



The Strategy, Impact, and Challenges Faced by Pos Malaysia Berhad during the COVID-19 Crisis

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ABSTRACT

The current Covid 19 pandemic has caused many people to feel grateful for the work they still have. Millions of people have lost their jobs and livelihoods, economic problems and financial woes increase exponentially. The study aims to analyse the strategy, impact, and challenges faced by Pos Malaysia during the COVID-19 crisis. With operations scaled-down amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic, the company faced loss. The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impact on the companies, resulting the decrease of revenue for the first quarter in 2020. This study used a quantitative approach. An online survey was carried using Google Forms and the respondents were Pos Malaysia employees. By using a sample of 50 employees in Pos Malaysia, the result showed that Pos Malaysia business was affected due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the subsequent stricter lockdown measures imposed in Malaysia.

Keywords: Strategy, Challenges, COVID-19, Impacts, Pos Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is affecting nearly all countries around the world, having an unprecedented effect on business and industry (Alan, 2020). Many industries and organizations are affected, including Pos Malaysia Berhad. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the company faced revenue loss. The unprecedented COVID-19 has impacted the company, resulting in a decrease in revenue for the first quarter of 2020 (Pos Malaysia, 2020). Following the global COVID-19 Pandemic and its latest reports, the Malaysian government commands the Restrict Movement Order (RMO) on 18 March 2020. As a result of this regulation, most Malaysians are worried about making purchase transaction (Kamaljeet, et. al, 2020).

The use of the Internet and technological developments make it easier for e-commerce to evolve exponentially in the courier service sector, connecting businesses, organizations, governments, and individuals together (Hui & Fernando, 2019). While demand for delivery services grew in the e-commerce sector at the end of March 2020, smaller retail sales were recorded at the post offices. Customers feel vigilant when flying beyond their residences, while the postponement of passenger and freight airlines' journey together with the termination of business operations has affected the international industry. The aviation segment contributed revenue of RM 62.8 million to the Group's revenue, primarily by freight and ground handling companies. As much as RM 75.5 million revenue in the logistics department is mainly from the freight



management and automotive business. COVID-19 did not affect the other segments such as Datapos, POS Digicert, and POS Ar-Rahnu, and these segments are exceeding their goals.

In the early 1800s, POS Malaysia Berhad's background is possible to be identified. While in the early 20th century, the development of postal services started in the Penang, Malacca, and Singapore (Straits Settlements) and then spread to the rest of Malaya. Then, the dispatch riders and other messengers will send the letters. Fees were paid instead of postage stamps as letters were sent to the Post Office. POS Malaysia Berhad initiated as a platform for mails, financial records, and newsletters to be delivered. Its service quickly grew to a provider of multiple platforms. It continued to grow into package distribution, licenses, and insurance options, money transfers, and deposits of funds.

Malaysia was a member of the State of the Universal Postal Union on 17 January 1958. In order to stay, the Postal Service Department became an incorporated entity in 1992. The postal service identified as the Postal Services Department has also taken over various services on behalf of government agencies. They began collecting utility bill fees, dog license sales, pension payments, TV license sales, among many others. One of the critical issues of the current courier services in Malaysia is the courier's efficiency. Many factors have been recognized in today's competition that influences courier services' efficiency (Teoh et al., 2020). Furthermore, by a reverse takeover of Philio Allied Berhad, POS Malaysia Berhad, acquiring its current name, was published in the Stock Exchange of Kuala Lumpur in September of 2001. However, Philio Allied has changed its business to POS Malaysia & Services Holdings Berhad next year.

POS Malaysia Berhad provides four primary systems, including postal, express, counter, and logistics services. Pos Malaysia Berhad also divided its services like PosLaju, PosNiaga, PosLogistik, and PosMel into four major business segments to supply their customers with quality, effective, timely, and creative solutions (Business Wire, 2020). Logistic arms support the delivery operation of these three core services (Yusliza, 2014). Parcel delivery services are also growing since internet shopping patterns grow (Edum et al., 2020).

Now, amid the fact that the COVID-19 Pandemic has already hit its firm, POS Malaysia said the subsistence of over 15,000 frontlines and institutional support personnel would continue to be secured, and their concerns are prioritized. Around 21.5 thousand full-time workers have been employed for POS Malaysia Berhad since 2019. The country's leading postal delivery service is POS Malaysia Berhad. Many people will use food delivery services and e-services to prevent massive gatherings that increase the risk of infections (Ganasegeran, et. al, 2020). An exclusive postal service concession is given to the private sector. This ongoing COVID-19 global crisis certainly has a massive impact on all walks of life (Khor, et. al, 2020).

