

INTENTION TO REVISIT MALAYSIAN TOURISM IN THE POST COVID-19 PERIOD

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Abstract: Within the unprecedented situation, Malaysian rural tourism was badly hit by the COVID-19 outbreak that reverberated across the global economy. This study represents the interdependency of revisit intention that correlated with rural tourism stigma and trust to excess the COVID-19 preventive efforts in uplifting the rural tourism in the country. As Malaysian daily COVID-19 cases are under control starting from November 2021, it is the appropriate time to study on the intention to revisit. Theory of planned behavior was applied to define the likelihood of tourists revisiting the rural tourism destination after COVID-19 or in the future. Results indicate that the current development of pandemic arises the concern among tourists and influences their trust to revisit. 298 responses analyses to examined to impede meaningful investigation for regional planning and remote area tourism development from the views of stakeholders, the planning agencies, and communities. The result of the study has shown that attitude, fear of COVID-19, and compliance have a positive and significant influence on trust. Likewise, trust has a positive and significant influence on intention, while compliance has the strongest influence on trust. Hence, this study is essential to highlight factors hampering the COVID-19 pandemic on rural tourism in Malaysia.

Keywords: revisit intention, rural tourism; post-COVID-19, pandemic, Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

Introduction

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to a severe impact on the tourism industry worldwide. UNWTO has predicted the worst-case scenario on global tourism receipts with the estimations of loss accounted for 320 US\$ billion (UNWTO, 2020). By regions, Asia and the Pacific regions faced the greatest hit with the largest decline with a 95% drop in international arrivals in the first five months of 2021 compared to the same period in 2019. Within this unprecedented situation, Malaysian rural tourism was badly hit by the COVID-19 outbreak on both demand and supply shocks reverberating across the global economy. At the sectoral level, tourism and travel-related industries will be among the hardest hit with an expected total loss of RM3.37 billion (MOTAC, 2020). The crisis has greatly contributed to the devastating impact on the domestic tourism sector and rural tourism is the subsector.

Rural tourism is a hybrid concept that merges two complex industries of rural area resources and tourism to create a profitable market for farm products and services in Malaysia. Well-developed tourism activity in the rural areas has the potential to enhance the local economy by promoting tourism activity and local business opportunities to enhance the standard of living of local communities. Many studies found that before the pandemic, rural tourism is recognized as one of the major tools in enhancing the community's standard of living (Shahudin *et al.*, 2017; Aliman *et al.*,

2016; Osman, 2014). This is because any development that took place at rural destinations benefited the local community as the permanent recipients. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the severe impact in tourism and containment of the virus across the tourism sector in post-pandemic is required in minimizing the transmission especially to uplift the rural tourism sector in Malaysia. Many recent articles are focusing on the COVID-19 widespread on the impact of airlines, hotels, and businesses (Foo *et al.*, 2020; Che, Omar & Suraiya, 2020) but very minimal on rural tourism area perspective. The majority of the current studies have demonstrated a highly significant impact of the pandemic on subsector in tourism in Malaysia, however, the rural tourism and their revisit attention in post-COVID-19 have attracted relatively less attention. However, the crisis has greatly contributed to the devastating impact on the domestic tourism sector (Zubair & Shamsudin, 2021).

Background of the study

A domestic tourism survey (DOSM, 2020) reported a total of 239.1 million domestic visitors were recorded in 2019 with a growth of 8.1 percent as compared to the previous year (7.7%). In terms of total tourism trips, domestic visitors undertook 332.4 million trips within the country with an average of 1.39 trips per visitor. Meanwhile, domestic tourism expenditure continued to register a double-digit growth to RM103.2 billion in 2019 (11.54%). Thus, the Malaysian Government has recognized that rural tourism has an emerging form and potential to generate tourism income down to the village level. In line with the ultimate objective of the Rural Tourism Master Plan (2001) which is to identify market potential for rural tourism growth to provide institutional strengthening which enhances the capacity of both government and tourist providers in Malaysia. Hall, Scott and Gössling (2020) stated that a pandemic contributes to the political momentum to enact public health measures in the tourism sector especially for the overall recovery of tourist arrivals that primarily be determined by the interplay of economic policy and health interventions. In Malaysia the daily COVID-19 cases are under control starting from November 2021 (<https://covid-19.moh.gov.my>). So it is the appropriate time to study on the intention to revisit by the tourists.

