. Therefore, this study intends to identify the factors of this phenomenon.

The findings suggest six reasons of travelling during Covid-19. Among them are i) place attachment ii) work-related iii) escapism iv) spouse obligation v) manageable risk vi) obsession and vii) promotion influenced the informants to travel during Covid-19.

4.1. Place Attachment

Place attachment representing an emotional or affective bond between a person and a particular place, has been used as a construct to investigate tourists' emotional, functional, affective, and social attachments to certain tourist destinations and/or tourism products (Lee, 2001; Ramkissoon, Graham Smith, & Weiler, 2013; Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2010).

A place connects people with the natural environment, evoking identification, gratification and concern for unique settings (Moore & Graefe, 1994), thereby influencing human affections, perceptions and behaviors (Harris, Brown & Werner, 1996). The concept of place attachment has been applied in various domains, such as geography (Tuan, 1977), environmental psychology (Low & Altman, 1992) and leisure or tourism (Lee et al., 2018; Moore & Graefe, 1994). This concept has been adopted by researchers to explore individuals' perceptions and behaviors towards recreational settings or tourism destinations (Gross & Brown, (2008); Han et al., (2019); Lee et al., (2012); Loureiro, (2020); Moore & Graefe, 1994; Prayag & Ryan, (2012); Ramkissoon, Smith, & Weiler, (2013); Xu & Zhang, (2016). Such an occurrence was in accordance with an explanation by R1 informant.

R1: Everytime I go to Morib, I will go in October in conjunction with my birthday month. Sometimes, if the place is fully booked, I will go earlier, in September. As usual, when I go there, I will enjoy eating and my birthday celebration. If I do not visit Morib, I feel my life is incomplete. My first time I visited Morib was in 2012, I brought my late mother with other four families there. Since, 2012, I visit Morib every year without fail. Except during the lock down in 2020. Even that, I tried to apply for a special approval from the authority to visit Morib, but the permission was denied.

4.2. Escapism

Escapism is a coping mechanism that provides individuals with an opportunity to deal with negative experiences, such as emotional stress or anxiety produced by unpleasant realities or difficult situations. Millennials engage in various activities to shift their focus away from the problems and pressures derived from social situations. Since the threat of COVID-19 diminishes subjective well-being, millennials escape the negative effects of the pandemic and deal with emotional distress by engaging in different activities. like internet use, social media use, nostalgic media use, and video game use. Majority of the informants describe this concept when they were asked for travelling during the pandemic.

R1: Due to the pandemic, we've been stranded for too long. About one year I do not visit anywhere, only stay at home. Thus, I need to find something to do, find entertainment. I feel I need to go out, to see the outside world. I joined a hiking activity with my office mates to explore Gunung Kinabalu.

R2: During Covid-19, I choose to explore Bukit Bendera, Georgetown, and Batu Feringgi because I want to escape. I've quarantined for twelve months.

R3: Even though I know Covid is still active, I was being locked down for three months, therefore, when the government announce we can do some activities, I choose to go out, because I've been stranded in the house for three months without any activities.

R4: In August 2020, I visited Genting Highland. I choose the destination because the destination offers many attractions and shopping malls. I choose to travel because I want to let go the feeling of resentful during pandemic.

Places that offer high immersion, such as natural parks or theme parks, provide escapist experiences for visitors (Anton Clave et al, 2023). When tourists become immersed, they escape from the reality and stress of the world. Recently, Park et al. (2020) recognized escapism as a motivation for tourists to visit a food museum, since the experience allowed them to escape from their routines and provided meaning to daily food rituals. In the COVID-19 context, Lebrun et al. (2021) identified natural parks as an alternative for tourists "to escape daily life routine and to revitalize their lives" (p. 5), since visitors may encounter an immersive experience with nature while diminishing the probability of contagion.

4.3. Manageable Risk

Risk perception plays an important role in the travel decision-making process on several layers like travel mode, travel time, travel style, travel cost and travel destination. For example, the type of preferred travel destination depends on tourists' risk perceptions. The next informant gives feedback on how one selects the destination.

R5: I choose the destination because I familiar with the place. If I do not familiar, I would not go. Since I've visited Kundasang many times before, I know where the place are that has many or less people and if I have problem, I know how to solve the problem if I'm contacted the with Covid-19. That is the reason why I choose Kundasang.

