

Benchmarking and Exploring Educational Tourism in Malaysia

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Abstract

Malaysia is one of the countries that pay special attention to the tourism sector. Its development is so rapid that modern places that so historically appear, have their concepts and different characteristics, ranging from buildings to magnificent urban areas that attract tourists to visit there, including the UNU Surakarta Campus. So the purpose of this study is to describe Benchmarking and Exploring Educational Tourism activities in Malaysia. The method used is qualitative with a field study approach, then the data is collected from 12-15 February 2023, followed by analyzing the contents and finally drawing conclusions. The results of the study show that Benchmarking and Exploring Educational Tourism in Malaysia include four stages, namely the preparation stage by formulating goals, preparing plans, and preparing the infrastructure, then the socialization stage, namely by discussing with students the rundown of the event, how long it will be there and what matters only what must be prepared, then the implementation stage is by visiting the Petronas Twin Towers, Kuala Lumpur Indonesian School, Genting Highland, Christ Church, Flor de la Mar Ship, Universiti Melaka to the Putra Jaya Mosque. And finally is the evaluation stage, namely requiring students to compile reports in the form of scientific work.

Keywords: Benchmarking, Exploring, Educational Tourism, Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism can be a contributor to income in a country. This is reinforced by research from the World Travel & Tourism Council in 2015 where the tourism sector contributes up to 7 trillion US dollars in all countries of the world. Even the following year, namely 2016, donations from the tourism sector rose to 10.9 trillion US dollars (Council, 2016). This shows that countries in the world are competing with each other to advance their tourism sector in the hope of increasing income and the interest of tourists to visit that country.

Competition between countries in the tourism sector has changed and increased from year to year. This is reinforced by data released from the World Economic Forum which stated that in 2013 10 countries ranked in the top 10 and top 10 in the tourism sector in the global market, including Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Austria, the United States, UK, Canada, France, and Germany. These conditions can certainly have a very significant and positive impact on the economy of the country concerned (Forums, 2013).

Of the several major countries above that have paid special attention to the tourism sector, Malaysia is one of them where the tourism potential includes nature, beaches, and also islands that are large enough so that they are often referred to as green tourism and blue tourism. In addition, there are other tourist

destinations such as culture, hospitality, and other businesses that are the main attraction of the country (Hamid & Isa, 2020). This is evidenced by Malaysia's record in 2016 where the tourism sector contributed around RM 73 billion and became the third largest contributor of revenue to the country's economy.

The above contributions come from natural wealth like Indonesia which includes forms of tourism ranging from honeymoon tourism, commercial, health, industry, sports, culture, maritime, culture and nature reserves (Thasimmim, Susanto, Haryati, Tegor, & Mitrayati, 2022). Malaysia's tourism potential can be demonstrated by Malaysia's achievements compared to other countries where it was ranked 25th in 2015 in the global market. And Malaysia is the only Southeast Asian country located on the mainland of Asia and the main island where the west is bordered by the Malay Peninsula (or Malacca) and Thailand, while the east is bordered by Sabah and Sarawak (Kalimantan), while the north and south are separated by the China Sea. South along 645 Kilometers (Online, 2023).

This geographical location supports popular ecotourism activities and can provide substantial economic benefits if managed properly (Kurnianto, Alifianto, D. Prasetyo, & Rahardi, 2013). Various government efforts have also been carried out on a large scale, such as advertising the slogan "Malaysia Truly Asia" and other things to improve security, cleanliness, and comfort so that infrastructure and facilities develop which can be enjoyed not only by tourists but also by all the population, numbering around 30 million. The government and the Ministry of Tourism are the parties most responsible for everything regarding tourism in Malaysia where the capital city is located in Kuala Lumpur, while the administrative city is located Putrajaya (Organization, 2023).

