



ANALYSIS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE-SITE ASSESSMENTS FOR MALAYSIA TOURISM EXCELLENCE (MaTEx) BUSINESS CERTIFICATION PROGRAMME 2020

Saya mengesahkan laporan ini dan pembekal telah melaksanakan perkhidmatan dengan sempurna.

NOR HAFIZAH MOHD AROP
Timbalan Pengarah
Delivery Management Office (DMO)
Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC)

DECEMBER 12, 2020

Rajesvare K.D Rada



Table of Content

I. Executive Summary	3
II. Introduction and Background	5
III. Purpose of the Paper	7
IV. Overview of MaTEx	8
V. Process Flow of MaTEx Certification 2020	9
VI. Process Flow of Online Site Assessments	10
VII. Programme Outcome	14
VIII. Assessor's Tasks and Responsibilities	15
IX. Assessor's Checklist	16
X. Data Collection	17
XI. Findings and Analysis on the Feedback Survey	19
XII. SWOT Analysis	30
XIII. Strategic Recommendations	32
a. Proposed Framework for Online Site Assessment for MaTEx	33
b. Process Flow of Online Site Assessments	35
c. Assessor's Tasks and Responsibilities	37
d. Assessor's Checklist	38
e. Company's Tasks	39
f. Company's Checklist	40
g. Communication Plan	41
XIV. Conclusion	42
XV. References	43
XVI. Technical Appendix	44

Executive Summary

Malaysia Tourism Excellence (MaTEx) Business Certification Programme is a newly developed industry level certification scheme aims to certify micro, small and medium tourism enterprises across Malaysia based on standards created. The first on-site assessment programme conducted in 2019 was a major success with 112 companies awarded the certificate of business excellence. In 2020, the business certification programme faced major challenge due to outbreak of the COVID-19 as the online-site could not be executed due to Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) by the government. As such, the on-site assessment was shifted to online-site assessment with additional support provided to participating companies.

This paper is commissioned to examine the effectiveness of implementing online-site assessment for Malaysia Business Excellence (MaTEX) Business Certification Programme 2020. Using an empirical research, the paper seeks to ascertain if MaTEx Business certification could be conducted online using WhatsApp as the main platform. The online-site assessment was conducted between October to November 2020 with 166 companies from five categories and 54 companies participated in the survey conducted by MaTEx secretariat. This paper defines project effectiveness as achieving the right amount of communication and knowledge exchange, supported by availability of infrastructure to conduct an online-site assessment.

The key findings of the report indicate the possibility of implementing online-site assessment using WhatsApp video, supported by adequate online training and briefing provided to participating companies and assessors. Results of cross tabulation analysis showed highest frequency of responses from most category of respondents for documents followed by the assessment process. Meanwhile, availability of infrastructure received lower frequency of responses. This leads to further investigation of other potential online platform which could be used to conduct online-site assessment as well strengthening the mobile and WiFi connectivity, adapting to the nature of the business conducted by participating companies. The regression analysis suggests the importance of well-constructed documents as the most essential factor followed by systematic process for a seamless online-site assessment. Post online-site assessment visit is highly recommended to ensure continuous effort in improving the product quality and services of the participating companies

The results of the study suggest the possibility of conducting a successful online-site assessment, facilitated by comprehensive documents, systematic assessment process and availability of reliable infrastructure. The online-site assessment is proven to improve overall performance, better documentation procedures, and effective communication among the stakeholders with the right amount of communication and knowledge exchange.

The report also investigated the limitation of the online-site assessment. Some of them are the construction of the research instrument covering adequate factors specifically on the use of online platform, and communication during the online assessment.

'For the industry, From the industry'
Malaysia Business Excellence (MaTEx) Certification Programme 2020

II. Introduction and Background

Certification can be described as the process of assuring industry and consumers that the assessed company has met a set of minimum standards. The purpose of certification is to achieve voluntary standards which meet or exceed baseline standards or legislation¹. Business certification derives two major benefits; improving the quality of management and services of companies and the sustainability of enterprises; and second, improving the market for certified enterprises². Increasingly, industry players are turning to certification as a market mechanism to promote business sustainability and consumption due to soaring demand for quality products and services and to distinguish from competitors. In the long term, business certification provides positioning, branding, business-to-business promotion, and distribution.

Malaysia Tourism Excellence (MaTEx) Business Certification Programme is a newly developed industry level certification scheme. It is a programme “by the industry, for the industry” which aims to grow micro, small and medium tourism setups, improve the quality of tourism products and delivery, and subsequently enhance tourists’ trust and confidence in Malaysian tourism products and standards. The programme also aims to recognize excellent achievements of the tourism industry players, improve their service deliveries, and encourage their business expansions (wayup,my, 2020). Kick-started in April 2019, MaTEx was officially launched by the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture in November 2019 and successfully certified 112 companies in five major categories in 2019.

The standards developed within MaTEx Business Certification Programme act as a steppingstone to micro, small and medium tourism stakeholders to get business certification and encourage them to build their standards; subsequently subscribe to top-tier certification programmes. MaTEx Business Certification Programme addresses the need for certification at micro level and to fill the gaps in existing certification programmes providing credible solutions to move forward. The participation is voluntary and viable across the various subsectors of the tourism industry; To ensure compliance, on-site visits were conducted by appointed assessors.

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the certification process was shifted online, which includes briefings, training sessions for companies, as well as site assessments for five (5) categories; TAC, PSO, EMC, MEV and HKO (homestays and kampungstays owners/operators). The assessment for Adventure tourism (ATO) category was postponed due to the nature of the high-risk activities involved and safety concerns.

A total of 71 companies were selected for Malaysia Tourism Excellence (MaTEx) Business Certification Programme 2020. The new online assessment also includes “Adopt and Adhere” COVID-19 Guidelines for the tourism industry to add value to companies which comply with government issued standard operating

¹ Dodds, R., & Joppe, M. (2005). *CSR in the Tourism Industry?: The Status of and Potential for Certification, Codes of Conduct and Guidelines*. IFC.

² Font, Xavier & Epler Wood, Megan. (2007). *Sustainable tourism certification marketing and its contribution to SME market access. Quality Assurance and Certification in Ecotourism*. 147-163

procedures. “Adopt and Adhere” COVID-19 Guidelines were made compulsory to companies that subscribe to the certification programme.

III. Purpose of the Paper

This report is an analysis of the recent implementation of online site assessment for MaTEx Business Certification Programme 2020. The objectives of this report are to investigate the opportunities and challenges of implementing online site assessment for MaTEx Business Certification Programme 2020 across five (5) categories; TAC, PSO, EMC, MEV and HKO. The report examines further the processes involved and offers a set of recommendation to improve the overall execution of online site assessments and process, as well as a reference for the effective execution of MaTEx online site assessments soon. It is based on primary data collected from online surveys conducted with participating companies and assessors, prior and post online-site assessment as well as secondary reports. The responses, feedback and comments are further analyzed and adopted into structuring the framework for online site assessment. The output of this reports is a proposed Strategic Framework for Online Site Assessment, Process Flow of Online Site Assessments, Assessor's Tasks, Responsibilities and Checklist, Company's Tasks and Checklist, Communication Plan and other relevant matters.

IV. Overview of MaTEx

MaTEx Business Certification Programme is an industry level certification programme for tourism products and services, comprises six newly developed standards. Each category of standards has approximately between 100 to 150 indicators or requirements to comply with in order to be certified under MaTEx; each standard is exclusively designed to suit the nature of businesses certified. The certification programme is part of the government initiatives in boosting productivity growth of Malaysia's tourism industry and fully supported by Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC), a government agency under the Ministry of International Trade and Industries (MITI). The development of the certification programme and its standards is led by Encik Uzaidi Udanis, Champion Tourism Productivity Nexus, and Dato' Noor Zaleha Baharuddin, Leader for Initiative T2 and the first Chairperson of MaTEx's Certification Committee.

There are six (6) categories under MaTEx Business Certification Programme, namely: Adventure Tourism (ATO); Event Management Companies (EMC); Homestay and Kampungstay (HKO); MICE and Event Venue (MEV) Travel Agencies (TAC) and Tourism Product and Site Operators (PSO). The standards were developed by Technical Working Groups which comprised selected individuals from the industry, associations, and academia who have experience, expertise, and knowledge of the industry and reviewed by TPN and MPC. The trainers and assessors for MaTEx Business Certification Programme are appointed among the qualified industry players selected by MPC, TPN and MaTEx Working Committee. Relevant training was provided to both trainers and applicant companies too.

MPC and TPN have agreed that the certification fee for a company to subscribe to MaTEx Business certification Programme is RM 2000 which includes all steps leading to the award of the certificate of excellence. The amount is used to cover related costs during the certification process such as honorarium for trainer and assessors, administrative costs,etc. In view of the Covid-19 disruption, the certification fee at RM 2000 is waived for applications received before or by 15 April 2020. The fee waiver is MPC's initiative to support industry players especially the micro, small and medium enterprises during the crisis.

Companies certified under MaTEx Business Certification Programme are part of TPN and MPC "inner circle" group. The "inner circle" group has access to programmes, events, and trainings organised by MPC and TPN. MaTEx certified companies will also benefit from the government-to-government and government-to-industry linkages by TPN and MPC. Up-to-date, MaTEx certified companies have benefited from the collaboration with Malaysia Airlines Berhad and SMECorp, and TPN/MPC's programme Inbound Business Exchange (InTEx), TPN Knowledge Enhancement Webinar Series (TPNKEWS), and B2B programmes, to name a few.

MaTEx Certificate of Excellence is valid for two (2) years, and is renewable at a minimal cost and hassle-free process.

