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FACTORS TO REACHING DECISION - THE CASE OF A PRIVATE AVIATION AGENCY IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: *Private aviation agency is considered as one of intermediaries that provide high-end or luxury tourism services. The purpose of this study is to conceptualize the factors considered by private aviation agency in Malaysia in decision making process. Qualitative approach was taken and semi-structured interviews were conducted on one Operational Manager, one Marketing Manager and three technical workers of Elite Jets Sdn Bhd to obtain required information. Content analysis was done to emerge themes based on the findings. Results show four themes related to factors of decision making by private aviation agency which are money, relationship, value and safety.*

Keywords: *(private aviation, private jet, luxury tourism, travel agency, travel intermediaries)*

Introduction

The private aviation industry came about during the golden age of air travel and was kick started by Bill Lear seeking to build a small affordable jet designed for the business market and Learjet was born. The first of its kind and fully in its own class the Luxurious aircraft first took flight in 1963 (Bombardier, 2008). In the beginning Private Jets were designed solely for the wealthy individuals and substantial companies, and over the years they were referred to with a range of names such as “Executive jets,” “Business jets”, or “Corporate jets”. The main motivation for utilizing private jets was categorized under private personal luxury use or for business use (“A Brief History of Private Jets”, 2011; Mireille, 2016). Industry forecasts predicts there will be a total of between 7,722 to 8,349 of new business jet deliveries in the next decade raking in a dollar value of between \$221billion and \$252 billion (“Latest 2018 Forecast for Private Jet Sales”, 2018).

Looking back at the global trend, the commercial airline industry at the beginning was regarded as a luxury service only afforded by the wealthy. However over the years with technological advancements, the sector tremendously evolved and commercial air travel became available to the masses (Mireille, 2016). The private aviation industry is going through a similar phase where it was once seen only for the extremely wealthy but it is now being slowly democratized by new age companies in the field, where Elite Jets of Malaysia as one of them. Therefore the objective of this study will be looking at the factors considered by the private aviation company in Malaysia in making decisions pertaining to the wellbeing of the business from all sorts of aspect.

Literature Review

Private Aviation as a Form of Luxury Tourism

As the luxury industry keeps evolving and growing at a faster rate, there has been a notable phenomenon of the democratization of luxury (Mireille, 2016). According to Chapman (2018), the “private air travel has been the domain of the ultra-wealthy” and this attracts the consumer base that are right below them. When analyzed through time, commercial aviation was initially regarded as a luxury industry. With technological advancements the sector evolved and became economically accessible to the masses (Mireille, 2016).

Meanwhile the United States have been one of the largest contributor of the private aviation market in the world. From largely inventing and improving the private aviation industry, the United States also acts as provider of solid framework for other countries to build upon (McCarthy, 2018). One of the most notable impact on the private aviation industry came about at the advent of mass access to the internet which contributed in simplifying the decision making process for the consumers compared to the pre internet ages (Wynbradt, 2018).

Prior to the arrival of internet, operators and owners of jet aircrafts did not have a proper means to market the jets based on price, location and availability to the potential jet travellers. However all of that changed as the internet enabled private jet service providers to advertise to the global audience. It opened up doors that allowed for private jet travellers to easily connect with the brokers and intermediaries further facilitating the process (Mireille, 2016). New business models appeared after the advent of the internet. From fractional ownership to membership programs which removed the risk associated with ownership, however had their short comings. Next, on demand chartered flights were introduced and as a new alternative, and it didn't require the customer's capital commitment and fees (Starry & Bernstein, 2008). However, it is not proven that on-demand charter, or even membership programs, are always more cost effective than fractional ownership as sometimes it could be less expensive (Huber, 2018).

According to the CEO of XOJET, “It's one of the good times to be involved in the private jet marketplace”. Due to the variety of options and new services of jet air providers, it's never been easier and cheaper for the private jet travellers to find a great jet service provider (Cave, 2018). Top of that the private jet industry players are investing heavily in the research and development when compared to the prior times which should contribute to the future growth of the industry (Mireille, 2016). Malaysia is still a young market for private aviation compared to the US and Europe counterparts and holds up to 50 private jets as of now. With a goal set to increase the number of jets to 150 in 5 years times, plans have been proposed to expand operation capacity of the Subang airport to allow hosting of more private jets (Yunus, 2018) as private jets are accounting to a growing share of the premium luxury market of business travel (Starry & Bernstein, 2008). The ever changing platform of the growth of the private aviation industry brings forth new challenges and opportunities for the agents, distribution channel intermediaries and the companies alike.

The role of travel intermediaries in the tourism industry is continually challenged and in constant change. Travel intermediaries are and will still be a key component playing an important role in the tourism distribution channel (Chow, Lai, & Loi, 2015; Klenosky & Gitelson; Buckley & Mossaz, 2016) and in this case of the private aviation industry. With the change in the technical logistics of the travel purchase, traveling intermediaries such as agents are no longer present in every transaction (Buckley & Mossaz, 2016). Individual travellers can now identify different traveling options online and make their own choices and purchases, especially for the less and simpler components. In this case where the travelling

intermediaries are not always required in all the transactions (Roma, Zambuto, & Perrone, 2014; Abou-Shouk, Lim, & Megicks, 2013; Inversini & Masiero, 2014; Buckley & Mossaz, 2016).

This trend has led to a reduction in the use for intermediaries especially for the high-volume low price category of tourism and travel distribution. (Haynes & Egan, 2015; Ling, Dong, Guo, & Liang, 2015; Buckley & Mossaz, 2016). However in the case of low-volume high-end specialized sectors the travel intermediaries have become brokers of information, using their skills and expertise to find better experiences at better prices or to plan, purchase and package customized personal itineraries for their respective clients (Lawton & Weaver, 2009). Travel intermediary decisions can exert substantial influence in these higher price low-volume specialized sectors and can lead to success or failure of the individual travel tourist business or an entire tourism destination.

The factors and the process these travel intermediaries (agents) consider to reach their final decision will be of interest from both the practical and theoretical areas. (Lam & Hsu, 2006). There have been several studies on decision process on individual tourists and high volume low price travelling intermediaries and agents, however the area of decision process for high-end low volume specialist travel service providers and intermediaries has the potential to be studied. The decision process of these specialist high-end travel agencies could be difficult to access due to their business being heavily based on confidentiality and tacit expertise applied (Buckley & Mossaz, 2016). The private aviation sector falls into the category (Starry & Bernstein, 2008) and seen as a luxury item due to the nature of its business. In the Malaysian context little to no prior study exists on the private aviation industry. Our study aims to analyze in-depth the area of decision making process of high end travelling intermediaries in this specialist sector, namely the private jet charter service provider in Malaysia.

Elite Jets

In Malaysia there are a few handful of private service jet providers which are Berjaya Air, Safura Holdings, Elite Jets and so on. Our research objectives were to interview the head of a few major jet service providers. However due to the nature of the business as a luxury product and also due to the time constraints and capital on our part, only Elite Jets responded to agree on providing us with information through an interview.

Elite Jets is one of the pioneering private jet service providers of Malaysia and has been in operation for more than a decade. Their service ranges from chartered private flights, chartered helicopters to ground handling. Elite jets fulfills and serve the trend of passengers travel for the luxury and business segments, ensuring unprecedented level of freedom and working towards providing a charter experience that is incomparable, all while flying elite group of clients through the stratosphere (Elite Jets Sdn Bhd, 2018). One of their biggest achievement came in 2015 when Elite Jets was trusted upon to handle the Air Force One Aircraft carrying the former President of United States, Barack Obama, during their visit to Malaysia. Elite jets emerged successful and etched a milestone in their journey when they were charged with ground handling services involving more than 40 flights. Other accolade includes their contribution to ensure smooth operation during the search and rescue for MH370 in 2014 and their contribution to the One Round World Tour when a young Malaysian captain attempted a solo flight record around the world 2013 (Elite Jets Sdn Bhd, 2018).

