

**AN IMPROVEMENT TO THE UTILIZATION OF POST ON WHEEL (POW)
SERVICES IN SANDAKAN, SABAH**

HELDORA BINTI HONG

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA

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**HELDORA BINTI HONG
MBS201082**

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**Azman Hashim International Business School
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia**

DEDICATION

To my dearest Mom and Dad for their patience and sacrifices in order for me to complete my MBA;

To my family members, loved ones and siblings for encouragement and support;

To my supervisor who never give up on me and always be my motivator to keep going and made this possible;

To my boss for being supportive and gave his very best to help me on this project;

To my colleagues and everyone who provide support in this MBA journey;

This project research is dedicated to you.

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Thirdly, a very special thanks to Pos Malaysia for the contribution in providing such a wonderful co-operation in this research. I would also like to express my appreciation to all respondents and persons in charge of the Post on Wheel (PoW) project who dedicatedly spent their time and effort in the interview sessions and discussions made. In my data collection process, their contribution and involvement brought a lot of impact and enabled me to collect relevant data and information within a short period of time.

Last but not least, I am forever thankful to both of my parents for their love and support, continuous care and unconditional prayers even though during the thesis completion journey, we were apart and barely saw each other due to the pandemic. Also, I would like to thank all my siblings and families for their valuable and continuous support throughout this journey.

ABSTRACT

The Post on Wheel (PoW) project which is under the Postal Transformation Plan in Sabah and Sarawak (PTPSS) aims to improve rural mail delivery and to increase rural community access to basic postal services. This PTPSS is a public private initiative programme of collaboration between MCMC and POS Malaysia Berhad. PoW service is a mobile Post Office which provides basic postal services to the communities in rural areas. In addition, this project also aims to assist development of inclusive socio-economic development for Rakyat in rural parts in line with Malaysia's New Postal Strategy.

This research aims to improve the utilization and transaction of PoW services in Sandakan Sabah as the revenue in this district was facing decline between the year of 2018 to 2020 and there is a need to overcome this issue to transform the PoW services in Sandakan towards community centric and beneficial service to the communities. Thus, this research aims to improve the utilization of PoW services which will also improve the revenue of POS Malaysia for its sustainability and to remain relevant in the Postal and Courier Industry in the country as the leading postal and courier company.

To achieve the objective of this research, the researcher will be using a mixed-method methodology whereby both qualitative and quantitative research methodology. Two framework models will be used in this research which are the STP Marketing Model and Revenue Model to achieve an effective result from the intervention made in Cycle 1 and 2.

This study contributes theoretically and practically in postal service delivery improvement as well as in the public-private initiative field in our country. In addition, this research would be able to fill the gap in the action research literature and contribute to the body of knowledge related to postal services.

ABSTRAK

Post on Wheel (PoW) atau pun Pos Bergerak adalah salah satu projek di bawah Pelan Transformasi Pos di Sabah dan Sarawak (PTPSS) yang bertujuan untuk memperbaiki perkhidmatan mel dan meningkatkan kebolehcapaian kemudahan perkhidmatan Pos kepada penduduk di luar bandar. Projek ini adalah inisiatif awam dan Swasta dengan kerjasama Suruhajaya Komunikasi dan Multimedia Malaysia (MCMC) dan POS Malaysia Berhad. Perkhidmatan PoW ini adalah perkhidmatan Pos bergerak di mana ianya menyediakan perkhidmatan asas Pos seperti mana yang disediakan di Pejabat Pos di kawasan-kawasan luar bandar. Projek ini juga bertujuan untuk membantu dalam pembangunan sosio-ekonomi rakyat di luar bandar sejajar dengan Strategi Baru Pos Malaysia.

Kajian ini adalah bertujuan untuk meningkatkan dan memperbaiki penggunaan dan transaksi PoW di daerah Sandakan berikutan kemerosotan transaksi PoW yang ketara di antara tahun 2018 hingga tahun 2020. Terdapat keperluan untuk mengatasi masalah yang dihadapi oleh PoW di daerah ini bagi menjadikan PoW ini sebagai perkhidmatan yang berlandaskan komuniti dan bermanfaat secara optimum kepada komuniti setempat. Sehubungan itu, hasil dari kajian ini akan dapat membantu untuk meningkatkan penggunaan perkhidmatan PoW di kalangan komuniti dan seterusnya akan dapat membantu POS Malaysia untuk meningkatkan keuntungan dari perkhidmatan ini juga demi mewujudkan kelestarian dan kekal relevan sebagai Syarikat yang mengungguli industri Pos dan Kurier di negara ini.