V. Process Flow of MaTEx Certification 2020

The following steps illustrate the process flow of MaTEx Business Certification Programme

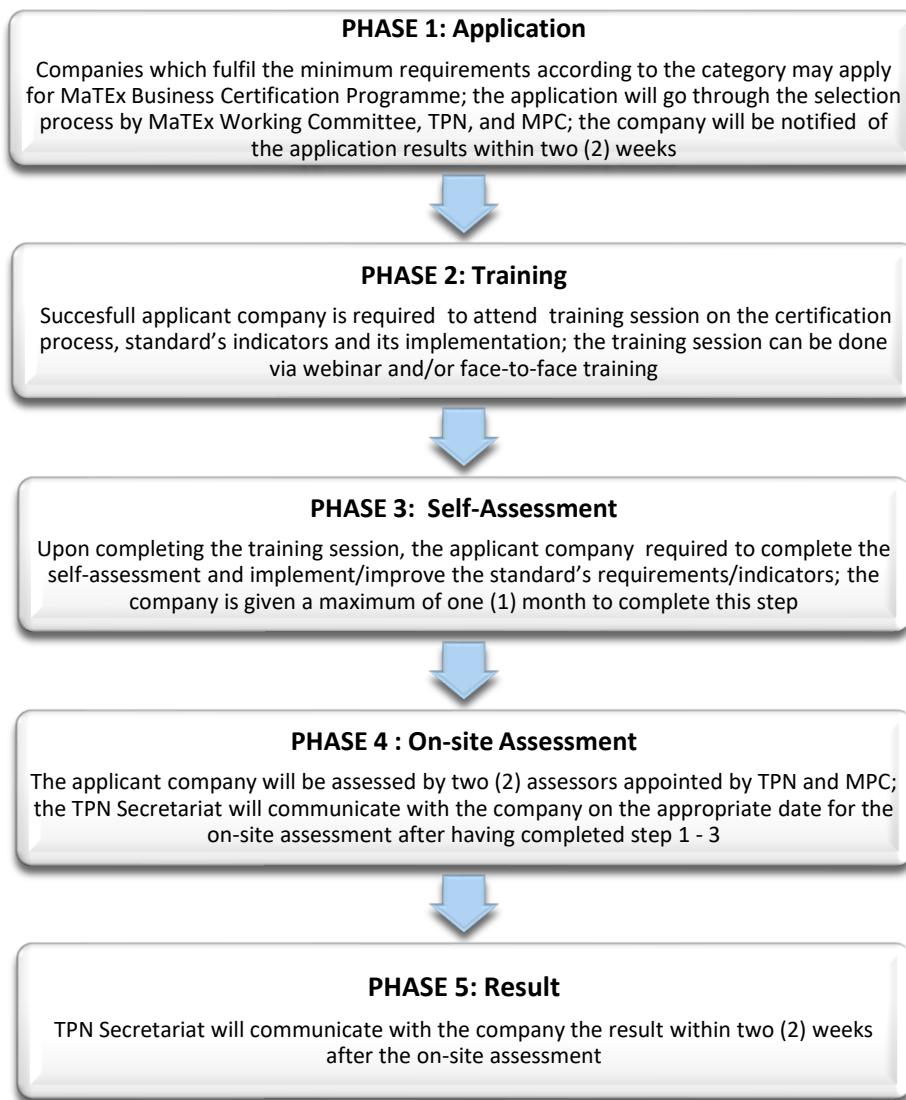


Figure 1: Process flow of MaTEx Business Certification Programme 2020

VI. Process Flow of Online Site Assessments

The online evaluation for MaTEx Business Certification Programme was conducted through the WhatsApp application for video call. WhatsApp video call gives the advantage to both assessors and participating companies access to internet as it is dependent on individual telco's speed. It also gives an advantage as many are familiar with using WhatsApp video call compared to videoconferencing platform. It is also convenient for the participating companies to move around the venues/areas assessed conveniently. However, it will cause data usage and relatively high battery consumption. Thus, the entire assessment session is recommended to be within 2-3 hours. Assessors should also ensure internet access either via Wi-Fi or telco data is reliable for effective implementation of online assessments. The assessor should perform the online assessment in a private space. It is to ensure the confidentiality of information shared during the assessment session and unnecessary interruptions during the session.

Company representatives will be at the following locations during the implementation of online-site assessment:

- i. Product/Site Operators/Owners (PSO) – at the site
- ii. Travel Agency Companies (TAC) – at the travel agents office
- iii. Homestay/Kampungstay Operators/Owners (HKO) – at the homestay/ kampungstay
- iv. Event Management Companies (EMC) – at management office
- v. MICE and Event Venues (MEV) – at event venue

Information and documents shared by participating companies are subject to confidentiality and can only be shared with MaTEx secretariat only. Confidential files/documents can be reviewed during the online-site assessment.

Append below is the flowchart of online site assessment for MaTEx Business Certification Programme 2020:

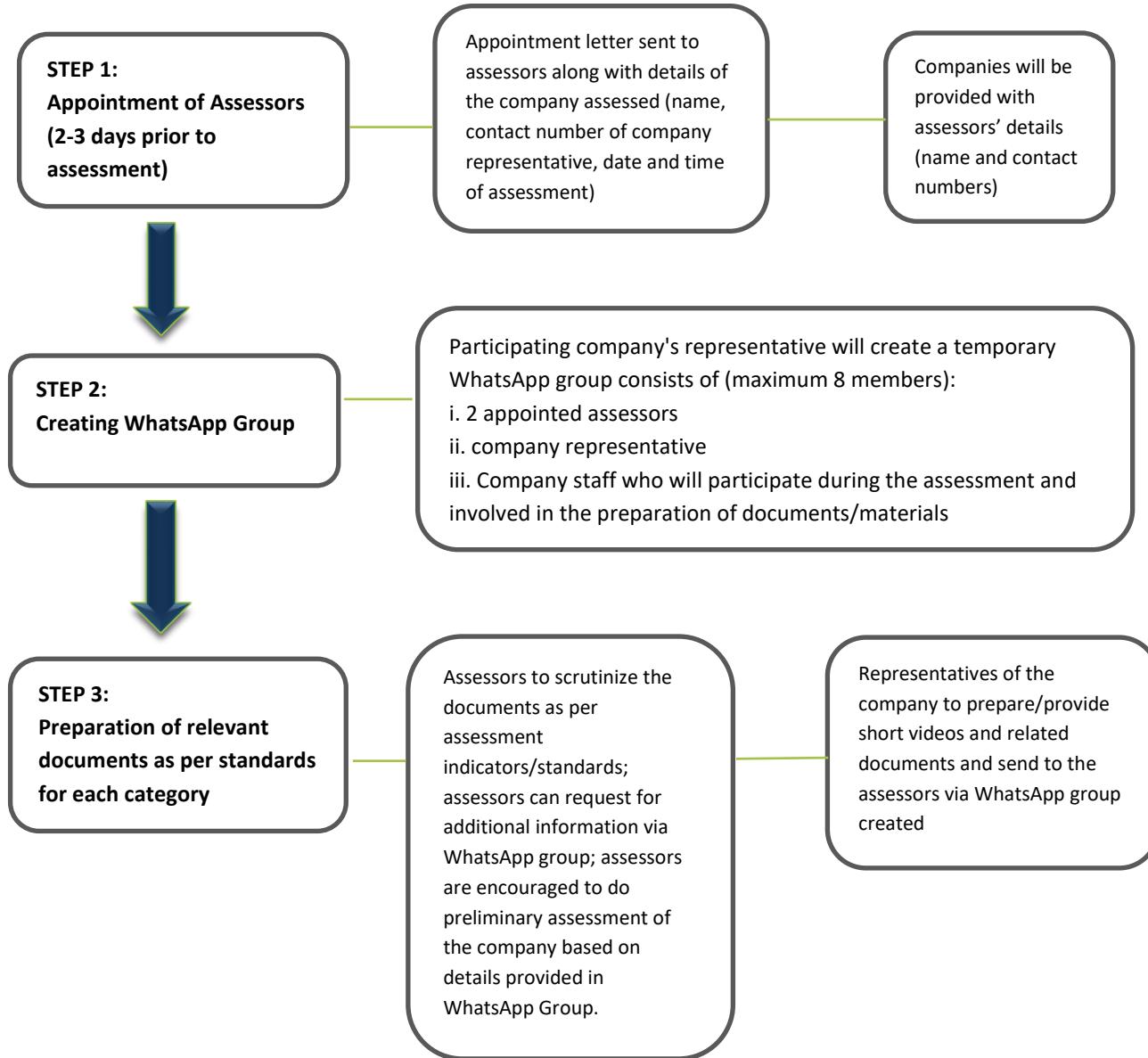


Figure 2: Flowchart of online site assessment for MaTEx Business Certification Programme 2020 (Pre-Online Assessment)

STEP 1:

Company representative will make WhatsApp video call through the WhatsApp group that has been created



Step 2:

Introduction session by both assessors and company representatives followed by briefing on the flow of the online site assessment; Assessors to lead the online site assessment



Step 3:

Online site assessment is conducted in three phases:

- i. Interview sessions between the assessors and representatives of the company ; verification of any document as requested by the assessors
- ii. Company representatives moving around the location / site assessed explaining relevant details to the assessors; company representatives shall indicate anything related to evidence of standard implementation as requested by the assessors
- iii. confirmation of compliance of "Adopt and Adhere" COVID-19 Guidelines and Relevant Government SOP

** Assessors can change the order of execution according to suitability and mutual consent.*



Step 4:

Assessors will conclude the session with feedback. Assessor may request companies for additional evidences/documents which can be submitted through the WhatsApp group.