Tourism there is developing rapidly and successfully, this is evidenced by the emergence of interesting, better, and modern places that are so historic as tourist spots. In addition, each corner of the building has its concept and has different characteristics, ranging from towering buildings, and magnificent urban areas that stand in the middle of Malaysia to other beautiful and enchanting places promoted by the forum. the annual ASEAN Tourism Forum. The various descriptions of tourism are certainly very interesting for tourists, UNU Surakarta Postgraduate Campus was no exception, so a benchmarking event was held in neighboring Malaysia for 3 days starting from 12 February 2023 -15 February 2023 with a total of 20 personnel consisting of 17 postgraduate students and 3 accompanying lecturers. From this background, the author is interested in discussing Benchmarking and Exploring Educational Tourism in Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur, Genting, Melaka, and Putrajaya).

METHOD

The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative with a field study approach, namely by examining the phenomena or events that occur while understanding phenomena that exist naturally in a flexible and interactive

perspective (Arikunto, 2013). Then what is being researched becomes scientific because the author is also a participant in the activity so the hope is that the results of the research are by the original (Gunawan, 2014). Meanwhile, the data is collected through observation, documentation, and additional supporting sources, followed by analyzing what is contained in the data. And the last is to conclude. The rundown of activities in the exploratory educational tourism event in Malaysia goes through 4 stages namely preparation, outreach, implementation, and evaluation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Meaning of Benchmarking and Exploring

Benchmarking language is often interpreted as a comparison and sometimes also interpreted as a benchmark. Meanwhile, in terms, it can be interpreted as one of the strategies to develop the performance and quality of an organizing organization so that it can adapt the ways of other organizations that have high performance or productivity, be it in the context of implementing education, economic tourism, or others. In addition, benchmarking is also a process for identifying outstanding performance, services, or practices from outside and then adopting them to provide more satisfaction to users (S, 1995).

Venetucci said that benchmarking can be used to improve performance and improve organizational performance so that it becomes superior. Besides that, it can also be said that benchmarking is a systematic tool to lead to superior performance by learning from others. Analyzing its performance, Comparing its operations to record knowledge, strengths, and weaknesses. All of these things must be considered while considering all aspects owned to achieve an effective and efficient institution (Venetucci, 1992).

While Exploring comes from the English language, namely exploring which means exploring, so if you say "Exploring" explore, explore, and provide learning experiences in the neighboring country of Malaysia (Santoso, Sitindjak, & Frans, 2019). In addition, the word must also include 3 things, namely observing/seeing, then feeling accompanied as a participant, namely having to be involved to be able to establish interactive, educative, and recreational discussions. Apart from that, in these activities, it is recommended to adapt to the life of the local community, their norms, and their lifestyle so that they gain more knowledge than other people (Nofyanti & Sidiq, 2016).

Educational Tourism

Educational tourism interpreted as a tour program and visiting a place to gain a direct learning experience from the tourist object. Such as utilizing cultural, social, and natural as well as regional wealth so that it attracts tourists, the public, educators, and students. This is certainly a benchmark for the success of education

because the content of learning studies is environment-based so it can relate the material being taught to situations in everyday life.

This type of tourism is also often referred to as a study tour or travel and visits to gain knowledge and add insight. This certainly can bring students closer to the environment so that a field trip project, group assignments, and so on are formed. So that this activity does not only provide a pleasant tour, but can also provide amazing learning (Sinta Devi, Damiati, & Sri Adnyawati, 2018).

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This activity was carried out by 17 students of the UNU Surakarta campus accompanied by 3 lecturers namely the Chancellor of UNU Surakarta, the Director of Postgraduate Studies, and the Secretary of the Department of Islamic Religious Education towards the neighboring country of Malaysia covering 4 stages, namely:

1. Preparation phase

At this stage, the UNU Surakarta campus establishes the formulation of clear instructional objectives from benchmarking and exploring educational tourism in Malaysia, preparing careful planning, dividing tasks, preparing facilities, contacting trusted travel agents, and considering the selection of techniques and objects to be visited to negotiate everything. And the most important thing is making passports for students because the main goal is abroad so you have to prepare well in advance. This is also done by the UNU Surakarta campus where students are given the facility to make passports through Batari Tour & Travel agents who have worked with the campus. This was carried out on December 15 2022 online at the UNU Surakarta Campus, while the photos were taken offline at the Surakarta Public Service Mall a branch of the Immigration office.