Bagi mencapai objektif kajian ini, pengkaji menggunakan kaedah campuran dalam mengumpulkan dan menganalisis data iaitu kaedah kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Dua kerangka model juga digunakan dalam kajian ini iaitu 'STP Marketing Model' dan juga 'Revenue Model' untuk mencapai impak yang efektif dalam usaha pelaksanaan kajian melalui usaha penambahbaikan yang dijalankan semasa kitaran 1 dan 2 kajian ini.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MCMC	-	Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission
PoW	-	Post on Wheel
ASB	-	Amanah Saham Bumiputera
PTPSS	-	Postal Transformation Plan in Sabah and Sarawak
NPS	-	National Postal Strategy
PPP	-	Public-private Partnership
PIK	-	Pusat Internet Komuniti
PK	-	Posmen Komuniti
WPK	-	Wakil Posmen Komuniti
PEDi	-	Pusat Ekonomi Digital Keluarga Malaysia
WoM	-	Word of Mouth
MCO	-	Movement Control Order

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic had affected the whole world's economic condition and our way of living. Many businesses and organizations are moving towards digitization and online platform in delivering businesses to keep surviving in this pandemic era. The exponential expansion of e-commerce demonstrates that it is a key driver of the global economy, as well as one that contributes significantly to the growth of Malaysia's economy. The e-commerce business is a crucial growth engine for our postal and courier industry, as Malaysia is one of the leading e-commerce marketplaces in the Southeast Asia (SEA) region. Thus, it is critical that the country's postal and courier industry operators take the required steps to ensure that the postal industry delivers world-class service to the customers in terms of quality, accessibility, and coverage. The important role of the Postal and Courier Industry indicates that Pos Malaysia is in a better position to take advantage of the opportunities that the digital era presents. According to Vasciuc C.G et al. (2019), in most countries postal networks are an essential infrastructure to ensure better functioning of the inclusive and efficient economy towards a sustainable development largely in developing the socio-economic, to counter the climate change or financial and social inclusion. It is crucial for the postal operator to facilitate, measure and reduce natural disaster risks or specifically reduce the digital divide to better use the postal infrastructure in rural and inaccessible areas to contribute to the development of the country.

The purpose of this study is to focus on the improvement of Post on Wheel Services (PoW) in Sandakan, Sabah as the transaction of PoW services is declining between the year of 2018 to 2020. This project provides access to basic postal services to the rural communities through the Postal Transformation Plan in Sabah and Sarawak (PTPSS). The PTPSS project is a Public-private initiative collaboration plan between Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) and Pos Malaysia Berhad which consist of new transformation plan for ‘Posmen Komuniti’, ‘Wakil Posmen Komuniti’, Post on Wheel (PoW) and Address for All initiatives. The project was started in 2011 and MCMC had allocated funding to support the implementation of PTPSS while Pos Malaysia absorbed the operational cost including logistics, uniforms, identification, signage, awareness campaigns and training. There are a total of nine (9) PoW operating in selected districts in Sabah which are Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan, Tawau, Lahad Datu, Keningau, Kota Marudu, Kota Belud, Beaufort and Semporna. But, only four (5) out of nine (9) PoW are still in operation as the other four (4) PoW unable to operate due to damages. The PoW provides basic postal services especially for rural areas which are located within 5KM radius or more from the post office. The facility is a specially designed mobile vehicle equipped with a technological system for postal services. Among basic postal services offered by PoW to the communities are such as utility bills payment, stamp purchasing, Posmel products, Roadtax and insurance renewal, *Amanah Saham Bumiputera* (ASB) transaction service and many others.

This project is important to address the underserved rural areas and to bridge the postal divide directly and gradually to meet the National Postal Strategy objective to assist the development of inclusive socio-economic for the communities in rural parts in line with the new economic model. The PTPSS was formulated in line with the National Postal Strategies in 2010- 2014 as shown in figure below:

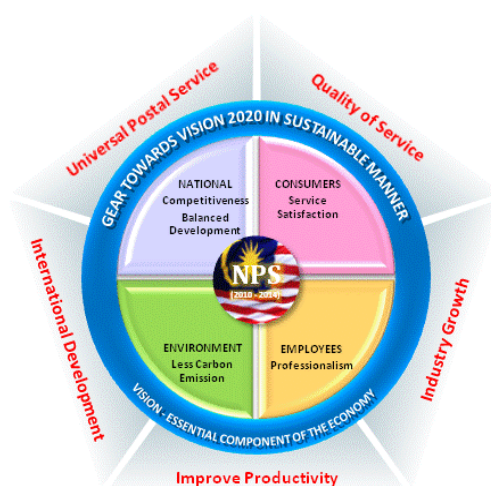


Figure 1.2.1.1: The National Postal Strategy
for 2010-2014

(Source: National Postal Strategy Report)

According to the National Postal Strategy (NPS) plan for 2010-2014, the NPS focuses to promote significant access to postal and courier services to the citizen by developing a coherent postal regulatory and development policy framework to connect both urban and rural areas to improve the quality of life. Even though the competition of postal and courier service in Malaysia particularly is intensive due to the booming of e-commerce and online transaction, the post office network remains as an important national infrastructure which provides benefit to the government and commercial services at more than 1,000 outlets nationwide.

