

Revealing Covid 19 Effects on Malaysian Domestic Tourism Acceptance Towards Destination Competitiveness

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Abstract: Tourism destination competitiveness has been demonstrated as one of the significant components to improve the country's travel industry goal. This paper study the relationship of domestic tourism acceptance towards tourism destination competitiveness. The data was drawn from a sample of 227 respondents, and a simple random sampling method was used. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The questionnaires are distributed by online survey and face to face method. Results showed that natural resources, cultural heritage, and special events had significant relationships between domestic tourism acceptance and tourism destination competitiveness in Malaysia. As an emerging tourist attraction, several measures should be considered to improve destination competitiveness while maintaining the future development of Malaysia as a tourism destination.

Keywords: Tourism development, tourism destination competitiveness, natural resources, cultural heritage.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that entails people's movement to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors who may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents, and tourism have to do with their activities, some of which imply tourism expenditure (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2008). A tourism destination is a geographic area consisting of a set of resources and attractions that is visited by tourists. These provisions are accessibility, attractions, package activities, and auxiliary services. As indicated by WTO, a destination is an interesting spot where a visitor goes through somewhere around one night and displays the travel industry items (World Tourism Organization, 2012).

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has set Malaysia in the 26th spot in its Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report, the half-yearly benchmarking file estimating the overall strength of 136 nations' travel industry area (World Economic Forum, 2017). Malaysia's ranking dropped one place compared to 2015; the country effectively improved its travel and tourism competitiveness in absolute terms.

As Covid 19 occurs and restricted Movement control order, domestic tourism becoming embracing. Domestic tourist defines as Resident/ those living in Malaysia (at least a year) including expatriate and non-citizen, who takes a trip to the main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year for business, leisure or person other than to be employed by a resident entity in the place visited (DOSM, 2020).

This sector has remained resilient with expenditure and numbers of travelers on the rise for the past few years. In 2019, domestic tourism expenditure registered a double-digit growth of 11.5% to RM103.2 billion compared to RM92.6 billion in 2018, revealed the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM). The change in expenditure was driven by an increase in tourists and day-trippers' expenditure, spending a total of RM67.9 billion and RM35.3 billion respectively. DOSM said 2019 was the fourth consecutive year of double-digit growth in domestic tourism expenditure. The number of domestic tourists also saw an 8.1% growth over 2018, increasing to 239.1 million. Tourism Malaysia is optimistic that the domestic sector could grow 30% in the year 2020.

The DOSM's statistics showed the increase in domestic visitors' number was supported by an 8% and 8.3% growth in day-trippers and tourists respectively compared to 2018. In total, they made 332.4 million trips domestically, of which 42.3% was to visit relatives and friends. Selangor was the most popular state with domestic travellers in 2019 with 33.6 million tourists,

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followed by Kuala Lumpur (22.6 million), Sabah (22 million), Perak (21.1 million), and Sarawak (19.8 million).

Due to the unprecedented effects and by virtue of the magnitude caused by the Covid19 pandemic, particularly on the tourism sector, the domestic market has been identified as the "key" for the industry to recover immediately. It is interesting to note that traveling has always been an integral part in society and the way of life. The eagerness of domestic travelers to plan and the level of confidence in terms of health and safety in Malaysia after MCO indicate optimism of recovery, albeit "new norms" in travel habits. These clearly show that the years of relentless efforts in promoting domestic tourism are bearing the fruits. Cuti-Cuti Malaysia will always be in the hearts of all Malaysians. (Tourism Malaysia.2020)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism destination competitiveness has been demonstrated as one of the significant components to improve the country's execution of the travel industry goal. Inside Malaysia, it is recognizable that the country travel industry is progressively seen as an elective salary age action for provincial networks (Akbar, Zahari, & Dusi, 2016; Falak, Lo, & Yeo, 2016). Destination competitiveness are defined as the ability of a destination to maintain its market position relative to its competitors (Hassan, 2000; Craigwell, Worrell and Smith, 2006) and share to improve upon them through time (D'Hartserre, 2000) while rural tourism can be defined as encompasses all forms of tourism in rural areas, including hunting, fishing, rural and eco-tourism.

