

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology  
of Egypt / Egyptology

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 TOWARDS TOURISM INDUSTRY: AN EVIDENCE FROM MALAYSIA

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**Mohamad Khairi Alwi, Ataul Karim Patwary, Nur Ilyani Ramly: impact of covid-19 towards tourism industry: an evidence from Malaysia -- PalArch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(8), 354-382. ISSN 1567-214x**

**Keywords: Coronavirus, Covid-19, the Tourism industry in Malaysia, Tourism Activities, Global Impact**

### Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to determine and provide the initial review of the impact of coronavirus (Covid-19) have on the tourism businesses in Malaysia. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the Covid-19 outbreak a pandemic as over 2 million proof cases were reported worldwide. This means that the country's economic growth has declined, and most businesses everywhere are struggling to stay afloat. This has almost ruined any business form on a large-scale, including manufacture, retail, and tourism. Besides, small and medium-sized retailers face the situation because of low footprints. Factory, shopping malls, schools, places of worship, and other establishments are closed immediately to avoid mass gathering, and movement control orders are introduced to contain the spread.

## INTRODUCTION

Ever since the World Health Organization (WHO) finally declared the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, lives have been interrupted, and global economic activities have disrupted. As of April 20, 2020, the Covid-19 outbreak originated in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, which has reached 184 countries, affecting 2,406,781 persons, with 165,273 deaths and 628,914 recovered cases worldwide. In ASEAN, the numbers too are rising, with more than 29 660 confirmed cases and more than 1,144 deaths reported by April 20 (ASEAN, 2020).

Purportedly spreading from a farmer's market in Wuhan, the local cluster of victims spread the Covid-19 virus across the city to the region, to the country, and beyond China's borders. The deadly virus has thrown a veil of terror, dimness, and death around the world, infectious countries and areas without proper pandemic strategies and forcing foreign and local medical organizations and local governments into switching tactics, to react at different speeds to the spread of the virus without national or international coordination (ASEAN, 2020). The outbreak affects the sector and industries that engage with bigger scale production and manufacturing equipped with manpower. As mass gathering will lead to the spread of the virus, many are forced to stay and work from home, yet not every industry can do so, considering not employees can acquire proper Wi-Fi connection at home and other component related.

While the health sector may continue to sustain and may even become stronger once the outbreak of Covid-19 is resolved, it might not be the case for many other industries currently affected, especially the tourism industry. The most remote likelihood that such disease may occur despite SARS that happened less than twenty years ago has never been taken into account in these fields; thus, most of them are unprepared (Murallitharan, 2020). Covid-19 would have a significant global impact on tourism. In 2020, international tourist arrivals could be reduced by 20-30% globally, from 1.46 billion tourist arrivals in 2019 to just 1.02-1.17 billion tourists this year, according to the UN World Tourism Organization (2020). It could lead to financial losses in international tourism exports of \$300 billion to \$450 billion (UNWTO, 2020). Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, Malaysia reported an estimated total loss of RM 3.37 million alone from January to February in the tourism sector (Dzulkifly, 2020).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Secondary data are gathered to conduct this research. Existing data and information are analyzed and reviewed. Existing research papers and information related to the research title are reviewed, and relevant and related data and information are extracted. The initial step in investigating the impact of Covid-19 on the tourism industry in Malaysia was to analyze the related papers and new articles related to understand the degree of damage that the pandemic brought upon and recognize the threats. Within this process, applicable information is gathered through internet search from reliable search engines, online news portal, and announcement and publication made by government officials. Among the keywords used in the process are 'covid-19 impact on the economy', 'impact of covid-19 on tourism', 'tourism recovery program,' 'global impact of coronavirus,' 'current state of the tourism industry in Malaysia', and other related aspects. Most of the article reviewed is focus on the impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry as a whole on a global scale, and several highlighted the impact on Malaysia directly.

This paper focuses on the impact of Covid-19 on the tourism industry in Malaysia and outlining the control it has over the airlines, hotels, and travel and tours. A review of the current statistical information is studied to see the changes that occur over the past couple of months since the outbreak has begun. At the same time, this paper will discuss on the mitigation and recovery action introduce by UNWHO, focus on the stimulus package that announced by the government and suggests several strategic guidelines for tourism stakeholders and tourism player to consider for the recovery on the industry.

### **Coronavirus: The current state**

At the time of writing on June 27, 2020, a total of 8,616 cases confirmed with 187 positive cases that were currently undergoing treatment have been identified in Malaysia. Of those, 8,308 have recovered, while 121 have passed away (MOH, 2020) (Figure 1). In response, Malaysian authorities issued a two-week Movement Control Order (MCO) on March 18, 2020. Businesses and services deemed to be non-essential were asked to shut down. Interstate travel was not allowed, and any public sporting, religious events, and gatherings were canceled.

Nearly 10 million people are infected COVID 19 worldwide. The United States (US) is the most affected by the pandemic, which contributes to 2.5 million cases

and recorded the highest death toll of 127,640 in the world. The number of cases in Brazil has surpassed 1 million, with 56,109 numbers of deaths to date and has surpassed the United Kingdom's (UK) death toll at 43,414 (Figure 2). Currently, of the 120 vaccine studies conducted, only 13 cases have reached clinical trials, of which 5 (US), 3 (China), 2 (UK), and 1 in Germany, Russia, Australia (MOH, 2020).