According to Ismail S. (2013), a public-private partnership (PPP) is an internationally recognized public-sector procurement technique in which the government enlists the private sector's commitment and delegates a certain amount of responsibility in the provision of public infrastructure or services to the private sector. The basic grounds for implementing PPP are that it will greatly reduce the government's upfront expenses in delivering and maintaining public facilities, and that it will allow for improvements in public facilities and services since PPP fosters private sector innovation.

Thus, as the public-private initiative is vital in the provision of public amenities, there are needs to implement new strategies to improve the service utilization and adjust with the current pandemic situation that impacts the whole world economic setting. This chapter will cover the sub-chapter including Pos Malaysia's background, issues related to the study, research questions and objectives, researcher's role, ethics, the importance of the proposed research theoretically and practically.

1.2. Case Company Introduction

Pos Malaysia Berhad is one of Malaysia's leading postal service providers. The Company provides postal services across Malaysia, handling millions of mail and items per day through a nationwide network of over 1,000 touch points, including Pos Malaysia Outlets, Pos Minis, Pos24 (Self-service Terminal), Post-On Wheels (Mobile Outlets), postal agents, and stamp agents. According to Pos Malaysia Berhad annual report 2013, the Pos Malaysia service transformed from traditional postal services towards becoming the one-stop provider for communications, financial services and supply chain solutions. Today, Pos Malaysia is a dynamic provider of postal (mail, retail, courier, and international), logistics, aviation, financial, and supply chain solutions in Malaysia, with the country's largest delivery and touchpoint network. Its core business segments provide extensive retail network experience.

The Company has a 200-year track record, connects the country to over 200 postal operators around the world and has expanded its competence to service South East Asia's fast growing cross-border e-Commerce firms.

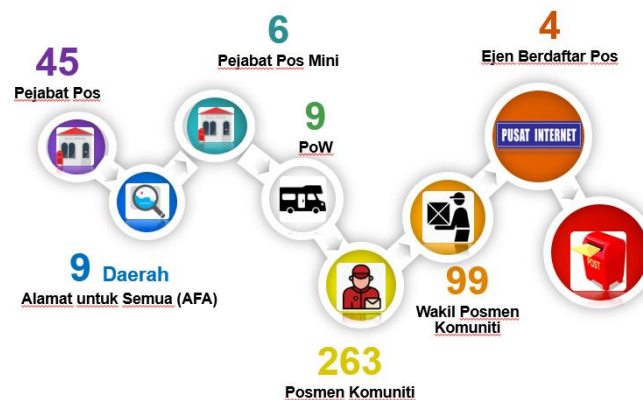


Figure 1.2.1.1: Overview of Pos Malaysia Berhad Sabah State Infrastructure and Projects

In Sabah, Pos Malaysia has 45 Post Offices, 6 Mini Post Office, 9 Pows but currently only 5 units of Post on Wheel (PoW) in operation, 4 Post Office Registered Agents in Pusat Internet Komuniti (PIK), 51, 328 Post Box, 99 'Wakil Posmen Komuniti', 263

‘Posmen Komuniti’ and 9 Districts that have been deployed with Address for All projects across the state as shown in figure 1.2.1.1 above.¹

1.2.1. External Environmental Analysis

The postal and courier industry is expanding globally and its services are vital in enabling the world population to connect through mail and parcel service, supporting the world’s e-commerce activities and providing solutions for supply chain. The industry continues to face digital problems, including the eventual collapse of the traditional core business of mail delivery as communications move online, as well as the quickly rising e-commerce parcel market, which has sparked fierce competition in the industry. In Malaysia, the postal and courier industry is regulated under the Postal Services Act 2012 (Act 741) and MCMC's main responsibility is to guarantee that Malaysia's universal postal service provisions are implemented. Pos Malaysia Bhd is the only company in Malaysia that has been designated and authorised to provide basic and competitive postal services.

The condition of Malaysia Postal and Courier industry will be further analysed by using the PEST analysis which consist of Political, Economy, Social and Technology factors.

Political Factor

For political factors, Malaysia is a country that practices parliamentary democracy. Thus, the various changes occurring in our country’s political setting would somehow affect the operational and flow of the postal industry sector. According to Taib & Mat (1992), the changes in government structure would also change the regulatory and administration planning in line with the national objectives of the new government. Thus, if the regulation of the industry changes due to the requirement of the government to look into the development of the sector according to the current situation, the needs to transform to a new strategy in aligning with the current situation. Postal and courier industry is bound by the regulatory act regulated

¹ *Pusat Internet Komuniti (PIK) is now known as Pusat Ekonomi Digital Keluarga Malaysia (PEDi)*

by MCMC. MCMC is a regulatory body to formulate strategic plans to further improve and empower the industry in line with the various current and future possibilities such as technological changes, new consumer trends and market trends. Hence for legal factor involved for postal industry in Malaysia towards aligning with the current pandemic situation, MCMC has set a moratorium period of two (2) years effective from 14 September to 15 September 2022 to review the framework of the postal licensing in ensuring that the postal and courier industry remains competitive and relevant. On another note, during this time the applications for new licenses as well license renewal is temporarily suspended. Thus, this would be able to assist the existing postal provider licensees to improve and focus on the quality of service.