This paper is an empirical study that examines the adequacy of the planning approach for policymakers in strengthening the revisit intention and tourist arrival in developing rural tourism in Malaysia with a focus on the rural capacity to increase the tourist arrival in the post-pandemic situation. It explores the fear of COVID-19, Attitude towards COVID-19, COVID-19 SOP Compliance towards Tourist Trust and Intention to Revisit. It is indeed important to understand the factors that are directly important for revisiting the rural tourism destination/spot in Malaysia after COVID-19 would be worthwhile for tourists. This study aims to offer advice on how to improve rural tourism revisiting motives on safety preparation, and coordination of actions and policy responses during future infectious disease outbreaks with empirical evidence. Indeed, the COVID-19 epidemic has created an opportunity for the development of rural tourism to attract local more tourists (Vaishar & Šťastná, 2020).

Research problem

The rural tourism sector has the potential to grow and be economically viable but is not seen as attracting a sufficient number of tourists, especially those coming from abroad (international tourists).

COVID-19 pandemic has created huge loss to rural tourism in Malaysia from March 2020 that caused the economic sectors to shut down, followed by subsequent quarantine measures that added zero

demand for tourism service providers, especially in the rural areas of Malaysia. Undoubtedly, the crucial need of this sector is to improve visitor demand via re-visit intention especially after the pandemic. In addition, the revisit intention analysis of rural tourism as a niche product is limited in its scope compared to other analyses in other sectors within the tourism context. Perhaps, the significant impact after post-pandemic on this sub-sector in helping the rural community or rural tourism economy has not been studied in detail.

Research Objectives

This study represents the interdependency of revisit intention that correlated with rural tourism stigma and trust after pandemic in generating more tourists' arrival and finally to exceed the COVID-19 preventive efforts as an important segment to uplift the rural tourism in the country. The theory of the planned behavior model (Ajzen, 1985) is applied in this study to investigate the intentions of tourists. Intention is the self-judgement of how likely an individual will perform an action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Ajzen (1991) defined attitude as the personal evaluation of the behavior in consideration, either favorable or unfavorable. The association between attitude and behavioral intention is positive as shown by past researchers. A favorable attitude will lead to a stronger intention to perform the said behaviour (Al-Debei *et al.*, 2013; Amaro & Duarte, 2015; Sanne & Wiese, 2018).

Thus, the objective of this study is to examine the relationship between attitude, compliance, and fear of COVID-19 towards the travelers' trust in Malaysian rural tourism. Subsequently, the element of trust is linked to the re-visit intention to analyze how pandemic has affected the tourist perception on this issue.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study are:

1. What is the relationship between Fear of COVID-19 and Tourists' Trust in Malaysia in the post COVID-19 period?
2. What is the relationship between Tourists' attitude towards COVID-19 and their Trust in Malaysia in the post COVID-19 period?
3. What is the relationship between COVID-19 SOP compliance by Tourists and their Trust in Malaysia in the post COVID-19 period?
4. What is the relationship between Tourist's Trust and their Intention to revisit in Malaysia in the post COVID-19 period?

The findings from this study would assist the rural tourism operators and policymakers in developing strategies to attract more visitors from the re-visit category. The local tourists are considered to be a target group because the sector has become increasingly popular among domestic before pandemic comparatively to foreign visitors. However, to understand the impact of revisit intention towards the rural economy in detail, the study needs to analyze visitor perceptions on COVID-19 rural tourism attributes to understand their motivation to re-visit a particular location in Malaysia.

Literature Review

The theory of the planned behavior model (Ajzen, 1985) is applied in this study to investigate a wide range of intentions and behaviors of tourists based on a comprehensive literature review on previous tourism studies as well as focus groups. It is considered that since the study focusses on the Intention to revisit by the tourists in Malaysia after COVID-19 period, TPB model is the best suitable theory for this study. TPB model is regarded as a cognitive model of human behavior that concentrates on prediction and understanding of clearly defined behaviors. The model is particularly applicable to the behaviors that are completely under personal control (Corby, *et al.*, 1996). The research model assumes the presence of the relationship between these elements and behavioral intention. Intention to perform in a specific way is deemed as the direct determinant of behavior under the concept of the TPB model. It is regarded as a cognitive model of human behavior that concentrates on the prediction and understanding of clearly defined behaviors. The model is particularly applicable to the behaviors that without completely under personal control. More than that, Ajzen (2012) concurred that the TPB model is adopted to explore frameworks of belief on novel behaviors and behavior resulting from constant experience. Based on a comprehensive literature review, an extended TPB model of tourists was also proposed to investigate precisely the formation and behavior of tourists' decisions, and are often used when forming new constructs (Hsu and Huang, 2010). It is as suggested by Ajzen (1991) that the TPB model is unlocked to modification by adding more predictors to predict a larger proportion of variance from the people's intention and behavior after taking into account the originally constructed TPB framework. Hsu and Huang (2010) enhanced TPB to access the destination attachment and risk perception of volunteerism experience intention. Scrima, Miceli, Caci & Cardaci (2021) in their study on 223 French adults' intention to take vaccine showed that the relationship between fear of COVID-19 and intention was positive and significant. Cihan, Cansev & Ilker (2021) in their study on 337 social media users in Turkey have found that trust positively and significantly mediated the relationship between fear of COVID-19 and intention.