Tourists' destination choices are shaped by risk as well as uncertainty, both concepts that are in a way related to potential loss as a consequence of an event (Quintal, Lee & Soutar, 2010b). The influence of these factors differs between destinations and changes during the destination choice process (Williams & Baláz, 2014), for example through the acquisition of new information. Although researchers often use the terms risk and uncertainty interchangeably in the context of decision-making, they "can be distinguished by the probability of their outcomes" (Quintal, Lee & Soutar, 2010a). However, Quintal et al. (2010b) points out that two perspectives exist in tourism research concerning the definition of risk and uncertainty: risk and uncertainty as the same concept where risk is a feeling of uncertainty about the consequences; risk and uncertainty as separate concepts where risk is associated with a certain probability of occurrence and uncertainty as the unknown consequence. This means that if decisions are made under uncertainty, information on the possible outcomes (type and probability of occurrence) is missing.

4.4. Family Influence

One of the reasons of choosing a destination is because of family influence even though during Covid-19 where travelling restriction is implemented. Family influence refers to the decision for travelling is influenced by the member of the family condition or situation. According to Schenzel et al. (2012), family travel is expected to increase more quickly than all other types of leisure travel, in part because it provides a means of family reunion and time spent together away from the responsibilities of the workplace. The newest big thing in travel is travelling with multiple generations. In addition, Aziz et al (2018,) added that family tourist has provided significant influence in managing decision in destination choice.

The findings showed that many traveller informants had travel with their family especially husband. Both informants stated that, they have to travel because of the family (husband) destination choice.

R10: Every year, in the month of October, I will visit Morib, Sepang. Every year, I will visit that special place. We will celebrate my husband's birthday in Morib and he never get bored of the destination. I just join his destination choice.

R11: During Covid-19, I visited Miri, I have to follow my husband who works as an army. He was assigned to Sarawak. So, we start our journey from Penang by car, go to army camp in Kuala Lumpur and took a flight to Sarawak. I was given a privilege by my employer to work from home. So, I took the opportunity to join him and I stayed in Miri for more than a year.

Based on the statements given by the informants, the informants enjoyed and respect the decision making by spouse in travelling. This study parallel Barlés-Arizón (2023), stated that the men's role has becoming increasingly significant in the couple's decision-making in vacation's decision making. Normally as fully housewife, will engage and need to consider in husband transferred or outstation for working purposes.

4.5 Promotion

In addition, some essential components of travel are escapism, family influence, manageable risk, location attachment, and promotion. Sales promotions are one kind of incentive that often gives consumers the behavioural drive to buy an item, according to Zhi et al. (2023). Coupons, price reductions, and mixed promos are examples of sales promotions. This definition suggests that advancement is frequently understood to be one of the specialised instruments employed in marketing campaigns that aids in elucidating, bolstering, and summarising the advantages of a product in order to convince prospective buyers to purchase it.

The results demonstrated that traveller informants had a promoting influence on consumer choice and preference for tourism destinations. According to the insider, people are seizing the chance to visit the location offering the deal.

R9: During Covid-19, I travelled to Malacca with my family. It was a school holiday season, and I would like to visit my husband's relatives too. While I in Malacca, I also visited a theme park. The theme park offers a big discount to the visitors. I grab the opportunity to enter the park during while they offer a big discount. If not, I couldn't afford the normal price of the entrance fee.

The findings from the informants' interviews also demonstrated how they seize opportunities to travel when there is a promotion. This issue is consistent with claims made by travellers that they are motivated to buy travel-related goods when they see a particular sale (Um et al., 2023). Furthermore, according to Alba et al. (2023), the method of travel planning that is used to choose a holiday depends on the provision of certain amenities and promotions. According to Zhi et al's (2023) hypothesis, sales promotions influence customers to stay at luxury hotels instead of cheap accommodations. This demonstrates how tourism-related products can improve sales promotion, particularly for membership customers, and add the ideal combination of promotional offers.

4.6 Work Related

In the connected world of today, travel is now a necessary component of working in the business world. Travel is motivated by job commitments, networking opportunities, and corporate objectives, as opposed to leisure travel, which is driven by the desire for exploration and relaxation especially self-employment in progress of the business (McCharty et al, 2023).

When someone is self-employed and does not work from home, there is a considerable correlation, at least in part, between self-employment and travel time (Huang et al, 2023).

R6: I manage a family business too, and my origin is George Town. During Covid-19, we received a complaint from our clients about the parts of the machine that we supply has problems. The client called us for inspection problem. I embark a journey to Sungai Petani which takes about eighty to ninety minutes of driving. Even though, I'm worried to travel there, I have to attend the complaint. When I arrived there, I checked the machines and we decided to send the machine to our headquarters for a repair. If not because of the machine, I wouldn't embark a journey to Sungai Petani as I'm taking care of my old parents. The risk is too high.

