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Review article

'The Movement Control Order (MCO) for COVID-19 Crisis and its Impact on Tourism and Hospitality Sector in Malaysia'

0. Introduction to the critical review of the above mentioned article

The article notes rightfully that **the tourism and hospitality industry** (hereafter Industry) is hit by a COVID embattled government their decisions (MCO) to call for stay home orders, to shut down hotels and to keep airplanes on the ground etc.

As a result, the industry is losing infrastructure, labour, and capital.

The article aims to link MCO to the future of an entire industry **however does not make any relevant link** but listing short-term conditions and methods of precautions only.

My answer is '*yes, it is, please tell me more*' but the study ends here and leaves the problem to strategists without contributing any idea or any relevant recommendation.

The article in discussion here **is not providing** any 'building brick' for industry its strategists to provide solid answers to (repeating) incidents, such as COVID19.

'Wisdom starts with recognizing the root causes, curiosity of its social economic context and with the not ever lasting efforts to get to the bottom of it, eventually enabling specialists to bring all available studies together, analysing under the use of a conceptual methodology, and by guiding a thinking process into weighted and sustainable solutions to the root cause of the problem to deal with.'

The to this article applied methodology **does not address the root causes** nor does it shed a light on the path to sustainable solutions. I fail to see this '**wisdom**' in the article I referred to, the article misses the key points and failed therefor.

While I am not pretending to hold all the answers, my contribution may guide at best use of it, analysts, and researchers to the roots of the industry its problem in dealing with virus affections and finding solid solutions for survival during and post pandemics.

In the next chapters, I will do best to ask attention for the need of a collective and inclusive '**think-tank**' in attempt to address the roots of the problem (which is in my opinion not MCO) and in relation to programs to use for upholding an entire industry in times of crisis while still eyeing sustainable growth.

1. The article in question is full of (1.1) 'open doors', (1.2) bias and (1.3) 'misplaced recommendations, (1.4) key issues are not addressed.

1.1 'Open doors'

'Open doors' in this sentence is an expression that explains of a recommendation for which the research does not provide any building brick. In other words, there is no relationship between the data collected and the recommendation to stay home, to avoid travelling, to wear a mouth cap and to practice social distance from one other.

The logic of such measures to provide safety to one, to avoid spreading of from one to all is found centuries ago, while experiencing a flu for example. MCO is no more and no less a bombastic enforcing of those measures as people in the society nowadays are to lose in taking precautions and is merely compensating lacking self-measures under circumstance of lacking fast speeding recovery tools while awaiting solid solutions such as vaccine for example.

The problem was or is still there 'there was no medicine' a run for fast speeding recovery tools' failed and people had forgotten the need for self-protection and so the devastating MCO came to light.

' **The door' to this was already open, the article itself 'did not open a door'.**

We are getting more careless and clumsier in dealing with natural precautions, we tempt to delegate the solution to medical industry and drug and that is worrying. Indeed, we do not feel ownership of problems of our body rather, we tend to blame one other or taking victim position in a pandemic event and are leaving the solution to third parties and or the pharmacy.

Its one of the reasons of why, we are too late in reducing collective losses, of why we are vulnerable to draconic measures such as MCO. MCO is merely a compensation at large for the lacking attention of one to its own senses and precautions needed.

In short notice, MCO (unprecedented and draconic) itself is the sum of (1) human their shortcomings to take precautions, (2) lacking respectful communication between community leaders and each single member of the community, (3) mistrust and politicking beyond the COVID case to deal with and (4) bias.

Many have founded reasons to believe that COVID **is not fatal in its nature** but do know that the virus may ask its deadly toll of 'a few of humankind'. I spend some lines to bias under 1.2 of this critical paper.

The problem is not MCO but **its problematic precedent for the future use** and that is alarming. It is to be expected that virus attacks of a kind of COVID will be more at the side of big 'packed' communities and will frustrate mass events and travelling of groups of people for example.

