

Asean Countries Strategies in Developing Tourism Post Covid-19 Vaccination

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Abstract

This research aims to implement vaccination in order to encourage tourism growth in ASEAN. The relationship between vaccination and tourism growth, especially in ASEAN countries, is very important. This research focuses on Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam which have reopened their borders to stimulate the tourism sector. This research uses qualitative research methods to look specifically at each country's policies regarding vaccination. The result of this research is that ASEAN governments are slowly easing it to save their tourism industry. At the regional level, the ASEAN Tourism Ministers' Meeting resulted in cooperation in operating the ASEAN Tourism Crisis Communication Team (ATCCT). From this meeting, it is hoped that in the future ASEAN countries will collaborate and have an integrated policy in the tourism sector, especially after the pandemic, considering that ASEAN is very dependent on tourism as one of the main sources of income.

Keyword: ASEAN Government; Tourism; Post Covid-19; Vaccination.

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Introduction

In November 2019, the international community was overwhelmed by the emergence of a newly discovered disease, COVID-19. At its core, COVID-19 is a disease that resembles SARS and MERS as it originated from one genetic family of the same virus that is the coronavirus, but with different sub-genetics. Clear evidence pointed that the spread of the SARS-Cov-2 virus initially began in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in November 2019.

Nevertheless, how this virus emerged to the public still has a lot of uncertainty. What is certain is the effect of the COVID-19 disease on various aspects of human life, including tourism. At this moment, the development of global tourism is deteriorating due to the spread of the COVID-19 and significantly consuming a number of victims, as well as weakening nearly every global economic sector as COVID-19 is an infectious virus. Since it first appeared on November 2019 in China, the COVID-19 outbreak has also spread across the world, without exception in ASEAN countries. Nation-states within this region have to experience various obstacles that are cross-cutting aspects such as in economic, social, and notably political aspects, a significant impact on the declining rates of economic growth rates of ASEAN countries. This paper will discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry in ASEAN countries and how each country makes efforts to handle it, including the vaccination process for boosting the reopening of the tourism industry.

ASEAN is not immune to the spread of COVID-19 worldwide. Although the numbers of infection were not as severe as other regions, such as Europe and the Americas, the spread of COVID-19 impacted all sectors of the ten developing economies in the region. By September 2020, it is recorded that the region had 420.688 cases and 10.015 deaths, which shows a fatality rate around 2.38%. Below is the current data as of July 2021 on COVID-19 infection in the region of Southeast Asia.¹

Country	Cases	Deaths	Cases per Million
Philippines	1.580.824	27.722	15.070
Indonesia	3.372.374	92.311	12.583
Singapore	64.861	37	11.558
Malaysia	1.095.486	8.725	35.112
Thailand	578.375	4.679	8.334
Myanmar	294.460	8.942	35.112
Vietnam	133.405	1.022	1.396
Cambodia	76.585	1.375	4.784
Brunei Darussalam	333	3	7.982
Lao PDR	5.919	6	804

With the condition of COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry in ASEAN is heavily impacted. Countries that rely on tourism expenditures and investments such as Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia are struggling to keep the economy floating as the number of foreign visitors are

¹ “Southeast Asia COVID-19 Tracker”, CSIS, 2020, accessed on 4 September 2020, <<https://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2020/01/31/thailand-confirms-first-human-to-human-coronavirus-transmission.html>>.

limited to contain COVID-19. Airline schedules have been canceled by 96% in Singapore and Malaysia in efforts to limit foreigners’ entrance to the countries. Hotels and other tourism sites in Indonesia, Cambodia, and Vietnam are temporarily closed, which means there will be massive lay-offs as the side effects of the pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 on tourism and how the government handles it in ASEAN countries varies.

In Indonesia, the effects of COVID-19 to tourism are mainly negative as it stopped the economy of tourism. The data showed that COVID-19 caused a loss of US\$ 5.87 billion to the tourism sector in 2020.² The COVID-19 also made tourism companies to furlough 95% of tourism laborers in Indonesia. During the period of January-May 2020, Indonesia experienced the decrease of tourist’s arrivals up to 87% compared to the same period in 2019. In the beginning of July, Indonesian government has eased PSBB (Large Scale Social Restrictions) because Indonesia is entering signs of economic recession. In order to keep the economy alive, the Indonesian government allowed domestic tourists to travel to domestic destinations all over Indonesia, such as Bali, Yogyakarta, and Labuan Bajo, with strict health protocols. With the period dubbed as “The New Normal.”

Indonesia’s neighboring country—Malaysia—implemented a strict entry ban for foreigners and movement limitations for its citizens to contain COVID-19 spread from March 2020. With the policy currently running, Malaysia lost US\$ 800 million in January-February 2020 alone.³ Moreover, the government also canceled Visit Malaysia 2020 programs and resulted in a massive furlough of tourism employees in Malaysia. The recent update in July announced that the government is slowly lifting Movement Control Order (MCO) and would allow specific types of tourism in Malaysia. Starting from July, Malaysia is allowing the entrance of medical tourists to the country with clear purpose and endorsement from Malaysia’s medical institutions. Furthermore, Malaysia is also reopening the domestic tourism industry in the country. Currently, hotels, restaurants, and theme parks are operating with strict health protocols to cope with tourism revenue losses in the previous months.