Self-employment has increased dramatically, especially for professionals who travel for business on a regular basis. The need for more flexibility, control over work schedules, and the capacity to seize opportunities that present themselves in new places are the driving forces behind this movement (Tao et al, 2023). When it comes to professionals who travel regularly for work, self-employment has a lot to offer. Using adaptability, varied prospects, and efficient administrative techniques, self-employed people can prosper in their professions and relish the liberty to discover uncharted territories. For many individuals, working for themselves while travelling for business will continue to be an exciting and fulfilling career choice as the workplace continues to change.

4.7 Sport Obsession

Millions of people worldwide are captivated by the captivating phenomena of sports obsession, which has a significant impact on modern society and inspires a level of dedication comparable to religious fervour (Dwyer and Drayer, 2010; Tamir, 2021). To fully comprehend sports obsession, one must consider its behavioural, emotive, and cognitive aspects. A noteworthy paradigm for characterising a sports fan was put out by James and Ridinger (2002), who emphasised self-identification, supportive attitudes, and observable behaviours as essential components. Supporters have close emotional ties to the groups or players they root for, which strengthens the link between them. Obsessed had a variety of motivations for going to sporting events; the main ones being travelled to support their favourite team, take in the thrilling atmosphere, and see new locations. This illustrates both the strong

emotional bond that supporters have with their teams and their desire for one-of-a-kind and unforgettable experiences.

R9: I stay in Sabah, however, during Covid-19 season I travel many times. Mainly to follow Sabah football club when they have match. I went to Negeri Sembilan (Stadium Paroi). Usually, the match will be on the weekend, so, I will depart to the destination on Friday. To watch the match, I spend about RM500-RM800 to travel to Peninsula Malaysia to support the Sabah team. If the destination has high number of Covid-19, I still go to the destination to support the match.

According to the earlier study, a fan's psychological commitment in travelling to a certain team is increased when they are involved in a sporting event and exhibit sport passion. According to study by other scientists, people's cognitive, emotive, and behavioural reactions are impacted by athletic events (Grohs and Reisinger, 2014; Rai et al., 2021b). People will be able to travel impart cultural knowledge to the next generation by sharing their experiences with sports customs, traditions, regulations, and legislation. This research highlights the impact of these sports in drawing spectator travel and is consistent with their widespread appeal. It's interesting to note that obsessive travellers mixed sporting activities with vacations, satiating their appetite for sports while seeing new places. This pattern demonstrates how sports tourism is becoming more and more popular as a means of fusing preoccupation with relaxation.

5. Conclusion

This study provides a brief background regarding the reasons for travelling during the spreading of communicable disease, known as COVID-19. and examines the impact of the mentioned disease on the tourism industry of Malaysia. Even though the risk is there, individuals still choose to take the risk and pursue their intention to visit or explore the places. In particular, the three area the study identified in this research would potentially benefit from the application of tourism research. Place attachment, manageable risk, escapism and family decisions are the strong attractions to attract tourist to visits during pandemic. A deep emotional attach to the place makes the tourist embark a journey to the place. Lastly, promotions offered during pandemic minimize the risk of the pandemic, and make people engage with the tourism activities. Thus, DMO should plan a strategy to adopt these elements in their future business plan.

To stay competitive with other destinations, Government Malaysia also upgrading service quality in meeting the demand from high yield market segments and ups-killing the quality of human capital through training. Efforts will

be enhanced to review and improve training modules, to increase the level of professionalism and meet the industry demand. Next strategy is to re-strategizing marketing and promotion where it is expected a shift from marketing and promotion based on geographical segmentation, to targeted marketing and promotion based on niche markets. Focus will be given to ecotourism, shopping and MICE segments to capture high spending tourists. The most important is, Malaysia Government is improving governance to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in sustainable tourism development and enable optimal utilization of resources. Lastly, Malaysia government also intensifying domestic tourism where the development of domestic tourism will remain a key priority and be actively promoted. Promotion and campaigns will be aligned to holiday periods to encourage domestic tourism.

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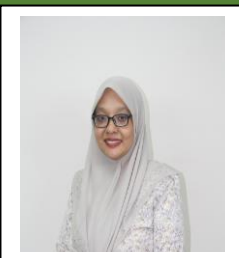
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