COVID-19 pandemic has created huge damage to rural tourism in Malaysia that caused the economics sector to shut down from March 2020 followed by subsequent quarantine measures added that create zero demand for tourism service providers, especially in the rural areas. Vaishar and Šťastná (2020) investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Czechia's rural tourism and found the drastic decline is mainly affected destinations that focused on foreign tourists. They found that the rural tourism sites recorded some moderate losses as this sector focuses more on domestic tourists rather than international tourists, interestingly the results show that in some destinations the tourist interest for the 2020 summer holiday is higher compared to 2019 before the outbreak. Despite direct restrictions imposed, only minimal effect poses to rural tourism in this country as travelers prefer rural activities such as hiking, cycling, water sports, and church tourism as the second housing environment. Thus to uplift the current state after the post-pandemic, Malaysian rural tourism has to foster the demand from domestic tourists in the short run planning rather than international travelers. By compiling regional package offers that coordinate the cooperation between stakeholders that entrusted areas create security amongst visitors (Vaishar & Šťastná, 2020). In addition, a decline in society income during a pandemic may shift the trend towards rural tourism as they may give up expensive holiday trips and rural tourism will be the attractive option. Seraphin and Dosquet (2020) pointed out that in the post-COVID-19 lockdown context, mountain tourism may induce higher opportunity and a new trend for destination selection as a new dimension for travelers as the mutation impacts of COVID-19. Chelsea, Hannah & Delaney (2021) in their study on individual attraction have found that attitude has a positive and significant impact on trust. Lubis, Yurasti, Yanti & Yulistia

(2018) in their study on taxpayers in Indonesia revealed that attitude has a positive and significant influence on trust. Nur Thara Atikah, Amran & Jaratin. (2017) in their study on travelers to Malaysia have found that trust was positively and significantly influenced by attitude. Davies, Lassar, Manolis, Prince & Winsor (2011) have found that compliance has a significant and positive influence on trust when conducting a study on franchisee in franchising business.

Whilst *et al.*, (2018) found that in the rural tourism sector, the two service quality components of accessibility quality and accommodation quality have great impacts on tourists' satisfaction that influence the revisit intention among tourists in Sarawak. Their study has propounded that it is important for rural tourism entrepreneurs to meet the tourist expectation during their stay to increase tourists' satisfaction that proven to have a positive relationship with revisit intention. This finding is in line with the past studies in different countries on rural tourism aspects by Artuğer (2015); Banki *et al.*, (2014) and Mensah (2013). In short, we can conclude that satisfaction is positively related to revisiting intention by fulfilling tourists' needs especially amid prolonged pandemic and intense competition among the rural tourism destinations in Malaysia. Artuğer (2015) further emphasized the evidence of risk element has a significant impact on the intention of tourists to travel as well as on their destination selection criteria. Jamaludin & Ahmad (2013) have found that trust has positively and significantly influenced intention when conducting a study on buyer intention to purchase in Malaysia. Adiwijaya, Kaihatu, Nugroho, & Kartika (2017) in their study on online shoppers have revealed that trust has a positive and significant influence on intention among online shoppers in Indonesia. Yuliana & Wahyudi (2021) suggested in their study on Zalora online shoppers that trust has a significant and positive influence on intention.

Various relaxation plans established by the government to ensure the survivalists of the Malaysian tourism industry cope with the current situation. When the pandemic is over, tourism will need to grow gradually after a severe hit, the government must tighten the SOPs for safety and recommend travelers to travel with full security and hygienic measures whenever the situation becomes under control (Zubair & Shamsudin, 2021). Despite many unforeseen problems arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, undoubtedly it has also created an opportunity for the development of rural tourism that focused mainly on domestic tourists in the short run with the possibility of long run expansion to a foreigner when it is completely safe to travel across the border.

Despite enormous government assistance and initiatives for rural tourism development, research on the economic contribution remains sparse and limited. The zero demand during extended CMO in Malaysia shows the need for planning and improvement to ensure the profitability of this sector especially to the operators and community in the long run. Therefore, it is believed that if the issues of Covis-19 pandemic problem, the low visitor occupancy, and participation rates will persist, and if it is not tackled soon enough, it could significantly impact the Government's objectives in increasing rural community participation for their economic benefit as designed under the Malaysia Rural Tourism Master Plan and Malaysia Village Action Plan Strategy Initiative.