Economy Factor

Vasciuc C.G et al. (2019) stated that postal networks work on hundreds of millions of physical, electronic and financial transactions daily as the backbone of commercial and economic development. The postal economy studies the problem related to this particular market, the demand and supply and analyses trend and policy development in different countries. The postal industry needs to adjust according to the new information and communication technologies, reform in line with the global economic and financial crisis which are the factors that contribute to the consumption behaviour of consumers towards the postal and courier services. The Covid-19 pandemic had resulted in many organization's transition from traditional ways of working and business towards digitization including Malaysia. Despite the world's economic turnover condition during the Covid-19 pandemic, the statistics of the e-commerce market is booming during the period as the internet usage among citizens is highly increased. According to GlobalData report (2020), Malaysia's e-commerce market is expected to increase by 24.7 percent in 2020, according to GlobalData's E-Commerce Analytics. Between 2020 and 2024, the market is predicted to increase at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14.3%, reaching MYR51.6 billion (US\$12.6 billion). During this period, entrepreneurs of online businesses and Postal services would benefit from this market trend.

Social Factor

The Covid-19 outbreak and subsequent lockdowns have boosted e-commerce even more, as well as accelerated other digital trends. This issue is hastening the postal industry's structural shift from mail to parcels. According to Jílková P. (2021), the COVID-19 epidemic, as well as government restrictions, had an impact on customer behaviour. During the COVID-19 crisis, consumers of all generations reported making more digital purchases of products and services. E-commerce growth was fuelled in large part by Baby Boomers. Overall, there has been a significant shift to digital expenditure, with 43% of all respondents shopping online since the COVID-19 problem began, compared to only 12% before the crisis. The frequency of purchases has also grown. Thus in Malaysia, during the pandemic, Pos Malaysia has recorded its revenue of RM605.1 Million for Second Quarter FY2020. This phenomenon resulted from the new normal lifestyle of the citizen during the lockdown period as the movement is restricted and leads to booming in online purchase of products and services.

Technology Factor

The digital transformation in the banking industry, introduction of electronic mail and digital platform businesses had impacted the postal industry in so many ways. The emergence of technological development and automation has implicated the businesses of post offices in rural areas and caused losses of business and revenue. (S.D White et al, 1997) Postal services would remain relevant and important in the modern business entity if it is continuously re-branded and customized according to the needs of the customer in line with the booming e-commerce industry. The major challenge for the postal operator is to maintain the quality of service delivered to the customer and to remain competitive with its other competitor. For the situation in Malaysia, the technological changes should be seen as an opportunity as this would lead to an increase of parcel services and Posmel product usage. Pos Malaysia would need to look at its sales target and enhance its product according to technological advancement and market trends.

1.2.2. Internal Environmental Analysis

Internal environmental analysis is an analysis of an organization's strengths and weaknesses. Internal factors include financial and human resources, tangible and intangible assets, management, operational efficiencies and many others.

In Pos Malaysia, the strengths can be seen from the strong brand and organization's experience as the leader of the postal industry in Malaysia before any of the competitors. Pos Malaysia was previously known as 'Jabatan Perkhidmatan Pos' before it was corporatized in 1992. In 2001, Pos Malaysia was listed in the 'Bursa Malaysia Berhad'. Since then, the functions of Pos Malaysia have transitioned from parcel delivery, insurance service, transaction of money (postal order & money order) and investment of funds to development of many strategic business units which are POS Laju, POS, Data Pos, POS ArRahnu, POS Digicert, POS Solutions & POS Online.

Another strength of Pos Malaysia is its variety of services such as same-day delivery, next-day delivery, time-definite delivery, pos parcel, pos express, and pos laju tack on-demand pickup giving clients more options. The latest service is the Ezibox service which enables those who do not have a permanent address or for any reasons unavailable for parcel delivery at home or in the workplace to self-collect their parcel in the Post office. In Sabah, there are two Ezibox provided which are in Kota Belud Post Office and Kota Kinabalu General Post Office. In this study, the strength of the PoW service is it offers varieties of services that would ease the communities not limited to parcel delivery and Pos Malaysia products but also offering services which is related to day to day needs such as utility bills payment, vehicle road tax and insurance renewal, ASB transaction, postal and money order, Telco prepaid reload and many others.