Based on the caliber of Elite Jets past accomplishments they can be considered a formidable player in the chartered private aviation industry of Malaysia. Hence our study will be based on their expertise in this industry.

Methodology

The private aviation industry in Malaysia is still considered as a small and growing industry where the sectors involved are low in volume despite providing high-price products. Thus, qualitative approach and case-study strategy is utilized due to the scarce of studies focusing on specialist travel agents or luxury tourism sectors (Buckley & Mossaz, 2016), specifically in the industry of private aviation in Malaysia. As the nature of this study is exploratory, this study hence aims to explore in-depth the factors take into account when making decision by a company who acts as a pioneer broker in providing private aviation or jets services. In gathering the data, semi-structured interviews were purposively conducted to the Operational Manager and Marketing Manager with ten years of experience with the company and three technical workers of Elite Jets Sdn. Bhd who have more than five years of experience in order to obtain the desired information (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Table 1: Respondent Profile

Respondents	Position	Experience
A	Operational Manager	More than 10 years
B	Marketing Manager	More than 10 years
C	Technical Staff	5 years
D	Technical Staff	5 years
E	Technical Staff	5 years

Interviews were conducted for around forty minutes in a relaxing atmosphere, with no bias and any conflict of interest emerged in delivering the questions. Photos and vital documents of the company were documented and the interviews were recorded to strengthen the results (Muafi & Wijayani, 2015). Next, the analysis of the data was based on Buathong & Lai (2017) which follows content analysis. This analysis helps in contextualizing the relationship between categories and themes. Maxwell (1996) stated that content analysis is a proper research technique as it makes the inferences replicable and valid based on the text and context, it also widens the understanding of a researcher regarding a phenomena. Based on the literature, the design of the interviews were constructed emphasizes on the decision making of the company's business strategy, the company's strategy on their customers and the company's service implementation. Some of the questions asked were "*how did the company plan its research strategy?*", "*what are the priorities in the company's business strategy?*", "*what are the concerns in providing the best services for the customers?*", "*what are the factors taken into account in making decision for company's business strategy?*". The result were then arranged according to the factors and categorized. Double checking was done on the original transcript to improve the credibility of the results obtained. Authors then achieved a consent together and finally, four themes of decision making factors concerned by private aviation travel agency in Malaysia are formed (Aro, Suomi & Saraniemi, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Interviewees directly and repeatedly highlighted the company's concerns in making decision in which emphasized mainly on two category of factors; customer and company sequentially. The very first factor which is customer includes cost, demands, needs, expectation,

experience, well-being and security where the interviewees mentioned that they serve customers *“based on the budget, because the longer the haul of the journey or the better the type of the aircraft, the higher the cost.”* They also mentioned that *“when a customer pays a lot, they demand for their needs, expectation and experience to be strictly fulfilled exactly to what they have asked to”*. These people are very holding on to “classy image” that they want everything that reflects them to convey the “classy view” mainly because they can afford to pay. As an ‘elite’ service provider, Elite Jets will surely have to encounter with it no matter how “ridiculous” it is as they also highlighted that *“we simply want customers to always be loyal and position us as the main aviation channel”*. Plus, they admitted that *“Elite Jets does not rely on mass marketing, because it is believed that the experience of the customer itself will lead to more loyalty, recommendation and wider market scope”*. The emotion of the interviewees was firm during commenting and explaining about their customers and how they purveyed the high-end clients’ need, plus they directly stated that *“customers are everything, but the first and foremost, is their safety during the service consumption”*.

Next, the company factor. The interviewees asserted that *“it is important for us to retain a good reputation, both in the eyes of consumer and suppliers”*. This is because these elite people are mostly those who take care of their good names, and that includes every service that they consumed. Plus, they also commented *“maintaining relationship with the suppliers is important because customers’ demand are always unexpected. This is where good relationship with suppliers plays its role by easing our process of dealing and negotiating with them to provide just as exactly as what the customers requested for at any time, any places and any how”*. They added that *“it is not impossible for someone in Dubai suddenly wishes to go to Las Vegas and chooses us to arrange his private flight”* and *“we can do that because we have good connection and contact with suppliers all around the world.”* They also gave a notion that *“company’s prosperity and well-being are key to achieving sustainability”*. The interviewees also mentioned that *“we would try our best in maximizing our capabilities and profit”* from giving the customers exactly what they want. Besides providing private aviation service, the company also provides ground-handling, body evacuation (Bodyvac) and medical evacuation (Medivac) services as a way in expanding their capabilities and making more profit. Table 2 summarized the categories and factors sorted out according to the results of the interview.

Table 2

Category	Factors
Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cost • demand • expectation • experience • loyalty • safety
Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputation • Capabilities • Profit • Sustainability

Based on the factors sorted out of the interview conducted, which is in parallel with Buckley & Mossaz (2016), there are four main themes extracted in regards to the concerns of the company's in decision making based on open coding. The themes are money, relationship, value and safety.

The first theme is *money*. This group of high-end or 'elite' people don't mind to spend because they afford it. Rich people have money but not time. Every single seconds or minute is like a gold to them. Besides, to attend meeting, meet client or investor from all around the world they need to be there on time. If they used the commercial airlines, there will be some delays and sometimes flights cancellation due to certain circumstances. Hence, by having this private jets service, they can reduce the time consuming and also, obtain a sense of privacy only by having to pay some certain amount. Sometimes, they can make a discussion in the jet because it keeps the privacy and it is more exclusive. By having this exclusive service can also improve their performance. On the other hand, by using private jet it shows their class. Usually this kind of people fall in a group 'bluxury', which is a combination of business and luxury. They are cash-rich but poor in time, thus with money they buy the time and the experience to travel by using private jet. This is because private jet have flexible flight schedules than the commercial flights. In the industry of private jet, you can request the type of flight and the service that you want, with one condition-- Money. For example, a journey to Las Vegas from KLIA by using commercial flight needs to undergo change of flight but using private jets they can save time and arrive at the destination on time. As an example, it is mentioned by the interviewee that some of the customers said " ... *give me a comfortable flight from New York to Helsinki and I don't care how much it costs, just give me the quotations*". Sometimes the clients book less than 3 hours than they supposed to. Usually they need to make a reservation a day before or in 48 hours before their flights. But some certain clients need an ad-hoc flight due to emergency cases. In pertaining to this situation, it is asserted that as long as they have money, Elite Jets will surely fulfil and give what they want or what they prefer. For the side of the company, money or profit is the top priority in assessing the company's survival. By giving the customers as exactly as they want, the company will secure the advantage of customers' loyalty, wider market scope and eventually contributed to more profit and company's sustainability.

The *relationship* theme is the crucial thing in Elite Jets service. Customer is like a King to them. They act like a genie in a bottle that can fulfil all the clients' needs and wants. They put clients on the first stage and make them loyal with their company. They do all the requests by the clients just to make a good relationship and then become loyal to them. As told by the interviewee, there were customers who requested like "... *please make sure that only Evian water are being served and I want rocket salad from SukaSucre Bistro and dessert curry puff from Saujana Impian only*". Thus, the company needs to inform and remind the caterer to serve those things. Just because the curry puff is different from the requested one, one of the staffs was almost being fired by the company. In this industry, to win the clients heart, it is vital to fulfil all their requests. Good service can bring not only just the loyal clients but new clients based on the word of mouth of loyal clients.

The third theme is *value* which indicates that what is served must be unique. The most important thing is a private jet allows individuals to fly without being recognized. Many clients are operating under a corporate banner and business trips involving well-known executives which can be conducted in relative secrecy. Jet owners also said they feel more secure as they have full control over the pilot and other staff on the aircraft. This of course is less obvious on a membership or fractional ownership basis but can be achieved to a degree. There is one big downside, however, as full ownership of a plane means that as it flies

around, others will know who is likely on board and where they are going. Next, the rich can often be fastidious about controlling elements of their life and travel is a common concern. One private jet customer noted that if a meeting overran, it provided no stress as the jet would be there waiting.