Malaysia's hotel occupancy comparison 1st half 2020 vs 2019
 Estimated losses due to extension of MCO until April 28, 2020

MONTH	2019		2020	ESTIMATED LOSS OF ROOMS REVENUE (RM) BASED ON 200,000 STAR RATED HOTEL ROOMS ONLY
	OCCUPANCY (%)	AVERAGE DAILY RATE (RM)	OCC (%)	
January	58.50	227.89	55	(49,452,130)
February	67.72	238.07	44	(327,527,183)
March	64.99	223.64	22	(596,085,583)
April	64.68	219.55	6	(1,126,568,133)
May	52.91	206.70	11	(537,093,414)
June	64.10	228.75	16	(660,172,500)
			Total	(3,296,898,943)

Note: Based on survey of 94,000 rooms inventory, using 2019 average room rates
 Not inclusive of F&B and events/functions losses

Vietnam is deemed as one of few countries that are successful in managing the COVID-19 crisis. The recipe for this successful condition is due to the strict policy implemented by the Vietnamese one-party government. In March 2020, the Vietnamese government suspended

² Adrian Wail Akhla: Pandemic Erases \$5.9b of Indonesia’s Tourism Revenue as Businesses Seek Help”, The Jakarta Post, 2020, accessed on 5 September 2020, <<https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/07/14/pandemic-erases-5-9b-of-indonesias-tourism-revenue-as-businesses-seek-help.html>>.

³ “The Coronavirus Crisis Has Hit Tourism in Malaysia Hard”, DW, 2020, accessed on 5 September 2020, <<https://www.dw.com/en/the-coronavirus-crisis-has-hit-tourism-in-malaysia-hard/a-53392776>>.

the entry of all foreigners for leisure and tourism purposes. With the restriction of foreign tourist arrivals, Vietnam experienced a 99.5% decrease in international arrival during the pandemic. Between March to June 2020, Vietnam also experienced a loss of US\$ 5.9 billion in tourism revenue as the side effect of nationwide lockdown. Although traveling to Da Nang is still under restriction, Vietnamese government already opened Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City for local tourism. Vietnamese airlines are reporting that their limited domestic flights are fast reaching capacity daily. This is also due to the tourism recovery fund by the Vietnamese government to subsidize the tourism sector to lure domestic tourists.

As for Thailand, the result of COVID-19 was collapsing tourism in Thailand. One major downturn was when Thai Airways proposed to declare bankruptcy to Thai courts and already laid thousands of its employees. During January-March, the number of tourists entering Thailand plunged 60% compared to the previous year. Thailand also delayed plans for a travel bubble with its Asian counterparts as COVID-19 cases kept worsening in the country.

Research Method

This research uses literature-based research methods that compare certain countries in ASEAN. This method is expected to be able to analyze the Covid-19 problem in each country and identify the economic, social and political impacts in that country. Some of the data presented is the result of analysis in research so that it can be concluded regarding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in ASEAN.

Result and Discussion

Although ASEAN governments vow to cooperate on overcoming COVID-19 pandemic, they also act on their own in creating suitable policies domestically. With the concern of uncoordinated response among ASEAN countries, it resulted in different policies that lead to a capacity gap in containing the spread of COVID-19. Below we will elaborate domestic policies of Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand, and compare them to draw good or bad case practices from their policies.

We can draw analysis in two different categories, which are the countries that are successful in managing COVID-19 and those that are struggling with the pandemic. The table below will guide on how each country takes measures to overcome COVID-19 crisis.⁴

Countries	Population (in mil.)	COVID-19 Case	Lockdown	International Travel Bans	Tracing and Surveillance	Masks Mandatory	Health Budget (% of Annual Budget)
Indonesia	267.7	3.372.374	Partial (April)	Limited	Weak	Yes	2.99%
Malaysia	31.5	1.095.486	Full (March)	Total	Weak	Yes	3.86%
Vietnam	95.5	133.405	Full (March)	Total	Strong	Yes	3.75%
Thailand	69.4	578.375	Partial (March)	Total	Weak	Yes	5.53%

⁴ Data was taken from “Current Health Expenditure % of GDP”, World Bank Data, 2019, accessed on 6 September 2020, < <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.CHEX.GD.ZS>>.

Singapore	5.7	64.861	Full (April)	Total	Strong	Yes	4.64%
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The first category is countries that are perceived to be struggling or failing in COVID-19 response policies. Indonesia and Malaysia were seen to be struggling in handling COVID-19 surge in their countries. Malaysia at first experienced a surge because of the mass gathering in Kuala Lumpur and people kept traveling from outside Malaysia. Meanwhile, Indonesia did not pay attention to preventive measures and was seen to be very late in imposing travel control only until April. The lack of preparedness and preventive measures from the two countries are what caused them to be left behind in COVID-19 management. Furthermore, for Indonesia's case, the healthcare capacity was on the verge of collapsing due to the lack of Ministry of Health involvement to prevent that. In addition, both countries' citizens have a low level of abiding to their governments' policies. This combination of lack of preparedness, unclear policies and directions, and low level of citizen abiding, cause the unresolved cases of COVID-19 in these countries.

The second category is countries that are perceived to be successful in managing COVID-19. We can see from Vietnam and Thailand's case; it is important to impose a strict movement limitation in order to prevent COVID-19 from spreading domestically. Furthermore, with both governments focusing on tracing, it allows them to put an early warning measure for future possible cases. In addition to the strict lockdowns and tracing policies, both governments are capable of handling the surge of COVID-19 patients due to their preparedness in the healthcare system. Both countries' healthcare systems were never reported to be on the verge of collapsing. Although the shortage of masks was inevitable at the beginning, they managed to put policies to overcome this problem. With these two countries currently leading ASEAN in terms of the success in managing COVID-19, it is important that other countries can follow their steps.

