Travel Risk Perception and Travel Intention on Staycation in Malaysia: Post Covid-19

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Abstract
Covid-19 has created public fear and tourism industry is among the most affected sectors with many travel restrictions put in place. Since there is still a lot of uncertainty about international tourism, people are looking for safer methods to restart some sense of normalcy in travel. Staycation is becoming more popular as a convenient method to unwind without having to travel far, however it is important to look at the tourists' feelings of the negative consequences that might occur during travel. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the travel risk perception and travel intention on staycation in Malaysia among domestic travellers. 384 responses were collected using a cross-sectional study to overview the recent changes in travel risk (threat vulnerability, threat severity, self-efficacy and response efficacy) and travel intention on staycation. The study revealed that the travellers realized how vulnerable they were to being infected by the virus. They tend to express their acceptance cautiously since they are willing to take preventive measures. As compared to many other types of travel, respondents seemed to believe that staycations are safe. Overall findings of this study are valuable for stakeholders and policymakers to make better decisions and bare the implications in tourism recovery.
Keywords: Travel Risk, Travel Intention, Post Covid-19, Staycation, Domestic

Introduction
The recent outbreak of Covid-19 has made waves in the world in numerous industries with the tourism industry topping the list of the hardest hit (Zhu & Dheng, 2020). Domestic tourism gives a higher possibility for a rebound in the early stages of recovery due to international travel limitations and the fear of infection. In addition, Malaysia has become the fourth Southeast Asian country, following Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia, to loosen up its Covid-19 travel restrictions by reopening its state borders and allowing interstate and international travel.

Nevertheless, there are some risks of contracting or spreading Covid-19 when travelling. As with any activity that involves interacting with people from different households, travel is not risk-free even after full vaccination against Covid-19 (UNICEF, 2021). Some areas even require

tests, and more importantly, there is anxiety and risk associated with stepping outside your home and getting infected. These may influence a traveller's perception of a location and intention to travel there (Yusuf & Azhar, 2021). This is in line with the Protection Motivation Theory constructed by Rogers in 1975 highlighted the principles which the model postulates that tourists' perceived threat vulnerability, threat severity, self-efficacy, and response efficacy all influence their travel intention. In fact, Sheeran et al (2014) discovered that improving risk appraisal factors such as risk perception and perceived severity have a combined positive impact on influencing intentions and behaviour toward safety.

One of the best ways to get out of the house after being in quarantine for what feels like years is to take a staycation during this post-pandemic. Even if one isn't comfortable travelling far, taking the time to take care of their mental health is still important. Hence, staycations will allow travellers to return to work feeling more refreshed and rejuvenated. While vacations may only provide around 50 per cent of relaxation time, staycations offer almost 100 per cent (Lee, 2020). Also, those who are anxious or fearful of travelling can consider a staycation a safer option since they will have less contact with strangers. Therefore, this study aims to investigate travel risk perception and travel intention on a staycation in Malaysia during post Covid-19.

Literature Review
Tourists' Fear of Pandemic Diseases
Pandemics are large-scale epidemics of infectious diseases that can significantly increase morbidity and death across a huge geographic area while causing major economic, social, and political disruption (Madhav, 2017). Covid-19 was declared a pandemic by the WHO when it became known that the disease was severe and spreading rapidly across a large area. The spread of disease is influenced by a variety of conditions. Two of the most important are the ease with which the condition can be passed from person to person and the movement of people, particularly through flight, because infections can be spread to other parts of the world in hours (Grennan, 2019). This has caused the country to be caught up in a sea of panic and fear. In turn, governments impose mandatory measures to control infection, such as travel restrictions, bans on public activities, school closures, quarantine, and isolation, which together contribute to the public's fear of the pandemic (Zheng et al., 2021). World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus revealed in his opening remarks at a Covid-19 media conference on April 10, 2020, that the epidemic had spread to 213 countries, with 1,524,162 confirmed positive cases and 92,941 deaths (Shah et al., 2020). Therefore, the growing number of cases and deaths has resulted in unprecedented levels of anxiety, fear and panic as well as an understandable avoidance of human interaction (Zheng et al., 2021).