2. Socialization Stage

At this stage, the UNU Surakarta campus together with Batari Tour & Travel agents carried out socialization on January 27, 2023, regarding what had been discussed regarding plans for neighboring Malaysia, namely by formulating objectives of benchmarking and exploring in Malaysia, determining the length of stay there, setting objects -objects to be visited to suit the goals to be achieved, compiling a rundown of events for students while in Malaysia, planning what equipment to bring and provide and finally dividing UNU Surakarta students into 3 groups.

3. Implementation Stage

At this stage, Mr. Mufrod as Chancellor of UNU Surakarta, Mr. Dardiri as postgraduate director, Mr. Amiruddin as secretary of the PAI department, and Mbak Mirza as head of the Batari Tour and Travel agent accompanied,

supervised, and gave instructions to students during their trip to Malaysia starting from 12-15 February 2023, several things were done there, including:

- a. Visit the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia.

The Petronas twin towers Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia is a pair of towers with the tallest buildings in the world before the appearance of the Burj Khalifa, even so, today, the two towers are still the tallest twin skyscrapers in the world where the peaks are considered an important part of the building's architecture, even in 1998 until 2004 the tower held the title of the tallest building by original height, measuring from the main entrance floor to the superstructure according to the International Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitats. This building is so amazing that it attracts tourists to visit here, not forgetting the students of UNU Surakarta while capturing the moment of their visit by taking photos, accompanied by occasional contemplation of the greatness of Allah and from there we can learn about spiritual values where the creatures created by Allah alone can be so majestic, beautiful and enchanting, then what about the Creator, of course, He is more Majestic, Most Beautiful and more Enchanting.



Figure 1. Visit the Petronas Twin Towers

- b. Visit Indonesian School Kuala Lumpur Malaysia.

The Kuala Lumpur Indonesian School (SIKL) is an international school consisting of PAUD, Kindergarten, Elementary, Middle School to High School levels and has won accreditation from the National Accreditation Board (BAN). The school has the vision to realize graduates as loyal,

optimistic, independent, and competent Pancasilaist Indonesian ambassadors. Besides that, it also has a motto to become a school with integrity, ideology, innovation, intellectual, and international. Thank God, UNU Surakarta students had the opportunity to visit this school, then continued the socialization accompanied by the signature of cooperation between the campus and the school. After that, the students were given time to teach class X IPA/IPS students about cultural diversity, tribes, and Indonesia's natural wealth to encourage them to continue to make Indonesia proud even though they are currently in Malaysia. From this activity, we can learn pedagogic values and this is very important considering our role as educators are needed to increase students' interest in learning so that it doesn't seem boring and is always fun, then at the end of the session, a group photo is taken as a form of memento with them.



Figure 2. Visit the Kuala Lumpur Indonesian School

c. Visit Genting Highland, Malaysia.

Genting Highlands is a mountain peak of the Titiwangsa mountains with an altitude above 2000 m above sea level in Malaysia. The place borders Selangor and Pahang and was founded by Lim Goh Tong in 1960 and then grew to produce various companies ranging from cruise ships, housing, plantations, oil companies, paper companies, to power stations. In addition, it also has a resort and the Genting Skyway cable car which is the fastest train in the world and the longest in Southeast Asia. And thank God, the UNU Surakarta students had the opportunity to ride the train while looking at the scenery around it which was a bit foggy and covered in a drizzle. From the train, we can see the height of the buildings in Malaysia, so cold mountain air, and can see the green plants along the way. From these activities, we can learn the meaning of

spiritual values that in the creation of the heavens, the earth, and all that is in them, there is a sign of Allah's Greatness for people who have sense. Humans are nothing when compared to this vast and endless universe.



Figure 3. Visit Genting Highland

d. Visit Christ Church and Flor de la Mar Ship in Melaka.