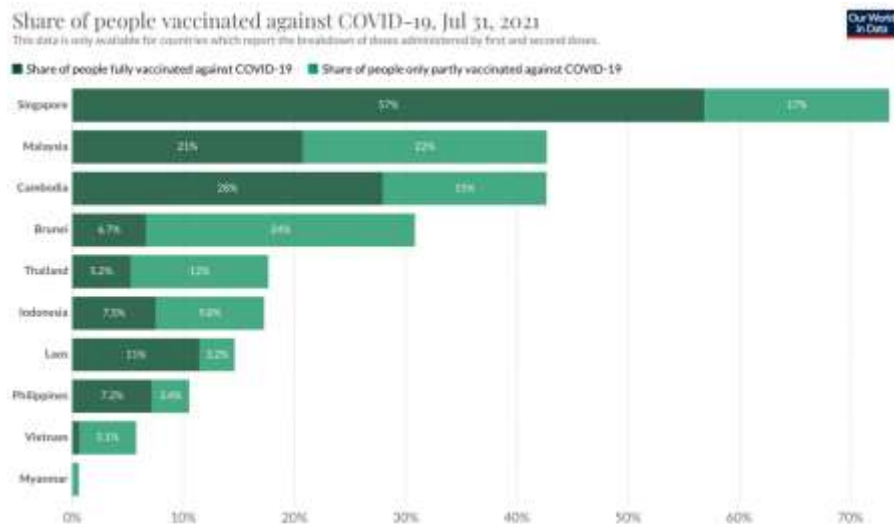
1. Vaccination Policies in Southeast Asia

It is undeniable that Southeast Asia is amongst the COVID-19 heavily impacted regions globally. With its heavy reliance on the tourism sector, COVID-19 imposed a sudden break on its tourism industry as the world put strong movement measures to prevent infection rate increase. As the global vaccination rollout undergoes, the Southeast Asian countries are also fighting for domestic vaccines availability on a global level.

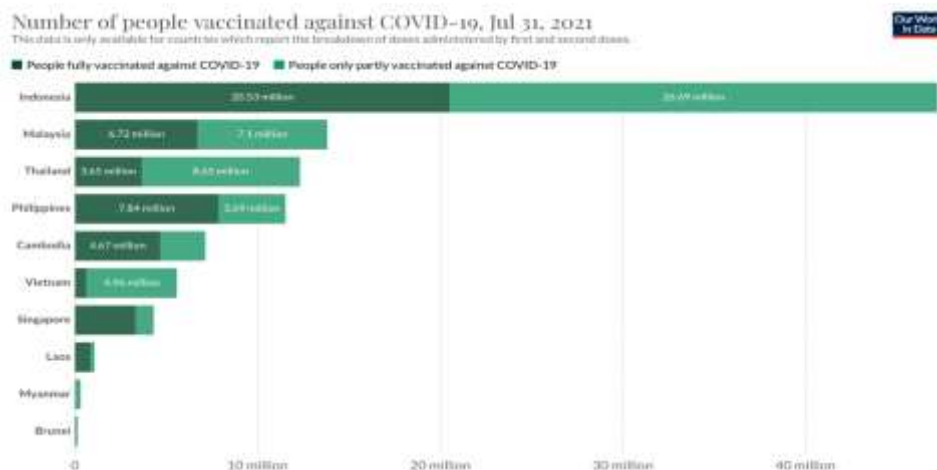
Southeast Asia started the vaccination program from 10 January 2021 and the vaccine rollout is still robustly growing in the region. As of July 2021, the region has administered more than 60 million doses of vaccines in a region with more than 600 million inhabitants. See below for the percentage and number of doses administered in the region:

The graph above⁵ shows that Singapore is the only country that has vaccinated more than 50% of its total population, which means it is ready to inhabit the herd immunity and normalcy period.

⁵ Graph is extracted from *Our World in Data*, <<https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations>>, accessed on 31 July 2021.



Meanwhile, Malaysia, Cambodia and Brunei Darussalam are also on a good pace to achieve herd immunity. But, on another side, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, although being the top populous states in the ASEAN, are struggling to vaccinate their populations. It is very crucial for these countries to have rigorous national vaccination programs considering how rapid the COVID-19 mutation is and how massive the domestic mobility for these countries.



Meanwhile from the number of vaccines administered⁶, Indonesia is leading with more than 20.5 million of its people already vaccinated. However, the number is still relatively low with only 7.5% compared to its 250 million population. Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines are also following the steps of Indonesia in terms of the number of vaccines given to their populations. Yet, these numbers are not enough if we take the percentage of the population and also population density of these countries into the equation. In the latest news, based on recovery index data released by Nikkei, Indonesia is the country that ranks the highest in the COVID-19 recovery

⁶ Graph is extracted from *Our World in Data*, <<https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations>>, accessed on 31 July 2021.

index in Southeast Asia.⁷ These data refer to the accumulation of infection management assessments, number of vaccine administrations, and mobility. Meanwhile, three ASEAN countries, such as the Philippines, Laos, and Vietnam, have the lowest ranking in this index.