Competitiveness is widely accepted as the most important factor determining the long term success of the destinations (Kozak & Rimmington, 1999). One of the earlier definitions is by Pearce (1997), who defined destination competitiveness as the techniques and methods that possibly apply to analyse and compare the diverse attributes of destinations in the context of planning (Mihalic, 2000). The most acceptable definition of destination competitiveness is defined by Dwyer and Kim (2003) and adopted by many researchers (e.g. Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013; Goffi, 2013; Marku, 2014; Kompupula, 2014; Omerzel, 2006), who explained the meaning of destination competitiveness as a critical component that appears to be linked to the destination's ability in delivering goods and services superior to other destinations and

the goods and services were evaluated as important tourism experiences by tourists.

Previous studies have also proffered that the necessity to develop tourism destination competitiveness for rural destination sustainability (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Lee & King, 2008). (Prideaux *et al.*, 2012) (p. 15) note, "competitiveness in its most basic form is the ability of a destination to identify its key selling propositions, identify markets that are likely to purchase these propositions, create a market space where these products can be purchased, identify change and future threats, and have the ability to maintain the process over a long period in a manner that is both environmentally and economically sustainable". Ritchie and Crouch add that unless a destination is sustainable, competitiveness is illusory. This analysis has achieved great popularity among researchers in the field of tourism, hospitality and services, and they have adopted this approach in studies of the image of tourism destinations (Lee & Lee, 2009; O'Leary & Deegan, 2005) and destination competitiveness (Enright & Newton, 2004).

In Crouch and Ritchie (1999) definition of natural resources, it explained that natural resources as the nature of the core resources of the environment, which includes the flora and fauna species. Hart (2007) explained natural resources as something that is found in nature and can be used by people which includes water, plants, forest, animals, soil, and stone (Lovins, Lovins, & Hawken, 2007). The tourism destinations are the composition of tourism products (e.g., environmental resources, range of facilities and services) to attract tourists' visit, as proposed by Dwyer & Kim (2003). Dupeyras and MacCallum (2013) indicate that a successful tourism destination has the ability to provide unique experiences to tourists which includes natural resources. Moreover, destinations with recognised world heritage status have a competitive advantage over other destinations to attract tourists.

Lane (2009) explained that environmental resources or natural resources are considered one of the principal attractions for sightseers in making travel, especially regarding the country in the travel industry. Consequently, it is desirable to preserve characteristic assets to keep up the nature of the provincial travel industry items (Sok, 2010; Reimer & Walter, 2013). Accordingly, maintaining a high level of an attractive natural environment has to be a primary concern for maintaining competitiveness (Inskeep, 1991). Many authors (Cracolici, Rietveld & Nijkamp, 2006; Gartner,

2014; Hassan, 2000; Middleton, 1997; Mihalić, 2000, 2013) suggest that the quality of natural attractions is part of the quality destination and it can be a determinant for tourism destination competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 1993). Other studies have centred on a particular aspect of destination competitiveness, including the environment (Hassan, 2000; Mihalic, 2000) and nature-based tourism (Huybers & Bennett, 2003; Claver-Cortes *et al.*, 2007).

Preserving a tourism product is a natural resource and means the sustainability of profits (Reimer & Walter, 2013). One main issue in tourism development is conserving fauna and flora (Lokuhetty, Jayawardena, & Mudadeniya, 2013) as often they are the main resources that attract tourists. Algieri (2006) shows that 'small' countries well-endowed with high-quality natural attractions tend to specialize in tourism. These economies could grow at a non-decreasing rate and promote sustainable economic development if manufacturing and tourism are distant substitutes, i.e. the elasticity of substitution between tourism and manufacturing is less than one.

According to the website of Tourism Malaysia, Malaysia's generation was created by Malays, Chinese, Indians, and many other ethnic groups that have lived together in Malaysia. It was creating a truly Malaysian culture and all of these cultures have influenced each other. Cultural heritage was diversified and become an irreplaceable source of intellectual and spiritual richness for all civilization. In this 21 century, cultural heritage has increasingly and become to be seen as important to human development (Matarasso, 2001a, b). He believed that culture is a development potential for the growth of the country and is also a way to sustainable human development itself. It was our cultural values that have determined our achievement and goals. According to Liew (2005), culture provided the link between present, past, and the future in our life, and the cultural information can bring communities together and promote understanding among the societies. Therefore, the enhancement and protection of cultural heritage should be promoted as a necessary aspect of human development.