Research hypotheses

Based on the above discussion, the following research hypotheses were proposed and the research model is given in Figure 1:

H1: There is a relationship between attitude and trust in Malaysian rural tourism.

H2: There is a relationship between compliance and trust in Malaysian rural tourism.

H3: There is a relationship between fear of COVID-19 and trust in Malaysian rural tourism.

H4: There is a relationship between trust and re-visit intention in Malaysian rural tourism.

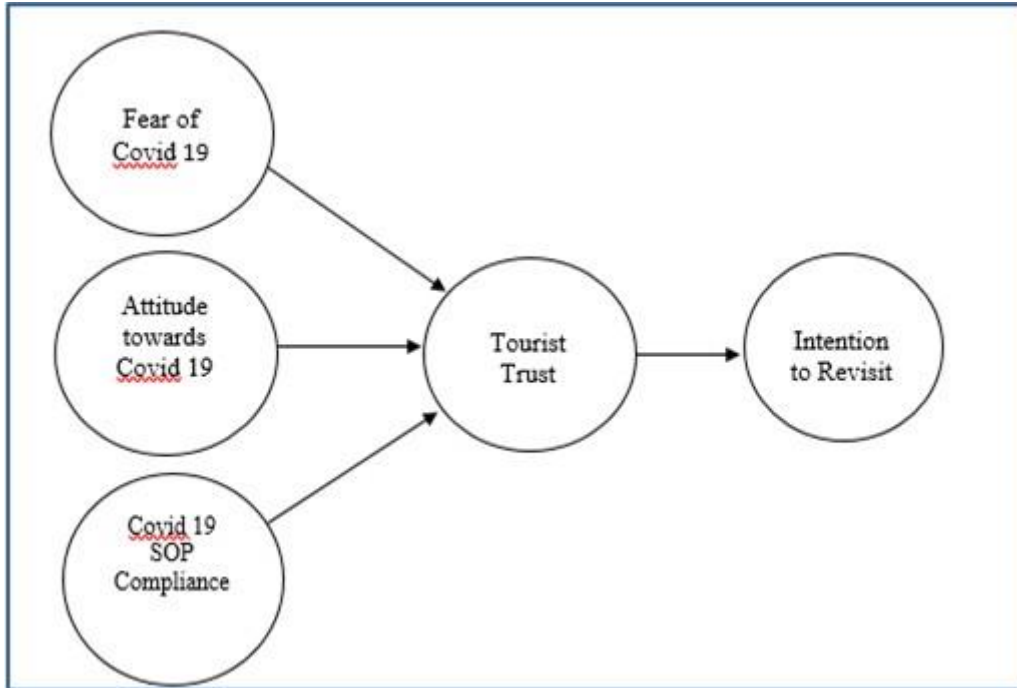


Figure 1: Research Model

Methodology

Tourists who experienced rural tourism in Malaysia before the COVID-19 pandemic were selected for this study. This study focuses on the tourist re-visit intention in Malaysian rural tourism. The survey was gone through over three months. Questionnaires were distributed via email to the targeted respondents by adopting a non-probability sampling technique of purposive sampling for data collection. In this study, purposive sampling was adopted as a sampling technique to select the samples. In purposive sampling technique, the samples were chosen based on the researcher's knowledge and judgment. Those 18 years old and above who have experienced rural tourism in Malaysia were selected as sample to answer the questionnaire. The survey data were collected via online and face to face. The data were collected from April 2021 until August 2021. This study utilized a survey questionnaire that was devised by a careful evaluation of past studies to acquire appropriate measurements that are being used and have strong reliability and validity. A total of 28 observed items constitute the measurement of the exogenous variables and the endogenous variable. Fear of COVID-19 construct consists of 7 measurement items (Ahorsu *et al*, 2020), attitude consists of 5 measurement items (Chu & Chen 2016), COVID-19 compliance constructs consist of 5 measurement items (Rahmani *et al*, 2021), trust construct consists of 5 measurement items (Liu *et al*, 2019) and re-visit intention construct to provide information on market segmentation strategies to stay competitive in the saturated market based on 4 measurement items (Kim *et al*, 2013). A five-point Likert scale was used from strongly disagree to strongly agree was adopted to measure the indicators of each construct. Out of 415 questionnaires distributed, 323 were returned. This constitutes a 77.83% response rate, and it is adequate to carry out data analysis by utilizing the SEM technique. After going

through the process of screening and deleting the outliers, 298 questionnaires were identified can be used and ready for analysis. SmartPLS3 was used in this study to run multivariate data analysis and hypotheses testing while assessing the model measurement and structural model procedures, and the PLS-SEM technique was adopted due to its assessment ability (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

Data Analysis

Common Method Bias

Collinearity statistics are given in Table 1 below. The amount of a variance inflation factor (VIF) greater than 3.3 suggested that there is a problem of collinearity and it also suggests the model is having an issue of common method bias. Therefore, if the VIFs at all factor-level as a result of a full collinearity test are equal or less than 3.3, it indicates that the model is free from any issue with common method bias (Kock, 2015).