Christ Church is the oldest Protestant Anglican church in the city of Melaka, Malaysia. The church was built in the 18th century in the British Dutch Colonial architectural style. The floor of the church is covered with granite blocks. The ceiling is 12 m high. The roof is covered with tiles. The walls are built of local laterite blocks covered with Chinese plaster and finally, the building is laid out in a simple rectangle measuring 25 m long and 13 m wide. Not to forget, UNU Surakarta students also had the opportunity to visit this place, enjoy its architectural splendor and observe the enchanting beauty of the evening in Melaka.

The Flor de la Mar ship, which means Sea Flower, is a relic from the Portuguese whom they had sailed the Indian Ocean for more than nine years until it sank in November 1511. The ship was built in 1502 in Lisbon when the Portuguese wanted to sail to India with spices but had a leak in the Mozambique archipelago for almost two months so it needed to be repaired. UNU Surakarta students also had the opportunity to observe the ship at such a close distance, so that we could know about the great masterpieces from the past.

These two things teach us a lesson that heritage buildings and ships from other nations (non-Muslims) can teach the meaning of social values, namely mutual respect despite different religions and traditions, not instead of being hostile to each other so that it ends in regret later.



Figure 4. Visit Christ Church



Figure 5. Visit the Flor de la Mar Ship

e. Visit the University of Melaka

Universiti Melaka, previously named Sekolah Tinggi Islam Melaka was established in 1994 as a private university college and wholly owned by the State Government of Melaka. On April 8, 2021, KUIM was upgraded to a full-fledged university as part of the state government's commitment to developing an agenda for education and excellence in knowledge. This is reflected in the campus' vision which reads "To become a center of higher education that excels in Islamic studies" to produce generations who are knowledgeable and capable in various fields of Islamic studies, technology, social sciences, and the latest knowledge besides having high competence to respond to the challenges of the times. And Alhamdulillah the students have the opportunity to study here, starting from the stage of getting to know each other academic/non-academic culture between UNU Surakarta and UNIMEL. Followed by a visit to the Al-Ghozali library with companions

and friendly staff that teaches us the meaning of professional values both in serving and in building cooperation between campuses to achieve a world-class university.



Figure 6. Visit the University of Melaka

f. Visit to Putra Jaya Mosque

This mosque is named Putra which is located in the city of Putrajaya right on Putra Square and adjacent to Putrajaya Lake where the city is used as the administrative center of the State of Malaysia. This mosque is pink in color with very modern architecture because it was built using rose red granite in 1997. The mosque is divided into 3 functional areas namely the madrasah, the mosque's courtyard, and a room for prayer, and can accommodate 15,000 worshippers. Praise God, the students also had the opportunity to visit this mosque, while enjoying the beauty of the pink nuanced architecture surrounded by a lake with clear water. From this activity, we can learn the meaning of spiritual values where currently many mosques are built very grandly, but the congregation is small. So the hope is that visiting this mosque will increase awareness among writers and Muslims in general about the importance of praying in congregation at the mosque so that they are classified as one of the servants who prosper in the house of Allah.



Figure 7. Visit the Putra Jaya Mosque

4. Evaluation Stage

At this stage, students hold discussions about all the results of their activities while in Malaysia. Apart from that, the UNU Surakarta campus also requires them to compile reports in the form of scientific work, as well as the insights, knowledge, and experience they have gained from these activities. And finally, follow up on the results of the report by asking for signatures from the postgraduate director and affixing an assignment letter from the Chancellor of UNU Surakarta as a form of student accountability.

CONCLUSION

From the elaboration above, it can be concluded that Benchmarking and Exploring Educational Tourism in Malaysia include four stages, namely the preparation stage by formulating goals, preparing plans, and preparing the infrastructure, then the socialization stage, namely by discussing with students regarding the event rundown, how long there will be and matters what must be prepared, the implementation stage is by visiting the Petronas Twin Towers, Kuala Lumpur Indonesian School, Genting Highland, Christ Church, Flor de la Mar Ship, Melaka University to the Putra Jaya Mosque where students get lessons on spiritual, social values, pedagogical and professional. And finally is the evaluation stage, namely requiring students to compile reports in the form of scientific work.

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