With the national race of COVID-19 vaccines procurement underway, ASEAN as the regional organization is also taking the lead in ensuring vaccine availability in the region. In May 2021, ASEAN leaders made a plea for fairer distribution of vaccines in the region.⁸ ASEAN also is a strong supporter of the temporary waiver policy of pharmaceutical intellectual property in order for its member states to be able to produce cheaper generic versions of the vaccines. ASEAN also managed to lobby China through the COVAX facility to supply an additional 120 million COVID-19 vaccines doses to ASEAN members.⁹ This number is 4.8 times higher than the number allocated by the United States and the European Union to ASEAN countries. In May 2021, ASEAN also held an expert discussion with the European Union in pursuing a multilateral approach to an affordable, fair and equitable access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines. This also marks the start of the adoption of the Regional Strategic and Action Plan on ASEAN Vaccine Security and Self-Reliance for 2021-2025.¹⁰

As the region is strongly united in securing the regional vaccine availability, we will also discuss the national vaccination programs and policies across Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore for policy comparisons.

a. Indonesia

Indonesia first commenced their vaccination program in January 2021, with doses were prioritized for front line workers. It is the second country after China to authorize the emergency use of the Sinovac vaccines. The vaccine also passed the halal certification prior to use to make sure that the world's largest Muslim population can receive the doses.¹¹ At first the government planned to charge Indonesians to take the vaccines, but due to the outpouring nation-wide criticism, the government finally made the vaccines free for all. Local pharmaceutical group, Bio Farma manages their use for Indonesia's free vaccination program.

⁷ detikHealth, *Nikkei: Indeks Pemulihan COVID-19 RI Tertinggi di ASEAN, Filipina Terendah*, 10 October 2021, <<https://health.detik.com/berita-detikhealth/d-5760396/nikkei-indeks-pemulihan-covid-19-ri-tertinggi-di-asean-filipina-terendah>> accessed on 14 October 2021.

⁸ Shannon Teoh, 'ASEAN leaders make a plea for fairer distribution of vaccines', *The Straits Times*, 21 May 2021, <<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/asean-leaders-make-a-plea-for-fairer-distribution-of-vaccines>>, accessed on 1 August 2021.

⁹ The Jakarta Post, *China Vaccine Doses to ASEAN top 120 million, 4.8 times UN program*, 21 June 2021, <<https://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2021/06/21/china-vaccine-doses-to-asean-top-120-million-48-times-un-program.html>>, accessed on 1 August 2021.

¹⁰ ASEAN, *ASEAN, EU experts hold second dialogue on COVID-19 vaccines*, 25 May 2021, <<https://asean.org/asean-eu-experts-hold-second-dialogue-covid-19-vaccines/>>, accessed on 1 August 2021.

¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Indonesia Launches First COVID-19 Vaccination Program*, 13 January 2021, <<https://kemlu.go.id/madrid/en/news/10666/indonesia-launches-first-covid-19-vaccination-program>>, accessed on 31 July 2021.

The government set a goal to vaccinate its citizens at the rate of 1 million doses per day. However, due to the lack of vaccines available, the country is struggling to live up to this target. As of July 2021, Indonesia has vaccinated just over 7% of its 250 million population, with most of the vaccine recipients centralized in Java Island and Bali. Meanwhile, outside of those provinces, vaccine scarcity became the main issue. In the end of June, Indonesia saw the surge of COVID-19 cases due to the highly transmissible Delta variant. With cases were recorded more than 50.000 per day, Indonesia imposes another movement restriction order to help contain the outbreaks. However, this movement order is not enough to contain the devastating outbreaks in Indonesia and experts warn the government that they have to speed up the national vaccines rollout in order to create herd immunity.

With the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the edge of their seat to conduct effective vaccine diplomacy, Indonesia finally announced that it will receive more than 45 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines in August 2021.¹² They will include Sinovac, Moderna, and Pfizer. Moderna will be prioritized as a vaccine booster for medical workers as the country is experiencing the worst of the pandemic since last year. The government also increased the national COVID-19 vaccination target from the initial 181.5 million to 208.2 million that will cover a wider demographic group, including the 12-17-year-old group.¹³

To support Indonesia's high target in its vaccination program, Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi explained that Indonesia's foreign policy in 2021 would focus on health security diplomacy.¹⁴ This set of policies expand from securing vaccines commitment through bilateral and multilateral partnerships to getting medical equipment like oxygen cylinders and ventilators to face the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Indonesia's diplomatic strategy has worked, as evident in the many countries that have responded to the call for assistance. Australia is donating 2.5 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, while the US via the COVAX Facility donated 4 million doses of the Moderna vaccine. Japan has also sent 1 million doses of AstraZeneca to Indonesia. Meanwhile Indonesia's neighboring country, Singapore, focuses on procuring medical supplies, in oxygen cylinders, ventilators, masks, gloves, and medical gowns.

b. Malaysia

As one of the countries that rely heavily on tourism, Malaysia puts their national vaccination program as a national priority. Malaysia is providing vaccines free of

¹² The Jakarta Post, *Indonesia to receive 45 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine in August*, 26 July 2021, <<https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2021/07/26/indonesia-to-receive-45-million-doses-of-covid-19-vaccine-in-august.html>>, accessed on 31 July 2021.

¹³ Agung Prakoso, et.al., 'Indonesia's COVID-19 Vaccine Diplomacy: The Challenge of Public Access to Equitable Vaccines and Healthcare Services', *Indonesia for Global Justice*, 22 December 2020, <<https://igj.or.id/indonesias-covid-19-vaccine-diplomacy-the-challenge-of-public-access-to-equitable-vaccines-and-healthcare-services/?lang=en>>, accessed on 13 August 2021.

¹⁴ The Jakarta Post, *Retno's vaccine diplomacy*, 14 July 2021, <<https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2021/07/13/retnos-vaccine-diplomacy.html>>, accessed on 15 July 2021.

charge to its nationals, but foreigners residing in Malaysia will need to pay treatment charges. The Malaysian PM announced that the country has signed a deal with Pfizer for 12.8 million doses.¹⁵ These vaccines will be administered in two stages of 6.4 million people each, with the program already commenced in Q1 2021. The Malaysian government also formed the COVID-19 Vaccine Supply Access Guarantee Special Committee (JKJAV) to ensure the procurement of COVID-19 vaccine supply for Malaysia is carried out in an orderly manner. The first individual to receive the vaccines is Malaysian PM Muhyiddin Yassin.