Table 1: Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

	RI	FOC	ATT	TRU	COP
RI		2.074	1.764	1.978	1.947
FOC	1.646		1.561	1.48	1.639
ATT	1.721	1.919		1.93	2.023
TRU	2.341	2.208	2.342		2.125
COP	1.714	1.817	1.825	1.58	

Respondents' Profiles

Based on Table 2 of frequency analysis, 47% of the respondents were male, and 53% were female. 11.4% of the respondents were under 30 years old, 29.9% between 31-40 years old, 32.2% between 41-50 years old, 17.8% between 51-60 years old, and 8.7% more than 60 years old. There were 7.7% have a monthly income between RM0-RM4,850, 67.8% have income between RM4,851 – RM10,970 and 24.5% have monthly income more than RM10,971. Respondents with secondary school qualification were 0.3%, certificate were 0.3%, Diploma 13.1%, Bachelor 52.3%, Master 31.9% and Doctorate 2%. Respondents who worked in the public sector were 10.7%, 46% were working in the private sector, 26.2% were entrepreneurs, 12.1% were pensioners, 3.4% were unemployed, and students were 1.7%. 85.6% of the respondents were Malaysian and 14.4% were non-Malaysian.

Table 2: Frequency Analysis

		Frequency	Percent
GENDER	Male	140	47.0
	Female	158	53.0
	Total	298	100.0
AGE	<30 YEARS	34	11.4
	31 - 40 YEARS	89	29.9
	41 - 50 YEARS	96	32.2
	51 -60 YEARS	53	17.8
	> 60 YEARS	26	8.7
	Total	298	100.0
INCOME	RM0 - RM4,850	23	7.7
	RM4,851 – RM10,970	202	67.8
	> RM10,971	73	24.5
	Total	298	100.0
EDUCATION	Secondary School	1	.3
	Certificate	1	.3
	Diploma	39	13.1
	Bachelor	156	52.3
	Master	89	31.9

	Doctorate	12	2.0
	Total	298	100.0
	Public sector	32	10.7
	Private sector	137	46.0
	Entrepreneur	78	26.2
EMPLOYMENT	Pensioner	36	12.1
	Unemployed	10	3.4
	Student	5	1.7
	Total	298	100.0
	Malaysian	255	85.6
NATIONALITY	Non-Malaysian	43	14.4
	Total	298	100.0

Source: Own Survey (2021)

Measurement Model

PLS-SEM algorithm was utilized to assess the structural model and to verify the construction measurement reliability and validity. AS suggested by Hair *et al.*, (2017), reliability and validity are the two vital criteria used in PLS-SEM for the outer model goodness study. Initially, the specified model was introduced in Table 1. It found that after the preliminary evaluation of the outer loading was conducted, a few items of the respective constructs need to be deleted due to lower loadings, and it affected the construct reliability and validity. After the deletion of the lower loading items, the requirement for Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was met with all the constructs' AVE ranged from 0.643 to 0.804, all of which were higher than 0.50, thereby confirming the existence of convergent validity for all latent structures (Hair *et al.*, 2012).

The composite reliability shows in Table 3 ranged from 0.878 to 0.966 for first-order constructions and met the criterion of 0.70 and above (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Further, to confirm the presence of discriminant validity in this study, cross-loading of the item was evaluated. The results depicted that all item loadings were greater than their respective cross-loadings, as shown in Table 4. Hetrotrait-

Monotrait (HTMT) ratios were verified to further confirm the presence of a discriminant when all ratios of the five constructs were < 0.9 as in Table 5. (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). The HTMT inference was also performed by running the full bootstrapping. This research, therefore, exhibited the reliability and validity of the latent constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2014).