JUMLAH KESELURUHAN TABURAN KES COVID - 19 DI MALAYSIA						
Sehingga 27 Jun 2020, 12 tengah hari						
Kes terdahulu	8,606	27 Jun 2020		Kes Baharu	Jumlah Keseluruhan	Peratus
Kes baharu	10	Jumlah kes kematian		Tiada kes	121	1.40 %
JUMLAH KES POSITIF KESELURUHAN :		Kes telah sembuh dan discaj		14 baharu	8,308	96.43 %
<b>8,616 (1.17%)</b>		Kes sedang dirawat di hospital			187	2.17 %
		Kes di <i>Intensive Care Unit</i> (ICU)			2	0.02 %
		Kes yang memerlukan bantuan pernafasan ( <i>intubated</i> )			0	-
Jumlah Individu Disampel : 739,458						
TABURAN KES MENGIKUT NEGERI						
Negeri	Kes 25 Jun 2020	Kes 26 Jun 2020	Kes Baharu 27 Jun 2020	Kumulatif Kes	Kematian Baharu	Kumulatif Kematian
W.P Kuala Lumpur	0	1	4 (1)	2,435 (152)	-	18
Selangor	2 (2)	2 (2)	3 (2)	2,039 (133)	-	24
Negeri Sembilan	0	0	1	1,016 (169)	-	8
Johor	1	2 (2)	0	691 (36)	-	20
Sarawak	0	0	0	570 (14)	-	17
Sabah	0	0	2 (1)	368 (1)	-	7
Pahang	0	0	0	365	-	7
Perak	0	0	0	258	-	6
Melaka	0	0	0	256 (76)	-	5
Kelantan	1 (1)	0	0	157 (1)	-	3
Pulau Pinang	0	0	0	121	-	1
Terengganu	0	0	0	111	-	1
W.P Putrajaya	0	0	0	97 (38)	-	1
Kedah	0	1 (1)	0	97 (2)	-	1
Perlis	0	0	0	18	-	2
W.P Labuan	0	0	0	17	-	0
<b>JUMLAH</b>	<b>4 (3)</b>	<b>6 (5)</b>	<b>10 (4)</b>	<b>8,616 (622)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>121</b>

\* Petunjuk - ( ) : Kes import daripada jumlah keseluruhan kes

Sumber :CPRC Kebangsaan, KKM

Figure 1: Distribution of total COVID-19 cases in Malaysia as of June 27, 2020

Source: Ministry of Health of Malaysia, 2020

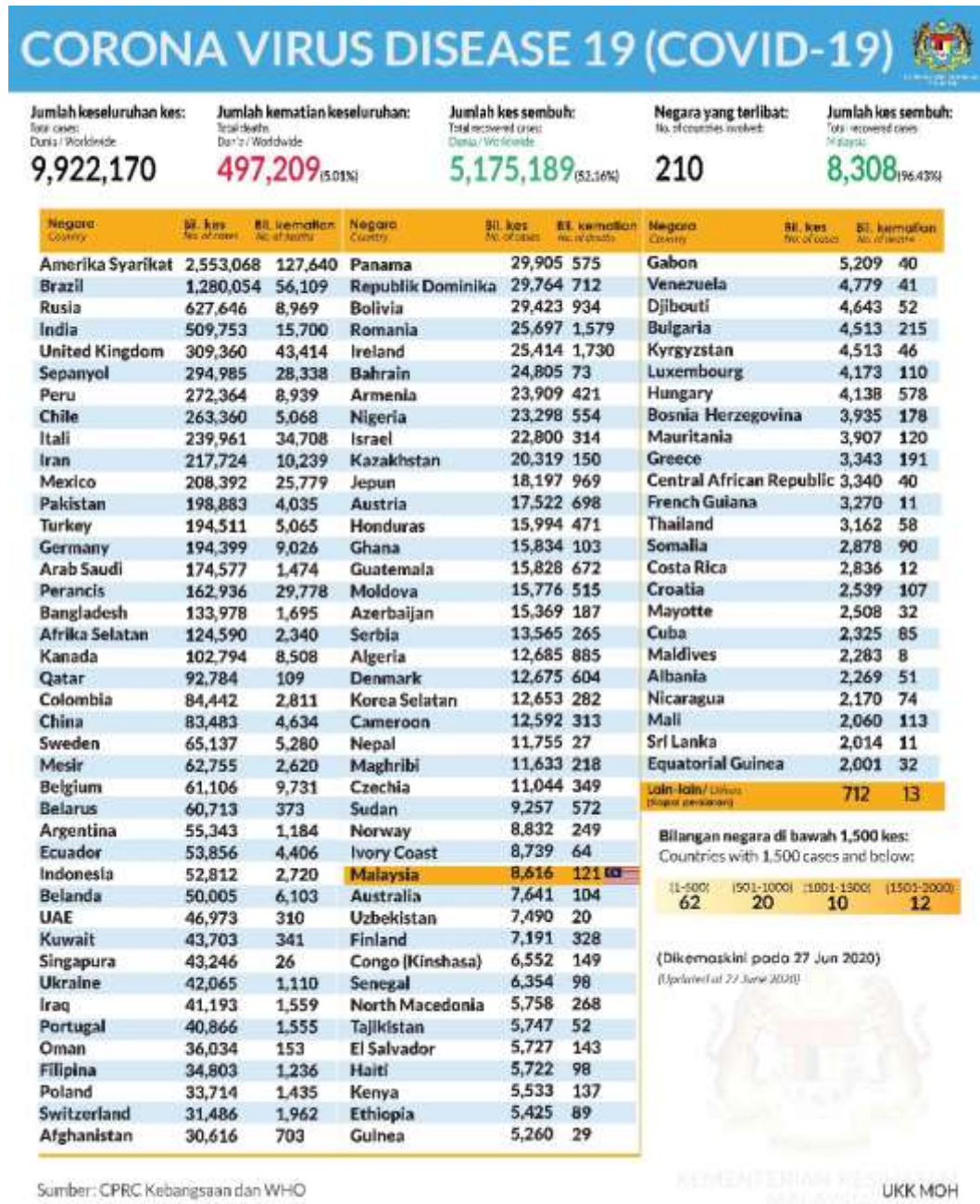


Figure 2: Number of cases reported worldwide as of June 27, 2020

Source: Ministry of Health of Malaysia, 2020

## IMMEDIATE REACTION DUE TO COVID-19 OUTBREAK

### *Quarantine and social distancing*

Introducing quarantine measures early in an outbreak may delay the introduction of the disease to a country or area or may delay the peak of an epidemic in an area where local transmission is ongoing, or both. However, if not implemented properly, quarantine may also create additional sources of contamination and dissemination of the disease. In the context of the current COVID-19 outbreak, the global containment strategy includes the rapid identification of laboratory-confirmed cases and their isolation and management either in a medical facility or at home. WHO recommends that contacts of patients with laboratory-confirmed Covid-19 be quarantined for 14 days from the last time they were exposed to the patient. For the purpose of implementing quarantine, a contact is a person who is involved in any of the following from 2 days before and up to 14 days after the onset of symptoms in the patient (WHO, 2020):

- Having face-to-face contact with a Covid-19 patient within 1 meter and for >15 minutes;
- Providing direct care for patients with Covid-19 disease without using proper personal protective equipment;
- Staying in the same close environment as a Covid-19 patient (including sharing a workplace, classroom, or household or being at the same gathering) for any amount of time;
- Traveling in close proximity with (that is, within 1 m separation from) a Covid-19 patient in any kind of conveyance; and
- Other situations, as indicated by local risk assessments.