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a newly discovered virus, an infectious disease first identified in Wuhan, Hubei, China, around December 2019. It has caused an ongoing pandemic across the world (Yau, et. al, 2020). To date, many cases have been reported across countries. This epidemic has had significant impact, especially on economic, social, and political issues, and as well as affecting almost all aspects of the lives of Malaysian



people. Malaysians comply the rules by staying at home. The government has also issued many regulations, such as restrictions on movement where only one individual for each household to go outside for supermarket runs and road closures in different areas in Malaysia. Since then, e-commerce in Malaysia is considered to be an essential operation. Hence, this outbreak has significantly impacted Malaysia's courier companies as the number of parcels received increased every day during the COVID-19 Pandemic. On 18 March, as the COVID-19 cases continued to rise, the Movement Control Order in Malaysia was implemented. Non-essential firms and businesses are required to cease their activities during the meantime. Besides, all schools, universities, and religious activities were required to be stopped during the pandemic. International travellers are also prohibited to cross the border (Leong, 2020). In addition, there was a different contender of the COVID 19 pandemic, such as postal agencies, apart from rubber gloves and healthcare providers. Malaysians are worried about the second COVID-19 surge because there was still no declining trend in the number of COVID-19 cases despite following the new regulations. As the country returns to life after the Pandemic, this has driven more shoppers to welcome internet shopping as the modern standard and get their items shipped straight to their doorsteps (Hooi, 2020). Also, the emergence of COVID-19 implies that the courier services are under more threat than ever before. People are encouraged to buy goods online because supermarket are temporary shutdown, as well as shopping centres such as mall (Ridgley, 2020). People cannot go shopping because they are not allowed to leave the house. However, they can do purchasing and selling transaction by via online (Hamzah et al., 2020).

Online Purchases

During COVID-19 pandemic, people are encouraged to stay at home for their own safety and health. Even so, many people are still doing buying and selling transaction directly to prepare their quarantine (Laato et al., 2020). The overall number of active customers, newcomers, and payments in March 2020 for the second week was officially rising in mobile apps for online wholesale (Hasanat et al., 2020). As the number of COVID-19 cases is multiplying in Malaysia, companies should cost-effectively provide service or product, provide superior value to consumers, and maximize service delivery strategies. Referring to Berry (2006), service innovation aims to build new markets for a delivery system, thereby extending its business scope.

In the digital and globalized communication age, the critical factor in developing postal and courier services was e-commerce (Yusliza, 2014). A massive number of sales and purchases online were recorded. The development of a modern and universal mailing and delivery communication infrastructure is vital since it requires the quality and ingenuity of services and products. Courier firms are essential and valuable to society and the economy as a whole. Due to the rapid growth of Internet-based technology in the country, mailing and delivery service providers have undergone an enormous transformation (Yusliza, 2014). To move in line with current developments, most postal firms have stepped up their efforts to modernize the postal network, innovate and diversify their range of goods to offer high-quality offerings that are important to consumers and targeted markets.

Impact and Challenges on Courier Companies

As cases involving COVID-19 rose drastically on 18 March, the Movement Control Order (MCO) in Malaysia was enforced to break the chain of COVID-19. Even so, courier



companies are permitted to continue to carry out their responsibility in delivering mails and parcels to their destination. The postal and courier services process consists of postal processing at the collection point, classifying the postal base at the delivery point, and postal transportation to allow successful delivery to the correct address (Izzah, 2016). Due to the closed borders and coronavirus lockdowns, some of the air cargo was delayed and cancelled. The delay and cancellation have made customers unhappy with the news. Most courier companies received many complaints and comments on social media regarding the issues. Customer satisfaction could significantly impact the organization's success (Ali & Amir, 2020). While other people work at home and adapt to the new norm due to the COVID-19 crisis, this industry faces a staffing shortage. Service charges were charged higher than usual so that the courier company could pay their staff better as working in the COVID-19 is risky. Besides, in a dynamic market constrained by competition and expense pressures, the courier company will continue to operate.

