UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

DOMESTIC VISITORS' TRAVEL INTENTION TO SABAH POST COVID-19 TRAVEL RESTRICTION

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 pandemic has affected the tourism industry in Malaysia and it has influenced in the domestic visitors' intention to travel. However, there are still limited studies done regarding on how the pandemic has affected the domestic visitors in Malaysia and their intention to travel to Sabah, Malaysia post Covid-19 travel restrictions. This study aimed to investigate the post Covid-19 travel intentions of Malaysian domestic visitors planning to visit Sabah. It examined fear of Covid-19, travel anxiety, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, and risk attitude with domestic visitors' travel intention to Sabah post Covid-19 travel restrictions by using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The research targeted domestic visitors in Malaysia intention to visit Sabah post Covid-19 travel restrictions, utilizing G*Power for sample size determination, and employing SPSS and Structural Equation Modelling with Partial Least Square for data analysis. The survey was distributed through social media using a Google Form. The study revealed varying perspectives among Malaysian domestic visitors regarding post-pandemic travel intention to Sabah. The study revealed that the fear of Covid-19 and risk attitude did not significantly impact the travel intention of domestic visitors to Sabah. These findings hold practical significance for tourism stakeholders looking to attract and accommodate domestic tourists in Sabah. Moreover, this research contributes to the tourism and education fields by enhancing the TPB model with additional variables, providing a more robust understanding of post-pandemic travel intentions.

Keywords: Theory of Planned Behaviour, Fear of Covid-19, Travel Anxiety, Risk Attitude, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioural Control

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Research Background

The tourism industry, a crucial contributor to a country's economy and international commerce (United Nation World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), 2022), faced a severe setback in 2019 due to the global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The outbreak led to a worldwide paused in tourism and travel activities to curb the virus's spread, causing a significant economic decline globally (Bakar & Rosbi, 2020). In Malaysia, the total domestic tourist arrivals decreased from 131.7 million in 2020 to 66 million in 2021, showcasing the negative impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry (DOSM, 2022). In Sabah, domestic tourist arrivals dropped from 10.3 million in 2020 to 3.8 million in 2021 (DOSM, 2022).

Survival strategies were employed globally to revive the tourism industry, one of which was the implementation of travel bubble destinations. Countries like Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand initiated travel bubble agreements to restart tourism (Helble & Fink, 2020; Hollingsworth, 2020b). In Malaysia, Langkawi became the first travel bubble destination opened to local visitors in September 2021 (Nixon, 2021). Besides travel bubbles, various survival strategies were adopted by tourism stakeholders, including diversifying businesses. In Sabah, hotels like Sutera Harbour and Ibis Styles Hotel turned to selling takeaway food and food delivery to cope with the pandemic challenges (Miwil, 2021b; Peter, 2022).

Sabah faced significant challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic, experiencing a surge in cases linked to state elections. This led to a decline in tourism, with a 98.9% drop in international arrivals and an 81.7% decrease in domestic arrivals in 2021 (Sabah Tourism Board, 2021).

Transitioning from the pandemic to the endemic phase, countries enforced restrictions as part of survival strategies. Thailand and New Zealand implemented measures like closing schools and restricting international travel (Bangkok Post, 2020; Hollingsworth, 2020a). In Malaysia, the Movement Control Order (MCO) and National Recovery Plan