Accepting MCO as an accepted government tool to embattle whatever pandemic comes to light is bringing the end of social economies in sight as social participants fails to anticipate and to bypass the virus attacks for example. It is and it always will be a 'cat and mouse' hunt, whereas the mouse is the virus, and the cat is the vaccine to the virus. There is no such thing as a guarantee for surviving a virus in the categories

of flu and or COVID for example. Unfortunate, with or without vaccine, still such virus takes its deadly toll.

The real threat to the future of social economies is in its precedent of MCO as a tool for its use in the future. The real problem is the social context beyond and failing to accept the simple fact that death is a part of life and that the threatening to a few does not oblige all to burn entire economic pillars. Ignorance of this reality brings us in distance to possibilities of building a better tomorrow for the next generations, for the sake of mankind.

'It seems mankind find it hard to accept this reality and that is a worrying trend as well. Who accept death, lives with positive attitude, values to life and tends to invest for the best out of it and is contributing to quality-of-life methods? Who fears death is in constant stress and merely looking for ways to escape death than ways to get the best out of living? Sometimes it comes to thinking. `MCO and which category (dare to live or afraid to die) of people are calling for it and why. `

Anyways, many crises can be predicted and treated as being results of human interactions and with collecting data and observing, an eventual crisis can be foreseen, precautions can be taken, losses can be limited. Such human crisis is to be understood in a sinus curve, its waves and timings can be predicted, economists can make models, strategists can make decisions as any of such crisis can be foreseen, problems can be tackled before the problem takes a company or even a society totally down.

Even when it comes to crisis related to natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcanos, and even heavy storms, those are timely recognised, and by allocating infrastructure, building 'shock proof' among other measures precautions can reduce losses due to fail out of production and damages to infrastructure once it gets a hit. Those are to be foreseen, no panicking there, the show can go on.

However, when it comes to virus such as COVID? You do not know when, you do not know what and the vaccine its arrival will always be months so not years upon a virus its first introduction, with a social economic crisis in between.

Economists need at least some rulers to deal with variables, it need at least a prediction of when it will likely happen as to anticipate in time to what may affect a production hard. Pandemics are unpredictable in its nature and cannot be measured, its hard to steer on lacking data but needed, its extreme difficult to build a war chest for the unknown.

The article accepts MCO as a reality, I dare as I stated here to challenge its legacy and urge for 'common sense' in using draconic tools for today's problem but loading the price on tomorrow until the social economic calendar collapse under its own weight.

1.2 'Bias.'

From the approach of the authors can be understood, 'we are under attack, stay home and wait for better days to come'. The at abstract level noted COVID definition lead into recommendations which are merely the enforced SOP orders as all Malaysian do know and are living up with.

However, is there a causality between COVID and the effects to the industry or is there a causality between policies and the effects to the industry. Safe to say that the policies (SOP for example) are 'inspired by COVID', but it is questionable which component (covid or covid related policies) is (more) leading into the devastating circumstances of the industry as of today.

The article just fails to answer this to the future of the industry related question. Allowing such draconic policies as MCO in attempt to deal with virus invite the next policy maker to apply the same policies to a H1N1, Ebola, COVID or any dangerous virus in attempt to kill a virus. Policymakers and captains of industry are in dire straits and in need to get academically input to support strategic answers to any threatening coming from any virus to an entire lockdown of industry with travel bans related.

Quote from page 1 its Abstract 'The recent outbreak of Novel Coronavirus COVID-19 has led to a global panic due to its fatal nature.'

From the very first moment it was known that mankind can resist the virus and can deal with effects upon being exposed to the virus. Where the human body is in conflict and weakened by certain other disease and or failures of certain organs, COVID among other virus such as flu, may take its deadly toll from the already weakened human body.

From the very first time we got to know COVID, specialists forecasted 10 to 15 percent of a population to be badly (but recoverable) affected by this virus, taking a death toll of 1 to 3 percent out of the entire population.