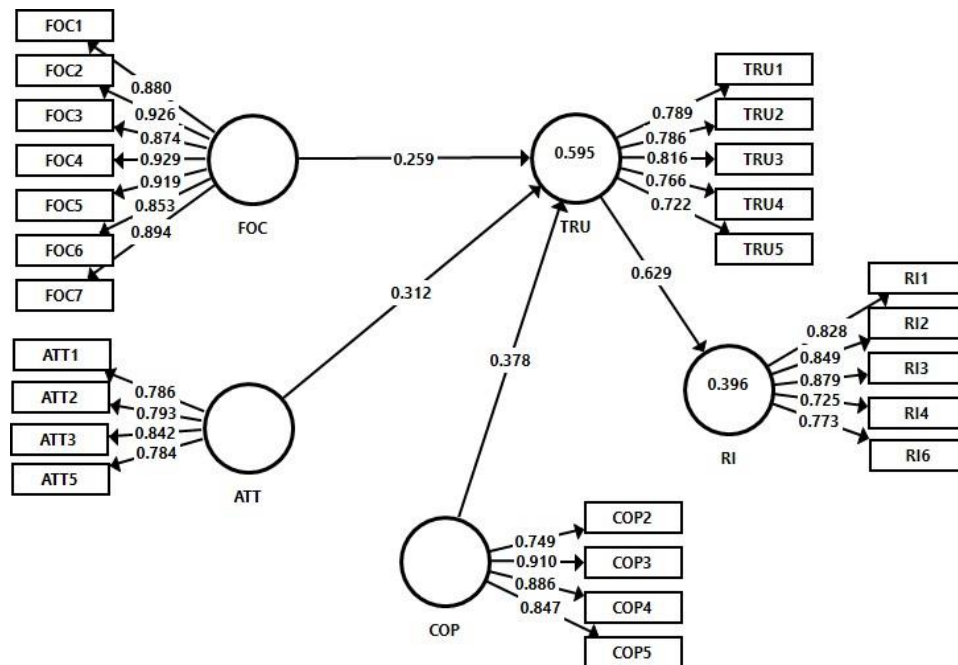


Figure 2: Measurement Model

Note: FOC=Fear of COVID-19, ATT=Attitude, COP=Compliance, TRU=Trust, RI=Re- visit Intention

Table 3: Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
ATT	0.817(0.760,0.857)	0.827(0.756,0.869)	0.878(0.844,0.903)	0.643(0.577,0.699)
COP	0.87(0.819,0.908)	0.872(0.819,0.910)	0.912(0.879,0.935)	0.723(0.646,0.782)
FOC	0.959(0.947,0.970)	0.96(0.944,0.969)	0.966(0.957,0.975)	0.804(0.760,0.846)
RI	0.87(0.832,0.902)	0.875(0.834,0.907)	0.906(0.882,0.927)	0.661(0.600,0.719)
TRU	0.835(0.782,0.874)	0.837(0.789,0.874)	0.883(0.850,0.909)	0.603(0.532,0.665)

Note: Confidence interval computed based on percentile bootstrapping test with 10000 sub- samples and at 5% confidence level. A two-tail test

Table 4: Cross Loadings

	ATT		FOC	RI	TRU
TT1	0.786	0.284	0.395	0.466	0.457
ATT2	0.793	0.379	0.453	0.503	0.448
ATT3	0.842	0.382	0.400	0.529	0.470
ATT5	0.784	0.497	0.441	0.564	0.619
COP2	0.389	0.749	0.339	0.443	0.524
COP3	0.465	0.910	0.377	0.528	0.572
COP4	0.429	0.886	0.382	0.470	0.532
COP5	0.389	0.847	0.389	0.479	0.562
FOC1	0.511	0.436	0.880	0.419	0.558
FOC2	0.503	0.395	0.926	0.441	0.550
FOC3	0.459	0.411	0.874	0.376	0.535
FOC4	0.470	0.367	0.929	0.392	0.528
FOC5	0.472	0.397	0.919	0.366	0.513
FOC6	0.422	0.355	0.853	0.374	0.481
FOC7	0.479	0.383	0.894	0.402	0.530
RI1	0.536	0.431	0.347	0.828	0.477
RI2	0.586	0.558	0.340	0.849	0.557
RI3	0.578	0.481	0.394	0.879	0.546
RI4	0.438	0.369	0.402	0.725	0.466
RI6	0.489	0.443	0.317	0.773	0.501
TRU1	0.573	0.478	0.391	0.593	0.789
TRU2	0.430	0.436	0.418	0.408	0.786