In this study, the weaknesses of the PoW vehicle as mentioned by the management is the frequency of damages for the vehicle and the processes involved to repair the damages or parts replacement such as generator set as it will go through procurement processes. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats will be discussed further in the next sub-topic in SWOT analysis.

1.2.3. SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) is a framework for assessing a company's competitive position and developing strategic plans. Internal and external elements, as well as existing and future possibilities, are all evaluated in a SWOT analysis. Pos Malaysia's SWOT analysis are analysed as follows:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Strong brand name and experience as the leader in postal and courier service2. Variety of services offered to customers3. Availability of PoW vehicles to assist in service delivery and to reach out to the communities in remote areas.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PoW vehicles facing frequent damages due to longer usage of generator set during operation.2. Procurement process bureaucracy in vehicle parts replacement and repair.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Increasing demand in online shopping platforms during the MCO.2. Technological advancement enables transaction and online payment gateway simpler and possible3. PoW vehicle equipped with a system that enables varieties of transactions to be offered to customers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Longer time taken for PoW vehicle repair and parts replacement would cause delay in PoW operation.2. High fuel consumption for location that is far from the Post Office3. Manpower cost4. Competitors from other postal service providers.

Figure 1.2.3.1: The SWOT Analysis for the Issue in this Study

Based on the SWOT analysis illustrated in figure 1.2.3.1 above, the explanations of the content are as follows:

Strengths

The SWOT analysis in Figure 3 was developed for exploratory purposes about the PoW vehicle and its operation matters. Through the analysis, the strengths for Pos Malaysia and PoW service is its strong brand name and experience as the leader in postal and courier service. Pos Malaysia is a well-known brand as it emerged in the postal industry before any competitor coming in the market. Besides, Pos Malaysia also has varieties of services offered to the customers not limited to only postal products and services. In this study, the PoW vehicle offers varieties of service to the customers such as utility bills payment, vehicle road tax and insurance renewal, ASB transaction, postal and money order, Telco prepaid reload and many others. The mobility of the PoW vehicle to move and operate in communities is an advantage and strength of this public private initiative as it would be able to contribute a lot to the communities especially in remote areas to serve the purpose of the initiative which is to bridge the postal divide.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses identified in this study are the frequent damages of the PoW vehicle due to high usage of the generator set during PoW operation. When the PoW vehicle faces damages, it will take time for part replacement or repair works to take place due to procurement processes. The delay of the parts replacement and repair works would result in delay of PoW operation in the community area and eventually would contribute to the decline of PoW's revenue.

Opportunities

The opportunities identified in this study are the increasing demand in online shopping platforms and the booming of e-commerce activities during which the MCO would be able to increase Pos Malaysia's product and services usage. According to the Star newspaper in June 2020, the news reported that during the full month of the movement control order, the Pos Malaysia group observed a 69 percent increase month-over-month (m-o-m) to an average daily package volume of 590,000 in April (MCO). This is seen as an opportunity of the PoW services as it will serve as an agent of e-commerce activities to support the communities. The PoW service would be able to support Small and Medium Enterprises and households who are earning money by working from home doing small businesses during the pandemic. The technological advancement is also seen as an opportunity as it is an enabler of e-commerce activities to be possible and through the system equipped in the PoW vehicle, it would be able to make varieties of transaction that would ease the communities without having to go out to town to make payment for utility bills such as electricity and water. Other hassles would be queueing up for road tax and insurance renewal which would consume time and movement to town. Instead of going to town for such purposes, the PoW is reaching out to the community to provide the services.

Threats

In this study, there are for threats identified that is in relation to the PoW operation which are:

- i. Longer time taken for PoW vehicle repair and parts replacement would cause delay in PoW operation

The bureaucracy in the procurement process would cause delay in the PoW operation as the vehicle would not be able to operate in the community's area. Thus, the inconsistency of service would cause perception to the community whether the service is still available or not in their community area.

- ii. High fuel consumption for location that is far from Post Office

Among issues that were raised by the management is high fuel consumption for locations that are far from the Post Office. This is seen as a threat because if the transaction received in the location is low, it would not be able to cover the cost of operation of the PoW.

iii. Manpower cost

Manpower cost is also seen as a threat as the PoW operation needs two staff to operate. The operation would involve two staff members which are the PoW Manager and assistant to manager to manage the operation. If the transaction is low in the location that they operate, the income from PoW would not be able to cover the cost of manpower for each day of the PoW operation. That is why location of PoW operation is important to ensure that the PoW operation would be worth the investment and at the same time Pos Malaysia would be able to gain revenue to cover the PoW operation.

iv. Competitors from other postal service provider

Another threat identified in this study is the existence of competitors from other postal service providers which offer lower prices for parcel delivery. This would offer the communities with options that they can choose for postal services.