Malaysia also authorized the use of Oxford-AstraZeneca and Sinovac and received more than 2 million doses from the COVAX program and other donations. Since May 2021, Malaysia already began to vaccinate Adults aged 18 and above having success in vaccinating healthcare workers previously in February-April 2021. With Malaysia also imposing the Movement Control Order, combined with the robust vaccination programs, Malaysia began to see the decline of COVID-19 cases in the country.

Malaysia has a robust vaccine diplomacy policy to ensure vaccine procurement to the country. Malaysia received 1 million doses of Pfizer vaccines from Washington and at the same time secured 16 million doses of Sinovac vaccines from China.¹⁶ Malaysia is also discussing vaccine cooperation with Brunei Darussalam for reciprocal vaccination arrangement to cover diplomats, students and expatriates for both nationals, as well as mutual recognition of vaccination certificates between both nations.¹⁷

As of July 2021, Malaysia has vaccinated more than 40% of its population with the first dose, and more than 21% has received two doses of COVID-19 vaccines. Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Sarawak are amongst the highest Malaysian federal territories that have already vaccinated more than 2 million of its residents. In July 2021, the Malaysian Science Minister announced that the country will soon allow the commercial sale of COVID-19 vaccines manufactured by Chinese firms Sinopharm and Sinovac.¹⁸ The vaccines will arrive from 1 August and this hybrid program is expected to boost the number of people vaccinated in the country.

¹⁵Dezan Shira, et.al., 'COVID-19 Vaccine Roll Outs in ASEAN & Asia – Live Updates by Country', *ASEAN Briefing*, 31 July 2021, <<https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/covid-19-vaccine-roll-outs-in-asean-asia-live-updates-by-country/>>, accessed on 1 August 2021.

¹⁶Davin Brunnstroma, 'One million US vaccine doses due in Malaysia on Monday', *Reuters*, 3 July 2021, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/one-million-us-vaccine-doses-due-malaysia-monday-2021-07-03/>>, accessed on 15 August 2021.

¹⁷Dawn Chan, 'Malaysia and Brunei discuss vaccine diplomacy', *New Straits Times*, 5 April 2021, <<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2021/04/679779/malaysia-and-brunei-discuss-vaccine-diplomacy>>, accessed on 17 August 2021.

¹⁸RozannaLatiff, 'Malaysia to allow commercial sale of COVID-19 vaccines', *Reuters*, 16 July 2021, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/malaysia-approves-chinas-sinopharm-vaccine-emergency-use-2021-07-16/>>, accessed on 2 August 2021.

c. Thailand

Thailand is one of the first Southeast Asian countries that secured vaccines supply early on to the global vaccination program. Thailand's National Vaccine Institute signed a non-refundable advance market commitment contract worth 2.38 billion Baht (US\$ 79 million) with AstraZeneca to reserve vaccine supplies for the country.¹⁹ It will account for 26 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccines. Siam Bioscience, a Thai pharmaceutical company, will receive technological transfer for co-investment. The authorities also imported 2 million doses of vaccine from Sinovac during February to April 2021. In June, Thailand also approved and started to use the Janssen vaccines in its vaccination program. These free vaccines are provided under the policies of the Ministry of Public Health.

The Thai government also stepped up their vaccination programs with inaugurated the production of its home ground vaccines. The vaccine is called "ChulaCov19" and it is set to put trial on May 2021. In July, the Health Authorities in Thailand said they will seek to impose limits on exports of locally produced AstraZeneca vaccines because the country does not have enough for its own needs.²⁰ The proposal comes as new cases and deaths are rapidly increasing along with the spread of the more contagious delta variant of the virus that set back the country's battered economy. This decision came because Siam BioScience struggled to meet the goal of 10 million vaccine production a month and only managed to deliver 5-6 million doses.

Thailand is claimed to be a battleground of vaccine diplomacy in Asia as the country already received vaccine donations from Japan, the United States, and China. At this juncture, China and the US have donated the same number of doses to Thailand at 1.5 million shots. Japan has also provided 1.05 million doses of AstraZeneca to Thailand. These days vaccine diplomacy has morphed into an encompassing maneuver that overcomes all diplomatic obstacles.²¹ For example, the Biden administration donates vaccines without any pre-condition. This could mark a new departure from the normal US policy and practice. The COVID-19 pandemic was further exacerbated in the nation due to outbreaks as a result of corruption and rule-breaking elites, but the pandemic also represented an opportunity for the US and its allies to strengthen ties with Thailand and the rest of Asia through vaccine diplomacy and engagement as an offset to Chinese influence in the region.²²

¹⁹Zsombor Peter, 'Thai firm joins with AstraZeneca to make COVID-19 vaccine for Southeast Asia', VOA, 18 December 2020, <<https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/thai-firm-joins-astrazeneca-make-covid-19-vaccine-southeast-asia>>, accessed on 31 July 2021.

²⁰ChalidaEkvittayavechnukul, 'Thailand preparing to limit exports of its COVID-19 vaccine', *Associated Press*, 14 July 2021, <<https://apnews.com/article/business-health-coronavirus-pandemic-global-trade-coronavirus-vaccine-9a69556f4ec2d410beb3de1634b0a341>>, accessed on 1 August 2021.