Figure 3: Flowchart of online site assessment for MaTEx Business Certification Programme 2020 (During the online site assessment)

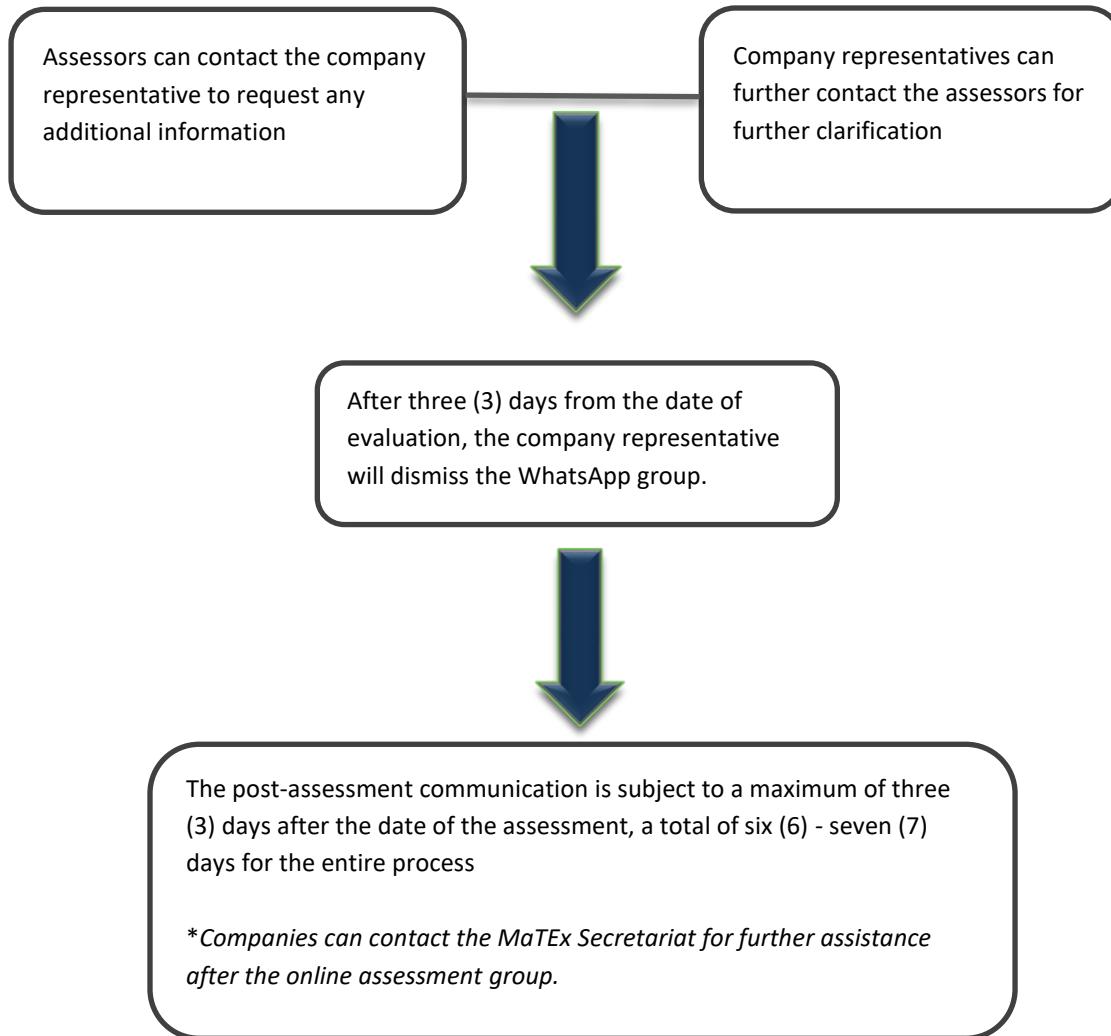


Figure 4: Flowchart of online site assessment for MaTEx Business Certification Programme 2020 (Post online site assessment)

VII. Programme Outcome

A total of 302 companies applied for Malaysia Tourism Excellence (MaTEx) Business Certification Programme 2020 and a total of 166 companies finalized their participation in the certification programme.

The participating companies were categorized according to the five major categories based on the nature of their business. The new MaTEx online assessment also includes “Adopt and Adhere” COVID-19 Guidelines for the tourism industry to add value to companies which comply with government issued standard operating procedures. 227 companies in six major categories attended the online briefing and 71 successfully completed the MaTEx online-site assessment and 95 for “Adopt and Adhere” COVID-19 Guidelines³.

Append below is the number of companies successfully completed the online-site assessment and certified:

Categories	No of companies certified MaTEx Business Certification	“Adopt and Adhere” COVID-19 Certification
Product/Site Operators/Owners (PSO)	15	16
Travel Agency Companies (TAC)	16	16
MICE and Event Venues (MEV)	9	9
Event Management Companies (EMC)	7	6
Homestay/Kampungstay Operators/Owners (HKO)	17	18
Total	64	86

Table 1: total number of companies successfully certified under Matex Business Certification Programme

³ Malaysia Tourism Excellence Business Certification Programme 2020; MaTEx Training Report (Rep.). (2020). Tourism Productivity Nexus.

VIII. Assessor's Tasks and Responsibilities

Assessors task and responsibilities can be divided into three phases; pre-online site assessment, during the online site assessment and post online site assessment.

Pre-online site assessment: Assessors should ensure stable internet access either via Wi-Fi or telco data for efficient online site assessment. The assessor should perform the online site assessment in a private space to ensure the confidentiality of information shared during the evaluation session and no interruptions during the session. It is the responsibility of the assessor to appraise the documents submitted beforehand and to request for additional documents/ evidence according to the standards. Information and documents shared by the company is subject to confidentiality and can only be shared with the MaTEx Secretariat. Assessors are advised to examine private and confidential documents during the online site assessment.

During the online site assessment: The assessor is encouraged to have a hardcopy of standards according to category of companies assessed and a copy of “Adopt and Adhere” COVID-19 Guidelines. Assessors are also advised to prepare in advance the questions to be directed to representative of the company and avoid repetitive questions. Assessors must dress neatly (MaTEx Corporate Shirt is recommended) and uphold integrity and professionalism in conducting online site assessment. It should be noted that, the assessors are the controlling parties and should take the lead during the online site assessment. The flow of the online site assessment session can be modified with mutual concern from both assessors and company representatives.

Post online-site assessment: upon completing the online site assessment, the assessor can provide immediate feedback to the company representative for further improvement on the implementation of standards and guidelines. The assessor will then formulate the marks and other relevant documents. Company representatives and assessors can further contact each other especially if there are additional documents or evidence required within the next 3 days upon completing the online site assessment. The assessors can discuss the overall performance of the company; however, scoring must be done individually. Assessors are advised to submit the Assessment Form upon completion of online site assessment within a week or upon completing all assigned duties to Matex secretariat.

IX. Assessor's Checklist

Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Hardcopy of MaTEx standards according to categories assessed✓ “Adopt and Adhere” COVID-19 Guidelines✓ Local/ state SOP standards for COVID-19 Guidelines✓ Softcopy / hardcopy of documents and evidences submitted by companies
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Stable Wi-Fi/mobile network connection✓ Mobile phone with WhatsApp application✓ Private space

Table 2: Assessor's checklist

X. Data Collection

The data collection for this survey is divided into two phases: preliminary and secondary data collection.

Quantitative research method is used to collect data for this preliminary study and the research Instrument is adopted from survey designed by MPC.

Preliminary data was collected through distribution of survey questions to the respondents prior and post online-site assessment. Secondary data was retrieved from existing journal, newspaper articles and reports from various sources.

- I. Survey 1: Pre-Pilot Simulation for Online Site Assessment MaTEx 2020 consists 3 descriptive questions with Likert scales and one open ended question. Questions were distributed via Google form to participating companies and assessors. 23 responses were received.
- II. Survey 2: Companies Feedback on MaTEx Business Certification Process 2020 consists of 10 descriptive questions with Likert scales and two open ended question. Questions were distributed via Google form to participating companies across FIVE (5) major categories. 54 responses were received within a period of 1 month.

Companies Feedback on MaTEx Business Certification Process 2020 survey questions were designed according to THREE (3) main categories of Independent Variable (IV) and ONE (1) Dependent Variable (DV) illustrated as below for data analytical purpose. Thus, the following conceptual model is designed to illustrate the relationship between IV and DV.

Survey	Question	Independent Factor (IV)	Dependent Factor (DV)	
Companies Feedback On MaTEx Business Certification Process 2020	Q4. Online training was effective	Factor 1 : Process	Factor 4: Effectiveness of online-site assessment	
	Q5. Online briefing was effective			
	Q9. Efficiency of MaTEx secretariat			
	Q3. Application form was simple and easy to fill in			
	Q8 : Documents were easy to understand	Factor 2 : Document		
	Q10. Implementation of standards for business improvement			
	Q6. Online-site evaluation session using WhatsApp video call is effective			
	Q7. Communication and information related to the program through WhatsApp group is effective	Factor 3: Infrastructure		
	Q11. Overall effectiveness of online-site assessment			

Table 3: Dependent and independent factors

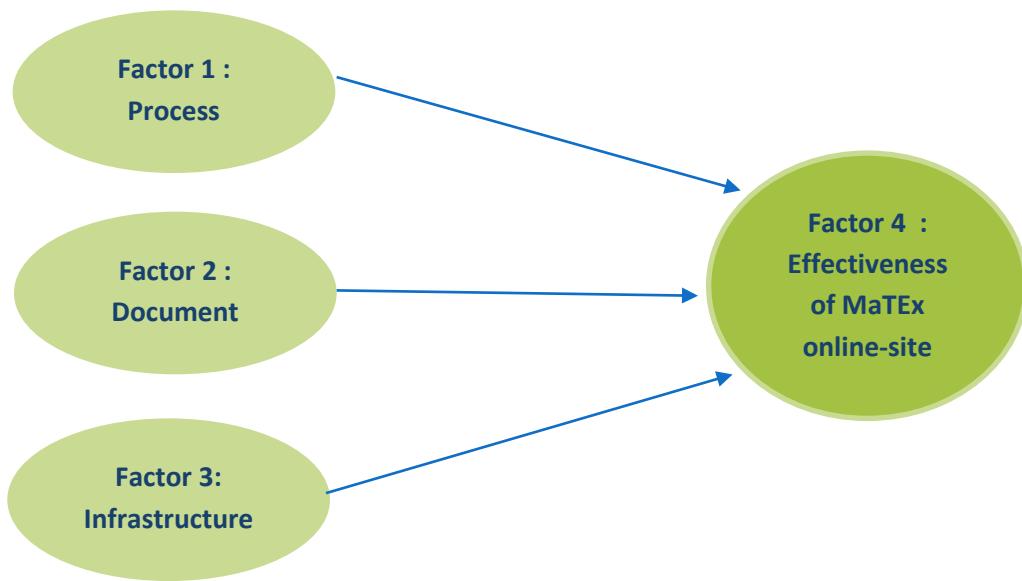


Figure 5: Conceptual framework on the effectiveness of MaTEx online-site assessment

The data collected were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative method. Descriptive, correlation and regression analysis were conducted to identify the relationship between the factors and to further facilitate recommendation of strategic framework. Inductive or open coding and categorizing were used to analyze qualitative responses received.