### *Movement Control Order*

"According to research carried out for the new report, as of April 6, 96% of all worldwide destinations have introduced travel restrictions in response to the pandemic. Around 90 destinations have completely or partially closed their borders to tourists, while a further 44 are closed to certain tourists depending on the country of origin," UNWTO said.

On March 16, 2020, the Prime Minister of Malaysia announced the Movement Control Order (MCO). The initial period of the order takes place from March 18, 2020, until March 31, 2020, for the duration of 14 days. The order aims to contain the pandemic spread. Among the orders is (Prime Minister Office,

2020):

- All residents and visitors within the area are forbidden from exiting their homes during the order;
- Non-residents and visitors outside the area cannot enter into the area subjected to the order;
- All businesses are shut down;
- Adequate food supplies will be given by the authorities during the 14 day-order to all residents;
- A medical base will be established within the area;
- All roads into the area are blocked.

### IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

Starting from June 10, 2020, the Conditional Movement Control (CMCO) will be supplemented by the Recovery Movement Control (RMCO), which will be strengthened with more lenient controls until August 31, 2020. The CMCO will be supplemented by the Rehabilitation Movement Control Order (RMCO), which will be strengthened with more lenient controls between June 10, 2020, and August 31, 2020. The majority of business sectors will resume their business activities as normal by implementing strict Operating Procedures (SOPs) as outline by the Ministry of Health with close monitoring by the government. The CMCO will be supplemented by the Rehabilitation Movement Control Order (RMCO), which will be strengthened with more lenient controls between June 10, 2020, and August 31, 2020. The majority of business sectors will resume their activities as normal by implementing strict SOPs from June 10, 2020. Any improvements or changes to the SOPs or regulations are periodically announced.

Table 1: Malaysia's Movement Control Order Phase

Phases	Implementation Phases	Date of Execution
1	Movement Control Order (MCO)	18 - 31 March 2020

2	Movement Control Order (MCO)	01 - 14 April 2020
3	Movement Control Order (MCO)	15 - 2 April 2020
4	Movement Control Order (MCO)	April 29 - May 3, 2020
5	Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO)	4 - 11 May 2020
6	Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO)	May 12 - June 9, 2020
7	Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO)	June 10 - August 31, 2020

Sources: PMO, 2020

### **DIRECT IMPACT OF COVID-19 TOWARDS MALAYSIAN TOURISM INDUSTRY**

Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) (2020) mentioned that companies and organizations throughout the tourism industry are struggling and are not immune to this crisis. Ironically, the mere thing that the industry is dependent on to generate revenue is unachievable in the face of social restrictions, making finance matters exacerbate with each passing day as movement and travel banned are imposed. Revenues have declined significantly, and expenditure is still ongoing. Cash-flow is now a problem throughout the industry.

A press statement made on March 24, 2020, by the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIERS) foresees that Malaysia's real GDP growth will decline from 4.0% by 2020 to 2.9%, with job losses of up to 2.4 million, 67% of which will come from the untrained category of workers. Preliminary estimates from the International Labor Organization suggest that unemployment and



under-employment are increasing dramatically as the crisis progresses (Ernst & Young, 2020). According to Ernest & Young's (2020) external sources, it is predicted that the unemployment rate and growth of real GDP in Malaysia will deteriorate in both baseline and scenario. The sources also foresee that Malaysia's GDP is far better in comparison with global economic growth (Figure 3).

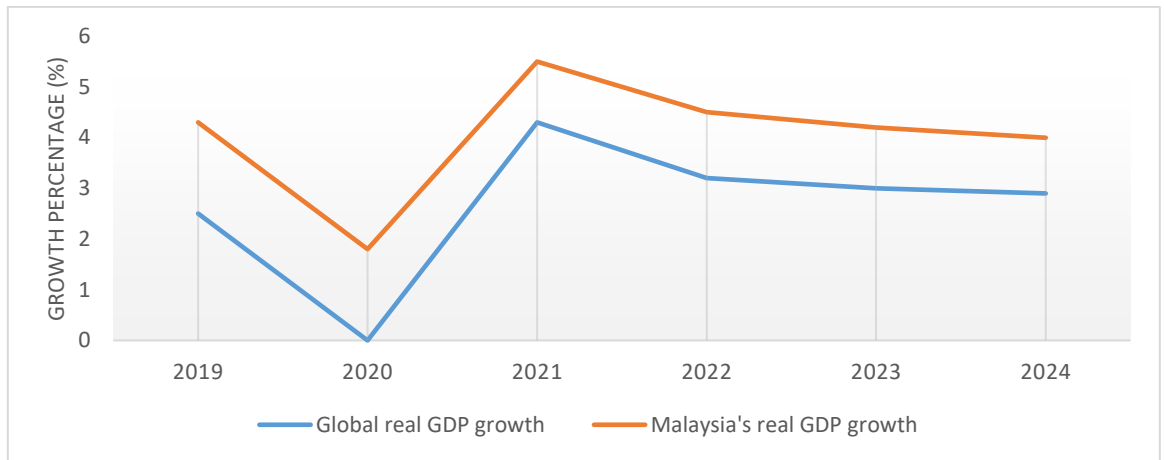


Figure 3: Economic Growth in Malaysia

Source: EY, 2020

The unemployment rate in 2020 is up to 3.4% compared with a 3.5% increase when the pandemic gets worse, according to updated baseline forecasts, as shown in Figure 4.