Lastly, the *safety* which indicates the safety in the mind of the clients. Managing risk is a common skill for the wealthy and often a high-end travelers will consider private travel to be safer than a commercial offering. It is claimed that the two dominant factors are the age of the plane and the visual condition of both its exterior and cabin. It also said that many wealthy individuals do not like to travel on older aircraft and that commercial airlines cannot guarantee a newer plane. The interviewee in the survey said that the presentation of the plane and staff was important because it suggested a high level of care was also being placed on operation and maintenance.

The results obtained and presented show a parallel consent with the theory of the hierarchy of luxury travel needs. Figure 1 shows the pyramid of the hierarchy of luxury travel.



Figure 1

Source: Centre for the Promotion of Imports

The hierarchy of luxury travel needs (Figure 1) illustrates the levels of luxury travel. The more a traveller is used to luxury, the higher up the pyramid their expectations are. The luxury travellers are generally at the level of expecting exclusive experiences. The VIP demands are limited to a small group, used to the highest level of luxury in their daily lives. The luxury travellers are generally looking for such things as: personalized service, preferably one-on-one good quality beds with good quality bed linen sophisticated design reliable transport comfortable seats when traveling, with plenty of legroom food and wine of outstanding standards exclusivity positive and professional interaction with staff, such as greeting by the doormen.

Conclusion

Wealthy individuals seek an experience to remember on vacation. With money, the experience can be anything like a trip to space, testing high-performance, limited edition cars or flying MIG fighter jets in Russia that can cost up to \$25,000 for a 45-minute ride. Experiencing something exclusive is all that matters. There is a new trend wherein companies provide vacation packages or journey that are personalized and includes complete travel by a private jet. The wealthy can go on a vacation on a state of the art aircraft that is exclusively at their disposal. The plane can come with a chef, gourmet food, personal iPads, flatbed seats or beds and an efficient crew that takes care of all customers' needs. Aside from vacations, private jets are good for traveling in general, especially when the time is money. A private plane charter may be a bit expensive, but it allows the flexibility to travel and saves on time. Flying on a private jet also maximizes efficiency and is great for people who do not want to be seen too much in public.

From the company's perspective, catering these high-end people is considered as a challenge to them. In an effort to make the company continuously grow in prosperity, Elite Jets is more than willing to put the customers as their first priority. To them, customers and their well-being are everything. Hence it requires them to always utilize decisions that portray a reputable role in 'branding the company as an 'elite' company which provides 'elite' transportation mode to those 'elite' people.

For the limitation, this study was done focusing only one private aviation agency where the results might or might not be generalizable. Future research may overcome this limitation by focusing on more providers that offer the same service, although the private aviation industry in Malaysia is still not widely recognized- unless for the rich. Quantitative study can also be done such as establishing dimensions or scale that represent the decision making concerns by private aviation or luxury travel service providers.

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SPIDER ASSEMBLAGE (ARACHNIDA: ARANEAE) AT RIPARIAN FIREFLY SANCTUARY OF SUNGAI CHUKAI, TERENGGANU, MALAYSIA

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Abstract: Sungai Chukai is a riparian sanctuary for synchronize firefly population. In riparian ecosystem, spider act as top-invertebrate predator influencing the food-web. A survey of spider were conducted in Sungai Chukai, Terengganu, Malaysia. The objective of this study is to identify the assemblage of spider in the riparian area. Samples were collected in six sampling occasions from December 2017 to May 2018 using sweep net at both day and night. Collection of samples were done at 20 sampling points along the riverbanks with an averaged interval of 200 meter between each point. A total of 149 spider individuals from 7 families (Araneidae, Clubionidae, Oxyopidae, Salticidae, Sparassidae, Tetragnathidae and Thomisidae) and 26 morphospecies were successfully collected. The most abundant family is Thomisidae (50 individuals; 33.56%) followed by Sparassidae (49 individuals; 30.87%) and Salticidae (24 individuals; 16.11%). There is no significant different ($p>0.05$) for spider population between night and day. Three spider guilds had been identified according to its foraging pattern which are the orb-weaver, running hunter and ambush hunter. This study adds to the inventory of spider in Peninsular Malaysia.

Keywords: Spider, Firefly Sanctuary, Riparian, Peninsular Malaysia

Introduction

Spider is an important group in the ecosystem as it preys on smaller insects and directly stabilizing the ecological foodweb (Sharma et al. 2010). This group of invertebrate may feed on smaller insect and becomes the food of larger vertebrate such as bird and bats. Currently, there are 48,127 described species of spider consisted of 117 family and 4150 genera all over the world (World Spider Catalog 2019). Spider fauna is extensively recorded in South East Asia though the record of spider in Peninsular Malaysia is scarce. The checklist of spider in Peninsular Malaysia had been done in 2009 by (Norma-Rasyid & Li) recording 425 species, 42 families and 238 genera. The effort of spider fauna inventory have also being done in various habitat such as mangrove (Norma-Rashid et al. 2009), forest area as well as agricultural plantation (Nasir et al. 2014).

While inventory of spider is on going in numerous habitat, there is limited record of spider fauna in riparian area of Peninsular Malaysia. Riparian area is an ecotone or interface between terrestrial and aquatic area (Gregory et al. 1991). This area is unique due to its sharp ecological gradient from land to water body. The riparian area is mainly characterized by type of vegetation, soil and hydrological factors in various width and boundaries (Ilhardt et al. 2000). This strip of habitat immediately adjacent to the stream may act the same way as wetland as it holds diversity of wildlife such as mammals, birds and arthropods. Riparian area of Sungai Chukai have a significant presence of synchronize firely population dominated by *Pteroptyx tener* (Adam Muhammad Mahmod et al. 2018). The synchronize firefly population in Sungai Chukai calls for public interest as it have huge potential in becoming an eco-tourism destination attracting both local and international visitors.

Riparian areas constantly challenge with land use change as human activity take place right next to the river edge. There are multiple land use at the river buffer as agricultural practice such as oil palm plantation, livestock farming often violated the appropriate distance from the riverbank (Yunus et al. 2004; Tasnim Lokman 2016). Restoration of riparian ecosystem is crucial as it can become refugee for wildlife. It also have huge capability as biological corridor making the area resilient against climate change (Fremier et al. 2015; Laborda et al. 2018). Thus in the effort of riparian habitat restoration it is important to have a baseline ecological data for a comprehensive assessment and area management to be done. According to Adis and Junk (2002), spider act as a top invertebrate predator in riparian habitat where it may influence local food-web. Thus, the aim of this study is to identify the spider assemblage in riparian habitat of Sungai Chukai, Kemaman, Terengganu. The result of this study will provide background knowledge for management of the riparian area as well as to contribute in the inventory of spider in Malaysia.

Materials and method

Samplings were conducted in 20 sampling point along riverbank of Sungai Chukai, Kemaman, Terengganu (Lat 4.3076 – 4.3002° N Lon 103.3725 – 103.395° E) (Figure 1). Sungai Chukai located at east coast of Malaysia. This riparian area is noted as habitat for congregating firefly, *Pteroptyx tener*. The firefly display tree, *Sonneratia caseolaris* can be found on the riverbank. Twenty riparian trees along the river with an averaged distance of 200 m were selected as sampling points. The sampling points were assembled at both sides of the riverbanks from downstream towards upstream (Figure 2). Samples of spider were collected in six occasions starting from December 2017 to May 2018 at day and night using sweep net for one minute. Spider samples were placed in bottles containing ethyl acetate which then brought to laboratory for identification. Samples were identified using the morphospecies approach to the lowest taxa level wherever possible using the identification

keys with the aid of illustrations notably by Dippenaar-Schoeman and Jocque (1997), Koh (1989), and Murphy and Murphy (2000). The riparian host tree of spider were collected were identified. Classification of spider into guild is done by referring to Uetz et al. (1999) and Rodrigues and Mendonça (2012).