XI. Findings and Analysis on the Feedback Survey

a. Findings of Survey: Pre-Pilot Simulation for Online Site Assessment MaTEx 2020

Overall effectiveness of online-site assessment

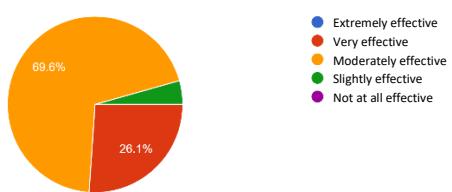


Figure 6 : Overall effectiveness of online-site assessment

Assessors readiness in conducting online-site assessment

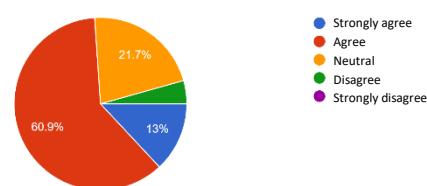


Figure 7 : Assessors readiness in conducting online-site assessment

Applicant companies can effectively cooperate in conducting online-site assessment

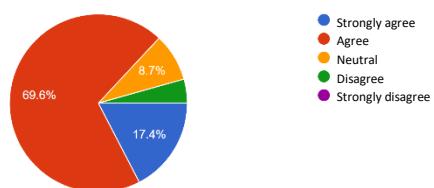


Figure 8: Applicant companies can effectively cooperate in conducting online-site assessment

Figure 6 demonstrates the overall effectiveness of the MaTEx online site assessment, based on pre-pilot simulation conducted. Majority of the respondents agree on the effectiveness of conducting online-site assessment for MaTEx Business Certification Programme 2020 (Figure 6). Assessors have the highest confidence in conducting online-site assessment effectively (Figure 7). Participating companies concurred with the majority in effective collaboration for a successful online-site assessment (Figure 8).

b. Findings Of Survey: Companies Feedback On MaTEx Business Certification Process 2020

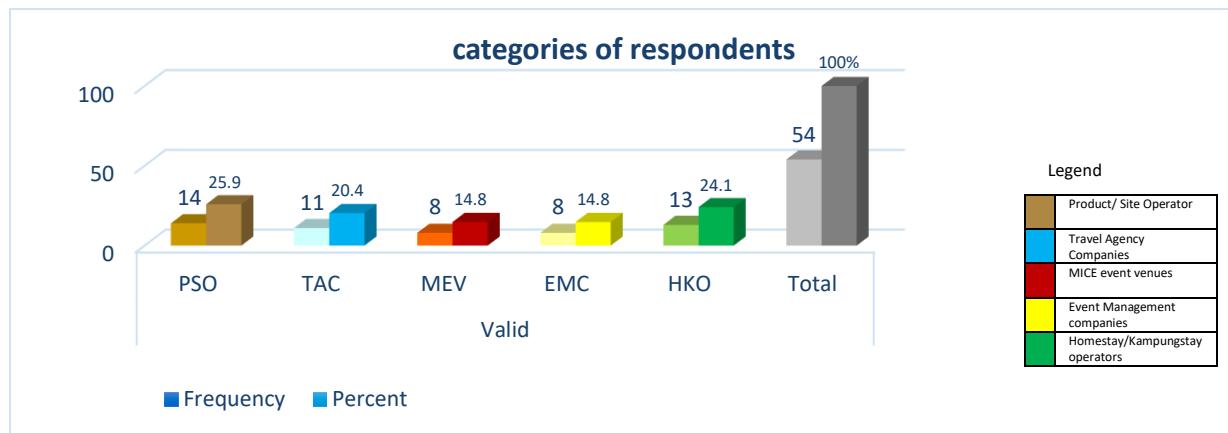


Figure 9 : Categories of survey respondents

Total of 54 companies participated in the post online-site assessment survey, from the FIVE (5) categories of businesses assessed as illustrated in Figure 11. Majority respondents were from Product/Site Operators (25.9%), followed by Homestay/Kampungstay operators (24.1) and Travel Agency companies (20.4%). There were 8 respondents from Mice Event Venues and Event Management companies, forming the smallest group of respondents. This correlates with the overall application received for MaTEx Business Certification Programme as majority application was received from Travel Agency companies (TAC), followed by Product/Site Operators (PSO) and Homestay/Kampungstay operators (HKO)⁴.

⁴ Malaysia Tourism Excellence Business Certification Programme 2020; MaTEx Training Report (Rep.). (2020). Tourism Productivity Nexus.

The following responses illustrates the documents used for MaTEx online-site assessment:

The application form was simple and easy to fill in.

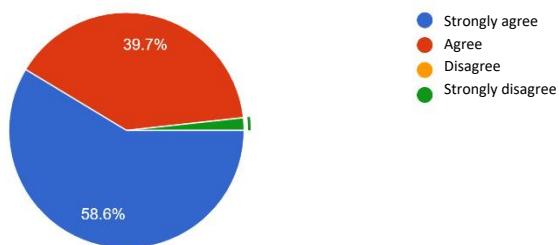


Figure 10: Application form was simple and easy to fill in

The documents related to the MaTEx Certification Program are easy to understand.

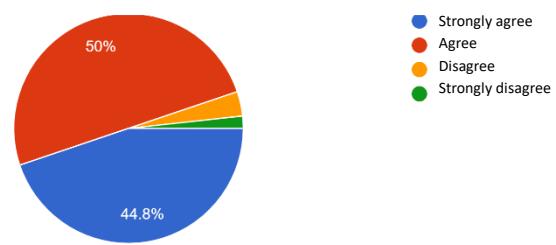


Figure 11: The documents were easy to understand

The certification process has helped to improve the quality of my tourism products and services through the implementation of the given standards

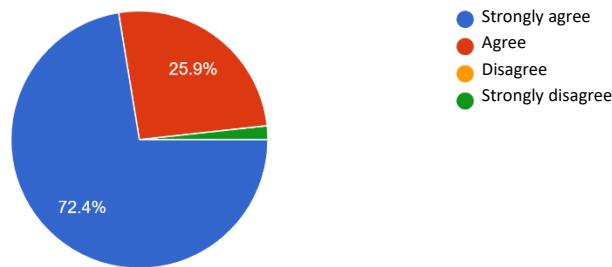
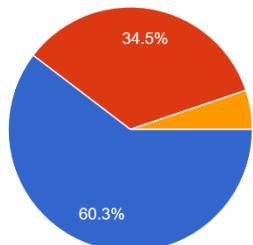


Figure 12: Certification process helped to improve the quality of tourism products and services.

Majority of the respondents agreed that the MaTEx assessment form was easy to comprehend and fill in (figure 10). 50% of the respondents concurred that the documents related to the MaTEx Certification Program are easy to understand which is an important key factor in determining the success of the online-site assessment. Majority of the survey respondents value the certification process via online-site assessment as an important factor for continuous improvement of tourism products and services though the implementation of standards provided; hence became a major boost for their businesses (figure 12).

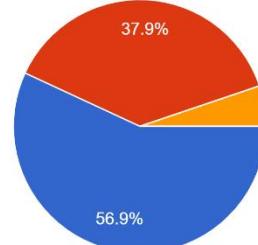
The following responses illustrates the process implemented for MaTEx online-site assessment.

The briefing session about online-site assessment was easy to understand and effective.



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Online training sessions are effective

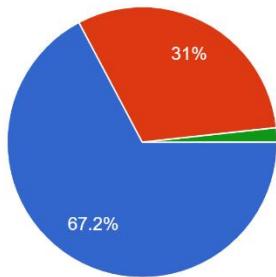


- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Figure 13: The online briefing was effective

Figure 14: The online training was effective

The MaTEx Secretariat is efficient in ensuring the certification process runs smoothly



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Figure 15: Efficiency of MaTEx secretariat

The survey results demonstrate that online training and briefing session plays a major role in overall success of the online-site assessment. 60.3% of respondents concurred positively to the briefing session conducted online prior to the assessment (figure 13). Meanwhile, 56.9% of respondents agreed that the online training conducted was effective and useful (figure 14). 67.2% respondents concurred that the whole process was facilitated by an efficient team of MaTEx secretariat for an effortless certification programme (figure 15).

The following responses illustrates the infrastructure used for the for MaTEx online-site assessment.

Online-site evaluation session using WhatsApp video call is effective

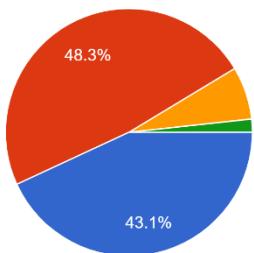


Figure 16: Online evaluation session was effective

Communication and information related to the program through WhatsApp group is effective

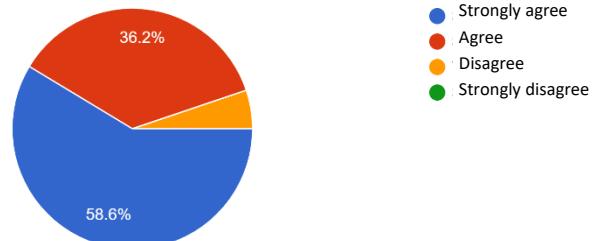


Figure 17: WhatsApp group was effective medium of communication

The above results demonstrate the effective use of WhatsApp mobile application for communication and online-site assessment, utilized throughout the certification process. Most respondents agreed with the online-site assessment conducted via WhatsApp call (43.1%). Meanwhile, 58.6% responded positively on the communication process via WhatsApp group (Figure 17).

d. Crosstabulation Analysis: Companies Feedback On MaTEx Business Certification Process 2020

Append below is the result of crosstabulation analysis of 4 variables — the correlation between availability of infrastructure, documents, online-site assessment process and categories of applicant companies.