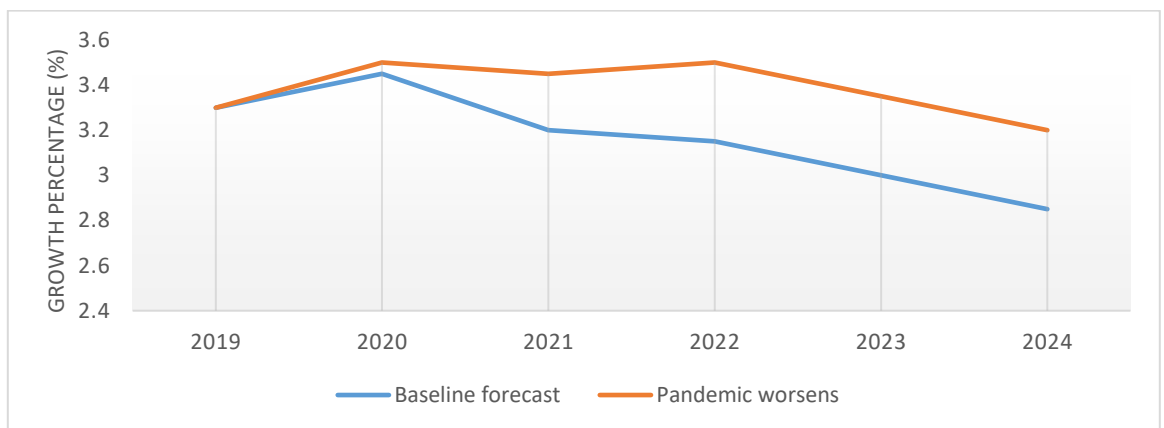


Figure 4: Forecast of Malaysia's unemployment rate from 2019 to 2024 (%)

Source: EY, 2020 as of March 20, 2020

As well as the actual GDP, in 2021, the trend for unemployment is predicted to rebound to regular levels in the baseline prediction of 3.2%, and 3.3% in 2023, in the baseline forecasts.

Earlier, before the massive spread of the coronavirus, in order to sustain the tourism market, Malaysia intensified the tourism campaigns to markets such as West Asia, Eastern Europe, and South Asia to cater to the decline in numbers of tourist from China and pushing for domestic travel align with the Visit Malaysia 2020 (VM2020) Campaign (Yunus, 2020). According to Tourism Malaysia DG Datuk Musa Yusof, one of the goals is to increase domestic journeys to help offset Covid-19's effect on the international demand for tourists as the domestic market had proved the potential value of tourism activities as RM 62 billion was generated from the domestic market in 2018. However, these strategies were planned before the movement control order started. Due to the massive outbreak of coronavirus, many destinations have imposed lockdowns and travel restrictions in order to contain the virus and delay the spread. This means that these tourists are no longer allowed to enter the country in tourist destinations that rely on tourism. As a result, an economic downturn will occur in tourist destinations. The impacts of Covid-19 would have significant economic consequences on many destinations. The economic effects are exacerbated by limitations and lock-outs that make it difficult for visitors to visit places like restaurants or bars. This leads to the loss of many jobs and the decline of tourist destinations.

A recent analysis of the possible effect of Covid-19 on international tourism was published by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Given the unusual implementation of worldwide travel restrictions. An estimated 20% to 30% decline could lead to a drop in international tourism receipts (exports) of 300 to 450 billion US dollars, nearly one-third of the 1.5 trillion US dollars produced in 2019. This means that growth of between five and seven years would be lost to Covid-19 in view of past tourism industry trends. To take this into account, in 2009, the international tourist arrivals decreased by 4%, against the backdrop of the global economic crisis. Meanwhile, in 2003, the SARS epidemic led to a decrease of just 0.4%. UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili mentioned that: "Tourism is among the hardest hit of all economic sectors.

However, tourism is also united in helping to address this immense health emergency – our first and utmost priority – while working together to mitigate the impact of the crisis, particularly on employment, and to support the wider recovery efforts through providing jobs and driving economic welfare worldwide."

### NEGATIVE IMPACTS CONCERNING AIRLINES

In the report published by UNWTO (2020), Table 2 stated that the tourism industry would suffer about a 38% chance drop in Revenue Passenger Kilometers (RPK) as compared to 2019. The report also estimated that the industry would be lost about 252 billion USD passenger revenue as a result of the current pandemic situation. The European region suffers the biggest change in RPKs with the estimation of a 46% drop from the previous year. Meanwhile, the Asia Pacific region stated the highest loss of estimated impact on passenger revenue at 88 billion USD.

Table 2: Estimated impact of COVID-19 on air transport in 2020 (RPKs and air passenger revenue loss), IATA

Region of airline registration	% Change in RPKS (2020 vs. 2019)	Est. Impact on the pass. revenue 2020 vs. 2019 (US\$ billion)
Africa	-32%	-4
Asia Pacific	-37%	-88
Europe	-46%	-76
Latin America	-41%	-15
Middle East	-39%	-19
North America	-27%	-50
Industry	-38%	-252

Source: IATA, UNWTO 2020

At the beginning of Quarter 2 of 2020, IATA worldwide flights decreased by 70%. As restrictions are increased in many areas, further declines are likely (IATA, 2020). According to Faus (2020), the World Council for Travel and Tourism (WTTC) cautioned that the COVID-19 pandemic could destroy 50 million jobs worldwide. The worst affected is predicted in Asia. When the outbreak stops, the industry will recover for up to 10 months. At present, 10% of global GDP is expressed by the tourism industry. WTTC's managing director Virginia Messina said that 30 million out of the 50 million jobs that can be lost would be in Asia, 7 million in Europe, five million in America, and the rest in other continents. The major airlines of Malaysia are also experiencing the impact derived from the outbreak. The low-cost carrier AirAsia is seeking a government loan as the industry suffers amid the coronavirus outbreak (Reuters, 2020). AirAsia is expected to be purchasing six aircraft from Airbus (Simpleflying, 2020), however as the announcement revealed that the airlines would not be acquiring new aircraft this year as the costs shall help the airline survive this tough time as almost 96% of its fleet grounded with negligible monthly revenue. It is also reported that Airasia founders will not be taking any salary during this crisis period, and the employees have accepted temporary pay cuts of 15-75% depending on seniority to share the effect this has on our business. However, in early June, as reported by MalayMail (2020), AirAsia announced that they would be retrenching over 250 employees due to the company's decision to downsize its operation. According to news, out of 1,900 current cabin crew, about 111 crews are expected to be laid off, including 172 pilots and 50 engineers. Other than AirAsia, Malindo Air is among those affected by the crisis as the airlines are ceasing all flight operations entirely in April and might continue until early May until further notice. The airline also has taken extreme measures for granted about 70% of the employee with unpaid leave (The Star, 2020).

## **NEGATIVE IMPACTS RELATED TO ACCOMMODATION**

According to a survey done by DOSM (2020), the accommodation service in Malaysia recorded that about 44.7% experienced a change of income at 50% and more from the original income before the pandemic hit. The same survey also indicated that about 14.6% lost their job, 22.2% took unpaid leave, while 21.8% manage to continue working from home (DOSM, 2020). While the registers of the MOTAC indicate a total of more than 290 thousand rooms in the region, a baseline calculation of 200 thousand rooms was used for a conservative perspective.