²¹Kavi Chongkittavorn, 'Thailand: A Battleground for Vaccine Diplomacy', *Points of View*, 8 July 2021.

²²Shaun Cameron, 'COVID-19 and Vaccine Diplomacy in the Land of Smiles', *Australian Outlook*, 6 August 2021, <<https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/covid-19-in-the-land-of-smiles/>>, accessed on 14 August 2021.

Thailand has so far administered 13.23 million vaccine doses. Around 9.88 million people or 14.3% of its population have received at least one dose. The government is now targeting 100 million doses by the end of 2021, enough to vaccinate 50 million people, just over 70% of the population. The Thai government also announced that medical workers who received two doses of the Sinovac vaccine will be given booster shots of the AstraZeneca vaccines. As the kingdom struggles to contain its Delta variant outbreak, the Health Authorities of Thailand say they will mix a first dose of Sinovac jab with a second dose of AstraZeneca in six weeks instead of twelve weeks. This decision was criticized by the WHO's chief scientist saying that the policy is a dangerous trend because it is not backed by evidence.²³ The government defended this policy citing that adenovirus vaccine, like AstraZeneca is compatible to be mixed with inactivated virus vaccine, like Sinovac.

d. Vietnam

Vietnam's National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE) has signed an agreement with Medigen Vaccine, a Taiwanese vaccine company to secure the supply of 3-10 million COVID-19 vaccine doses in 2021.²⁴ Vietnam is also working on producing its own vaccine, with the Institute of Vaccines and Medical Biologicals (IVAC) in Nha Trang City, partnering with New York City-based Icahn School of Medicine. The institute plans to submit documents for approval to the health ministry and claims to be capable of producing 30 million doses a year. Vietnam commenced its vaccination program in March 2021 and will continue throughout the year with the goal of vaccinating 80% of the population by June 2022. Oxford-AstraZeneca, Sputnik V, Sinopharm, Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Janssen were approved by the health authority for emergency use.

Although Vietnam is a success story in disease prevention and has kept outbreaks under control, the country's COVID-19 vaccination program is considered to be slower than most countries in Southeast Asia. As of July 2021, only 5.8% of its population received at least one dose and under 1% of the population is fully vaccinated. Even when the Chinese government announced it would provide priority access to Sinovac and Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccines, Vietnam is the last ASEAN state to publicly state if it will use this due to anti-China sentiment among the public.²⁵ It is also one of the last to approve a Chinese vaccine.

Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Nguyen Min Vu talked to the press about efforts to deploy vaccine diplomacy to find vaccine sources as well as solutions to

²³ AFP, 'Thailand defends Covid vaccine 'mix-and-match' after WHO warning', *The Jakarta Post*, 13 July 2021, <<https://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2021/07/13/thailand-defends-covid-vaccine-mix-and-match-after-who-warning-.html>>, accessed on 2 August 2021.

²⁴Dezan Shira, et.al., 'COVID-19 Vaccine Roll Outs in ASEAN & Asia – Live Updates by Country', *ASEAN Briefing*, 31 July 2021, <<https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/covid-19-vaccine-roll-outs-in-asean-asia-live-updates-by-country/>>, accessed on 1 August 2021.

²⁵ Sen Nguyen, 'Vietnam begin Covid-19 vaccination drive without China-made shots', *South China Morning Post*, 7 March 2021, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/vietnam-accelerates-vaccinations-covid-19-epicentre-2021-07-29>>, accessed on 1 August 2021.

successfully implement the government's vaccine strategy.²⁶ This includes both bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, and formal or informal activities, via telephone or post to world leaders requesting access to vaccine resources. Through the COVAX mechanism, Vietnam has acquired 2.6 million doses of vaccine. China has provided Vietnam with 500,000 doses of vaccine and will probably provide more. The Japanese government also pledged to provide 2 million doses to Vietnam, of which 1 million doses were delivered to Ha Noi on June 16 and 400,000 to Ho Chi Minh City on July 2. Russia has also donated 1,000 doses of vaccine and agreed to provide up to 20 million doses of Sputnik V vaccine in 2021.

A poll conducted from October to December 2020 found that Vietnam has one of the highest vaccine acceptance rates in the world. 98% of people surveyed responded they would definitely or probably get vaccinated when the vaccine becomes available in the country. In July 2021, Vietnam saw the worsening wave of infections driven by the virulent Delta variant. The government is building more field hospitals and accelerating its vaccine rollout in COVID-19 hotspot Ho Chi Minh City.²⁷ It is aiming to administer at least one shot to 70% of the city's 9 million residents over the next month.

e. Singapore

Singapore is a success story in both containing the virus outbreaks and vaccinating its residents. With robust tracing and quarantining policies, Singapore managed to keep its Covid-19 infection rate below 65,000 cases with 37 deaths. The Singaporean government invested more than S\$1 billion to sign advanced purchase agreements and made early down payments on promising vaccine candidates, such as Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Coronavac. The first shipment of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine arrived on 21 December 2020. The first vaccine commencement was on 30 December 2020 and the vaccine is free for all Singaporeans and long-term residents.

Singapore developed two vaccination programs. The first one is sponsored by the country's ministry of health and uses the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Novavax vaccine in the National Vaccination Plan. Meanwhile, the second route, the Special Access Route, is targeted for individuals who cannot receive mRNA vaccines. Thus, it will only distribute Sinovac and Sinopharm-made vaccines. The Special Access Route vaccine recipients are not eligible for the Vaccine Injury Financial Assistance Programme (VIFAP) which means that the individuals cannot claim for financial assistance should they develop any adverse reactions due to the vaccine injection.