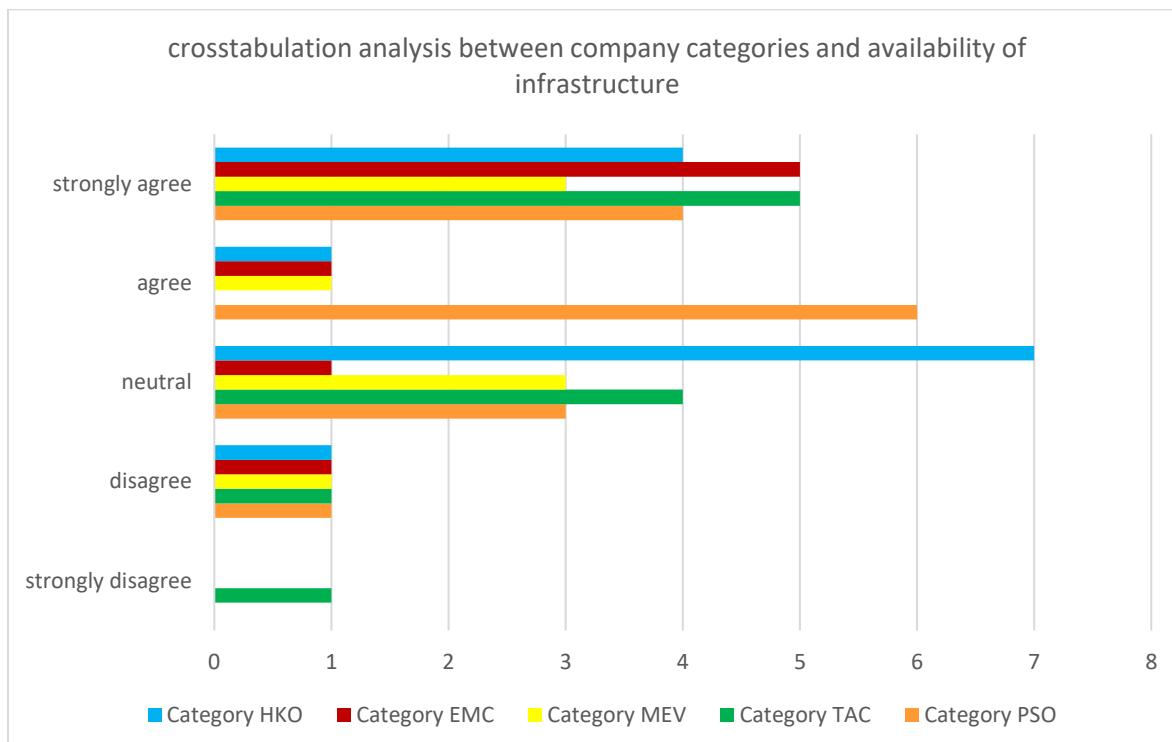


Figure 18 : crosstabulation analysis between categories of companies and availability of infrastructure

Figure 18 illustrates moderate frequency between categories of companies assessed and availability of infrastructure. Categories Product/Site operator (PSO) shows higher dependency on infrastructure, followed by Homestay/Kampungstay operators (HKO). This could lead to further discussion on the nature of the business of these categories which requires the companies to move around within the premise during the online-site assessment, which depends heavily on the availability of Wi-Fi or mobile data network. Travel Agency companies (TAC) demonstrated lowest frequency as no major movement within the site is required during the online-site assessment.

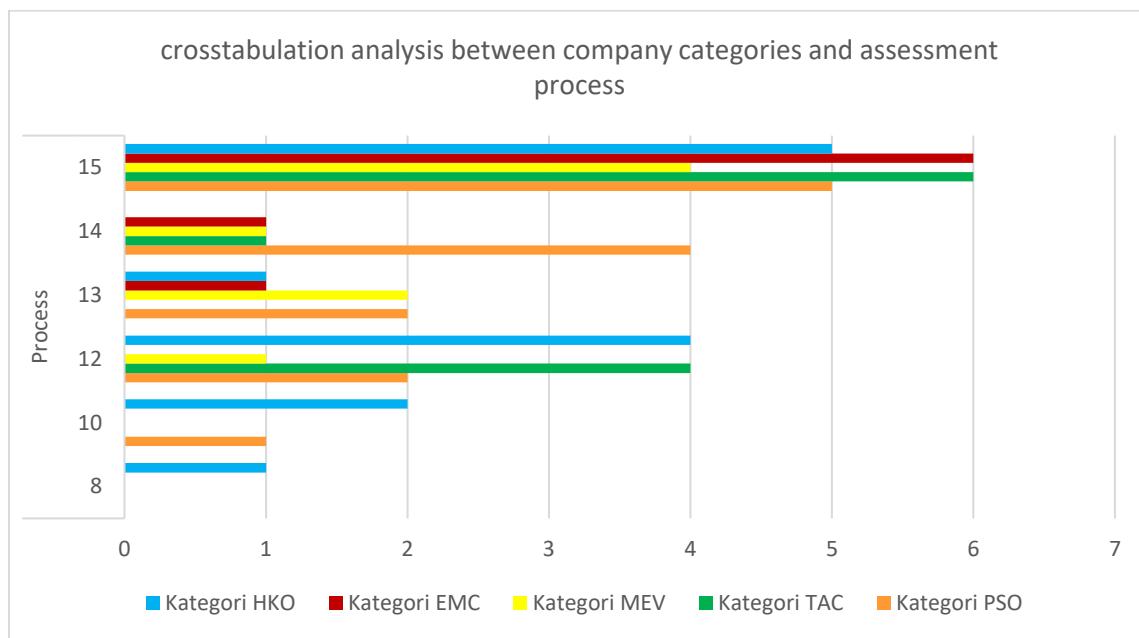


Figure 19: crosstabulation analysis between category of companies and assessment process

Figure 19 illustrates higher frequency of responses between categories of companies assessed and Online-site Assessment process. Event management companies (EMC), Travel Agency Companies (TAC), Homestay/kampungstay operators (HKO) and Product/site Owners (PSO) are the major categories of companies with higher frequency of responses to assessment process. This reflects positively on the online-site assessment process which involves online training and briefing as well as the efficiency of MaTEx secretariat in facilitating the overall assessment process.

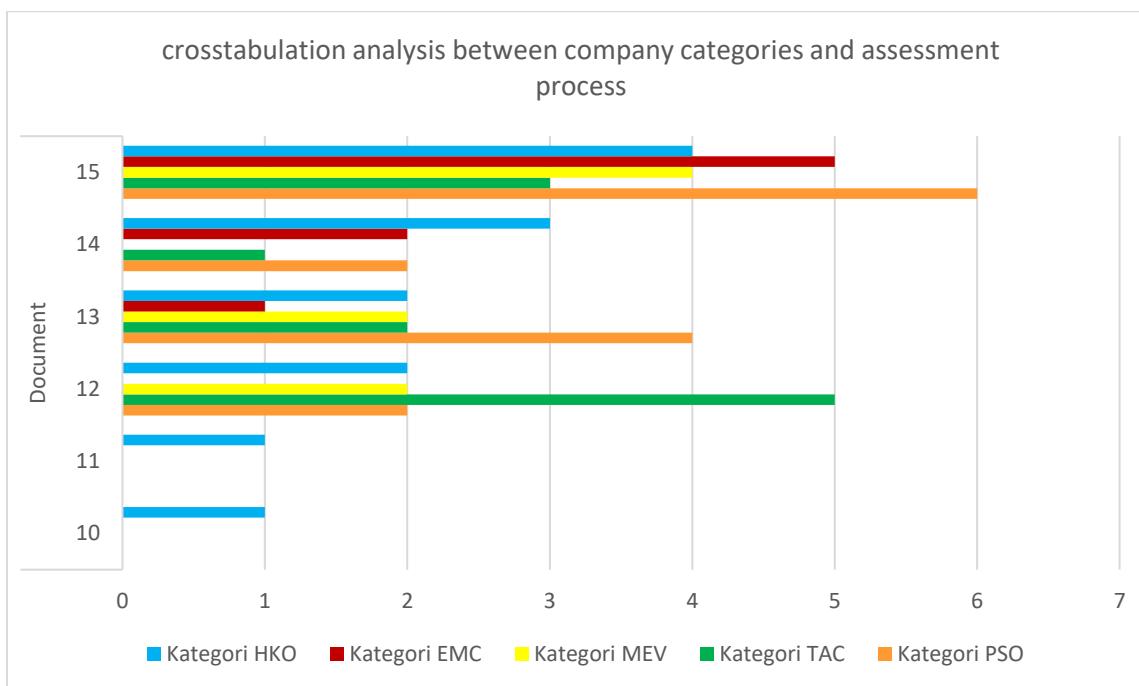


Figure 20 : crosstabulation analysis between categories of companies and assessment process

Figure 20 illustrates higher frequency of responses received from all categories of companies assessed and document preparation for the online-site assessment. The reflects the overall understanding of the standards and evidence required for online-site assessment as well as the improving the quality of the tourism products and services through the implementation of the given standards. This factor received the most responses among the participating companies reinforcing the importance of well-prepared documents.

Model Summary

	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
infrastructure	.139 ^a	0.019	0.001	0.4873
document	.723 ^a	0.523	0.514	0.33997
process	.644 ^a	0.415	0.404	0.37627

Table 4: Summary of correlation analysis between variables

The table above concludes the relationship between three independent variables: assessment process, document, and infrastructure on the overall effectiveness of the online-site assessment. Both documents ($R=.723^a$) and assessment process ($R=.644^a$) demonstrates high moderate relationship with the overall effectiveness of online-site assessment. It is evident that the documents and online-site assessment process play crucial role in the successful implementation of online-site assessment. Clearly documented guidelines, easy to fill-in forms, online training as well as online briefing is significant contributor to the success of online-site assessment. The MaTEx Business Certification programme is well-structured with adequate and comprehensible documents, a crucial component for any business certification program, and facilitated with an effective assessment process.

Availability of infrastructure ($R= .139^a$) demonstrates very low relationship with the overall effectiveness of the online-site assessment. WhatsApp call is the major platform used for online-site assessment, which depends heavily on network connectivity. This app can be replaced with any other reliable platforms, as such it plays a minor role in contributing to the overall effectiveness of online-site assessment.

The three factors above play significant role in a successful implementation of an online-site assessment for business certification, thus the framework for future similar assessments should incorporate all the three factors.

e. Content analysis of suggestions received from respondents on how to further improve the online-site assessment.

i. Coding of Pre-Pilot Simulation for Online Site Assessment MaTEx 2020 survey

Append below is the result of coding of keywords derived from the open-ended survey conducted. 23 responses were received, and the codifying was done manually, identifying verbatim keywords commonly mentioned in the survey form. Simple coding was used to classify the responses and labelled according to different themes as per the framework. The major concern raised by majority of respondents pertaining documents are focused on preparation of document/evidence, and confidentiality of documents. Respondents also regarded Wi-Fi availability and stable network connectivity as an important key factor for an online-site assessment. Moving around the premise/site visited is deemed as a hassle for companies as some premises could be large and takes longer period to show around, especially for Homestay/Kampungstay operators (HKO) and Product /site operators (PSO). Many respondents also feel the need to have actual site visit compared to an online-site assessment.