	2019		2020	Estimated Loss of Rooms Revenue (RM)
	OCC (%)	ADR(RM)	OCC (%)	Based on 200K Star Rated Hotel Rooms Only.
January	58.50	227.89	55	(49,452,130)
February	67.72	238.07	44	(327,527,183)
March	64.99	223.64	22	(596,085,583)
April	64.68	219.55	6	(1,126,568,133)
May	52.91	206.70	11	(537,093,414)
June	64.10	228.75	16	(660,172,500)
			Total	(3,296,898,943)

Source: Malaysian Association of Hotels, 2020

There have been multiple theories of changing findings from polls to the prolonged MCO timeframe on March 20, 2020. The Malaysian hotel sector, by June 2020, will, in moderate words, are expected to lose approximately RM3.3 billion in revenue. According to Tourism Malaysia's 2019 Survey, 24% of tourist expenditures were accommodation at the cost of RM20.67 billion, the second-highest after shopping. From the point of view of hotels, MAH reported an average occupancy of 59.99% for 2019, forecast at no more than 30% for 2020, despite the reliance on the global markets similarly impacted by the pandemic.

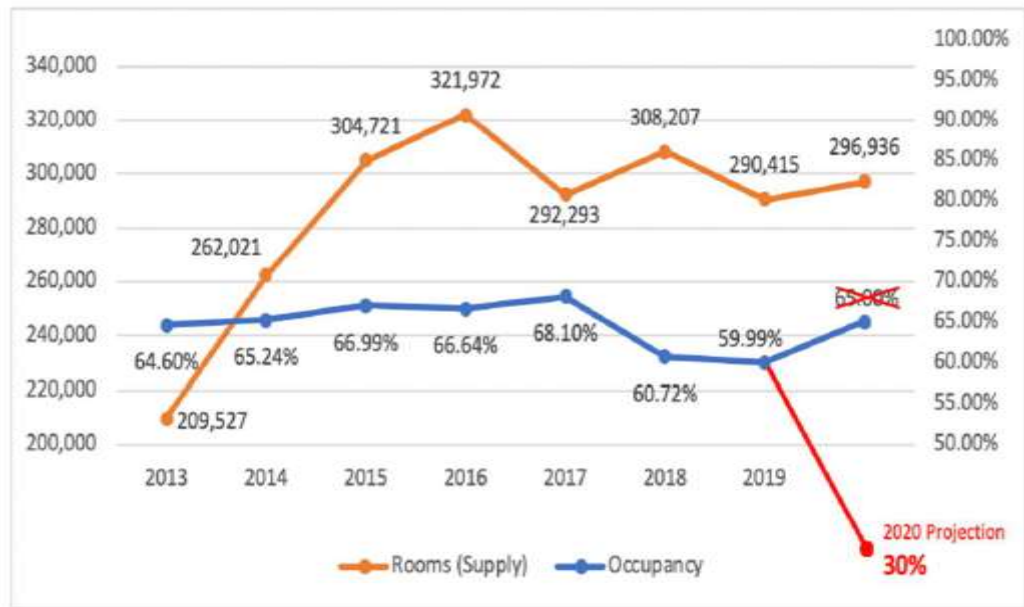


Figure 5: The number of room supply and occupancy rate of the hotel in Malaysia

Source: MAH, 2020

In order to exclude any potential COVID 19 cases, a mandatory 14-day quarantine period has been developed for all Malaysians returning to the country on April 3, 2020. It implied that quarantine centers had to be adequately designed to guarantee compliance with the specifications of home quarantine. MAH was contacted by MOTAC in order to include hotels at all points of entry, the original list of which was 10,000 beds, each with an RM150 per room per night, and a maximum of three meals by the government (MAH, 2020). The list grew to over 23,000 rooms by April 12, 2020, and about 12,000 Malaysians were in quarantine. The revenues from this are not expected to move numbers from the industry but are helpful for the hotels involved because they hardly have any revenue during the MCO. According to STR (2020), in Malaysia case, some markets face rising rates of occupation despite overall decreases. This is due to the fact that the government-appointed a few hotels as the quarantine center, especially for those who come back from overseas and for those who unable to leave the country as the border is secure tightly. Like many other global markets, hotel closures and performance decline in Malaysia have been prompted by lockdown measures. At present, there are over 80 quarantine hotels selected by the government, and when using their properties, the government pays a fee to hotels.

Employers are obliged not to increase profits but to minimize losses, and that

means survival, to implement cost-cutting measures. Overall, budget hotel labor expenses amount to about 25% of sales, 32% of medium-sized hotels, and 29% of high-end hotels. This percentage compensates for one-third of what the hotel is not making during the MCO period; thus, tough choices to impose pay cuts and giving unpaid leaves are opted by the employers in order to sustain the job instead of laying off staff. As of March 20, 2020, the study by MAH found that 9% of workers had earned salary cuts, 17% submitted unpaid leaves, and 4% laid off, which was alarming, as shown in Table 4. Such figures are now gathering traction. Originally, the government proposed compensation for unemployed workers, then a pay incentive for employers.

Table 4: Number and percentage of hotel employees receiving pay cut, taking unpaid leave, and being laid off.

Total Employees	Pay Cut	% of Emp	Unpaid Leave	% of Emp	Lay Off	% of Emp
3,215	108	3%	202	6%	72	2%
692	0	0%	80	12%	0	0%
4,314	340	8%	902	21%	92	2%
560	76	14%	157	28%	0	0%
17,826	2,880	16%	3,641	20%	542	3%
1,872	65	3%	191	10%	85	5%
1,452	0	0%	179	12%	130	9%
1,464	0	0%	150	10%	231	16%
5,549	240	4%	430	8%	84	2%
1,654	91	6%	595	36%	245	15%
4,934	893	18%	1,075	22%	177	4%
3,488	175	5%	258	7%	92	3%
7,981	134	2%	1,812	23%	238	3%
1,298	52	4%	101	8%	53	4%
<b>56,299</b>	<b>5,054</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>9,773</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>2,041</b>	<b>4%</b>

Source: Malaysian Association of Hotels, 2020

Malaysia Hotel and Association (MAH) reported that cancellations for room reservations alone had been swelled in their initial number, to date (as of March 20, 2020) as reflecting the loss of over RM 75 million for the Malaysian hotel market, in-room revenues of around 193,000 room nights. This does not include

case, conference, trade shows, meetings, or losses of food and drink.