²⁶ Viet Nam News, *Vaccine diplomacy to play pivotal role in Viet Nam's search for vaccines*, 9 July 2021, <<https://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/988681/vaccine-diplomacy-to-play-pivotal-role-in-viet-nams-search-for-vaccines.html>>, accessed on 17 August 2021.

²⁷ Reuters, *Vietnam accelerates vaccinations in COVID-19 epicentre*, 29 July 2021, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/vietnam-accelerates-vaccinations-covid-19-epicentre-2021-07-29/>>, accessed on 1 August 2021.

As of July 2021, 58% of its population are fully vaccinated and 75% already received at least one dose of vaccine. Singapore itself aims to fully vaccinate two-thirds of its population by around National Day on 9 August 2021.²⁸ With the country's current vaccination rate of 80.000 doses per day, it is on track to achieve the target. Furthermore, Singapore also announced the interval between first and second doses has also been shortened to four weeks, from six to eight weeks previously. This success story can also be credited to Singapore's mass vaccination campaign and also the use of technology to its national vaccination program.

2. Comparing Southeast Asian Nations' Vaccination Program

We have two stories of vaccination programs in Southeast Asia. Vietnam and Singapore are deemed very successful in containing the COVID-19 outbreaks. Furthermore, these countries are en route to herd immunity as they began to combine mass tracing protocols with robust vaccination programs, especially for Singapore. Meanwhile, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand are struggling on both ends. While the outbreaks due to the Delta variant worsens in the countries, vaccination rates are not keeping up with the infection rates. It is hard to predict when these countries can step out of the pandemic with the current situation.

To compare the vaccination policies in the countries, we have laid a table for explanation as seen below as of July 2021²⁹:

Countries	Population (in mil.)	COVID-19 Case	Vaccine Types	% of fully vaccinated
Indonesia	267.7	3.372.374	Sinovac, AZ, Sinopharm, Moderna	7.3%
Malaysia	31.5	1.095.486	Pfizer, AZ, Sinovac, Sinopharm	19.6%
Vietnam	95.5	133.405	AZ, Sputnik V, Sinopharm, Pfizer, Moderna, Janssen	0.6%
Thailand	69.4	578.375	AZ, Sinovac	9.1%
Singapore	5.7	64.681	Pfizer, Moderna, Novavax, Sinovac, Sinopharm	56.3%

3. Strategies of Southeast Asian Government to Revive Tourism Post-Vaccination: Policies Comparison

As Southeast Asian countries are focusing on the execution of vaccination programs, they are also preparing the recovery plans once the vaccination program already reaches the goal. Recovery plans are crucial in the race of who gets out first from the downside of the pandemic. Tourism as an important economic sector in the region cannot be overlooked in the recovery plan should these countries want to boost up their economy.

²⁸ Rebecca Pazos, 'Singapore aims to vaccinate 2 in 3 residents against Covid-19 by National Day: Are we on track?', *Straits Times*, 26 June 2021, <<https://www.straitstimes.com/multimedia/graphics/2021/06/singapore-covid-vaccination-tracker/index.html?shell>>, accessed on 31 July 2021.

²⁹ CSIS, *Southeast Asia Covid-19 Tracker*, 31 July 2021, <<https://www.csis.org/programs/southeast-asia-program/projects/southeast-asia-covid-19-tracker>>, accessed on 1 August 2021.

Before diving deeper into each country’s recovery plan, we must discuss how ASEAN plays a central role in uniting regional responses towards COVID-19 and its escape plan. At the 37th ASEAN Summit, ASEAN Leaders agreed to adopt the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework. Within this framework, the nations designed coordinated responses to COVID-19, including strengthening health systems, digital transformation, and broader economic integration. In the framework, the Leaders recognized that COVID-19 impact on the tourism sector is significant given its importance for ASEAN economies, particularly MSMEs and informal workers.³⁰ There are few strategies that were offered in this framework, such as:

1. Setting up **travel bubble/corridor** framework³¹: ASEAN Leaders agreed that it is essential to have regional guidelines to facilitate cross-border movement of essential personnel such as business travelers to maintain essential movement of people, yet ensuring the safeguarding of public health;
2. Accelerating **tourism sectoral recovery**³²: ASEAN Leaders agreed to prioritize the tourism sector by reopening economic sectors and strengthening public health gains. Given that tourism contributes to 14.3% of region’s GDP and accounts to 13.7% of region’s total employment, the leaders focused on implementing the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025 amid the pandemic;
3. Strengthening **transportation**³³: ASEAN, with the support from UNESCAP and ITF will develop transport connectivity to support tourism development after the pandemic.
4. Establishing **digital vaccine certificate**³⁴: ASEAN leaders also weighed a digital coronavirus vaccine certificate as they prepare to revive the region’s ailing tourism sector. This move was discussed after a few good case practices from EU’s Digital Green Pass and Israel’s Vaccine Passport to help boost the creative economy and tourism sector in their respective regions.