When we apply such numbers on the population of Malaysia, containing 32 + million people, fatalities could be in the range of 1 to 3 percent, (32.000-96.000) people. The latest estimation of the government is the level of fatalities up to 27.000 in the period March 2020 to December 2021. Malaysia its fatalities (<1%) is in line with global effects of COVID and considered (*with or without locking down*) to be at the safe side of the road.

The statistic supports the thought that COVID is **not fatal in its nature** but can take its deadly toll from certain human body conditions and just under specific circumstances. With separation of the weakened under us and practicing SOP by all of us, awaiting vaccination, its questionable to apply in addition also a draconic lockdown of entire societies to the solution.

Next generations will judge whether we have been overreacting and by overacting being very harmful to societies and civilizations (more than COVID could do itself) and if with right doing or not, entire countries and industries have been locked up for eventually '**bias based on fear** and panicking enforced policies'.

Policymakers seems very busy to address China as a country purposely creating and spreading this virus. Policymakers remain silent once been questioned 'statistics are not confirming the need of shutting down entire countries'. Statistics are confirming merely 'policies based on fear and panicking, why?'

And **that answer is** relevant to the tourism industry. Are we victimized by the COVID virus or are we victim to ad hoc acting policymakers based on their panicking thoughts and never-ending draconic approaches (MCO1,2,3,4, ->?)

How to position in the market and how to avoid such ever can affect us in the future as much it affects us now? The study we are referring to remain 'deadly' silence and contain bias in its nature.

Of course, it is my opinion toward other opinion holders, but I am calling for in-depth research after this covid case and what captains of industry would be able to do for the better. One is to be critical and not to surrender in just 'COVID is deadly in nature, because so much is sure, it is not as deadly as we are forced to believe it would be.

1.3 'Misplaced recommendations'

Quote from page 6 its Conclusions and Implications 'Firstly, the results highlighted in this study would help the authority of the tourism board to better understand about the best policy to be implemented on tourism activities. Furthermore, the study could help travel agencies to provide suitable products and package to leverage the tourism industry in Malaysia.'

followed

by a quote from page 6 its Conclusion and Implications 'As airlines and hotel industries have been disrupted by this coronavirus outbreak it is further recommended all those service providers involved in this industry to encourage customers for taking precaution to keep themselves safe. As airlines and accommodations are considered as two major elements in tourism industry, they may take initiative to recommend travellers, to be continued...'

leads into authors their published conclusions and recommendations as such recommendations also can be lookup and practiced following instructions of the free of charge download of a health app **MySejahtera**. The COVID19 related implications affect all industries not putting Tourism Sector in an exclusive position.

The answer to the question 'is there any recommendation to our needs to survival as an industry requires ideas and recommendations other then MySejahtera recommendations and in particular those key problems remain untouched so not remain unanswered.

1.4 'Key Issues are not addressed'

From studies like this, one may expect recommendations related to the industry their positions to uphold their business and dealings with huge challenges and which are not even close related to 'practice SOP' policies. Putting myself in the position as a leader of Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board awaiting academical input to support strategic choices to make and or a business owner, awaiting academical input to support business survival and or business recovery plans, I would feel rather depressed then understood in my challenges and primary industry survival concerns by not finding in this study any key recommendation instead receiving another advertising for upholding SOP rules.

2. The chosen methodology

Its acceptable to apply such conceptual method to studies like this. However, the author not just miss the key point of industry its need to survival, it also connects not relevant points to the points of recommendation unless we educate an airplane to dive as the authors are of opinion that nonessential travelling should be avoided.

I rest my case, its even not conceptual, its merely copy and paste government overruling policies without providing any counter solution. Not even beneficial.

3. The roots problem of the industry however

Not being ever exposed to such crisis leaving the entire industry as a lame duck.