The paper aims to identify the strategy, impact, and challenges faced by courier companies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The courier companies' demands increased as their consumers kept using their services and doubled their parcels throughout the pandemic. Despite receiving the parcels more than the customer's usual time and complaints, most courier companies continue their operation and conduct their services very well. There was a growth in the courier business, driven by demand from the online and e-commerce industries. However, the courier companies should increase their cost efficiency and realize the benefits of operational improvements and their business initiatives. Increasing cost efficiency ensures the smooth operation of delivery services and the rapid development of online shopping. Therefore, it is one of the main issues that should be discussed and kept track of by the courier companies as the results may contribute to the national economy.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach. An online survey was carried using Google Forms and as many as 50 respondents worked in Pos Malaysia taken as a survey sample. The survey is based on their experiences when working at POS Laju Malaysia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Challenges are based on what they faced during COVID-19. The impact is based on what happens to their operation and performance due to COVID-19. The strategy is based on the solution for the challenges and impacts during COVID-19. We employed the snowball sampling technique, where the respondents will invite their colleagues to participate in the survey. This online survey is one of the most convenient platforms for collecting more data and information from the respondents.

Furthermore, we managed to collect all of the employees' input by enabling them to answer the survey truthfully. This online survey allows us to analyse the data and discuss it in our research (Ashraf, et. al, 2020). Therefore, we approached Pos Malaysia employees and asked for their participation and recommendation to get their colleagues. In addition, we also tried to do some research into the journals about Pos Malaysia and the research topic. Our research study used these resources as some of the information on their website is quite limited. Since it is COVID-19 Pandemic, we followed the



Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in our data collection and contact with Pos Malaysia's employees.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Employees get a set of questionnaires designed specifically to analyse the strategy, impact, and challenges faced by POS Malaysia during the Covid-19 pandemic. The questionnaire consists of several sections including the respondents' background, the experience when working in Pos Malaysia in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, the impact of Covid 19 pandemic on POS Malaysia's operation and performance, the challenges faced by Pos Malaysia, and the strategy used by Pos Malaysia during the pandemic.

Table 1 shows a summary of the respondents' demographics profiles. Over half of the respondents were male (66%), 62% of them were in the age range between 21 to 30 years old. More than three-quarters of them were Malay (76%) and 96% were Malaysians. As many as 54% of them were single, and another 42% were married. 78% were working as full-time employees and 70% of them were working for not more than two years. 58% worked as a postman, another 22% worked as a clerk and 92% were satisfied with their work in Pos Malaysia.

Table 1. Respondents' Demographics Profile (N=50)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	33	66.0
Female	17	34.0
Age		
21-25	10	20.0
26-30	21	42.0
31-35	14	28.0
36 and above	5	10.0
Race		
Malay	38	76.0
Indian	6	12.0
Chinese	6	12.0
Nationality		



Local	48	96.0
International	2	4.0
Marital status		
Single	27	54.0
Married	21	42.0
Widowed	2	4.0
Employment type		
Full-time	39	78.0
Part-time	11	22.0
Organizational tenure		
Less than 12 months	11	22.0
1 till 2 years	24	48.0
More than 3 years	15	30.0
Position of employment		
Postman	29	58.0
Clerk	11	22.0
Manager	3	6.0
Lorry driver	2	4.0
HR department	1	2.0
Unloader	1	2.0
Customer services	2	4.0
Finance department	1	2.0
Work satisfaction		
Very satisfied	10	20.0
Satisfied	36	72.0
Neutral	3	6.0
Not satisfied	1	2.0



During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Participants were asked to provide their perceptions of their work during the COVID-19 crisis. As many as 28% said they need to adapt to the new norm of wearing a facemask in public and crowded places all day long during work, using hand sanitizer, checking body temperature, and using MySejahtera application (It is an application developed by Government of Malaysia to assist in monitoring Covid 19 outbreak in the country by empowering users to access their health risk against Covid 19). Employees are required to follow the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) strictly. 48% of the respondents reported that they need to deliver many parcels in one day, especially during festive seasons. They were busier than the usual workdays. The demands for the parcels were increased each day because customers nowadays prefer online shopping. When too many parcels need to be delivered, they need to work overtime. Some of the parcels at courier were delayed. There are some parcels waiting to be delivered to customers. Some of the respondents stated that they felt tired of working due to the increased workload during the COVID-19 Pandemic. One of them mentioned that employees also need to work on Sunday to prevent overloaded parcels and ensure the delivery process went smoothly.