Cultural heritage is divided into two forms in Malaysia, which know as tangible and intangible. Tangible cultural heritage can be found in the form of artifacts or old buildings. For example, tangible cultural heritage also can be divided into movable or immovable cultural heritage such as paintings, sculptures, monuments and so on (UNESCO

convention on world heritage, 1972). While intangible cultural heritage was in terms of the peoples' attitudes, values, and way of life, Malaysia's heritage has possibly existed. Cultural heritage needs to protect sustainably because it was not a renewable resource, both on a global and local scale.

There are natural resources, and the cultural heritage can represent a comparative advantage of a tourism destination. It is because those are necessary conditions but not sufficient to be competitive. So cultural heritage can be a complementary element to improve the tourism destination competitiveness. (Cracolici *et al.*, 2009).

For local communities, special event became a popular way to provide recreational opportunities to their members, as well as to attract the arrival of tourists and the increasing of revenue (Dwyer, Forsyth & Spurr, 2005; Kim & Uysal, 2003). The purpose of special events was to diversify, and it celebrating a unique moment with ritual (Goldblatt, 2005), and provided chances for leisure and social interaction beyond everyday experiences (Getz, 1997; Nicholson & Pearce, 2001). Special events have turned into a typical route in the travel industry to elevate a destination and to reconstruct a positive picture of the place (Shone & Parry, 2010).

According to Getz (2008), special events in tourism can be defined as infrequent events outside the normal activities and are largely driven by profit motives. For local communities, special event became a popular way to provide recreational opportunities to their members, as well as to attract the arrival of tourists and the increasing of revenue (Dwyer, Forsyth & Spurr, 2005; Kim & Uysal, 2003). The purpose of special events was to diversify and it celebrating a unique moment with ritual (Goldblatt, 2005), and provided chances for leisure and social interaction beyond everyday experiences (Getz, 1997; Nicholson & Pearce, 2001). Special events have turned into a typical route in the travel industry to elevate a destination and to reconstruct a positive picture of the place (Shone & Parry, 2010).

Special events are defined as a cultural tourism product that enhances destination competitiveness in a city. Nowadays, special events were established as an essential and major part of development and marketing in tourism industry. It was a simple definition would be the systematic development and marketing of special events as tourist attractions (Getz, D., 1989). The

special event has contributed to the tourism industry between each other. So it proved that the tourism industry's infrastructure has been improved and means that improvements for events. All in all, special events have positively related to tourism destination competitiveness

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Taken from the past study demonstrates that all these three developments are identified with the tourism destination competitiveness. Researchers in the past (e.g., Buhalis, 2000; Mihalič, 2000) have elucidated that natural resources are the paramount factor in developing rural tourism destination competitiveness. Past studies have demonstrated that natural resources significantly contribute to the tourism's competitive advantage (Yoon, 2002) and sustainable environment development (Ferrari, Mondejar & Vargas, 2010). There were three hypothesizes in this study related the relationship of two variables:

H1: There is a positive relationship between natural resources towards tourism destination competitiveness.

H2: There is a positive relationship between cultural heritages towards tourism destination competitiveness.

H3: There is a positive relationship between special events towards tourism destination competitiveness.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, researchers used descriptive research as an approach to quantitative methods. This type of research is conclusive in nature, rather than exploratory. A quantitative study was used via an online survey among Malaysian targeted respondents to evaluate the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable.

In this study, the simple random sampling method was used to select the respondents within Malaysia. 381 respondents are replying the survey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, Pearson's correlation has been used by researcher. The research used the correlation to measure the strength of the linear relationship between two variables: dependent variable (tourism destination competitiveness) and independent variables (natural resources, cultural heritage and special event). The value of correlation coefficient (r) was fall within -1 to +1. A correlation coefficient -1 or +1 represented that a perfect linear relationship was formed while a correlation coefficient 0 represented that no linear relationship exists between two variables.

Relationship between Two Variables

H1: There is a positive relationship between natural resources towards tourism destination competitiveness.

Refer to the Table 1, the result showed a strong relationship between two variables with correlation coefficient (r) of 0.716. And significant level of natural resources and tourism destination competitiveness was .000. So it proved the hypothesis was a positive relationship between natural resources towards tourism destination competitiveness.