3.1 Finance structure of the industry

An industry largely or nearly entirely living on borrowed money and borrowed times collapses when productivity get a halt during a longer period than 3 months. As we remember, borrowing money cost money and goes with the obligation of repaying debts plus interests from the operation its 'thin 'profit. Repayment schedules of lease etc are monthly or quarterly based. Missing 2 repayment schedules and the red flag get in top of the relationship between operation and equity management.

Many leading players their leverage is far to high. It is also a labour-intensive industry, repayments of 'borrowed' working hours needs to be done daily, weekly, or monthly. Failing 2 payment schedules and the red flag get in top of the relationship between operation and its labour ship.

An industry, which has no other option then to grow as otherwise future repayment schedules following investing for growth cannot be met is vulnerable and cannot afford decreasing numbers of 'pax'. COVID its disturbance to growth made this in the earliest stage of the pandemic crystal clear.

Investing and taking loans as of a travel and service production never could be halted **is an ignorance to the reality** as for example we are facing today. One year plus pass-by with nearly no service production and the financial liabilities are climbing mountains high (so high the eagles will not dare to fly).

As COVID itself is not deadly in its nature but takes its deadly toll of the weakened human body, COVID (MCO) is not deadly in its nature but takes its 'deadly' toll of the weakened companies, especially those living largely on borrowed time and money.

The industry was already in great difficulties, many premisses outdated and **slavery as a mean to escape from fair paid wages** was already in use to escape from rising high costs and overcoming lacking efficiency.

COVID finished the job, industry its arrogance and ignorance already started with.

3.2 Ignorance.

Mankind could not believe that a global virus could harm an entire global tourism industry. Not one single study ever has considered such events, making a lame duck out of what ever was a blossoming and growing industry.

The problem is not COVID, its merely a messenger of bad news to an industry being too much focused to growth and were never considered a falling scenario. (The story of Titanic comes in mind.)

The problem is the attitude and arrogancy of mankind and its weak relationship with mother nature. Mankind is in a power struggle with mother nature and is getting confronted with natural set limitations to the endless efforts to occupy each part of this planet and to live as of the sun tomorrow still shines. Indeed, the burning effects of increasing sunlight (global warming) creates among other unhealthy issues, more bacteriologic related virus.

Having said 'COVID among other natural influencers 'is not the problem but placed a calling to mankind.

3.3 Huge update of vision required.

It is time to spend quality time on deep evaluation of the industry its Vision, its time to reanalyse the strength and weakness of the industry itself. Its time for a total reset and better spreading of the business.

3.4 One organization, two economic pillars embedded.

It is time to learn of possibilities to build an industry on two economic pillars under the use of the same competences. One economic pillar hosting tourism as it is, another pillar eyeing to developing rural economies, with aim to make forgotten or rotten areas available for both local business and reliving.

In good times both pillars uphold the budgets needed, in bad times, one pillar may compensate the by bad circumstances effected another pillar its failure to contribute.

Ongoing doing this, we are getting more on par with mother nature her deep interests while gaining profit and being better prepared for the next message of mother nature, calling for 'do better or prepare for another downfallen.

3.5 Underestimated human power of Tourism Industry and its potential for halting growing poverty. (Info taken from an internal Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board internal discussion in March 2021)

'Brain Drain – The so called 'experts' in the industry could not think of any dynamic mechanism on the ground level (Malaysia) and be like 'follower' when responding to the world's recovery initiative of establishing 'Travel Bubble' by ASEAN/UNWTO and other neighbour countries which the SOP and activation of such initiative creates confusion, and it was failed to execute due to the restriction by local authority, unclear SOP and weak execution plan that the other partner country does not give overwhelming response to the idea.