		Tourism Revenue					
		6 months			12 months		
		Worst	Average	Best	Worst	Average	Best
ASEAN	Brunei Darussalam	-51.2%	-49.7%	-48.2%	-31.0%	-30.4%	-29.5%
	Cambodia	-61.9%	-58.4%	-57.8%	-48.2%	-42.6%	-41.3%
	Indonesia	-56.8%	-53.6%	-51.5%	-29.1%	-27.7%	-27.2%
	Lao PDR	-66.7%	-64.8%	-62.8%	-87.2%	-55.0%	-52.8%
	Malaysia	-29.0%	-27.7%	-27.1%	-5.3%	-5.2%	-5.1%
	Myanmar	-63.6%	-62.4%	-59.9%	-48.4%	-46.1%	-44.2%
	Philippines	-34.7%	-34.1%	-32.7%	-15.8%	-15.2%	-15.1%
	Singapore	-26.4%	-25.4%	-24.7%	+25.6%	+24.6%	+24.1%
	Thailand	-32.2%	-30.3%	-29.7%	-4.0%	-3.8%	-3.7%
	Viet Nam	-51.7%	-50.2%	-48.7%	-10.7%	-10.3%	-9.8%

³⁰ ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, pp. 10.

³¹ ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, pp. 13.

³² ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, pp. 30.

³³ ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, pp.31.

³⁴Kentaro Iwamoto, ‘ASEAN eyes digital vaccine certificate for post-COVID travel’, *Nikkei Asia*, 3 March 2021, <<https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/ASEAN-eyes-digital-vaccine-certificate-for-post-COVID-travel>>, accessed on 1 August 2021.

		International Tourist Arrivals					
		6 months			12 months		
		Worst	Average	Best	Worst	Average	Best
ASEAN	Brunei Darussalam	-41.5%	-39.5%	-38.7%	-14.3%	-13.8%	-13.3%
	Cambodia	-55.9%	-52.7%	-51.7%	-33.4%	-32.1%	-31.4%
	Indonesia	-43.5%	-42.7%	-41.4%	-13.2%	-12.4%	-12.0%
	Lao PDR	-68.1%	-66.8%	-64.1%	-45.9%	-45.0%	-43.7%
	Malaysia	-18.0%	-17.4%	-17.1%	+7.4%	+7.2%	+7.1%
	Myanmar	-60.0%	-56.6%	-54.3%	-38.5%	-37.7%	-36.2%
	Philippines	-26.9%	-25.9%	-25.4%	+10.3%	+9.8%	+9.7%
	Singapore	-16.0%	-15.5%	-14.9%	+42.4%	+41.2%	+40.4%
	Thailand	-29.9%	-28.3%	-27.7%	-5.1%	-4.9%	-4.8%
	Viet Nam	-37.4%	-36.7%	-35.2%	-10.1%	-9.5%	-9.3%

The table³⁵ above presents data on projection of tourism revenue and international tourist arrivals for ASEAN member states. The trend shows that in terms of revenue, no ASEAN countries, except Singapore will experience positive growth from the tourism sector. Noted that, it will only happen in 12 months and within the 6-month timeframe, no country is able to revive their tourism sector yet. Singapore is the only one with positive growth in the next 12 months can be credited to its massive and wide vaccination programs that successfully suppress the infection rate in the country.

Meanwhile in terms of tourist arrivals, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore will experience the surge of international tourists within the 12-month timeframe. While other countries, like Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam will see a growth although it is not as significant as the three countries mentioned previously. International trust can also impact the number of tourist arrivals. Malaysia and Singapore are using global renowned vaccines, like Pfizer and AstraZeneca and also have positive tracing and quarantine track records throughout the pandemic that might put these countries out of the travel bans of tourist origin countries.

Conclusion

In the future, the tourism industry in ASEAN might have a rough path to continue. As airlines have not operated fully yet, the level of cautions from some countries, tourism in ASEAN will not come back to normal in several years ahead, at least until the vaccine for COVID-19 is massively produced. In spite of the uncertainty of the future, it might be worth noting that domestic tourism in ASEAN started to reopen and some ASEAN countries have seen a surge in local tourism.

In addition, countries have started to reopen their borders, including Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia. Although the travel corridors might only include business travelers, it's a good step. Meanwhile in Asia, some countries are proposing to have a travel bubble, for example between Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, China, and South Korea. Although travel restrictions are still intact, the governments of ASEAN are slowly easing them in order to save

³⁵StathisPolyzos, et.al., 'COVID-19 Tourism Recovery in the ASEAN and East Asia Region: Asymmetric Patterns and Implications', *ERIA Discussion Paper Series*, No. 379, pp. 15-16.

their tourism industry.³⁶ At the regional level, the ASEAN Tourism Ministers Meeting resulted in conveying cooperation in operating the ASEAN Tourism Crisis Communication Team (ATCCT).³⁷ From the meeting, we can expect in the future ASEAN countries will collaborate and have a unified policy in tourism, especially after the pandemic, considering ASEAN heavily relied on tourism as one of the main sources of income.

Although in normal conditions it can contribute to billions of revenues, during a public health crisis like COVID-19 pandemic, tourism is a very vulnerable industry. For countries who are heavily reliant on tourism, it is important for them to have adequate preparedness in policing and healthcare systems in order to cope with the downside of global pandemic. ASEAN, as a regional group, should have more authorities or advice in directing the member states' policies to tackle COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the government also needs to allocate emergency funds to save local businesses affected by the global crisis. With unified policies and greater information sharing experience among ASEAN Member States, hopefully we can overcome this crisis and rebuild our strategic tourism industry in the future.

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³⁶ "Southeast Asia's Tourism and Travel Sector After COVID-19", EMEx, 2020, accessed on 7 September 2020, <<https://www.emergingmarketexperts.nl/blog-media/analyses/36-restoring-southeast-asia-s-tourism-and-travel-sector-after-covid-19>>.

³⁷ Manila Times. "ASEAN Tourism Ministers Hold Special Virtual Meeting". 2020, accessed on 7 May 2020. <<https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/05/11/weekly/expat-diplomats/asean-tourism-ministers-hold-special-virtual-meeting/723917/>>

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