1.3. Problem Statement

The initial aim of this research is to improve the service utilization of PoW in Sandakan, Sabah. Discussions were made with Pos Malaysia's State General Manager on the problems of PoW operation and suggestions were made by the top management to implement research in Sandakan, Sabah due to the decline of PoW transactions between the year of 2018 to 2020. Although the other districts also show low transaction of PoW services such as Beaufort and Kota Belud, there were issues of PoW vehicle damages that did not permit the research to be implemented in the area. Hence, Sandakan District is chosen as a pilot project to test the effectiveness of the research intervention.

The arising issue is also supported by the secondary data provided by Pos Malaysia. The PoW service utilization's data in the 9 districts for 2018 to 2020 is shown as below chart:

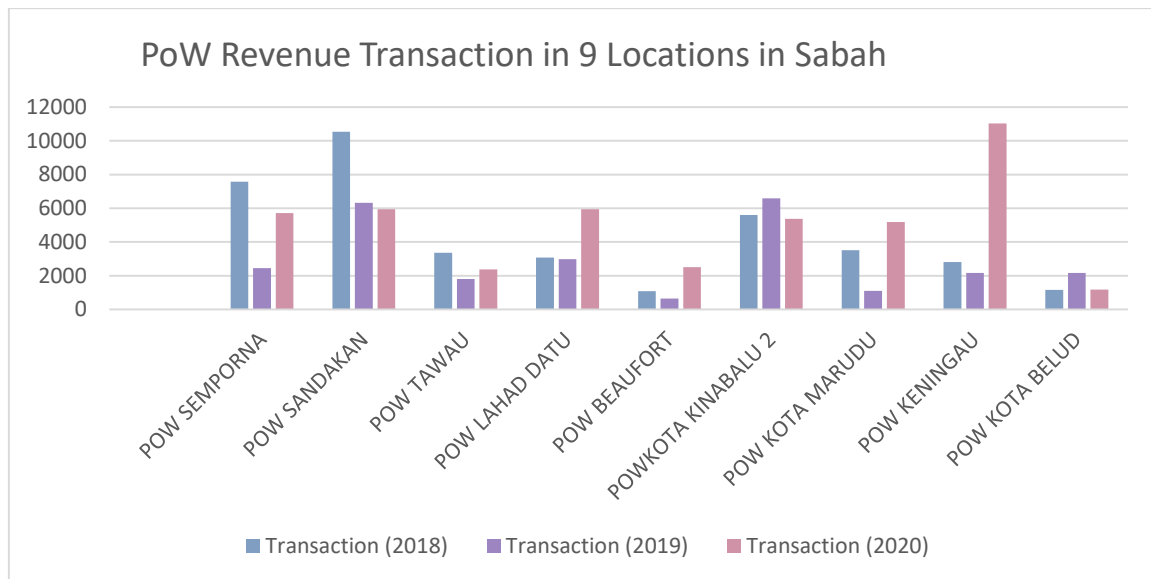


Figure 1.2.3.1: PoW Transaction Trends in 9 Locations in Sabah from 2018 to 2020

From the figure 1.2.3.1 above, PoW's revenue in Sandakan district shows a decline trend between the year of 2018 to 2020. The decline of transactions of PoW means that the utilization of the services is declining in the district. Low transaction of PoW would cause losses and would not be able to cover operating cost of human resources, fuel consumption and wages. The issues and factors will be further discussed in problem diagnosis.

1.3.1. Problem Diagnosis

Through the SWOT analysis and problem statement that gathered during the first phase of the research, it has shown the surface of the factors that contributed to the decline of PoW services in Sandakan. As PoW service is a Public Private Initiative that is vital to serve the community especially in the rural areas, factors influencing the decline of service and ways to improve the PoW transaction should be addressed and identified. The problems were identified by using the Fishbone diagram as follows:

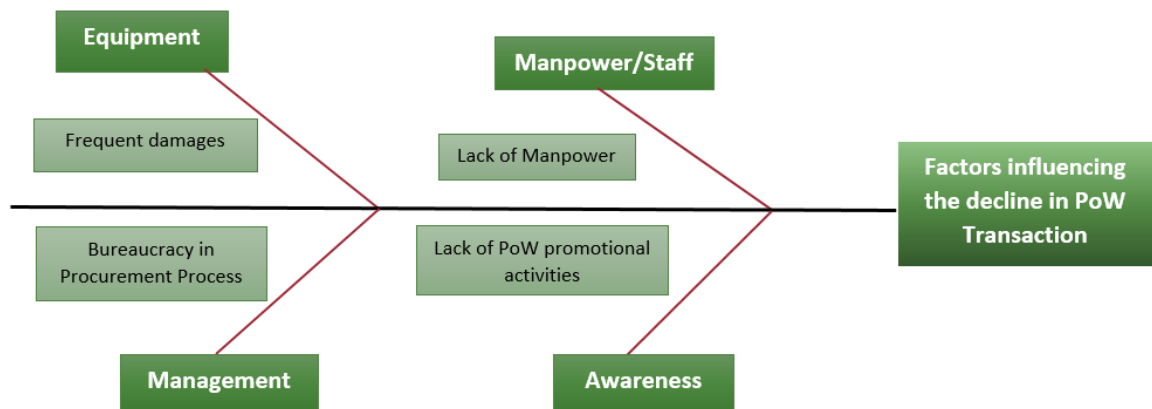


Figure 1.3.1.1: The Fishbone diagram showing the factors that influencing PoW Transaction in Sandakan, Sabah

