

## **Traverse Tour SDN. BHD, Kota Kinabalu: The Impact of Covid-19 to the Tourism Sector and Local Community**

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The pandemic of Covid-19 first reported in December 2019 in China before the pandemic wider spread around the world. The pandemic was highly impacting the tourism industry in Malaysia and has been the worst affected of all major economic sector. Tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors and is an important driver of economic growth and development. There are many impact of Covid-19 especially for tourism industry. The pandemic of Covid-19 gives a large negative impact on economic industry in Malaysia. (Lee Feng Foo, 2020)

Three months of closed has been a huge blow to the local tourism industry. The problem that Traverse Tour has been faced during the Pandemic of Covid-19 was spread in our country, this company was closed and its give impact to the local community directly. They cannot make promotion to their tourism product which are Mari-Mari Sepanggar Island, Mari-Mari Cultural Village and RIVERBUG. In this situation, its gives impact to the local community that work in this cultural tourism business during Movement Control Order (MCO). The company under this tours also faced the same situation in which they didn't received any tourist from international and domestic which means this also give zero profit to their company. This will give a bad impact during MCO and after MCO because the international tourist still cannot entered our country which give a large of revenue before this pandemic hit to our country.

The pandemic of Covid-19 increase in unemployment especially in tourism sector. There is a net loss to the economy due unemployed labor and capital. During the dramatic contraction in tourism industry, many workers may become unemployed and displaced because of this pandemic crisis that will bring negative effect to the health. Within countries, displaced workers

can move to other sectors within countries but it may be hard to find job in other sectors during this economic downturn. For example, during MCO in Malaysia, there is so many sector especially for tourism sector should be closed to control the virus spread in crowded place, because it can spread in many ways which is through air and contact.

During the pandemic of Covid-19, all the business activities has been pause. Tourism sector received zero visitors due to the restriction on movement and business operation. For example, there was quietness of the usually a lot of local people and tourist came for a holiday in Mari-Mari Island Sepanggar do a lots of activities which are stand up paddle board, kayaking, sea walking, jet ski, banana boat, scuba dive and many more activities. There was no income for the small tour business because of the business stopped during the Movement Control Order. So that this place has been closed during the pandemic because there is no visitor that's means no profit. This means, it can't sustaining the natural habitat and the environment because of no profit from this business and there is no workers during Movement control order. This pandemic was badly affecting to tourism business due to the zero tourist and business closed during the pandemic. (Amir, 2020)

The main problem that this company has been faced during MCO is, they cannot promote their product as well as before the MCO announced by our Prime Minister. In this situation, the 3 product that they handle is not only accept foreigner but also local tourist doesn't have opportunity to enjoy the three products that handle by this company. Traverse Tour is not only facing this challenge during MCO, but they also will facing this facing this challenge after MCO been stopped. This is because, to attract people again is not easy on how to give them trust that enjoy again with a new norm. Wesley who has been working for seven years at Traverse Tours Sdn. Bhd said they should work in the new norm after MCO. During that time, they will be facing

challenge of attracting visitors to Mari Mari Sepanggar. He said that, it was quite difficult to restore the public confidence to return for travel again. (ROSLAN, 2020)

Instead of Traverse Tour facing a challenge during the MCO, one of their product which is Mari Mari Sepanggar Island been facing a challenge for the first week of MCO. It was a big different before the MCO announced, the atmosphere of the beach and the area around the tourists center on the island is no longer lively with a thousand of tourist visiting every day. The jetty and the boats that used for guest are now quiet and only the sound of waves can be heard. This is the situation since the MCO was implemented on March 18, there are no more tourist visits and tourism activities. So that, during MCO, the staff been spending time with the new tasks when they can't do their daily routine to managed their guest. For three month without operating, there are some volunteers who live on the island to take care of the tourist center area. One of the workers at Mari Mari Sepanggar Island Lodge Albasir Hassan, 26 said that they facing a quite challenging as they faced running out of water resources. It is difficult for island to get a water resources for daily life. In addition, as a staff that stay for long time on the island, it will be also hard for them to survive at there and will give a bad effect to their mental. (ROSLAN, 2020)

The way that need to be taken to revive and revitalize this sector is to refocus the domestic tourism because the local tourist already understand the standard operating procedure (SOP) on the prevention of Covid-19 transmission as recommended by the Ministry of Health (MOH). With the understanding of the SOP that been already set, at least the probability of transmission of Covid-19 is low among the local tourist if they keep follow the SOP given. This give a positive impact for the tourism sector to recover again after a few months decline due to the impact pandemic of Covid-19.

In addition, to proposed solution towards this problem, give more packages with lower price to attract local tourist. It's a big challenge for tourism sector when the MCO is over. This is because, it's hard for this sector to rebuild their market again after so long closed. They won't achieved their previous revenue again in short term. So that, to attract people especially the local people, give them some holiday packages with cheaper price. For example, in ecotourism place, give them discount for family package in homestay such as give discount 70% for the second night at homestay. So that, this way not only can boost tourism sector but also can released people stress during the pass MCO after so long not going out.

Besides that, visitors' management also can solve this problem by reopen the place with the new normal. In Malaysia, all place is not open in same time. It open with stages include the tourism sector. The way from recovery is with the new normal which is people should follow the standard operating procedure (SOP). The way how to enter the place should not more than 10 person in one place. Despite this, the SOP still can stimulate the tourism sector because the demand in tourism sector is high. For example, to enter the place for buying ticket, only 10 person allowed. Then, people are allowed to follow the SOP which is social distancing in 1 meter. Instead of these, the visitor also should wear face mask and to keep hygiene they should always bring the hand sanitizer. This will help the virus from spreading and can prevent from the virus easily spreading. Following the SOP will build trust the others visitors to enter the place.

We knew that tourism sector has a huge problem during this pandemic situation. So that, promotion strategy by using social media to promote product is the best way for this company to attract their customer again especially to the local tourist. As we know, international tourist still cannot entered our country and our local people still afraid of this pandemic, the way on how to keep people know about product that handled by Traverse Tour Sdn Bhd is by promoting all their product through social media. So that, after built some marketing strategy, this company should

posting all the promotion to telling people that has a new package in their product. This company also can tell people through social media which is Facebook about their daily activities and example of the new package. Besides that, to make their tourism product silence, they can keep promoting their product so that people will know the exist of their new package. The best channel to promote this product is with web-based promotion. The web-based promotion is must have it because it can make customer reach this company by contact, make reservation and feedback by customer. In addition, social media is very effective strategy for this company because cheap and effective way nowadays. Internet is very fast way to get good engagement.

As we know that this pandemic of Covid-19 gives impact to the local community that work in the tourism sector which lose their job. To solve this problem, worker should strive to improve skills to prevent losing the job. As an employee, the responsibility during Movement Control Order is to make brainstorm together to think about what activities that can be offered to the local visitors when the MCO over. During this time, it is important to this company to train their worker on how to keep their product still known by others with only the social media. So that, keep telling people about the awareness of their product. Workers that do one job before the pandemic hit our country should have to be multitasking worker which is do a lot of job. For example, the employee who served as a customer service assistants before the pandemic hit our country, but now the worker performs assist the management of activities that can be offered to visitors.

Traverse Tour growing up nowadays. The name of Traverse Tour become known of many people as their number one travel agent in Sabah. Traverse Tour is the best travel agent that built with professionalism and dedicated workforce. The management system where flexibility is the essence enables them to conduct tailor made tours to suit all needs and requirements of their client. The customer satisfaction in an obligation to the Traverse Tour Sdn Bhd.

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