***Unheard Voice/ Not Inclusive** – Voice of the 'ground player' does not take into consideration in total when the government making up a policy towards COVID recovery travelling SOP. The player knows their market well and they have the tools and capabilities to carry out their responsibilities together with tourism authority in halting the downfall. In this matter, communications play vital role between the government and private sector. Input from the industry should be taken seriously and be realistic.*

***Half-hearted helping hand** – The so-called recovery plan of 'Pakej Cuti Penjawat Awam (PCPA)' initiated by the government with so called 'smart collaboration' with CUEPACS has no strong basis execution plan and it is clumsy. Method, channel, and period of promotions does not speak well that later creates confusion and delays in executing the promo packages that leads to the losses for the industry and it is not standardise. Role function of CUEPACS in the initiative not well brief and it seen as 'one man show' in the end and again, bring losses to the player on the ground. This also refers to the business aid provided by the government that has to go through so many layers and documentation that in the end, makes the industry players like á beggar' in their own land. Government should make things easier instead of giving so many hurdles to the ground people who are in need during crisis.*

The time for 'fancy tourism' is getting over and this is the time to go back to mother nature, communicate and interact back in its own language for a long-term sustainable survival in time of crisis. Country that has full of resources such as Malaysia can be a leading partner as role model in executing 'survival tourism' within this pandemic. The only need is that the so called 'experts' must open their eyes, their ears, and their mind to listen to the 'more experts' that knows their market well and holding hand in hand for a planning, designing, testing and executing the new mechanics plus SOP within the country limitation as a preparation before embarking to international arena once again. '

In essence,

My contribution does not aim to be complete; its aim is to motivate others to think outside of the box they are in and to best use of all their conceptual qualities to the bitter need to come out with a sustainable structure, one with built in stabilizers in case events such as COVID attempt to burn an entire tourism industry down again.

So much to lose for all, so little to win by a few, locking yourself up and to 'wait and see'. It needs the attitude of never to surrender in the willingness to climb out of misery and to halt programs and actions not really supporting Industry its entire need for overhauling.

Indeed, as the article show with confirmed facts and statistic data that the industry truly is a vital element of the social economy of Malaysia. The industry its impact to the 'man in the street' is huge, be it by being directly employed or be it as an entrepreneur eating from the travelling passant.

The article in question, however, is not standing up against down falling, is not fighting for the so important industry its survival, it is not inviting to climb out, it is merely a stay home order based on 'doubtfully stating that COVID is killing in its nature.'

The to the society so important industry as tourism cannot afford such attitude, it needs calling up the 'leaders' for getting out of their narrow mind thinking, for getting out of merely a 'copycat' attitude and not to living in fear.

Yes, to follow SOP for the time being but to keep on innovating, to keep on moving and to keep on improving is the source to spectacular ideas. Spectacular ideas lay the groundwork for innovation and growth of the industry. Beyond reasonable doubt, existing structures, approaches will not defend the industry for a next virus unwanted visitor, it need 'open-source methodologies' applied to web browsers such as Firefox for example.

Thus, time for overhauling, time to invite new young talents because and after all, this current approach to COVID has severely damaged the infrastructure and emptied the pockets, leaving the next generation with a negative start and that is not what this generation would like to offer to them.

God knows how much Malaysia need spectacular ideas and the courage to overcome fear and just to make it happen. In the spirit of one for all it requires rebuilding of trust and team spirit, it requires more than one liners and studies, it requires an influential think tank with authority.

I do hope that my contribution will support the captains of industry to sit down and to listen (also to the grassroots), to entrust their sake to **a collective and inclusive thinktank** I mentioned in chapter 0.

As a payoff, I find great inspiration in a quote of the late Sir Winston Churchill (1874 – 1965)

‘ Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak. Courage is also what it takes to sit down and to listen ‘.

Could [this wisdom](#) reach Malaysian government leaders in their heart, they would know by then that implementing emergency laws as a tool to embattle COVID exclude thinkers from any contribution to a collective and inclusive strategy to deal successfully with the current and next upcoming pandemics.... Courage is not based on bravery, its based on daring to compromise in an inclusive solution for all.

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