TRU3	0.466	0.485	0.511	0.449	0.816
TRU4	0.486	0.401	0.493	0.410	0.766
TRU5	0.488	0.661	0.474	0.540	0.722

Table 5: Hetrotrait-Monotrait(HTMT) Ratio

	ATT	COP	FOC	RI
COP	0.569(0.457,0.667)			
FOC	0.593(0.446,0.702)	0.479(0.318,0.616)		
RI	0.759(0.640,0.850)	0.647(0.517, 0.748)	0.485(0.325, 0.608)	
TRU	0.744(0.641, 0.829)	0.744(0.638, 0.850)	0.657(0.534,0.762)	0.724(0.584,0.819)

Note: A two-tail percentile bootstrap test at 5% confidence interval (2.5%, 97.5%) with 10,000 sub-samples were performed

This study assessed the structural model by assessing the Path coefficient and the coefficient of determination (R²) value (Hair *et al.*, 2012). 500 sub-samples bootstrapping by PLS was utilized to confirm the significance level of path coefficient in this study. Table 6 depicts the outcome of the hypotheses testing of path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-value. In Table 6, hypothesis 1 proposes a relationship between attitude and trust and the result confirms that there is a positive and significant influence of attitude on trust ($\beta = 0.312$, $t = 5.008$, $p=0.000$); as a result, H1 is supported. The result of the hypothesis 2 also reveals a significant and positive relationship between compliance and trust ($\beta = 0.378$, $t = 6.579$, $p=0.000$); thus supporting H2. The hypothesis 3 result also demonstrates the positive and significant relationship between fear of COVID-19 and trust ($\beta = 0.259$, $t = 4.831$, $p=0.000$); therefore, H3 is supported. Lastly, the hypothesis 4 result reveals the positive and significant relationship between trust and re-visit intention ($\beta = 0.629$, $t = 11.808$, $p=0.000$), and thus, H4 is supported. This study also assessed the R² of the endogenous construct of intention. The R² shows moderate values of 0.595 and 0.396.

Table 6: Hypotheses testing Results

	Beta	T Statistics	P-values	Decision
ATT -> TRU	0.312	5.008	0.000	Supported
COP -> TRU	0.378	6.579	0.000	Supported
FOC -> TRU	0.259	4.831	0.000	Supported
TRU -> RI	0.629	11.808	0.000	Supported

Discussion

This study seeks to establish the understanding of the attitude, fear of COVID-19 and compliance direct effect on trust and the direct effect of trust on re-visit intention in the Malaysian rural tourism sector. Previous studies were reviewed on attitude, fear of COVID-19, compliance, trust, and intention. The basis to develop the model is based on the findings of the initial academic studies. It has shown that attitude, fear of COVID-19, and compliance have a positive and significant influences on trust and trust has a positive and significant influence on intention. The PLS technique was applied in this study to confirm the proposed hypotheses.

From the above data analysis, the result has clearly shown that compliance has the strongest influence on trust. This clearly demonstrates that compliance adhered to by rural tourism tourists is very crucial in ensuring trust among the rural tourism tourist. Based on the hypotheses testing results, compliance has the highest influence on trust with the path coefficient of 0.378. The statistical results suggest that those rural tourism tourists who follow strict compliance during the COVID-19 pandemic tend to have the highest level of trust in the rural tourism sector. Another reason for rural tourism tourists to have more trust to re-visit the rural tourism destination again is because they are familiar with the rural tourism destination that they visited before. Therefore, the level of trust is much higher due to their experience and their expectation that the same compliance will be followed by the rural tourism operator. Therefore, rural tourism operators in Malaysia should focus on how to elevate the rural tourism tourists' trust by focusing on the tourists who follow the compliance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Marketing strategy must be directed towards enhancing trust which will attract the tourists to re-visit the rural tourism attractions.

The second strongest construct that influences on trust is the attitude with the path coefficient of 0.312. The statistical evidence shows that the attitude of the rural tourism tourists is one of the important determinants to ensure that the tourists will have trust in the rural tourism. Rural tourism tourists' attitude towards rural tourism plays an important role in developing trust. Rural tourism operators must take the right strategy by giving the right information so that those rural tourism tourists can form the right attitude which eventually develops the trust towards re-visit the place again. New attractions and activities must be informed and the benefits and differences the tourist will experience must be highlighted as well. The right marketing and advertising campaign must be adopted so that it will influence on the attitude of the rural tourism tourists. The attitude that the rural tourism tourist formed during the COVID-19 pandemic will lead them to have greater trust for them to visit again the rural tourism destination which previously they have visited.