Prior research indicates that during a pandemic, people suffer fear of infection, which causes stress, depression, and anxiety (Teng et al., 2021) and that uninfected people are afraid of encountering confirmed Covid-19 patients. Zheng et al (2021) on the other hand claimed that, since travellers are fear of infection and death which may lead to feelings of hopelessness and long-term anxiety about travelling, they prefer to avoid visiting areas that are seen to be unsafe and risky. Still, the existing literature on travellers' reactions to disasters, has mostly focused on their risk perception and post-crisis travel intentions, ignoring the emotional implications of health-related crises (Zheng et al., 2021).

Risk Perception

According to Bhasin (Falahuddin et al., 2021), risk perception is an uncertain, probabilistic prospective future outlay. It can alternatively be defined as a subjective analysis of the risks of a risky scenario based on its characteristics and intensity. Risk perception is also commonly used to characterise people's attitudes and intuitive judgments toward risk (Falahuddin et al., 2020), while Wolff et al (2019) indicate that anxiety and other negative emotional behaviour are enhanced by risk perception. Karl and Schmude (2017) stated that risk perception, as a multi-dimensional construct, can have a variety of implications for travellers in their decision-making, since one or more risk dimensions might influence a traveller's judgement of a place and desire to visit. It shows that even if there is risk in actual life, the level at which the individual perceives it is a critical determinant. Thus, how risk perceptions may influence post-crisis recovery travel behaviour of visitors, is of great concern to tourism experts (Matiza, 2020). In order to protect people from the pandemic or to bring it under control, a set of strict but essential restrictions and procedures have been implemented in almost every country (Arica et al., 2021). Therefore, in a short period of time, the normal flow of life has shifted, and a non-normal process has become an intrinsic part of daily life in the face of the pandemic.

Domestic Travel Intention

The intention to travel is the result of an individual's mental process that influences behaviours and changes motivation into conduct or action (Angguni & Lenggogeni, 2021). In the post-Covid19 situation, travellers can take a lot of effort to mitigate these risks, including sticking to their travel plans, modifying the purpose of their trip, or gathering more relevant information about the location they will be visiting. In fact, Angguni and Lenggogeni (2021) also claimed that travellers' willingness to tolerate risk, as well as the chance of safety, will have a significant impact on their decision to visit a destination. To put it another way, psychological and functional factors frequently impact behaviour toward a destination, resulting in travel intention.

According to Bae and Chang (2020), the Covid-19 pandemic's impacts and consequences are not the same as those of earlier disasters, such as property destruction, but Covid-19 has a larger impact, including job losses, economic crises, psychological difficulties, and instability. Since the tourism industry is the backbone of many of the countries in the region, many countries have changed their focus to domestic tourism to relaunch it including Malaysia. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), domestic tourism has the potential to revitalise the tourism industry (Chan, 2021). As of October 2020, 75.2 per cent of Malaysians said they planned to travel within the country soon. To prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus, Malaysia implemented the Movement Control Order (MCO). In June 2020, the MCO was lifted, and Malaysia entered the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO), which has since permitted Malaysians to travel interstate (Hirschmann, 2021). Therefore, domestic travel intentions and relevant strategies must be thoroughly examined to understand changing behaviour in this new normalcy.

Post Pandemic Travel Behaviour

Behaviourism, often known as behavioural psychology, is a learning theory that holds that most behaviours are learned through conditioning (Cherry, 2019). During pandemics, different countries have implemented different levels of limitations especially travel

restrictions to prevent and control the spread of the virus. Such limitations might have a significant impact on the general public's travel behaviour, people's lifestyles, social interactions, and economic circumstances (Abdullah et al., 2020). Therefore, the tourism industry must undergo major transformations in order to prepare for the relaunch, including extensive restructuring and the implementation of new procedures and standards (Ivanova et al., 2020). Due to the impact on people's perceptions, preferences and attitudes toward travel, companies' business strategies in the aftermath of the pandemic must necessarily take into account the changes in travellers' behaviour and demand.

Chan (2021) examined how travellers' travel decisions and behaviour are influenced by uncertainty and risk awareness in terms of risk perception, objects, occurrences, or activities and showed that the quantity and validity of those mediation paths and decision-making processes were influenced by how potential travellers view tourism risks, particularly in the post-pandemic period. Therefore, travellers' perceptions of risk and travel anxiety can have a big impact on their destination selections and travel behaviours (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). Obviously, the changes in travel behaviours resulted in the travelling in most parts of the world travel near the travellers' homes to feel safe.