Table 1: Number of losses due to room cancellation

States	Losses Due to Cancellations (RM)	Room Cancellations
Kedah	3,291,500	3,239
Perak	1,354,206	3,646
Penang	8,962,185	18,476
Kuala Lumpur	24,912,199	61,859
Selangor	9,053,751	25,940
Pahang	215,756	259
Melaka	708,499	4,128
Negeri Sembilan	7,655,685	20,665
Johor	7,711,922	20,977
Sabah	11,788,551	33,769
Sarawak	37,775	99
Terengganu	446,406	466
<b>Total (as of March 20, 2020)</b>	<b>75,692,028</b>	<b>193,057</b>

Source: MAH, 2020

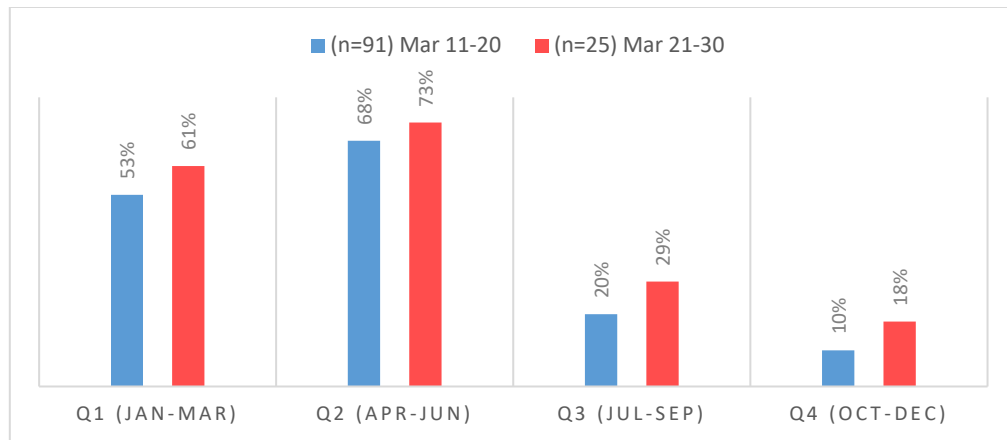
In reference to Table 1, MAH (2020) reported that the cancellations mainly centered on the entrance points of Malaysia, with Kuala Lumpur and Selangor collectively taking large numbers, while tourism destination that is popular among China citizens, such as Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, and Langkawi, Kedah, took a direct hit and fully lost all tourist arrivals from China. Transit destinations elsewhere also suffered, with the majority of Johor, Melaka, and Perak's tourist arrivals being dropped. Cancellations were just the beginning of the situation when hotels are also losing future demand, with the world being extremely cautious about traveling. Throughout April, May, June, and finally even the third quarter of 2020, the market for hotels plummeted almost immediately. This decrease in demand contributes to revenue loss for hotels, while high operating costs are incurred. Hotels had to prepare ahead to guarantee their own longevity. As MCO was supposed to end on March 31, MAH conducted a survey dated



March 20, 2020, and the result already experienced an enormous decrease in occupancy for the industry. Compared to 2019, occupancy is estimated to be equal to a loss of revenue of more than RM 500 million for the same period from 18 to March 31, 2020. With MCO is extended further to April 28, 2020, it is believed that by the time it was restored and removed, the industry will have lost more than RM 1.5 billion. In the months of April, May, and June, hotels were asked for their planned occupancy, and during the March 20, 2020 report, even in June, only 25% would be achieved on average. The industry has never seen such low rates of occupancy in history. In addition to losing revenue, the hotel needs to bear the operating cost, including keeping the employees. The labor costs of budget hotels, in general, are around 25% of revenue, mid-range hotels at 32%, and high-end hotels at 29%. This constitutes one-third of what hotels are making and thus the difficult decision whether to implement pay cuts and leaves so that workers can stay working rather than discharge or lay off. In the same survey, it is found that nine percent of hotel workers had already received a cut in their salaries, 17 percent were ignored, and 4 percent were laid off. Such figures must have risen by this time as it is expected that 15% of Malaysia's hotels could be forced to shut down because of the Covid-19 pandemic. As of April 22, one of the hotel groups known as VHM Hotel Management Group revealed through a memorandum that it was closing some of its properties in Penang and Ipoh, Perak (The Sun Daily, 2020). Other than that, Plenitude Bhd is among the company that will be closing the operation of three hotels under their wing which Mercure Penang Beach and The Gurney Resort Hotel and Residences, both in Penang, and Travelodge Ipoh, Perak, with immediate effect and begin downsizing the operation of the other hotels owned by the company (EdgeProp, 2020). With the outbreak and international and domestic travel restriction, these closure and downsizing are expected in the first six months of 2020, and the hotel is looking at potential losses up to RM 3.3 billion from room revenue alone (The Sun Daily, 2020).

### **NEGATIVE IMPACTS CONCERNING TRAVEL AGENTS & TOUR OPERATORS**

In a survey done by the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), about 84% of responding organizations voted negative and somewhat negative outlook on their business prospects over the next year due to COVID-19. It is reported that a drastic escalation in tour cancellations due to travel restriction and the fear of the outbreak itself is shown in Figure XX. The cancellation leads to a loss in revenue.



Note: % = percentage of bookings that have been canceled compare to Q (1-4) in 2019

Source: ATTA, 2020

It is also reported that reasons for the cancellation were derived from consumer hesitancy to travel at 45%, 23% due to travel restrictions, and lockdown that being imposed (ATTA, 2020).