Ranking of Codes	Frequency of appearance in the responses received	Theme
Preparation Of Documents Beforehand	11	Documents
Infrastructure (Phone/Wifi)	6	Infrastructure
Hassle For Companies	5	Process
Confidelity Of Documents	4	Documents
Assesment Method	3	Process
Prefer Site Visit	2	Process

Table 5: Coding of responses received for MaTEx 2020 Pre-pilot simulation survey.

ii. Coding of feedback related to online site evaluation and MaTEx Business Certification Programme

Append below is the result of coding of keywords derived from the open-ended survey conducted after the online-site assessment. 54 responses were received, and the codifying was done manually, identifying verbatim keywords commonly mentioned in the survey form. Simple coding was used to classify the responses and labelled according to different themes as per the framework. Majority of the respondents raised their concern on the preparation documents beforehand and the limited duration given, followed by low or no internet coverage at certain areas in the premise/site which affects the online-site assessment. Some proposed to use Zoom or GoToMeeting for online-site assessment. Some respondents prefer the onsite assessment compared to online-site assessment for an effective and holistic assessment. There also recommendation to prepare the documents in dual language i.e Malay and English. Positive remarks were received about the overall MaTEx online-site assessment and recommendation to include more categories of business operators in the near future.

Ranking of Codes	Frequency of appearance in the responses received	Theme
Document	17	Document
Infrastructure	15	Infrastructure
Process	7	Process
Covid-19	4	Process
language	2	Document
Prefer Site Visit	1	Process
Time	1	Process

Table 6: Coding of responses received for MaTEx 2020 post online-site assessment survey

XII. Issues and Challenges / SWOT Analysis



Figure 21: SWOT Analysis Matrix of online-site assessment for MaTEX 2020

The above figure is the summary of SWOT Analysis conducted for MaTEX Online-site assessment, derived from the primary and secondary data collection. The strength of the online-site assessment lies in the well established assessment structure and clear guidelines provided to participating companies. This is further strengthened with efficient team of experienced assessors and MaTEX secretariat in facilitating the entire online-site assessment process. The online training and briefing sessions enhanced the overall online-site assessment as companies were prepared with adequate knowledge about the assessment, process and documentation involved, which contributed to the success of overall online-site assessment.

Poor WiFi connectivity, lack of preparation time, mobile phone battery consumption and limited view of the site and document assessed are the major weaknesses that could hinder the overall effectiveness of online-site assessment. The use of WhatsApp video call depends on the stable connection of WiFi or mobile data, which is a major challenge for Homestay/Kampungstay Operators (HKO) and Product/site Operators (PSO) due to large area size to be covered during the online-site assessment. Certain areas lack good network connectivity causing delay and disruption to the overall online-site assessment. WhatsApp video requires longer battery consumption of the smartphone used as well as limited view of the site and documents assessed.

The success of MaTEX 2020 online site-assessment allows us to further explore the possible opportunities to extend the certification programme to other categories of tourism operators. The business certification

programme is proven to be effective in providing strategic guideline on all major aspects in tourism business operation and widely accepted by participating companies. Post online-site assessment visit is recommended to further strengthen the business certification and promote continuous improvement. The certification programme is highly recommended to be expanded in order to cover wider scope of tourism product operators.

Few external factors serve as threat for the successful implementation of MaTEx mainly the outbreak of the Covid-19 disease and climate. Covid-19 is the main contributing factor of the modification made to the MaTEx Business certification assessment process. Climate plays a vital role in outdoor site inspection as participating companies had to re-schedule the online-site visit due to erratic weather in some part of the country which delayed the assessment process.

It is evident from the research results that the standards and processes involved in conducting online-site assessment are well established, supported by efficient team of MaTEx secretariat and assessors. It is vital to address the weaknesses highlighted in the report for a seamless online-site assessment. The remaining chapters in this report recommends potential solutions for an ideal online-site assessment, taking into consideration the feedback received from participating companies and assessors.

XIII. Strategic Recommendations

Project management principles are used to construct the strategic framework for Online Site Assessment MaTEx Business Certification. Project management is the application of processes, methods, skills, knowledge and experience to achieve specific project objectives according to the project acceptance criteria within agreed parameters. Project management has final deliverables that are constrained to a finite timescale and budget⁵. The project management process for MaTEx online-assessment involves three stages illustrated below:

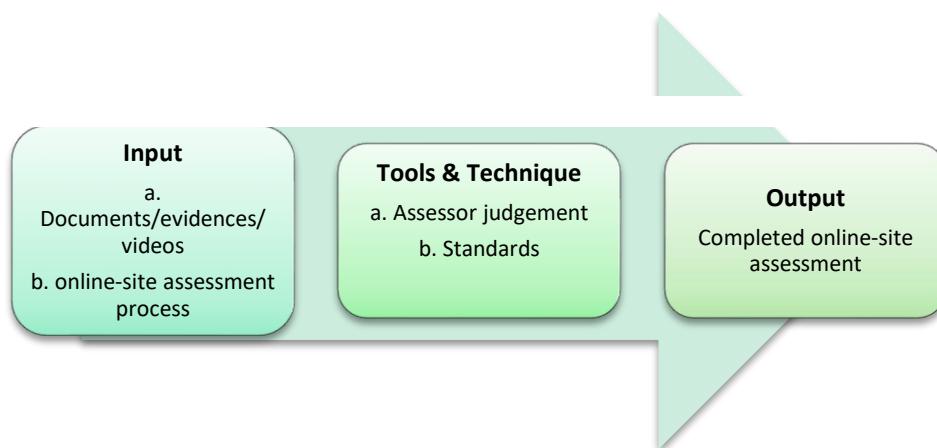


Figure 22: Project Management Process

⁵ What is project management? (n.d.). Retrieved December 09, 2020, from <https://www.apm.org.uk/resources/what-is-project-management/>

a. Proposed Framework for Online Site Assessment for MaTEx

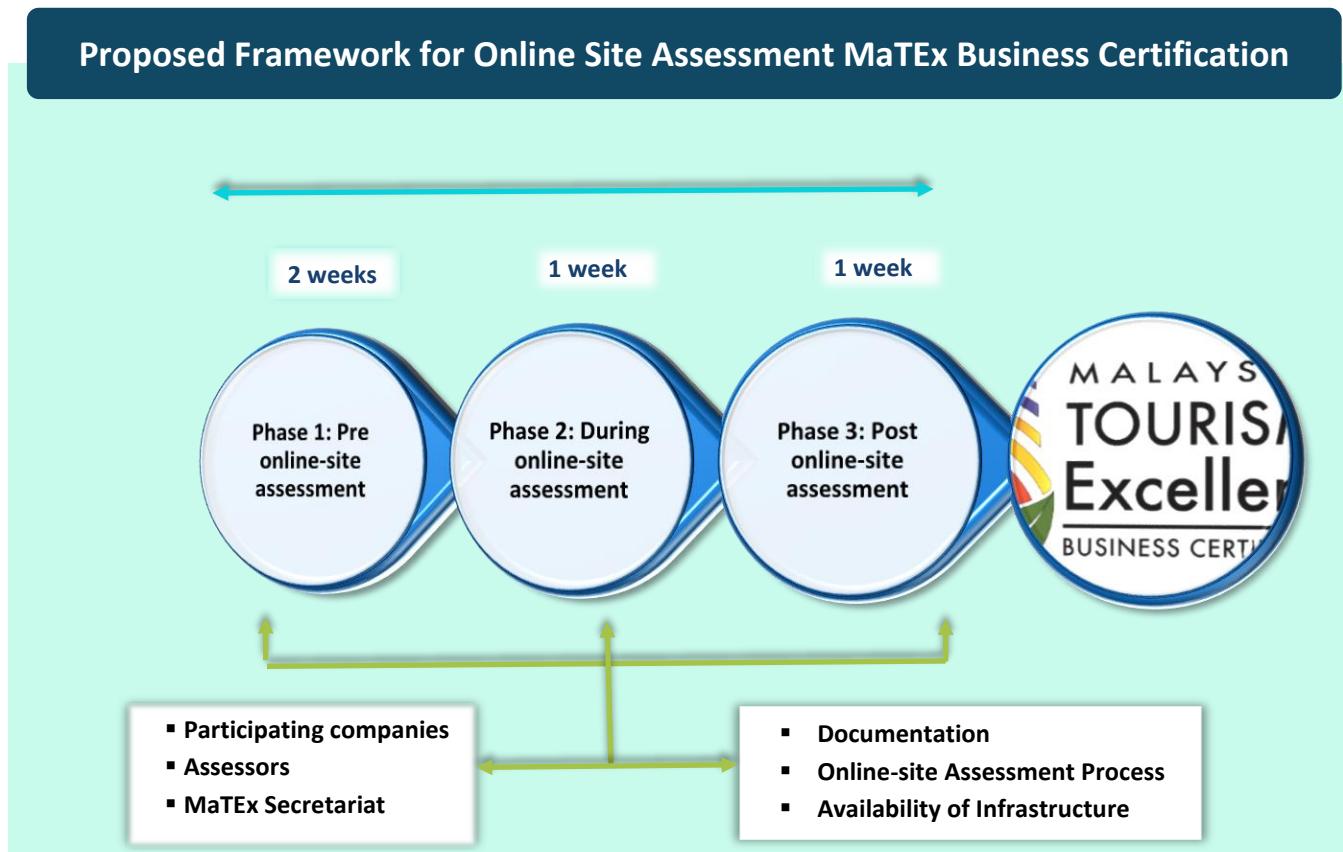


Figure 23 : Proposed Framework for Online Site Assessment for MaTEx Business Certification Programme

The figure above illustrates the proposed framework for MaTEx online-site assessment organized in three major phases: pre online-site assessment, during the online-site assessment and post online-site assessment. Three major focus areas are identified as key pillars for the implementation of successful online-site assessment: documentation, process and infrastructure, applicable throughout the online-site assessment process. These key areas are derived from the survey conducted, based on the recommendation proposed by participating companies and assessors.

The table below discusses each focus areas in detail.