Intention to Staycation
The world is moving towards a new normal, thus people are looking for safe ways to restart normal life as countries carefully reopen following months of lockdown. During the lockdown, certain industries have been able to adapt to digital platforms and continue their fight for existence (Sharma et al., 2021), others like tourism had unprecedented failures due to travel limitations and social distancing, making it extremely difficult to survive the pandemic. As to support the local economy and revive the economy and tourism industry, staycation appears to be an excellent answer to the problems mentioned above, staycation turns out to be a great method to enjoy pleasant holidays while also benefiting one's pocket and the environment (Gonçalves, 2020). According to google trends, the popularity of staycations has soared since the outbreak of the pandemic (Sudevan, 2020).

The term staycation is derived from the contraction of "stay" and "vacation". It refers to vacations taken at home or around your home rather than travelling to another location (Gonçalves, 2020). Elliot (2021) stated that the present recession and pandemic did not create the staycation trend. It hastened it and according to others, made it permanent. In other words, staycations, as some call them, are the new vacations. Due to people wanting a safer bet for their holiday, they believe that closer is better and a lot of travellers are searching for a secure, comfortable gateway from their daily struggles. With that, it is important for the tourism industry, particularly the hoteliers to monitor trends and industry forecasts that will help in the recovery of travel demand while also taking safety precautions such as safety and hygiene, as travellers want to avoid interaction as much as possible.

Methodology
The method of analysis used to collect this research data is quantitative, using cross-sectional study with five sections (Section A: demographic profile; Section B: perceived threat vulnerability; Section C: perceived threat severity; Section D: perceived self-efficacy; Section E: perceived response efficacy; and Section F: intention to staycation). 384 responses were successfully collected among domestic tourists who have experienced or willing to staycation

during post-pandemic Covid-19. Data collected is analysed using SPSS version 23 to reveal the frequency of mean scores.

Findings

Demographic Profile

The demographic characteristics of the respondents for this study were shown in Table 1 as showing the gender distribution is 62.8% were female respondents, and 37.2% were male. The dominant age of the group of the respondents between 18-24 years old (59.1%), 25-34 years old (13.5%), 35-44 years old (12.5%), 45-54 years old (10.7%), 55-64 years old (2.6%) and 65 years old and above (1.6%). The majority of the 63.8% of respondents have experienced a staycation during the post-pandemic period while 36.2% of respondents haven't experienced it yet and 85.9% of respondents are willing to have a staycation in Malaysia.
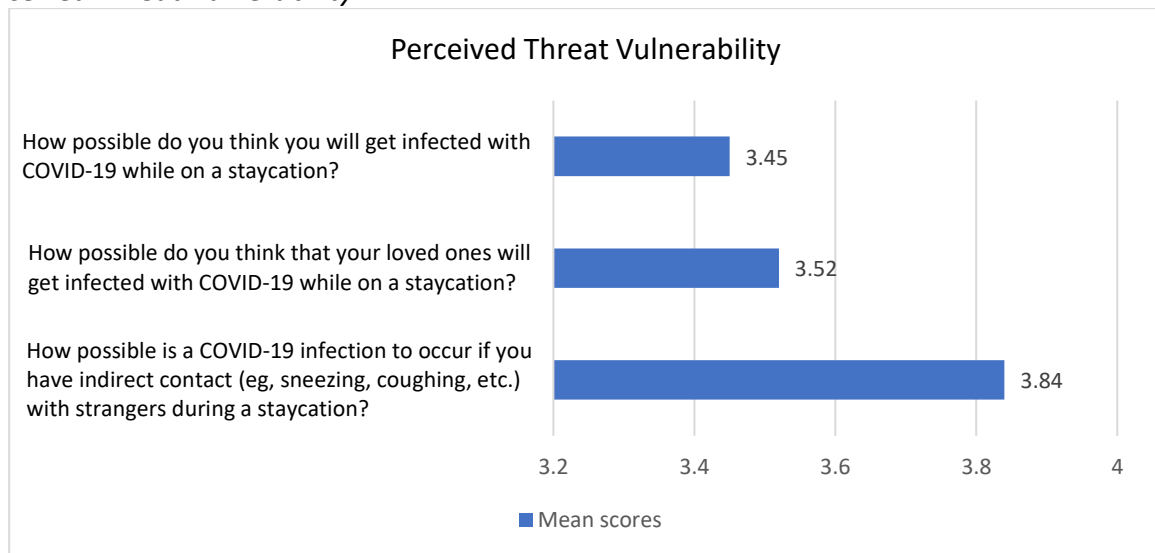
Perceived Threat Vulnerability