Travel and tourism play a key role in Malaysia's economy, with almost 50% of Malaysia's export trade in services reflecting only travel. There are approximately 27 million annual tourist arrivals to Malaysia. The effect of coronaviruses on the Malaysian tourism industry will rely on how coronaviruses spread across Singapore rather than China, as tourists from Singapore are around 39 percent highest, while tourists from China are about 12% low (Duddu, 2020). Currently, human-to-human coronavirus transmission in most countries is higher, which already leads to tour cancelations, thus resulting in the drop in tourist arrivals to Malaysia. The year 2020 is intended to promote Visit Malaysia 2020 in an effort to boost both international and domestic tourism. Due to the spread of coronavirus, the Tourism, Arts, and Culture Ministry has decided to cancel the ongoing VM2020 as it impacted both international and domestic tourism sectors. Malaysia Prime Minister announced that the tourism sector is expected to lose RM3.37 billion in the first two months of the year alone. It is said that Malaysia's annual gross domestic product (GDP), with estimated possible losses of up to RM17.3 billion, is projected to decline by 0.8 to 1.2, respectively (Dzulkifly, 2020). The hospitality, entertainment, and tourism industries have suffered a lot from the outbreak. Although disease outbreak is difficult to predict, some people assume that such great effort to accommodate foreign tourists without tactically engage the domestic tourism market is contributing to this in no small part (Murallitharan, 2020). Robust efforts to develop and sustain a competitive domestic tourism market would have allowed

the market to learn the fact that the domestic marketable to the fill the gap and balance the market whenever the international market faced the consequences like this. As an example, the whole section of newer shopping centers with restaurants that focus on Chinese visitors who are now lifeless.

The Malaysian Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MoTAC) recognized that the tourism industry could suffer possible harm from the coronavirus outbreak. It set up a Tourism Recovery Committee to combat coronavirus concerns on health and safety in tourists and to identify new ways to draw new markets of visitors to mitigate China's decline in tourism, especially to states that received the highest number of China market. Despite these steps, Malaysia may be affected by lower inbound tourism/ visitors in the travel and hospitality sectors, considering the movement control order that being imposed. Taking an example, Sabah (one of the states in Malaysia) received 598,566 China's tourists in 2019 alone, which accounted for 40% of the states' international arrival. However, on January 30, 2020, the state government suspended all scheduled and chartered flights from China to Sabah on a temporary basis until the situation improves, indirectly affect the T&T businesses in the state. According to statistics by Sabah Tourism Board (2020), the number of China tourist arrival in January 2020 recorded a 26.4% decline as compared to the same month in the previous year.

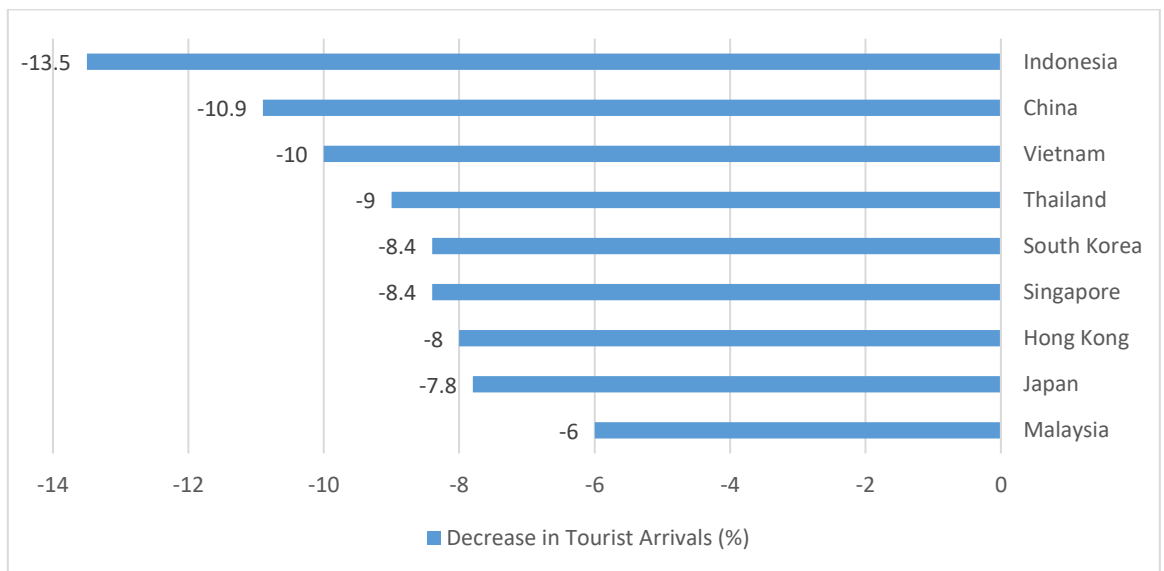


Figure 3: Impact of coronavirus on tourist arrivals in Asian Countries

Source: Krungsri Research, February 2020

According to Krungsri (2020), in the first two quarters of 2020, the Coronavirus epidemic is expected to decrease tourist arrivals by 30.8% and 13.1%. As shown in Figure 3, Indonesia recorded the highest decline in the number of tourist arrival at 13.5%, followed by China and Vietnam. These are due to the number of travel cancellations done by agents and free independent travelers as travel restriction and movement control orders are imposed in several countries as precautions. This, in effect, triggered cancellations on domestic and international travel, which lead to the tourism industry losses as a refund are requested by the tourist.

As the concern over the covid-19 outbreak rose in early 2020, most countries have begun to ban travel to and from China. At the same time, the China tourist dominates the travel market up until recently, thus impacted the number of tourist arrivals. The tourism sector is considerably affected by the Covid-19 outbreak as it constitutes a large share of GDP in Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia. Indeed, the economies in the area of the Asian region were expected to suffer unprecedented losses of USD211 billion from the outbreak (Moore, 2020). Although previous outbreak outbreaks have affected the Asian tourism industry, none have been quite as serious as the outbreak of Covid-19. This is likely because the Asian tourism industries in recent years were not as dependent on China tourists. Travel and tourism and associated sectors are predicted to be among the most affected industries in Malaysia, as Malaysia's biggest tourist numbers are coming from China.

### **NEGATIVE IMPACTS CONCERNING EVENT MANAGEMENT COMPANIES**

As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected an unprecedented number of business events. In a survey done by PCMA (2020), a high rate of cancellation is recorded, of which 87% of the respondent indicate their cancellation due to the outbreaks while 66% choose to postpone the events. Looking from the perspective of event management companies, the outbreak and travel restriction has put a toll on most of the event business as a mass gathering is risky and due to the fear of the mass virus. PCMA also reported that almost half of the respondents conclude that their future prospective partners will be more unwilling to travel and rather than having to restrain the desire to meet up on the face to face basis. According to the survey, some of the respondents believes that, until a COVID-19 vaccine is discovered, they do not believe the levels of attendance will rise to their level in 2019, and others said that even if they want

to travel for an event, economic factors can prevent participation at events on-site short-term. Thus, making it hard for event business in relation to the mass gathering to bounce back in the near future.