Focus Area	Categories	Description
i. Documentation	a. Pre- availability of standards in online portal	To establish a dedicated portal for MaTEx Business Certification Programme or to update the existing portal with downloadable Standard for each category to facilitate referencing by applicant companies i.e google drive; standards made available in Malay and English
	b. Preparation of documents as per standards.	Applicant companies are given 2 weeks' notice from the date of application to prepare relevant documents/videos/evidences required as per standard.
	c. Online portal to submit confidential documents	Documents/evidences/videos submitted to a centralized portal managed by MaTEx secretariat i.e google drive; access is granted to assessor and applicant companies throughout the assessment process.
ii. Online-site assessment Process	a. Online training	Applicant companies are given relevant trainings and guidance on the standards, document/video/evidence preparation and submission.
	b. Online-site assessment	Clear guideline as stipulated in the document to be established on the flow and process involved. Assessors to discuss beforehand; clear communication to be established between assessors and company representatives on the flow of the online-site assessment.
	c. Communication	Clear communication to be established between the MaTEx secretariat, participating companies and assessors. The communication process is facilitated with the use of WhatsApp mobile app, portal to download the standards and google drive to share the documents.
iii. Availability of Infrastructure	a. Availability of stable WIFI/mobile network	Both assessors and applicant companies to ensure stable internet connection; suggest applicant companies to test stability of connection at various areas within the inspection site/venue prior to online-site assessment.
	b. Availability of reliable platform	Proposed platforms for online-site assessment such as Google meet, GoToMeeting, Zoom compared to WhatssApp for better image projection and battery consumption.

Table 7 : Focus areas of recommendation for Online Site Assessment for MaTEx Business Certification Programme

b. Process Flow of Online Site Assessments

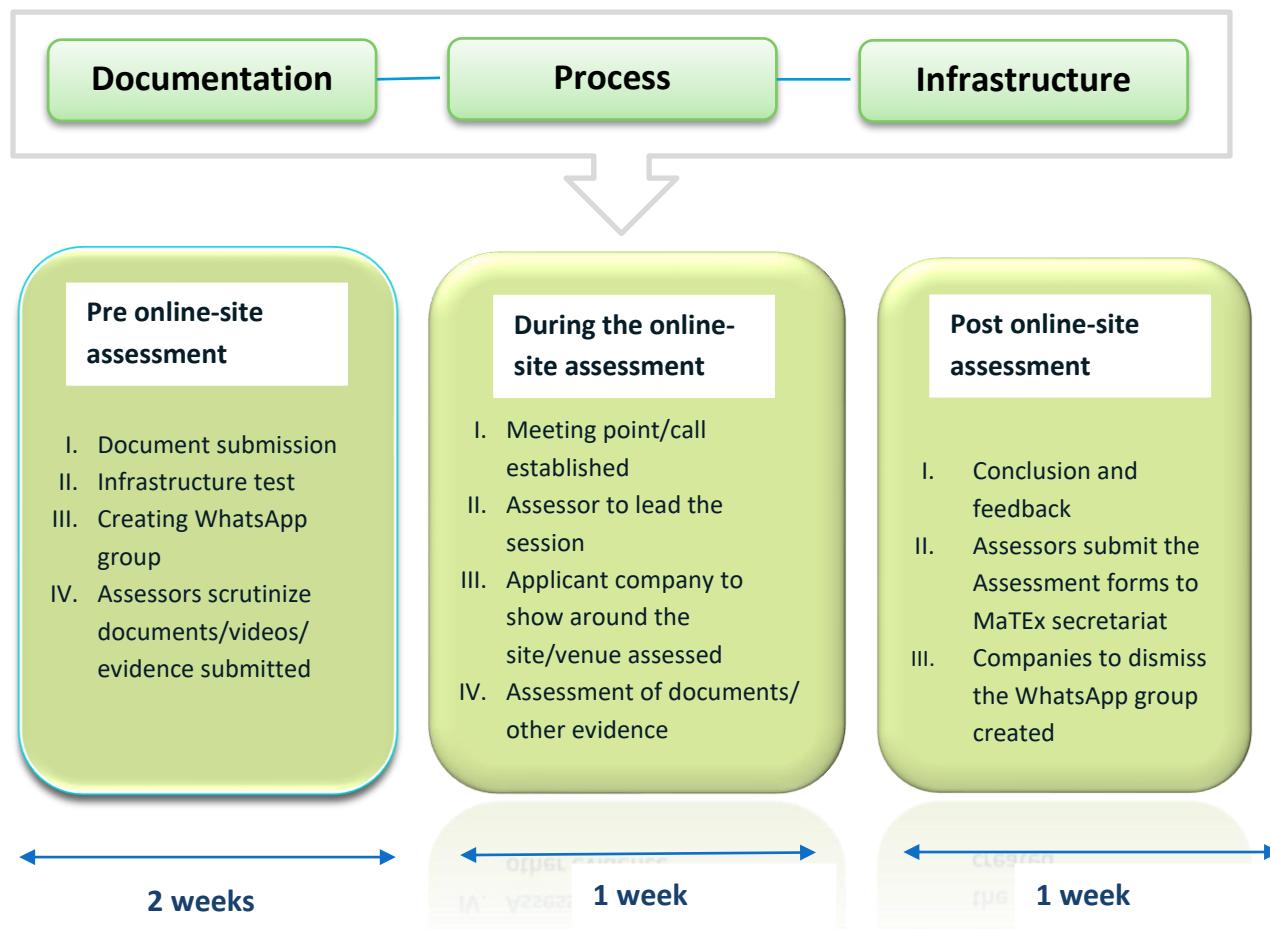


Figure 24 : Proposed process flow of MaTEx online site assessment

Phases	Main tasks	Steps involved	Duration
Pre online-site assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document submission ▪ Infrastructure test ▪ Creating WhatsApp group ▪ Assessors scrutinize documents/videos/evidences submitted 	<p>STEP 1: Companies download the standards and prepare documents/videos/evidence as per standard and submit to the established portal i.e google drive</p> <p>Step 2: Applicant companies to test infrastructure availability i.e WIFI/mobile data connection at various inspection site.</p> <p>Step 3: Creating WhatsApp Group to establish communication between appointed assessors and applicant companies on the flow of online-site assessment.</p> <p>Step 4: Assessors to scrutinize the documents submitted and communicate with applicant company if extra documents are required; assessors can assess the documents submitted</p>	2 weeks
During the online-site assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting point/call established ▪ Assessor to lead the session ▪ Applicant company to show around the site/venue assessed ▪ Assessment of documents/ other evidences 	<p>Step 1: Assessors and applicant company representatives meet during the stipulated time and date using preferred online platform</p> <p>Step 2: Assessors to introduce the flow of the online-site assessment</p> <p>Step 3: Company representatives to show around the inspection site/venue and any other documents/evidences</p> <p>Step 4: Assessor to ask relevant questions and additional details required</p>	1 week
Post online-site assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conclusion and feedback ▪ Submission of Assessment forms ▪ Companies to dissolve the WhatsApp group created 	<p>Step 1: Assessor to conclude the session and provide feedback to company representatives</p> <p>Step 2: both parties to keep in touch via WhatsApp group to facilitate finalizing the documents. Group will be dismissed at the end of discussion.</p> <p>Step 3: Assessor to submit Assessment forms to MaTEx secretariat</p>	1 week

Table 8: Detailed process flow of MaTEx online site assessment

c. Assessor's Tasks and Responsibilities

Assessors task and responsibilities is restructured according to the framework recommended.

Phase	Steps	Remark
<i>Pre online-site assessment (2 weeks)</i>	<p>STEP 1: Assessors to obtain and scrutinize relevant documents/evidence from the online portal</p> <p>Step 2: Assessors to check on infrastructure availability i.e WIFI/mobile data connection and private space to conduct assessment</p> <p>Step 3: Assessors to communicate with company representatives via WhatsApp group created on the assessment flow and to obtain any additional evidence required</p> <p>Step 4: Assessors can assess the documents submitted and prepare relevant questions to ask during the online-site assessment</p> <p>Step 5: Assessors to prepare hardcopy copy of standards according to category of companies assessed, a copy of "Adopt and Adhere" COVID-19 Guidelines and relevant local SOPs.</p>	<p><i>Information and documents shared by the company is subject to confidentiality and can only be shared with the MaTEx Secretariat. Assessors are advised to examine private and confidential documents during the online site assessment</i></p> <p><i>Assessors can decide on the flow of the online-site assessment; decided based on indicators or nature of the business; the flow should be communicated with applicant companies before the online-site assessment.</i></p> <p><i>Assessors are also advised to prepare in advance the questions to be directed to representative of the company and avoid repetitive questions.</i></p>
<i>During the online-site assessment (1 week)</i>	<p>Step 1: Assessors and applicant company representatives meet during the stipulated time and date using preferred online platform</p> <p>Step 2: Assessors to introduce the flow of the online-site assessment and lead the online-site assessment</p> <p>Step 3: Assessor to ask relevant questions and additional details required as per standard</p>	<p><i>Assessors must dress neatly (MaTEx Corporate Shirt is recommended) and uphold integrity and professionalism in conducting online site assessment.</i></p>
<i>Post online-site assessment (1 week)</i>	<p>Step 1: Assessor to conclude the session and provide feedback to company representatives</p> <p>Step 2: Both parties to keep in touch via WhatsApp group to facilitate finalizing the documents. WhatsApp group will be dismissed upon completing all the necessary process.</p> <p>Step 3: Assessor to submit Assessment forms to MaTEx secretariat</p>	<p><i>Company representatives and assessors can further contact each other especially if there are additional documents or evidence required within the next 3 days upon completing the online site assessment. The assessors can discuss the overall performance of the company; however, scoring must be done individually</i></p>

Table 9: Assessor's Tasks and Responsibilities

d. Assessor's Checklist

Phase	Description	Remark
Pre online-site assessment	<p>A. Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Appointment letter from MaTEx secretariat ✓ Hardcopy of MaTEx standard according to categories assessed ✓ “Adopt and Adhere” COVID-19 guideline ✓ Local/ state SOP standards for COVID-19 guideline ✓ Softcopy / hardcopy of documents and evidences submitted by companies 	<p><i>Information and documents shared by the company is subject to confidentiality and can only be shared with the MaTEx Secretariat.</i></p>
During online-site assessment	<p>B. Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stable Wi-Fi/mobile network connection ✓ Mobile with WhatsApp app ✓ Platform for online-site assessment (mobile/laptop and apps/online platform) ✓ Private space 	<p><i>Assessors are advised to examine private and confidential documents during the online site assessment.</i></p>
Post online-site assessment	<p>e. Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be familiar with the flow of online-site assessment ✓ Assessment questions ✓ Communication with applicant companies/representatives via WhatsApp group. 	