Data Analysis

Diversity of spider on different riparian vegetation was analyzed using Past software. Mann-Whitney test was used to test for any significant difference between spider population at day and night. Data was analyzed with Minitab 17 software. Species accumulation curve was generated after 100 randomization of sample order with Chao 1 and Jackknife estimator using EstimateS 9.1 software (Colwell 2009). Cluster analysis was conducted to find structure of spider community in the riparian area with software PCORD 5.0 using Euclidean and Ward's distance matrices.

Results and Discussion

A total of 149 spider individuals representing 26 species under seven families (Araneidae, Clubionidae, Oxyopidae, Salticidae, Sparassidae, Tetragnathidae and Thomisidae) were successfully collected as listed in (Table 1). The most abundant family is Thomisidae (50 individuals; 33.56%) followed by Sparassidae (49 individuals; 32.89%) and Salticidae (24 individuals; 16.11%) (Figure 3). The species accumulation curve generated using Chao1 and Jackknife estimator shows an ascending trend indicating that more species are yet to be discovered (Figure 4). Mann-whitney test shows no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between spider population at day and night time suggesting that resource partitioning occurred only by spatial factor rather than temporal.

The spiders collected in this study are commonly found in Malaysia. Since inventory of spider in Peninsular Malaysia is scanty, record may only be compared with Nasir et al. (2014), Norma-Rasyid & Li (2009) and Norma-Rasyid et al. (2009). Orb-weaver spider such as (Tetragnathidae, *Tegranatha* sp.), (Araneidae, *Neoscona* sp.) had been recorded in the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia by Nasir et al. (2014). The long-jawed spider, *Tegranatha* was found in mangrove areas of Morib and Tioman (Norma-Rasyid et al. 2009) while sac spider (Clubionidae, *Clubiona*) was previously found in Tioman only (Norma-Rasyid et al. 2009). This genera were confirmed to be non-endemic to Peninsular Malaysia as it were also recorded in Sarawak (Koh et al. 2013) and Sabah, Malaysia (Dzulhelmi et al. 2014). The Lynx spider, (Oxyopidae, *Oxyopes*) was also recorded in Sarawak but not in Sabah, while in Peninsular Malaysia it had been found in Penang, Tioman and Morib (Norma-Rasyid & Li 2009; Norma-Rayid et al. 2009). Both genera of Salticidae collected in this study namely *Icius* and *Myrmarachne* had been recorded in Peninsular Malaysia (Norma-Rasyid & Li 2009). However, *Icius* never been recorded from Sabah and Sarawak. The huntsman spider (Sparassidae, *Heteropoda* sp.) and crab spider (Thomisidae, *Mastira* sp.) were widespread in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak (Norma-Rasyid & Li 2009; Koh et al. 2013; Nasir et al. 2014). On the other hand, another genus, (Thomisidae), *Ebrechtella* is newly recorded in Peninsular Malaysia though it have been recorded in Sabah and neighbouring country, Thailand (Deeleman-Reinhold & Floren 2008).

Four species of riparian vegetations were recorded as the host plant for spiders namely *Barringtonia racemosa*, *Hibiscus tilaceus*, *Nypa fruticans* and *Sonneratia caseolaris*. Shannon Diversity Index shows that the diversity of spider found on *Hibiscus tilaceus* appeared as the highest ($H' = 1.782$) while the lowest is on *Nypa fruticans* ($H' = 0.6315$). The diversity index of spider found on *Barringtonia racemosa* and *Sonneratia caseolaris* are

$H' = 1.723$ and $H' = 1.563$, respectively. The variation of spider's diversity on different riparian vegetations are highly postulated due to vegetation architecture. *Hibiscus tilaceus* was observed to have the most dense foliage compared to the others. This is supported by a study done by Hatley and Macmahon (1980) which discovered that spider diversity increase with shrub foliage volume and density. A huge foliage density will hold more smaller invertebrate as prey options as well as substrate for web attachment. This prove that vegetation composition and structure play an immense role in controlling diversity of spider in the area.

Through cluster analysis, the spider population at Sungai Chukai can be divided into three guilds in reference to its foraging strategy (Figure 5). Group I is the orb-weaver that consisted of two spider families, Araneidae and Tetragnathidae. The is using sticky web to capture flying insect at all life stage while being stationary (sit-and-wait) (Sensenig et al. 2011). Orb weaver spider produce silk as soon as they hatch from egg sac and as it grows, the amount and quality of silk is improved to support larger body size. This will also help the adult spider to capture larger prey (Sensenig et al. 2010). The web produce by Aranaidae and Tetragnathidae is bidimensional as opposed to the space web sheet spider that build tridimensional web (Ávila et al. 2017). According to Nasir et al. (2017), orb-weaver spider depends highly on the presence of structure for web support. Riparian habitat in Sungai Chukai apparently have the capability to provide structure for attachment of web by *Tegragnatha* sp. and *Neoscona* sp. A complex habitat particularly with various vegetation will provide more options for the orb-weaver to attach its web, thus supporting a diverse spider population.

Group II from the cluster analysis is represented by the hunting spider that is dominated by the ambush hunter. The ambush hunter is sit-and-wait spider just like orb-weaver spider but the members of Oxyopidae and Salticidae do not build a web (Ávila et al. 2017). They remains motionless until movement of prey triggered spider predatory movement. The lynx spider (Oxyopidae; *Oxyopes* sp.) may prey on calliphorid fly (*Chrysomya rufifacies*) in oil palm plantation (Chin et al. 2008), tea mosquito bug (*Helopeltis theivora*) in tea plantation (Basnet & Mukhopadhyay 2014) and white back planthopper (*Sogatella furcifera*) in rice plantation (Butt & Xaaceph 2015). The affinity of this spider towards pest of economic importance shows that it have the potential of becoming beneficial biocontrol organism. The ant-like Salticid spider (Salticidae, *Myrmarachne* sp.) also prey on various of arthropod prey though it is adept in cathing moth (Jackson & Willey 1994).

Spider from the family Thomisidae and Sparassidae were separated into Group III. Both spider are hunting spider though perhaps this spider families are influenced by the same abiotic factor making it clustered into one group. It is suggested to study on how the abiotic factors in the riparian area affecting these spider population. Nevertheless, Thomisidae and Sparassidae have different mode of hunting where the Thomisidae family is the ambush hunter while Sparassidae is both running hunter and ambusher (Rodrigues & Mendonça 2012). Thomisidae frequently visits flowering plant and may succesfully attack butterfly, dragonfly as well as stinging insect such as bees and wasp (Lovell 1915). The huntsman spider, Sparassidae had been reported to be able to hunt on water surface (Airamé & Sierwald 2000) making riparian area as a suitable habiat for this spider family to live in.

Malaysia is indeed a tropical country that holds many fascinating flora and fauna. It is highly feasible that there are more spiders awaiting to be discovered. It is also important to note that the spider in this study coexisted along with congregating firefly population in the same riparian habitat. This left us with a question of whether there is interaction between this two population. The result from this study contribute to biodiversity knowledge of Sungai Chukai which will help in conservation effort of this area which have high potential as

ecotourism attraction. Inventory of Malaysian spider should be thoroughly done to expand the knowledge regarding spider population in this country. Therefore, a continuous research will contribute to new knowledge which can eventually be used in conserving both spider and firefly population as well as Sungai Chukai riparian ecosystem as a whole in the hope that it can be developed as an ecotourism center and maintained as ecological corridor.

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Table 1: Checklist Of Spider In Sungai Chukai, Terengganu, Malaysia.