Another 20% reported that customers were worried if the parcels received had been sanitized. Some customers came and collected parcels and complained about the defective parcels. Some of them were afraid to go out to take their parcels. As frontline workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the employees also were anxious about the risk of COVID-19 as they did not know if their customers' health status. Besides, they received many calls from customers asking whether their parcel has been delivered or not because it exceeded more than one week. They also stated that they received many customers' complaints due to their parcels not moving from the KLIA hub for 1 to 2 weeks, which exceeded the delivery time.

Impacts of COVID-19 Outbreak to POS Malaysia

Respondents were asked to share their opinion on the impacts on POS Malaysia Berhad's operation and performance due to the COVID-19 crisis. 50% stated that the number of parcels increases dramatically, especially during the first announced Movement Control Order (MCO) and before the festive season where people tend to purchase clothes, accessories, groceries, and more on online platforms. Hence, Pos Malaysia operations became slow, and overloaded parcels. The process of delivery takes up time before delivering the parcels. However, their performance is high due to the demand for delivery services.

Some of the respondents reported a change in terms of working hours. The mail carriers or postman starts working in the early morning until midnight. The respondents said it is very exhausting because they need to finish sending hundreds of parcels every day due to COVID-19. However, Pos Malaysia has shortened office hours for customers to visit. Due to the shortage of workers and the increasing number of parcels, employees must work under pressure and in a chaotic workplace. Some respondents shared their opinions that the COVID-19 Pandemic causes their operation to delay, particularly if they were located in the red zone (a red zone refers to a district with more than 40 active COVID-19 cases).



As many as 10% of the respondents considered that the new SOP impacted Pos Malaysia operation and performance during the COVID-19 Pandemic. They shared that many customers had to queue up long due to social distancing. They were only allowed to deal with five customers at once. If there were many customers on that day, customers need to wait for a longer time. The employees also need to deal with customers who were not following SOP when they came to the POS Malaysia office. The postmen must be more careful and make sure to be contactless with customers when sending the parcels. Hence, POS Malaysia employees need to adapt to the new norm and follow the SOP due to COVID-19 for everyone's benefits.

Table 2. The impact of COVID-19 on POS Malaysia

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The parcel volume in the courier increases unusually.		
Strongly agree	36	72.0
Agree	4	8.0
Neutral	2	4.0
Disagree	1	2.0
Strongly disagree	7	14.0
Other business operations and international services are affected		
Strongly agree	29	58.0
Agree	9	18.0
Neutral	5	10.0
Disagree	1	2.0
Strongly disagree	6	12.0
Work-related pressure has increased and an increased workload		
Strongly agree	32	64.0
Agree	5	10.0
Neutral	1	2.0
Disagree	2	4.0
Strongly Disagree	10	20.0



Employees are overworked and their operation hours are affected

Strongly agree	31	62.0
Agree	6	12.0
Neutral	1	2.0
Disagree	5	10.0
Strongly Disagree	7	14.0

Table 2 presents a summary of the impact of the COVID-19. As many as 80% agreed that the number of parcel volume in their place has increased. The respondents stated that every day, POS Malaysia received the double number of parcels than usual every day, especially before the festive season and during MCO. Also, many parcels got delayed, and there was dumping of parcels at the courier. They reported that there is a shortage of workers and cause a delay in the daily operation.

Next, 76% reported that other businesses and international services such as mailing service, POS Aviation, POS Logistic, and international parcels were affected during the COVID-19 crisis. After MCO, POS Malaysia Berhad stopped receiving any parcels from overseas except Singapore.

Then, 74% felt that work-related pressure has increased due to an increased workload. Employees need to process many parcels and sanitize every parcel from overseas by following the new SOP. The findings indicated that employees are overworked, and their operation hours were also affected due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. 74% shared that mail carriers or postmen had to work overtime. They even need to send more parcels than usual in a day. The postmen's working hours were from early morning until midnight to make sure the parcels delivered on time. As for employees working in the office, especially those who worked as a clerk at the counter office, they must work with limited operation hours and workers' shortage.

Challenges

In this section, respondents give their answers to the challenges faced by Pos Malaysia. Table 3 shows the challenges faced by Pos Malaysia during the COVID-19 crisis. 80% respond that Pos Malaysia has to continue to carry the responsibilities and serve the country during the pandemic time. They still need to work even during a pandemic. 82% agreed that the employees had to work extra hard, especially toward the festival season and the increasing demand. Mail carriers had many parcels to deliver to customers in one day. They received many parcels, and employees need to work overtime during the COVID-19 Pandemic, especially the postman. They have to work overtime in order to deliver good service to their customers. E-commerce is trending during the COVID-19 Pandemic because e-commerce is becoming a substitute source (Bhatti, et. al, 2020).