The factor that identified in terms of manpower is through the surface analysis and interview of PoW Manager in Sandakan, the findings was they were lacking manpower and no dedicated staff to in charge of PoW operation. PoW operation needs to be managed by two staff. If one of the staff is on leave of having emergency matters, the PoW would not be operated on the day. In addition, if there were any emergency that needed staff to cover duty in the Post Office, the staff who are supposed to be in charge of PoW would be required to work in the Post Office and the PoW would not be operated.

Apart from that, there was also a lack of awareness done to promote the PoW services. There was awareness done but the medium of awareness is not through the right channel such as through Pos Malaysia's Facebook Page. For remote areas, not everyone is internet savvy and they might not have access to Facebook. It was also mentioned that there was awareness and promotional activity done through PoW Banner on the vehicle during its operation. The method of awareness is seen as not efficient enough to disseminate the information to the communities.

There were also issues on the frequent damages on the PoW vehicle which resulted in delay in operation for a long period. It took about one month or more for the vehicle parts or repair works to be done as Pos Malaysia has their procurement processes to follow as it incurs cost. Thus, this factor leads to the decline of the operation during the period that the PoW is unable to operate.

Thus, in view of these factors that are influencing the PoW services performance and transaction, a strategic intervention plan needs to be done in order to assist Pos Malaysia to improve these issues.

1.3.2. Theoretical Gaps

Any research conducted would need to have its contribution and significance towards knowledge development in the particular industry. The findings and outcome anticipated from the research must lead to positive impact to the industry and beyond the research setting.

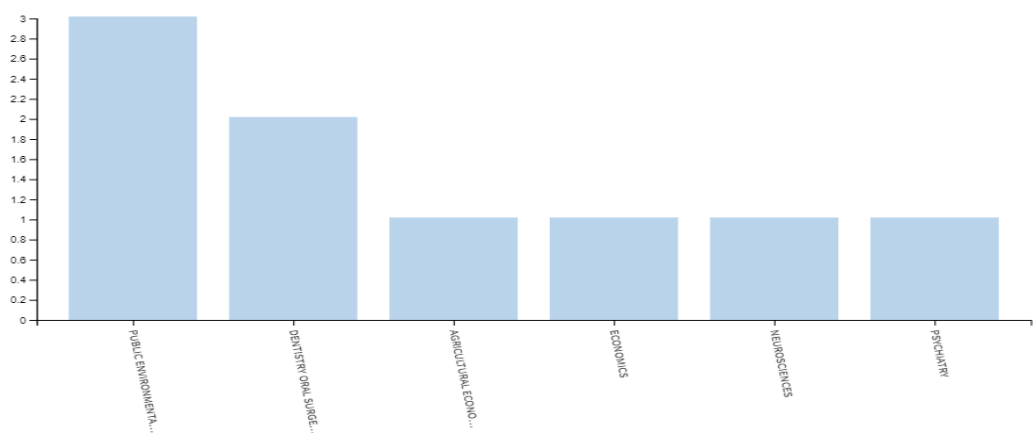


Figure 1.3.2.1: Bar Graph Analysis from Web of Science browser showing the number of the related studies in the same field

The finding from figure 1.3.2.1 shows that there is limited literature and studies done on the field of postal service delivery improvement in rural areas. There were only 7 records for the search of the research field.

1.3.3. Practical Gaps

The research topic that has been chosen in this study plays an important role in the Public Private Initiative field and also would bring huge contributions in the Postal industry as this study aims to contribute back to the community. This would eventually contribute to the efficiency of the government and private partnership project in the future. The success of the intervention plan in this study would be able to be replicated in other fields as well in the future towards creating an efficient service delivery improvement in the related field.