Family	Morphospecies	No. of Individuals	Total
Araneidae	<i>Neoscona</i> sp.	2	2
Clubionidae	<i>Araneus</i> sp.	4	12
	<i>Clubiona</i> sp. 1	2	
	<i>Clubiona</i> sp. 2	1	
	Clubionidae sp. 1	5	
Oxyopidae	<i>Oxyopes</i> sp. 1	1	5
	<i>Oxyopes</i> sp. 2	4	
Salticidae	<i>Icius</i> sp. 1	4	24
	<i>Icius</i> sp. 2	4	
	<i>Myrmarachne</i> sp.	1	
	Salticidae sp. 1	4	
	<i>Spartaeus</i> sp. 1	9	
	<i>Spartaeus</i> sp. 2	2	
Sparassidae	<i>Heteropoda</i> sp. 1	45	49
	<i>Heteropoda</i> sp. 2	1	
	<i>Heteropoda</i> sp. 3	3	
Tetragnathidae	<i>Tetragnatha</i> sp.	3	7
	Tetragnathidae sp. 1	4	
Thomisidae	<i>Ebrechtella</i> sp.	5	50
	<i>Mastira</i> sp. 1	9	
	<i>Mastira</i> sp. 2	1	
	<i>Mechapesa</i> sp.	4	
	Thomisidae sp. 1	2	
	Thomisidae sp. 2	1	
	Thomisidae sp. 3	3	
	Thomisidae sp. 4	25	



Figure 1: Location Of Study Site In Peninsular Malaysia

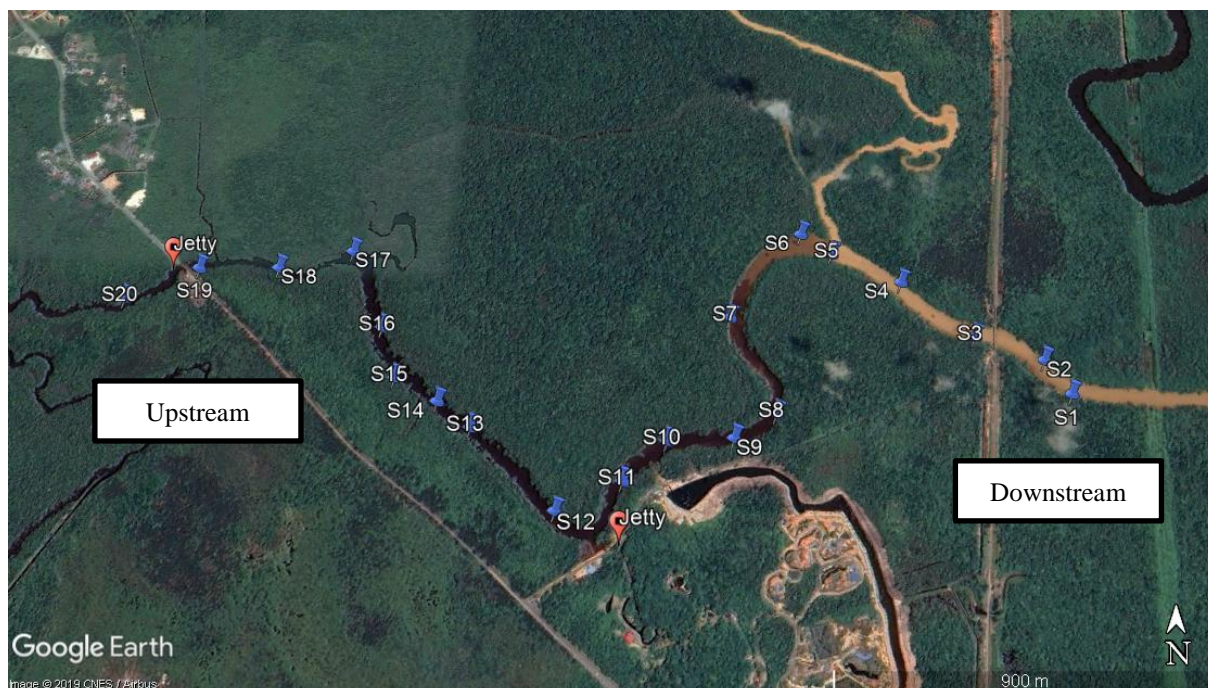


Figure 2: Sampling Points In Sungai Chukai, Terengganu, Malaysia

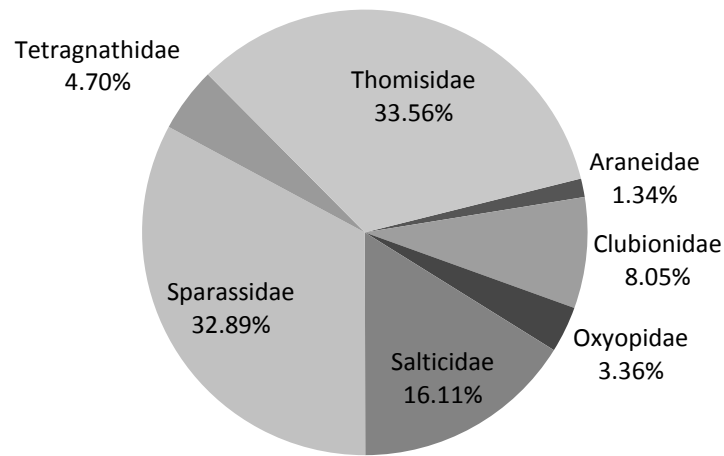


Figure 3: Assemblages Of Spider In Sungai Chukai, Terengganu, Malaysia

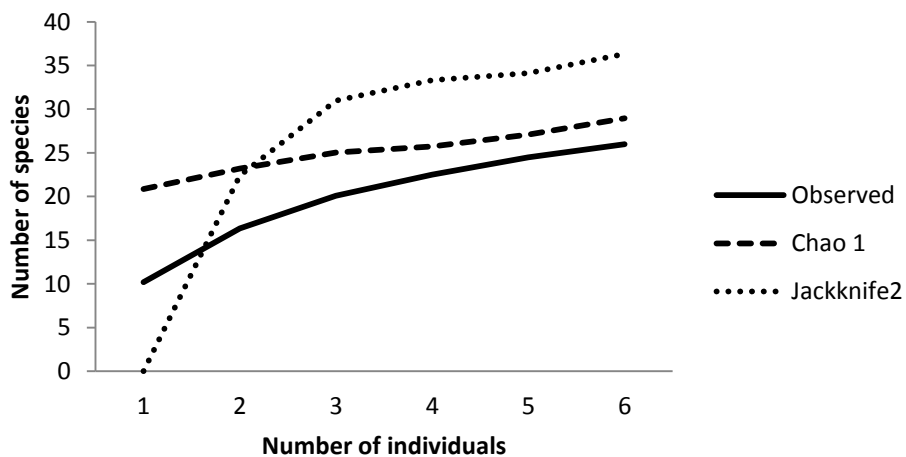


Figure 4: Species Accumulation Curve Using Chao And Jackknife Estimator For Spider Species Found In Sungai Chukai, Terengganu, Malaysia.

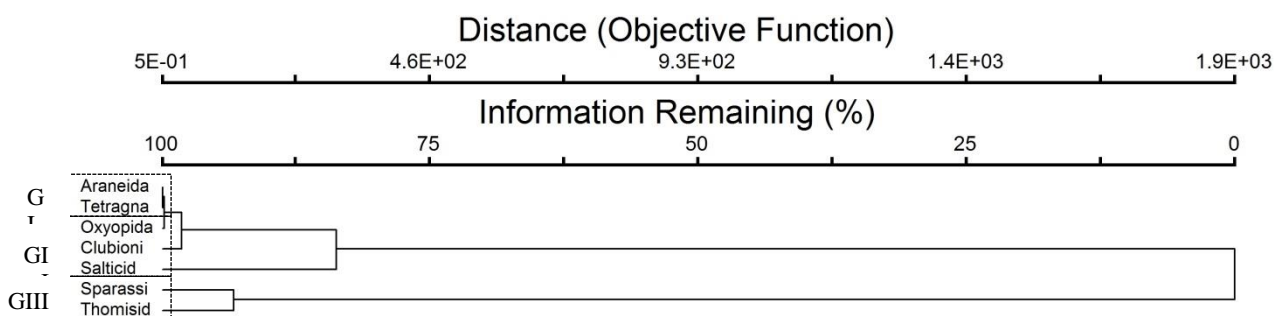


Figure 5: Dendrogram For One-Way Cluster Analysis Of Spider In Sungai Chukai, Terengganu, Malaysia.