Figure 1 – Mean for Perceived Threat Vulnerability

Figure 1 presents the mean scores for perceived threat vulnerability. High mean scores were recorded for "How possible is a Covid-19 infection to occur if you have indirect contact (e.g. sneezing, coughing, etc.) with strangers during a staycation?" (mean=3.84), followed by "How possible do you think that your loved ones will get infected with Covid-19 while on a staycation?" (mean=3.52) and "How possible do you think that you will get infected with Covid-19 while on a staycation?" (mean=3.45).
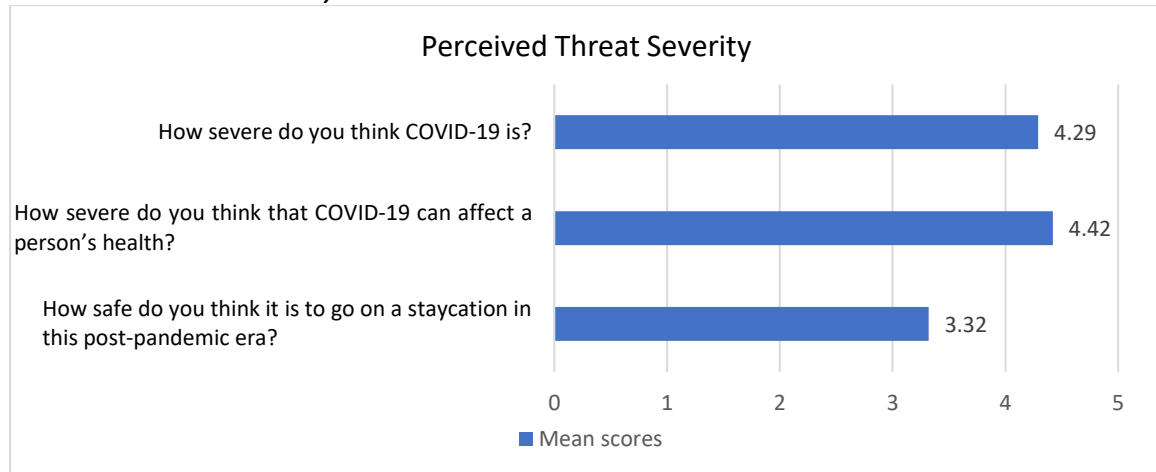
Perceived Threat Severity

Figure 2 – Mean for Perceived Threat Severity

Figure 2 shows perceived threat severity. The highest mean (4.42) was recorded for "How severe do you think that Covid-19 can affect a person's health?". The lowest mean (3.32) is for "How safe do you think it is to go on a staycation in this post-pandemic era?".
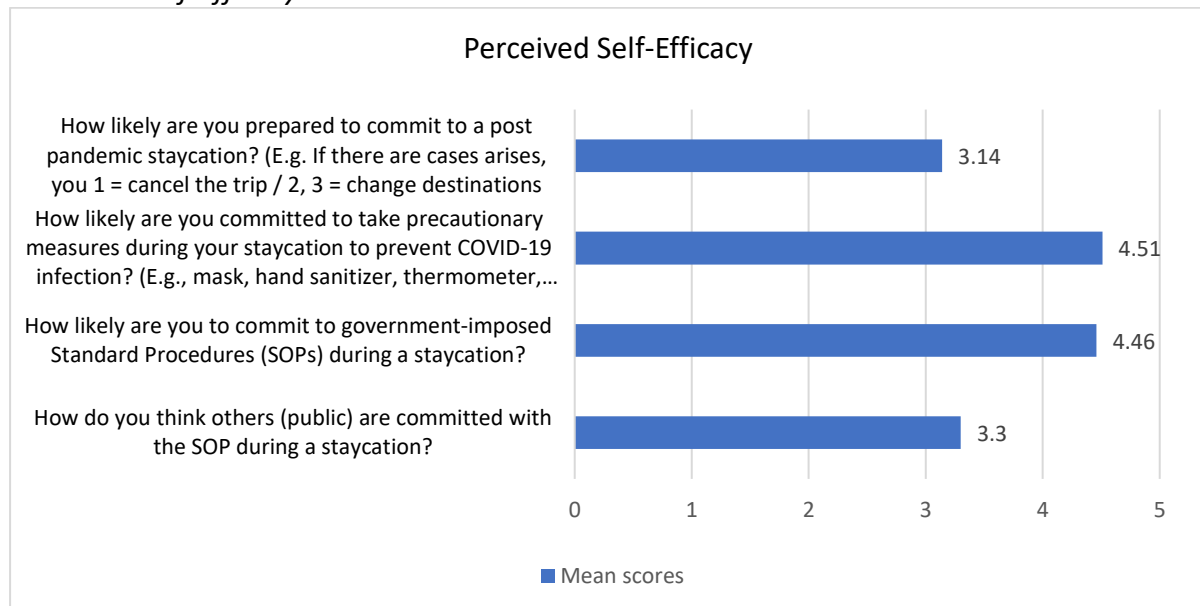
Perceived Self-Efficacy