The third strongest factor that influences trust is fear of COVID-19 with a path coefficient of 0.259. The fear of COVID-19 makes the rural tourism tourist have more trust to re-visit the rural tourism destination they visited before due to their experience and familiarity before at the destination. Due to the fear of COVID-19, trust towards the destination they visited before is much stronger since if they want to visit the new destination which they never visited will be less likely. Even though they fear COVID-19, but since the trust level is high, they will have a stronger re-visit intention to the same destination. Therefore, the rural tourism destination must take initiative to build greater trust in those who have visited their place to visit their place again. The rural tourism operator must be able to convince and ensure their visited guest before that their place is safe and secure for their guests. By doing so, it can attract more rural tourism tourists to visit the place again. To further enhance the rural tourism re-visit intention among the rural tourism tourist, the government has implemented a policy to ensure the safety of rural tourism tourist from COVID-19 threat. The government has come out with

stringent COVID-19 standard operating procedure for the tourist to boost their confidence to re-visit and stay at the rural tourism spots. Government policy to allow only vaccinated tourists to visit rural tourism spots was one of the measures to ensure the safety of the tourists.

Implications

In terms of practical implications, this study has provided some guidelines to the tourism stakeholders in developing higher tourist intention from tourists' perspectives especially in the post COVID-19. From the above statistical data analysis, it has been shown that trust has a very strong positive and significant influence on re-visit intention with a path coefficient of 0.629. This is very obvious suggesting the importance of trust in ensuring for the rural tourism tourists to have re-visit intention towards the rural tourism destination they visited before. With the high level of trust, the intention to visit again the same rural tourism destination will be very strong. Stronger trust means the rural tourism tourist will feel they are safe while at the rural tourism destination. It is the duty of rural tourism operators to plan and strategize on how they can instill stronger trust among the rural tourism tourists so that the tourists will feel more confident and to visit again their rural tourism destination.

Limitations

This study has a few constraints in terms of the methodology, sample size, sampling technique, and constructs. Firstly, the sample of respondents was collected from tourists who experienced rural tourism in Malaysia during the period of control movement order (CMO) during the COVID-19 pandemic via online survey. Hence, it limits the generalization of the findings, as only 11% respondents are non-Malaysian and majority are domestic tourists. Secondly, the study adopting a non-probability sampling technique of purposive sampling where data was gathered within a sole time frame. In general, tourist behavior and motivation may change over time, as well as attitudes and the image of the destination as the COVID-19 pandemic has halted mobility globally on an unprecedented scale, causing international travelers' constraint to revisit or severely disrupted as noted by Ioanides and Gyimothy (2020). Thus, revisit factors in the aspects of rural tourism at a point of the prolonged CMO in Malaysia (18 March 2020 – October 2021) may not reflect the actual tourist motivation afterwards to be able to draw meaningful conclusions that lead to sustainable and resilient tourism policy. Thirdly, the collection of data was conducted within a limited period which covers only several months of the year 2021. The constraint in data collection due to the online responses and it took time to obtain a sufficient intended number of samples for analysis. This exhibits the generalization of the sample throughout the year during prolonged CMO in the country.

Recommendations

For future studies, researchers would suggest that data to be collected more across both from international and domestic tourists through longitudinal approach to determine if tourists' revisit intention exists over a duration of time to integrate tourism planning to be rational, sustainable, practical and relevant with the objectives initially pointed out from rural tourism planning through time and space aftermath pandemic. Next, future studies may use pre-post responses which collect the data from local and international tourists before and after the post pandemic. This may provide more accurate data to produce significant findings of the study by employing a larger sample size, to maximize findings' generalizability to examine other independent constructs such as price, image, and promotion to see their effect on revisit intention. Finally, it is suggested that studies focus on specific type of the rural tourism destination or activity as the sector comprises of variety sub sector within

this context. This eventually helps to provide a better understanding the tourist revisit intention on selected Malaysian rural tourism to be able to draw meaningful conclusions and policies that lead to sustainable and resilient of growth especially for international tourists' arrival and the capacity of rural tourism to rebound from the crisis.

Conclusion

The rapidly spreading of the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia has wreaked domestic tourism industry especially rural tourism destinations. Thus, it is very vital for the rural tourism operator to observe the rural tourism fear tourists of COVID-19, their attitude, and the self-compliance adhered by the rural tourists. By observing those factors, the rural tourism operators would be able to make a strategy to enhance the trust among the rural tourism tourists. The study has shown that trust is a very important factor to ensure that the rural tourism tourists have a strong re-visit intention to the rural tourism destination again. At the same time, rural tourism operators must take action to convince rural tourism tourists that their place is safe, secure, and hygienic for their guests. In a post-COVID-19 pandemic, rural tourism tourists will be more particular and concern with all these issues. By addressing all the issues mentioned, the trust level will be strengthened, and eventually, it will bring back again their guest to their place. For future studies, it is recommended to include other variables such as previous experience, familiarity, and service quality in the model.

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