Table 10: Assessor's Checklist

e.Company's Tasks

Phase	Steps	Remark
Pre online-site assessment (2 weeks)	<p>STEP 1: Companies download the standards and prepare documents/videos/evidence as per standard and submit to the established portal i.e google drive</p> <p>Step 2: Applicant companies to test infrastructure availability i.e WIFI/mobile data connection at various inspection site.</p> <p>Step 3: Creating WhatsApp Group to establish communication between appointed assessors and applicant companies on the flow of online-site assessment.</p> <p>Step 4: Communicate with assessors on documents/evidence submitted and if extra documents are required; to discuss the flow of the online-site assessment</p>	<p><i>Standards to be made available in portal/website for easy download</i></p> <p><i>Companies can continue updating the documents/videos/evidences to a shared folder i.e google drive before the online-site assessment</i></p>
During the online-site assessment (1 week)	<p>Step 1: Assessors and applicant company representatives meet during the stipulated time and date using preferred online platform</p> <p>Step 2: Assessors to introduce the flow of the online-site assessment</p> <p>Step 3: Company representatives to show around the inspection site/venue and any other documents/ evidences</p> <p>Step 4: company representatives to respond to assessors' queries</p>	<p><i>Company representative will make the call to assessors using a mutual platform i.e zoom, WhatsApp call</i></p> <p><i>Applicant companies are recommended to have at least 2 representatives; one to show around and another rep to do the briefing; companies are recommended to decide the flow based on recommendations from assessors</i></p>
Post online-site assessment (1 week)	<p>Step 1: Assessor to conclude the session and provide feedback to company representatives</p> <p>Step 2: both parties to keep in touch via WhatsApp group to facilitate finalizing the documents.</p> <p>Step 3: Companies to dismiss the WhatsApp group created 3 days later. Companies can contact MaTEx secretariat for further assistance.</p>	<p><i>Company representatives to respond to assessors' queries related to evidences/documents and to assist accordingly if further documents/clarification required</i></p>

Table 11: Company's task

f. Company's Checklist

Phase	Description	Remark
Pre online-site assessment	<p>A. Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Confirmation of online-site assessment from MaTEx secretariat ✓ Hardcopy of MaTEx standard according to categories assessed ✓ “Adopt and Adhere” COVID-19 guideline ✓ Local/ state SOP standards for COVID-19 guideline ✓ Softcopy / hardcopy of documents and evidence submitted by companies ✓ Company profile ✓ Videos based on indicators/evidence 	<i>Companies to download standards from dedicated website/portal</i>
During the online-site assessment	<p>B. Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stable Wi-Fi/mobile network connection ✓ Mobile with WhatsApp app ✓ Identify areas with strong/weaker connection to avoid disruption during the online-site assessment ✓ Platform for online-site assessment (mobile/laptop and apps/online platform) 	<i>Companies are required to submit the documents/evidences/videos to assigned folder i.e google drive</i>
Post online-site assessment	<p>g. Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be familiar with the flow of online-site assessment ✓ Communication with assessors via WhatsApp group. 	<i>Companies can continue updating the folder based on assessors recommendation/query.</i> <i>Companies recommended to form a group/team or assign a dedicated staff to work on the documents and evidences required</i>

Table 12: Company's checklist

g. Communication Plan

Phase	Communication type	objective	Medium	Frequency /schedule	Audience	Owner
Pre-online site assessment	Preparation	Applicant companies to submit relevant documents/evidence before the online-site assessment	Online portal i.e google drive	(1-2 weeks before online-site assessment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assigned Assessors ▪ MaTEx secretariat 	▪ Applicant company
	Pre-assessment discussion	To create common communication platform	WhatsApp	3 days before online-site assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assigned Assessors 	
During the online-site assessment	Online meeting	Actual online-site assessment to take place	WhatsApp video call or another platform mutually agreed	1 time (2-3 hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assigned Assessors 	▪ Applicant company
Post online-site assessment	Post-assessment discussion	To facilitate finalizing the process and wrap up the session	WhatsApp	3 days post online-site assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assigned Assessors 	▪ Applicant company
	Wrap up of online-site assessment	Assessors to submit the finalized marks	Email	1-week post online-site assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MaTEx secretariat 	▪ Assigned Assessors

Table 13 : Proposed communication plan for MaTEx online-site assessment

XIV. Conclusion

The recent COVID-19 pandemic caused major disruption to the way businesses were conducted with travel and tourism is among the worst affected sectors. Tourism stakeholders are in dire need to rethink the way tourism business and operations are managed, thus redirected to the major shift of adopting technological advancement for business sustainability. The latter half of the twentieth century witnessed robust growth of information-centered technologies, development of the Internet, distributed databases, and informed society. These changes lead to further improvement in the way we conduct our businesses, promote our products, customer services and other aspects of business transformation.

MaTEx Business Certification is an excellent framework designed to ensure continuous business development and the online-site assessment was the catalyst in transforming the way to conducting business certification. Businesses have transformed their business into online platform to stay relevant in the technology driven 21st century. Tourism organizations and certification bodies are rethinking content and delivery strategies for successful execution of business certification.

This report explored the implementation of online-site assessment for MaTEx Business Certification Programme. The results revealed positive outcome as participant companies responded constructively to the overall implementation of online-site assessment; facilitated by the efficient MaTEx secretariat and appointed assessors. Comprehensive documents, clearly structured assessment process and availability of reliable infrastructure play major contribution to the overall implementation of a successful online-site assessment. Challenges were also addressed in this study along with recommendations to overcome and proposals for future similar online-site assessment.

Further research is recommended to prove or disprove the arguments put forward in this chapter. While the author does not contest that online-site assessment was an efficient, further study is required to validate and enrich the data. Author suggest improving the research instrument and conducting interviews or focus group sessions with relevant stakeholders for a concrete framework to be established.

XV. References

1. *A guide to the project management body of knowledge: (PMBOK® guide)*. (2017). Newtown Square, PA, USA: Project Management Institute.
2. Chiang, I., Jhangiani, R., & Price, P. (2015, October 13). Constructing Survey Questionnaires. Retrieved December 11, 2020, from <https://opentextbc.ca/researchmethods/chapter/constructing-survey-questionnaires/>
3. GSTC Destination Criteria. (2020, September 06). Retrieved November 30, 2020, from <https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria/gstc-destination-criteria/>
4. Grapentin, S., & Ayikoru, M. (2019). Destination Assessment and Certification: Challenges and Opportunities. *Sustainability*, 11(13), 3691. doi:10.3390/su11133691
5. Green Globe Standard. (n.d.). Retrieved November 30, 2020, from <https://certifications.controlunion.com/en/certification-programs/certification-programs/green-globe-standard>
6. Font, Xavier & Epler Wood, Megan. (2007). Sustainable tourism certification marketing and its contribution to SME market access. *Quality Assurance and Certification in Ecotourism*. 147-163.
7. Linneberg, Mai & Korsgaard, Steffen. (2019). Coding qualitative data: a synthesis guiding the novice. *Qualitative Research Journal*. 10.1108/QRJ-12-2018-0012.
8. Malaysia Tourism Excellence (MaTEx) Business Certification Programme By Tourism Productivity Nexus (TPN): Productivity Way Up Malaysia. (2019, August 09). Retrieved November 23, 2020, from <http://www.wayup.my/news/malaysia-tourism-excellence-matex-business-certification-programme-by-tourism-productivity>
9. MPC and TPN certify the tourism industry players who adhere to covid-19 guidelines. (2020, July 16). Retrieved November 25, 2020, from <https://www.malaysiasme.com.my/mpc-and-tpn-certify-the-tourism-industry-players-who-adhere-to-covid-19-guidelines-in-support-of-compliance-to-government-issued-sops/>
10. Standard Criteria and Indicators. (n.d.). Retrieved November 30, 2020, from <https://greenglobe.com/standard/>
11. Smith, Derek. (2010). Measuring the Effectiveness of Project Management Training.
12. Selamat Datang ke Portal Rasmi Kementerian Pelancongan, Seni dan Budaya Malaysia. (n.d.). Retrieved November 30, 2020, from <http://www.motac.gov.my/en/program/standards/asean-tourism-standards>
13. Walas, Bartłomiej & Celuch, Krzysztof. (2016). Certification in tourism as an element of quality management –theoretical aspects and entrepreneurs' attitudes. 10.13140/RG.2.1.4431.4489.
14. (2019, August 9). Retrieved November 25, 2020, from <http://destina.my/malaysia-tourism-excellence-matex-business-certification-programme-a-pathway-to-higher-standards/>

XVI. Technical Appendix

EVENT MANAGEMENT COMPANIES (EMC)

This standard covers minimum requirements for operation and management of event management companies which organize events in hotels, event halls, and other touristic establishments and venues. The events include the following: Sport events for example marathons, Concerts, Exhibition, Conferences / Seminar / Talks • Performing arts/theatre, Training, Wedding, Corporate events, Charity events, Medical events, Parties, Convocations, Exhibitions/fairs/fest and Gatherings. The standard excludes adventure and extreme based events

TRAVEL AGENCIES COMPANIES (TAC)

This standard is applicable to travel agencies/destination management companies operating inbound tours as licensed by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MoTAC)

MICE AND EVENT VENUES (MEV)

This standard covers minimum requirements for operation and management of MICE and event venue where events/activities are organised, which include at hotels, event halls, stadium, cinema, auditorium, open field, open space and other touristic establishments

HOMESTAY AND KAMPUNGSTAY (HKO)

The minimum pre-requisite requirement to apply for MaTEx Business Certification Programme for category Homestay/Kampungstay Owners/Operators is the homestay/kampungstay must be registered under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MoTAC) and comply with the guidelines as set by MoTAC

PRODUCT AND SITE OPERATORS (PSO)

This document covers the requirements for the following areas: Eco and nature based product or site, Agro-based product or site 2.3. Park related destinations (theme park, man-made park, amusement park etc.), Cultural, heritage and historical site, Local product classes and workshops (keris, bijih timah, latex, etc.), Government owned tourism sites and Food products (own production).