Figure 3 – Mean for Perceived Self-Efficacy

Figure 3 presents the scores for perceived self-efficacy. The highest mean scores were recorded for "How likely are you committed to take precautionary measures during your staycation to prevent Covid-19 infection (e.g.: mask, hand sanitiser, thermometer, etc.) (mean=4.51). The lowest scores were recorded for "How likely are you prepared to commit to a post-pandemic staycation?" (mean=3.14).
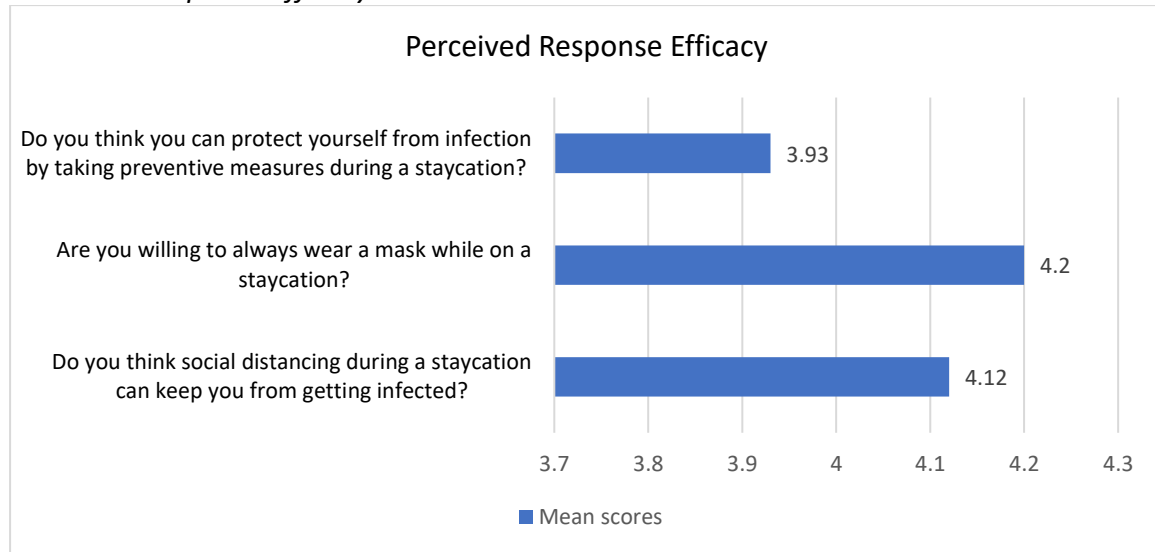
Perceived Response Efficacy