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PELANCONGAN DAN PEMBANGUNAN SETEMPAT DI MALAYSIA: SATU KAJIAN ANALISIS ALIRAN KEMASUKKAN PELANCONG TIMUR TENGAH KE NEGERI PAHANG SEBAGAI EKO-PELANCONGAN

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Abstract: *Pelancongan menjadi salah satu industri terpenting kerana bukan saja berupaya mengembangkan dimensi fizikal dan ekonomi negara tetapi juga sektor sosial, budaya, politik dan teknologi. Negeri Pahang merupakan salah sebuah negeri yang mempunyai tarikan destinasi pelancongan yang menawarkan pelbagai keistimewaan seperti flora dan fauna, masyarakat, tanah, pemandangan dan sebagainya. Kajian ini meneliti aliran kemasukan pelancong dari negara Timur Tengah ke Negeri Pahang yang dilihat kurang mendapat sambutan. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui kaedah tinjauan dan temuduga. Pengkaji beranggapan bahawa menambahbaik fasiliti yang bersifat mesra arab (friendly -Arab) akan meningkatkan aliran kedatangan pelancong dari negara Arab. Pengkaji berpendapat kurang maklumat dan promosi yang mesra-arab terhadap eko-pelancongan di negeri Pahang terutama ditempat utama seperti di airport, brochure berbahasa arab dan pemandu pelancong yang boleh berbahasa arab. Cadangan pengkaji agar diperbanyakkan promosi dalam Bahasa Arab di media sosial, papan-papan tanda, laman-laman web yang mempromosikan Negeri Pahang untuk merealisasikan hasrat bagi meningkat eko-pelancongan di Pahang sebagai salah sebuah aset pelancongan negara*

Keywords: *Arab, Statistik, Pahang, Eko-pelancongan, produk pelancongan*

Pengenalan

Pelancongan adalah salah satu industri terpenting di dunia yang berupaya mengembangkan aspek fizikal, sosial, budaya, ekonomi, politik dan teknologi serta mampu memberi pulangan ekonomi kepada negara sejak awal 1980an lagi (Hausman, 2001). Pelancongan bukanlah sesuatu yang baru. Sejak dulu lagi sektor pelancongan telah menjadi nadi penggerak ekonomi beberapa buah negara. Dalam era globalisasi kini, banyak negara dunia berlumba lumba memajukan industri pelancongan untuk tukaran wang asing yang lumayan. Malahan banyak juga negara yang menggalakkan pelancongan dalam negara untuk menjana pertumbuhan ekonomi di sekitar destinasi pelancongan. Dalam rangka membangunkan industri tersebut banyak kawasan yang mempunyai keunikan semulajadi dibuka dan dimajukan untuk tujuan pelancongan, sama ada melalui evolusi ataupun dibuka dengan sengaja oleh pihak-pihak tertentu. Menurut Ibrahim et al. (2016), negara ini amat bertuah mempunyai alam semulajadi yang indah, unik dan pelbagai seperti hutan hujan tropika, iklim dan cuaca yang tidak melampau, banjaran gunung, pulau dan pantai serta pelbagai spesies flora dan fauna. Menurut

Menteri Pelancongan dan Kebudayaan Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz jumlah kehadiran pelancong Arab Saudi ke Malaysia akan bertambah hasil lawatan sulung Raja Arab Saudi, Raja Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud ke Malaysia. Raja Salman mengadakan kunjungan sulung selama empat hari ke Malaysia selepas ditabal sebagai Raja Arab Saudi pada 23 Jan 2015. Pada 16 Mei 2016, Malaysia dan Arab Saudi menandatangani memorandum persefahaman (MoU) mengenai kerjasama dalam sektor pelancongan.

Menerusi MoU itu, kedua-dua pihak bersetuju mengambil langkah perlu bagi menggalakkan promosi dan kerjasama dalam sektor berkenaan melalui permuafakatan dalam bidang penyelidikan dan pembangunan serta latihan bersama dalam program berkaitan pelancongan. Sasaran kerajaan ini dijangka menjadi realiti sekiranya pembangunan yang bersepadu dilakukan. Ini bermakna pembuat dasar berkaitan pelancongan dan mereka yang terlibat dalam industri ini saling bekerjasama dalam membangun dan mempromosikan pelancongan Malaysia. Othman et al. (2013) berpendapat, untuk tujuan tersebut, informasi berkaitan dengan faktor yang merangsang ketibaan pelancong dirasakan adalah antara faktor penting diketahui. Ini dapat dijadikan garis panduan kepada pembuat dasar dan mereka yang berkepentingan dalam industri pelancongan negara. Menyedari hakikat ini, kajian ini dilakukan dengan memfokuskan kepada aliran kemasukan pelancong pasaran Timur Tengah di negeri Pahang. Pelancong Timur Tengah menjadi pilihan untuk dikaji memandangkan potensi cemerlang sama ada dari segi pertumbuhan ketibaan mahupun daripada aspek perbelanjaan yang tinggi yang dilakukan oleh mereka semasa berada di Malaysia. Kebanjiran aliran pelancongan ini di lihat bertambah namun hanya tertumpu kepada beberapa buah negeri, namun agak sedikit kehadiran mereka di bumi Tok Gajah ini.

Tujuan Kajian

Jumlah kehadiran pelancong Arab Saudi ke Malaysia dijangka meningkat 5 peratus tahun ini hasil lawatan Raja Arab Saudi, Raja Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud ke Malaysia pada awal tahun 2017. Menurut Konsul Tourism Malaysia di Arab Saudi, Mohd Nasir Kushairi, hubungan baik yang diperlihatkan kedua-dua negara telah menambah keyakinan rakyat negara Timur Tengah untuk melancong ke Malaysia yang sememangnya mempunyai pelbagai tarikan pelancongan. Menurut (Samori & Sabtu 2014), kebanyakan pengunjung Arab Saudi akan berada di Malaysia selama dua minggu ke atas dan berbelanja sekitar RM10,000 setiap seorang dan ini memberi manfaat kepada sektor pelancongan dan ekonomi negara. Berdasarkan statistic yang di keluarkan oleh Kementerian Pelancongan dan Kebudayaan, pada 2016, seramai 123,878 pelancong Arab Saudi berkunjung ke Malaysia berbanding 99,754 pada tahun sebelumnya. Bagi Kajian ini, tujuan pelaksanaan penyelidikan ini adalah bagi mengetahui masalah kekurangan aliran pelancong timur tengah ini di Negeri Pahang. Selain itu, untuk membuktikan bahawa terdapat kekurangan dari sudut promosi, fasiliti yang tidak *mesra-arab* dan tarikan bagi mengundang pelancong dari Timur Tengah ini di bumi Toh Gajah ini.

Objektif Kajian

Secara umumnya, kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengenal pasti potensi aliran pelancong dari Timur Tengah di Negeri Pahang. Secara khususnya pula, kajian ini adalah untuk:

- 1) Menenal pasti profil demografi dan latar belakang pelancong-pelancong Timur Tengah di Malaysia.
- 2) Menenal pasti karekter pelancong Arab menerusi pilihan destinasi, penginapan, pengangkutan, tempoh melancong, dan aktiviti.
- 3) Menenal pasti faktor tarikan yang mempengaruhi pelancong Arab untuk keluar melancong.
- 4) Mencadangkan strategi untuk memperkembangkan sektor pelancongan Negeri Pahang.