H2: There is a positive relationship between culture heritage towards tourism destination competitiveness.

Refer to the Table 2, the result showed a strong relationship between two variables with a correlation coefficient of 0.661. And a significant level of cultural heritage and tourism destination competitiveness was .000. So it proved the hypothesis was a positive relationship between cultural heritages towards tourism destination competitiveness.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis for Hypothesis 1

		Natural Resources	Tourism Destination Competitiveness
Natural Resources	Pearson Correlation		.716**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		227
Tourism Destination Competitiveness	Pearson Correlation	.716**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	227	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: Correlation Analysis for Hypothesis 2

	Culture Heritage	Tourism Destination Competitiveness	
Culture Heritage	Pearson Correlation		.661**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		227
Tourism Destination Competitiveness	Pearson Correlation	.661**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	227	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

H3: There is a positive relationship between special events towards tourism destination competitiveness.

Refer to Table 3, the result showed a strong relationship between two variables with correlation coefficient of 0.783. And significant level of special event and tourism destination competitiveness was .000. So it proved the hypothesis was a positive relationship between special events towards tourism destination competitiveness.

This research has examined, the relationship of tourism development towards tourism destination competitiveness among higher education students in Kelantan. This research had shown that the variables of tourism development, which are natural resources (independent variable), cultural heritage (independent variable), and special events (independent variable) were significantly correlated with tourism destination competitiveness in Kelantan (dependent variable), and with high positive correlation relationship.

For theoretical recommendations, future researchers can review the result of this research and take concern on these determinant factors. The finding in this research may contribute advantages to their decision-making process. The researcher suggested that future research needs to do more research on

students' acceptance towards tourism development in Kelantan. The reason is different backgrounds of students will have different perspectives and acceptance levels towards tourism development. Besides that, the researchers suggested to explore and investigate another research framework that would influence the relationship of tourism development towards tourism destination competitiveness among higher education for future research. For example, sustainability that consists of different variables from the tourism development variable could influence the similar dependent variable simultaneously. The researcher found out that sustainability may be a pulling factor for destination development and a tool to enhance tourism destination competitiveness. The research framework can help the students change their perspectives on being more positive towards tourism destination competitiveness.

Next, for the methodology recommendations, future research is highly recommended to maintain quantitative methods rather than qualitative methods to collect data from respondents. Future research is advised to use this method as the outcomes can be clearly shown through the data gathered. Meanwhile, the results would be more relevant, reliable and generalizable to a larger population. Future research is recommended to expand the coverage area for a

Table 3: Correlation Analysis for Hypothesis 3

	Special Event	Tourism Destination Competitiveness	
Special Event	Person Correlation		.783**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		227
Tourism Destination Competitiveness	Person Correlation	.783**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	227	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

research study to gain better and more comprehensive research. In the future, the researcher can expand their research areas and cover other spaces such as other states in Malaysia to get a comprehensive and accurate data about the impact of competitiveness on tourism destination. The face-to-face sessions are highly recommended to collect data from the respondents rather than the online survey. It is suggested that future research be carried out with face-to-face sessions because it would reduce respondents' time to formulate their thoughts. This method enables the researcher to collect relevant and useful information for answering the research question.

For practical recommendations, the researcher suggests that the study might compare tourism competitiveness in other countries. For this study, it is on the impact of competitiveness towards tourism destination. Future researchers can compare with other countries as the factor may vary according to the country's people. This kind of comparison will make the study more holistic and comprehensive findings.

CONCLUSION

In this research, the study was to examine the relationship between natural resources and tourism destination competitiveness, to identify the relationship between cultural heritage and tourism destination competitiveness, and to study the relationship between the special event and tourism destination competitiveness in Kelantan. This research had shown that the variable of the study, which are natural resources (independent variable), culture and heritage (independent variable), special events (independent variable) was significantly correlated with tourism destination competitiveness (dependent variable), and with high positive correlation relationship. This research also suggests inserting a moderating in the framework of the study. With the moderator, the information on the study can be more widen and in-depth than they are. It is also recommended that future researchers highly recommend maintaining the use of quantitative methods rather than qualitative methods to collect data from respondents. Lastly, it is suggested that future

research could make a comparison of tourism competitiveness with other countries.

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