1.4. Research Questions

The proposed area of research addresses the following research questions:

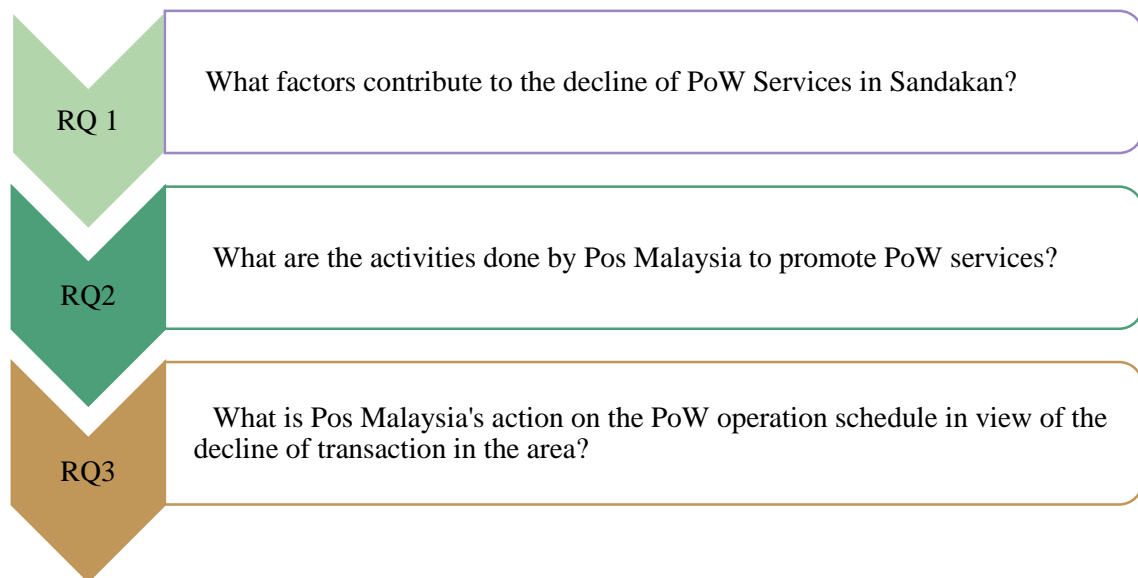


Figure 1.3.3.1: Research questions developed from the study

The research questions addressed in figure 1.3.3.1 would lead to the next step of the research which is to identify the research objectives and also intervention plan to achieve the objectives of the study.

1.5. Research Objectives

The development of the research question will be inter-related to the objective of the study. The research objectives must be clearly identified, achievable and verifiable as it will directly contribute in answering the research questions. Hence, the objectives of this study are identified as follows:

- i. To improve the PoW transaction in Sandakan, Sabah and to increase revenue of Pos Malaysia
- ii. To identify suitable intervention plan related to promotional activities to increase the service utilization of PoW services
- iii. To re-strategize the existing schedule of PoW operation to the targeted market segments

1.6. Researcher's Role

The researcher plays an important role in conducting research with full of responsibility and ethics as outlined below:

- i. The researcher is responsible to ensure the successful implementation of the project according to the timeline given.
- ii. The researcher will be responsible in maintaining good work, discipline and following the steps in action research guideline
- iii. The researcher is responsible to carry out the research task until completion of the project
- iv. The researcher will be presenting the research outcome as and when requested by the University

1.7. Research Ethics

Research ethics refers to the area of discipline a researcher should take into account in conducting the whole process of research until completion of the project. There are seven (7) principles of research ethics highlighted by the City University of London:

- i. The researcher should maximise the advantage or benefit of the research and minimize any potential risk that could harm participant and researcher
- ii. The researcher must ensure that the participant take part voluntarily and free from any compulsion
- iii. The researcher shall treat all participant equally with respect without comparing a position of the individual or group in the society
- iv. The researcher should also ensure that the participants are informed accordingly on the purpose and benefits of the research
- v. The researcher must respect participant or group decision to remain anonymous and should take confidentiality seriously to avoid unnecessary action in the future
- vi. The researcher must ensure a high standard of integrity, quality and transparency in conducting research and also avoiding misrepresentation of data and negligence
- vii. The researcher must not have any personal gain or interest and must not agree to any party who offer promising rewards in the process of conducting the research

1.8. Significance of the Research

The proposed research is significant in addressing the underserved rural areas and postal divide directly and gradually. The community in rural area should not be left behind in any technological advancement and as MCMC is the regulatory body for Postal and courier service industry under the Postal Services Act 2012 in Malaysia, it is within MCMC's purview to ensure that the postal and courier industry is balanced both in urban and rural areas. Thus, analysis and in-depth details of the issues raised will be explored further by conducting research and improvement to the related field.

1.8.1. Significance to Theory

The proposed research is important to address the issue in the Public Private Initiative as this study would be able to improve the service delivery of Postal and Courier Industry as well as contributing to the communities. The gap should be filled through additional research in PoW operations and within Pos Malaysia's management. The study is significant towards the contribution of theory and facts in the Public Private Initiative field. Thus, the selection of topic is important as it would be able to benefit the academic setting and add knowledge on the related field.

1.8.2. Significance to Practice

The study would lead to public service delivery improvement contributions in the Postal and Courier Industry. In addition, it could be adapted by the related field of Public Private Initiative in improving the public service delivery projects funded by the government in partnership with private organizations. The intervention plan in this action research would be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the awareness programme and engagement with the 'Pusat Internet Komuniti' in ensuring the success of the intervention.

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