Next, 84% agreed that the employees were committed to providing service quality and delivering on time. They need to deal with angry customers. Delivering parcels on time to customers is another challenge faced during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Customers would complain if they received the parcel late. However, customers can get the delivery notice. Another 54% noted that there was no bonus given even though they were required to work extra. 10% mentioned that employees' main challenges are the risk of exposure to the virus while delivering the parcel to customers. The postmen have a higher risk of being infected with the virus because they did not know their travel history. Mail carriers need to give customers' parcels at least 1 meter to avoid the virus from spreading to others. However, 6% shared that another challenge was the shortage of workers to manage the delivery process, and employees need to make sure all customers are following the SOP when they want to enter the premises.

Some worried about the international parcels might have a virus on that parcel. Mail carriers still had to deliver parcels to red zone areas to ensure a smooth delivery. In short, employees were burdened with the extra workload during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Other challenges were worker shortage issues, adapting to the new norm such as wearing a face mask and following SOP, extra works such as sanitizing parcels delivered to customers and facing technical problems that delay delivering and facing rude customers.

Table 3. The Challenges Faced by POS Malaysia Berhad during COVID-19 Crisis

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
POS Malaysia Berhad continues to carry out the responsibilities and serves the country as an essential service provider even during the Pandemic.		
Strongly agree	34	68.0
Agree	8	16.0
Neutral	1	2.0
Disagree	1	2.0
Strongly disagree	6	12.0
POS Malaysia employees work extra hard especially toward the festival session and deal with increasing workload and demands.		
Strongly agree	31	62.0
Agree	10	20.0
Neutral	1	2.0
Disagree	2	4.0
Strongly disagree	6	12.0



POS Malaysia employees commit to providing service quality and delivery on time to customer.

Strongly agree	37	74.0
Agree	5	10.0
Disagree	4	8.0
Strongly disagree	4	8.0

POS Malaysia employees deliver many parcels in one day without bonus in pandemic time.

Strongly agree	20	40.0
Agree	7	2.0
Neutral	1	2.0
Disagree	6	12.0
Strongly disagree	16	32.0

Strategy

Participants were asked to provide suggestions. 24% suggested that the management should hire more staff so that the parcels can deliver on time. One reason is that during the Movement Control Order (MCO), they have to deliver parcels daily from morning to night due to a lack of employees. Some suggested that bonuses or allowances should be provided to employees, especially riders. Some also provided their views that the management hires agent services such as AsiaXpress or AskPost to help them deliver the parcel to customers. Other suggestions include rescheduling working hours, alerting customers of the possible delay, and implementing online payment for bills.

CONCLUSIONS

The current Covid 19 pandemic has caused many people to feel grateful for the work they still have. Millions of people have lost their jobs and livelihoods, economic problems and financial woes increase exponentially. In conclusion, the COVID-19 crisis has a huge impact on Pos Malaysia services and made their jobs more challenging. The paper provides empirical evidence. The effect of the COVID-19 outbreak towards POS Malaysia has affected the company and burdened the employees. The employees must work for extra hours because they received many parcels than usual. They also need to adapt to the new norm and regulations, such as wearing a face mask for hours and applying a 1-meter social distancing from customers to minimize physical contact.



We can see that POS Malaysia adopts proper precautionary measures and prioritizes its employees' safety, especially during the COVID-19 crisis. Management of the company provides face masks and hand sanitizers to employees. All parcels were sanitized before delivering to customers, including international parcels. It shows that POS Malaysia is concerned about its employees' health and welfare and cares about their customers' safety and well-being. Thus, wearing a mask throughout the working hours is made compulsory.

The operation hours have been shortened from the regular operating hours, but the demand for the delivery services keeps increasing. The employees also need to ensure on-time delivery to create an excellent public image. POS Malaysia also introduced a new online posting platform that makes it easier for customers to send their parcels, SendParcel. Despite having to deal with COVID-19 infections, POS Malaysia maintains its service quality to ensure customers' satisfaction. For future research, we can conduct the same study in the new context, which focuses on POS Malaysia's employees' job satisfaction. To gain more information and address unanswered aspects of our research problem, we can add an interview as one of the research methods. The study's limitation is that we cannot conduct face-to-face interviews due to COVID-19.

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