In 2020, one of the most devastating year for the event sector has already gone from a prosperous year, and the expected turnaround cycle is now several times over. In parallel with the rest of the country, entertainment planners seek to make the most of global lockdowns while looking forward to regular events reopening. The most difficult thing is that nobody knows when the situation will be resolve. In Malaysia alone, the event businesses have suffered just like the rest of the servicing businesses, which lead to thousands of ringgit in losses to due cancellation and whatnot. One of the events that are canceled due to the outbreak of COVID 19 was the Penang Chinese Girls' School centennial celebration, which was supposed to be attended by over 10,000 of its alumni and students from all over the world (The Star, 2020). In an article by Edgemarket, several event-related companies owner mentioned that they are struggling to stay afloat as their business relies solely on event organizing in order to generate income. According to the respondents, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all Korean and Chinese concerts planned for January have been postponed, and it gets even worse for them as local events are also canceled as the government began implementing public health and safety measure in the wake of the outbreak. The establishment of the MCO has canceled all events, and even before the MCO, industry players had no source of income as travel banned being imposed, and borders are closed (Gomes, 2020). While we can talk for months over activities and significance reunions with businesses and individuals, events were the first to be affected when the plague starting to break as events and gathering will lead to major virus transmission due to the nature of the business that required people to be in close proximity with each other. Due to fear, no one willing to take the risk of participating in the event if one does not feel safe and secure as the risk of catching and carrying the virus is very high. Thus, in the near future, it's very hard to predict the recovery of the event businesses.

In the sectors of transportation, restaurants, hotels, and entertainment, the social distance initiatives which are necessary to tackle the epidemic are significantly reducing demand. Disturbances in production (workers unable to get to work; business closing outbreaks) can make other industries difficult to produce. The direct loss of production, possibly a couple of months, is expected. However, if this direct loss of production can be reversed by the government, it will alleviate economic difficulties during the outbreak and avoid the direct loss of production from permanently affecting the economy. Without policy intervention, direct

loss of production would lead to substantial losses for corporations and major layoffs. Many corporations and employees have inadequate resources to cope with dramatic demand shortfalls. The danger is that many businesses will have the possibility of going out of business, which will affect the workers and their families. The demise of an organization has a long-term cost: the connection between employers, employees, and clients is broken and sometimes must be restored from scratch. This is important to keep companies alive during this recession to ensure that employees continue to get their paychecks – even for firms to staff who have to sit idle because of social distance.

The coronavirus came and shifted our way of life and our path. Economic recessions across the world are likely to result in short term consequences. Covid-19 gave a thrilling impression of the future. Travel and tours (T&T) would be different, at least in the near future. What used to be busy airports with thousands of travelers coming and going from wonderful destinations have now become a ghost town with quiet hallways, empty car parks, and completely blank displays of arrivals and departures. The international visitors' number has provided both the macro and micro-level revenues to the private and public sectors. Goods and services are purchased from international stores and hotel chains as well as from parent companies in each region. According to Oğuz, Gordon, & Cruz (2020), countries with travel and tourism revenues accounting for 7% or higher of trade face sector-related declines and worse unemployment statistics than countries with a lower level of T&T. Secondly, Covid-19 would have a cumulative detrimental effect on tourism business in the short term, at least. A significant proportion of the tourism workforce is out of business. Given that the first waves of unemployment impact those with an extremely low or zero marginal savings risk, total consumption would decrease and result in higher rates of unemployment. Most countries' reliance on tourism for employment, economic, and development makes it crucial to find ways and strategies to minimize and even resolve those challenges.

Malaysia is expected to be among the most affected by this highly contagious outbreak, with travel, tourism, and related sectors, including hospitality. As Covid-19 transmitted through human to human contact, Malaysia has postponed religious, social, tours, and all major economic activities, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), to minimize the risk of spreading the infection in the countries. Various meetings scheduled to be conducted through April have been canceled, including sport and international conferences. In the first two months of 2020, projections by the Malaysian government suggest losses in the tourism industry at RM 3.37 billion (Permal & Jamal, 2020) as

VM2020 is canceled, and tourist accommodations are expected to substantially decrease as non-essential activities are restricted due to MCO. In the course of this global pandemic, marine tourism also affected badly of which including ferry services, vessels for leisure sports, snorkeling, diving, and sailing were affected. Marine Department Malaysia statistics showed nine ferry services in the North and South of Malaysia are suspended from operation (Permal & Jamal, 2020). In addition to that, according to a survey done by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), about 15% of the worker from servicing sector is affected and losing their job; which will lead to the breakdown of 35.4% from food and beverages, transportation at 18.7%, accommodation 14.6% (DOSM, 2020).

## CONCLUSIONS

One example the industry is researching for guidance is the Severe Acute Respiratory System (SARS). The World Health Organization's declaration of a global alert about SARS took about four months before the disease was officially contained and about five months to complete its efforts to report on new cases. Tourists were mostly affected at the early stages of the epidemic indirectly become the carriers of the epidemic, thus affecting travel and tourism (Wilder-Smith, 2006). Back in 2003, due to its novelty, ease of transmission, and its speed through jet travel combined with broad media coverage, the SARS outbreak created international travel anxiety. The psychological effects of SARS, combined with the limitations imposed on travel by many national and international authorities that restricted international travel, really had an impact on the tourism business (Wilder-Smith, 2006).

The international disease spread underlines the need for strong global public health systems, effective worldwide monitoring structures, comprehensive health services, and knowledge, which can rapidly be mobilized across national boundaries to contain the spread of the virus (Wilder-Smith, 2006). None of this is going to be convenient, definitely. It'll be costly for the beginning. The budget deficit expectations of the government would have to be surpassed. It is important to make tough decisions later on how tax revenues might rise, but these costs do not have to be borne by the middle or lower classes (Saez & Zucman, 2020). Furthermore, even with substantial and courageous attempts to reduce the strain for people and firms, a range of job cuts and closures would be inevitable. Nevertheless, the cost of inactivity – or even inadequate action – is far higher and much more terrifying. Ekstein (2020) mentioned that according

to AirInsight's aviation analysts, the SARS outbreak cost airlines \$10 billion, and that was at a time when global business isn't as developed as now. If the Covid-19 outbreak also takes nine months to shift towards the 'recovery' stage, the aviation and airlines are mostly affected, and it will take even longer recovery time for hotel and tourism destination to fully operate and restore their business to the operation level before the disease outbreak.

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