Figure 4 – Mean for Perceived Response Efficacy

The mean scores for perceived response efficacy were presented in Figure 4. The highest mean (4.2) is for "Are you willing to always wear a mask while on a staycation?", while the lowest mean (3.93) is for "Do you think you can protect yourself from infection by taking preventive measures during a staycation?".
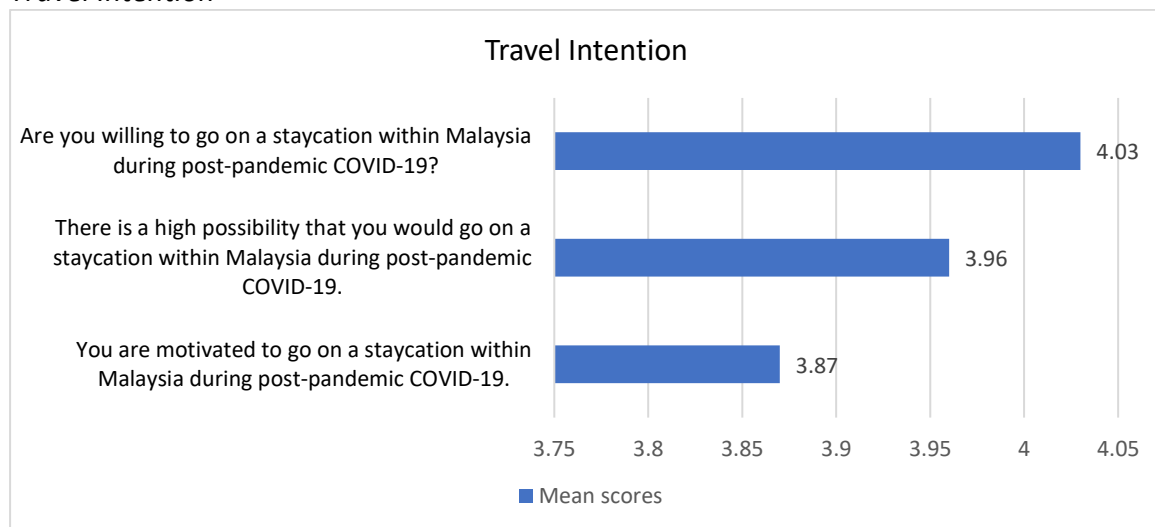
Travel Intention

Figure 5 – Mean for Travel Intention

Figure 5 presents the mean scores for travel intention with the highest (m=4.03) recorded for "Are you willing to go on staycation within Malaysia during post-pandemic Covid-19?". The lowest with mean scores (3.87) is for "You are motivated to go on a staycation within Malaysia during post-pandemic Covid-19".

Conclusion

Threat Vulnerability

In summary, the respondents realized the level of vulnerability of being exposed or attacked by the virus. They agreed that the infections could occur through sneezing or coughing even

if they have indirect contact with strangers during staycation. The findings indicated that the respondents were well conscious of the degree of threat vulnerability of Covid-19.

Threat Severity
During post-pandemic staycations, respondents' perceptions of threat severity are strongly correlated with their health. Hence, this finding of this study has added an interesting body of knowledge to travel risk perception and travel intention especially when it comes to a critical health crisis. This body of knowledge revealed staycation is a safer way of travel in this post-pandemic situation as travellers' intention to have a staycation during the post-pandemic will be influenced by how much they believe the destination acts for the greater good in addressing the disease's health.

Self-Efficacy
In summary, the travellers' self-efficacy shows their commitment to the standard operating procedure (SOP) applied during their staycation in the post-pandemic period. It indicates that Malaysian travellers are highly prepared for a staycation during the post-pandemic. The analysis also shows that higher self-efficacy perception levels are associated with higher levels of travel intention. In the Covid-19 circumstances, travellers are willing to change and take extra precautions during their staycation. Respondents were aware of the risks of Covid-19 during their staycation during post-pandemic, but their intentions to travel remained high. Therefore, respondents tended to be cautious in expressing their acceptance or refusal.

Response Efficacy
Majority of the respondents willing to take precautions to minimize the contacts and the spread of the virus while on staycations. Wearing masks during travel was believed to be the best action to prevent themselves from the threats. It shows that the respondents are ready to be responsible for the decision they made to travel safely during the pandemic situation.

Travel Intention
Based on the results, the respondents were seeming to believe that staycation is a safe mode of travelling as compared to many other types of travel. The high intention to staycation in Malaysia also shows that the respondents put trust on the enforcement taken by the government and tourism service providers in handling the pandemic.

Recommendation
Practically, since the findings revealed that the travellers doubt Covid-19 infection, practitioners must take decisive action to adapt tourism recommendations from public health officials and the World Health Organization including managing social distancing, reducing the possibility of Covid-19 infection, ensuring the enforcement of health protocols among travellers, and ensure the safety of travellers to improve public trust during their staycation following the post-pandemic. A clear informative instruction should be provided by each of staycation providers to avoid misunderstanding during the operation. A constant analysis of the staycation's facilities should be assessed to ensure the precautious actions can be successfully practiced. Future research could explore the use of different risk perception theories or approaches and how travellers perceive their different type of travel intention especially when dealing with pandemic.

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