Penyataan Masalah

Kajian ini dilakukan bagi mengkaji sejauh mana tindakan dan promosi Majlis Tindakan Pelancongan Negeri Pahang, dan Pejabat Kementerian Pelancongan Malaysia Negeri Pahang memberi impak dalam meningkatkan aliran Pelancong Arab dari Timur Tengah. Selain itu, sebagaimana peranan Pelancongan Arab ini mampu meningkatkan ekonomi setempat sekaligus mencerminkan bahawa Negeri Pahang adalah sebuah negeri yang dapat memberikan kepuasan yang tidak ternilai kepada warga arab ini sepanjang melancong di Negeri Pahang.

Latar Belakang Kajian

Pada 15 Mei 2013, MoTour telah dinamakan semula sebagai Kementerian Pelancongan dan Kebudayaan Malaysia (MOTAC). Ini adalah bagi mengiktiraf peranan serta hubungan rapat sektor pelancongan dan sektor kebudayaan dalam usaha mempromosikan Malaysia sebagai destinasi pelancongan pilihan dunia, yang selari dengan slogan "Malaysia, Truly Asia". Pelancongan merupakan sektor yang semakin berkembang pesat di Malaysia kerana menyumbang kepada pendapatan dan pertumbuhan ekonomi negara. Justeru itu, kerajaan telah membangunkan pelbagai produk pelancongan baru di seluruh negara dari semasa ke semasa bagi menarik minat pelancong untuk melakukan kunjungan. Antara aset yang sudah sekian lama menjadi sumber pencarian pengalaman dalam kalangan pelancong adalah aset semulajadi (Ibrahim et al. 2016). Aset semula jadi ini juga mendapat perhatian kerajaan dan penyelidik apabila kesedaran masyarakat global terhadap kepentingan penjagaan alam sekitar dan warisan budaya mula meningkat. Isu aset semula jadi terus ditangani bagi memastikan pembangunan yang dilaksanakan adalah seimbang dan berkekalan. Kerana itu, usaha mengintegrasikan keseimbangan alam sekitar ke dalam perancangan pembangunan telah dipertingkatkan, dan usaha memperkukuhkan mekanisme institusi, perundangan dan peraturan telah dilakukan. Bagi memastikan pembangunan pelancongan dilakukan secara lestari, satu bentuk pengurusan aset semula jadi perlu dilaksanakan secara terancang dan menyeluruh.

Di negara-negara maju, penumpuan kepada *reconstructing nature* dan mengangkat alam semulajadi sebagai ikon landskap telah lama dilakukan, misalnya landskap diabadikan dalam bentuk poskad dan fesyen. Ini memperlihatkan aset semulajadi menjadi prasyarat kepada kecemerlangan pelancongan. Selain itu, para sarjana pelancongan melihat pembangunan aset semulajadi dilakukan bukan atas tuntutan ekopelancongan semata-mata, tetapi juga pembangunan aset semulajadi dalam dimensi yang menjangkau tafsiran dan konstruk pelancong masa kini. Berdasarkan kajian tentang nature dan tourism, beberapa aspek ditekankan merangkumi landskap geografi seperti taman negara, kawasan yang dilindungi, air

terjun, tasik, empangan, pantai, gua dan formasi, panorama menarik; dan kawasan yang mempunyai keindahan semula jadi (Ahmad et al. 2016).

Dalam masa yang sama, kriteria essential dan desirable mendokong kepada sumber tarikan ini. Sungguh pun literatur tentang aset semulajadi dan pelancongan diteliti dalam pelbagai dimensi, isu dan pendekatan, namun tidak dinafikan aset semulajadi terus menjadi bahagian penting dalam pelancongan oleh penggiat dan pengkaji sektor ini. Negeri Pahang merupakan negeri yang kaya dengan aset semula jadi dan kepelbagaian budaya yang diwarisi oleh masyarakat setempat. Persekitaran aset semula jadi merupakan sumber asas bagi pembangunan produk pelancongan. Tanpanya, pincanglah sektor pelancongan di negeri ini. Sebagai Bandar Diraja Pahang, Pekan merupakan sebuah mercu tanda yang kaya dengan nilai-nilai sejarah, seni bina bangunan yang menarik serta keunikan budaya masyarakat tempatan, dan aset semula jadi yang boleh ditawarkan kepada pelancong.

Selain itu, kewujudan Tasik Chini dan Sungai Pahang menjadi aset semula jadi yang tidak ternilai bagi Negeri Pahang kerana wujudnya sumber semula jadi yang menarik seperti air terjun, gunung ganang, gua, sungai, hutan tropika serta perkampungan Orang Asli yang masih mengekalkan budaya dan adat resam kehidupan. Ciri-ciri aset semula jadi terdiri daripada tarikan yang paling asas seperti pemandangan indah dek sinaran matahari, panorama laut dan pantai sehinggalah kepada tempat-tempat yang belum pernah diterokai oleh manusia, membolehkan dimensi produk dan pengalaman pelancongan berkaitan alam sekitar dipelbagaikan. Walaupun sasaran 15 juta pelancong mengunjungi negeri ini sempena Tahun Melawat Pahang (TMP) 2017 gagal di capai namun lebih 14 juta dicatatkan telah mengunjungi Negeri Pahang menerusi promosi berstrategik serta agresif yang telah dilakukan. Pelbagai usaha diperkenalkan bagi memastikan para pelancong menghabiskan masa yang lebih panjang di negeri Pahang. Memandangkan potensi pelancongan berteraskan aset semula jadi amat besar, Pahang seharusnya tidak melepaskan peluang menjadi sebuah destinasi pelancongan berteraskan keindahan dan keunikan aset semula jadinya. Ahmad et al. (2016) berpendapat, kepelbagaian produk pelancongan yang ditawarkan mampu memenuhi kehendak pelbagai segmen pelancong seperti warisan budaya, tarikan pulau, tasik, sungai, gunung, hutan yang menyimpan pelbagai khazanah bernilai.

Negeri Pahang berpotensi untuk dibangunkan sebagai sebuah destinasi pelancongan melalui penerapan konsep pembangunan pelancongan berasaskan aset semula jadi. Usaha untuk memperkasakan aset semula jadi negeri Pahang perlu dipertingkatkan bagi menjadikan aset ini sebagai produk pelancongan yang mampu menyumbang kepada ekonomi negeri Pahang. Melalui Wilayah Koridor Ekonomi Wilayah Pantai Timur (ECER), satu konsep baru pelancongan dapat dibangunkan di Pahang dengan menghubungkan aset semula jadi dan warisan budaya sebagai tarikan bagi menggalakkan pelancong menerokai keindahan negeri Pahang. Khazanah aset semula jadi yang ada di Pahang perlu diterokai untuk memberi 'nilai tambah' dalam mewujudkan daya saing kepada industri pelancongan sama ada di peringkat atau di peringkat negara. Justeru itu, artikel ini bertujuan membincangkan pemeraksanaan aset semula jadi di negeri Pahang sebagai sebuah destinasi pelancongan. Menurut Jusoh et al. (2016).

Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, Negeri Pahang merupakan negeri yang terbesar di Semenanjung Malaysia, iaitu kira-kira 35,965 km persegi dengan jumlah penduduknya 1.6 juta orang pada tahun 2015 dan 5.1 % berbanding jumlah keseluruhan rakyat Malaysia yang berjumlah 31.7 juta orang. Berbanding negeri lain, negeri ini mempunyai banyak keistimewaan. Sebagai sebuah destinasi pelancongan, negeri Pahang dianugerahkan dengan keindahan alam semula jadi yang begitu menakjubkan. Antaranya memiliki sungai terpanjang di Semenanjung Malaysia, iaitu Sungai Pahang, gunung kedua tertinggi di Malaysia, iaitu

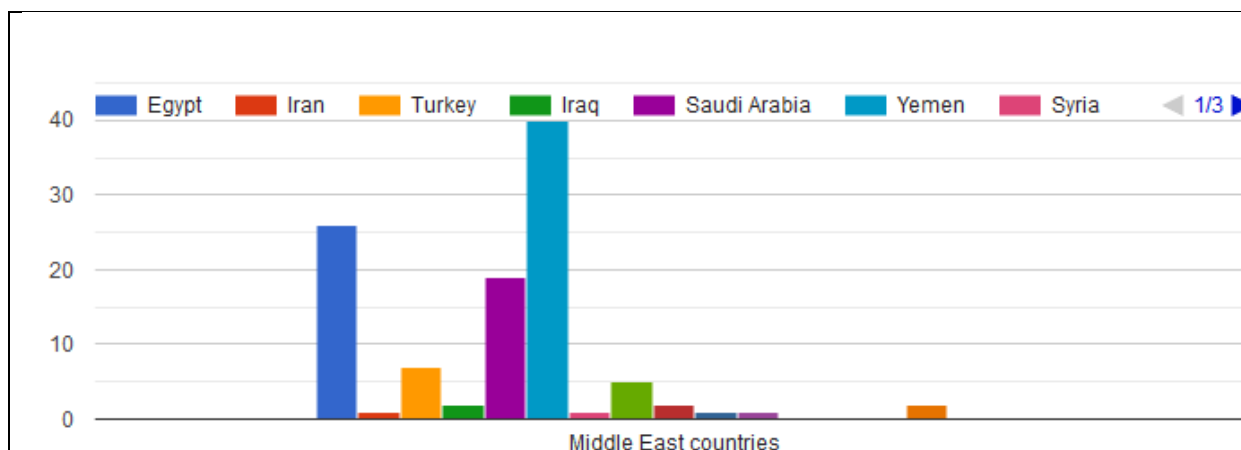
Gunung Tahan (2,190 meter) dan tasik semula jadi terbesar di Malaysia, iaitu Tasik Bera. Para pelancong juga boleh menikmati kenyamanan udara tanah tinggi di Cameron Highlands, Genting Highlands dan Bukit Fraser (Ahmad et al. 2016). Sebahagian besar daripada taman negara terletak dalam negeri ini. Di samping itu, negeri Pahang turut memiliki taman-taman hutan yang terpelihara keasliannya seperti Rimba Kenong dan Endau-Rompin, selain Taman Negara Tarikan pelancongan negeri Pahang. Berdasarkan kelebihan semula jadi negeri Pahang, produk pelancongan berkonsepkan alam semula jadi wajar diperkasakan sebagai tarikan pelancongan utama di negeri dan negara ini. Kehijauan alam yang masih terpelihara dan keunikan budaya hidup masyarakat berpotensi tinggi untuk dibangunkan sebagai produk pelancongan (Jusoh et al. 2016). Kebanyakan lokasi pelancongan negeri ini sebenarnya sudah dipromosikan dan diberikan publisiti yang baik daripada semua pihak.

Pelancong Timur Tengah

Ketibaan pelancong Timur Tengah ke Malaysia secara keseluruhannya semakin meningkat pada setiap tahun. Menteri Pelancongan dan Kebudayaan Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz berkata menjadi kelaziman jika seseorang pemimpin melawat sesebuah negara, ia bukan sahaja mengeratkan lagi hubungan negara terlibat tetapi turut memberi pelbagai manfaat termasuk daripada aspek pelancongan (Aziz & Salleh 2017). Menurut Jumlah kehadiran pelancong dari Arab Saudi ke Malaysia menunjukkan pertambahan 24 peratus berbanding tahun sebelumnya. Statistik pelancong dari Arab Saudi menunjukkan trend peningkatan sebanyak 24.2 peratus dalam tempoh 2015 hingga 2016, iaitu daripada 99,754 kepada 123,878 pelancong. Pertumbuhan ini sangat drastik dan mengatasi pertumbuhan ketibaan daripada pasaran lain bagi kes pelancongan Malaysia. Namun begitu, aliran pelancong tersebut ke negeri Pahang agak sedikit berbanding aliran kemasukan ke negeri-negeri lain.

Dapatan dan Analisis Kajian

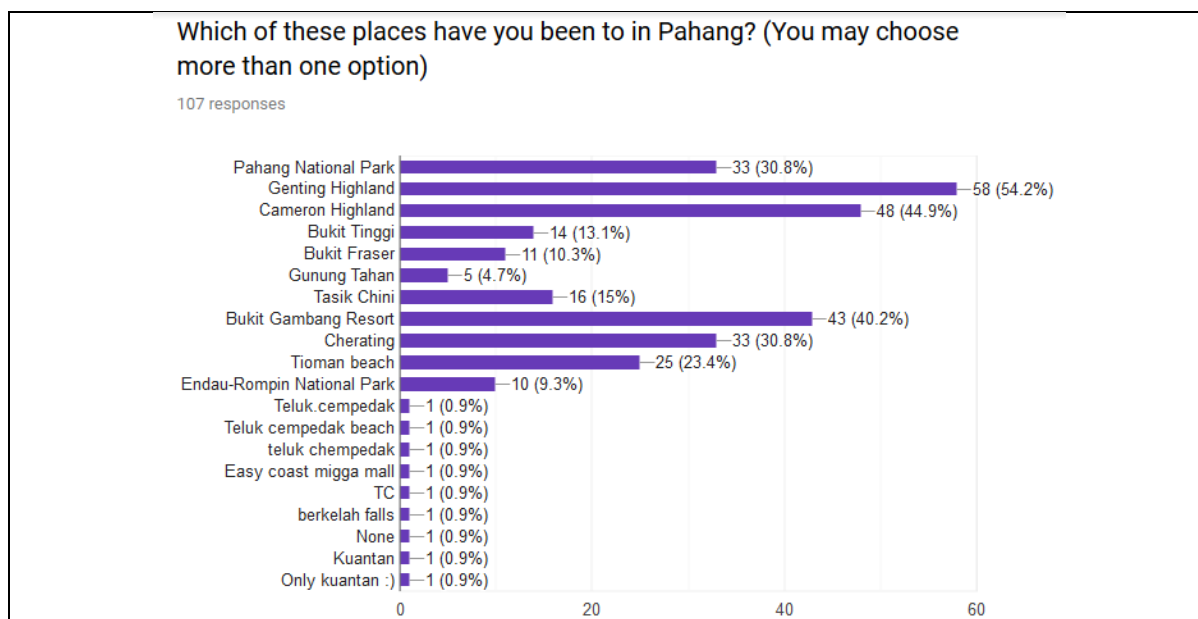
Hasil daripada soal selidik dan temubual bersama pelancong-pelancong daripada timur tengah, pengkaji mendapati kajian yang dilakukan selari dengan kenyataan En Mohd Izazi bin Ismail, Penolong Pengarah di Pejabat Kementerian Pelancongan, Seni dan Budaya Malaysia Negeri Pahang (Motac Pahang office), kebanyakan pelancong arab yang datang ke Malaysia untuk tujuan melancong mempunyai gaya percutian yang lebih santai seperti berbelanja dan percutian mewah. Oleh sebab itu, tumpuan mereka hanya terarah ke Kuala Lumpur, Genting Highland dan pusat-pusat membeli belah yang bertaraf 5 bintang. Walaubagaimanapun, kecenderungan mereka untuk bercuti ke alam semula jadi seperti Taman Negara (Merapoh) Cameron Highland, Air terjun Berkelah dan tempat-tempat yang di wartakan sebagai eko-Pelancong masih ada namun agak perlahan. Berikut adalah hasil soal selidik dan temubual bersama lebih 107 orang responden:



Rajah 1: Taburan Pelancong Mengikuti Negara Timur Tengah

Source: (Soal selidik dan temubual bersama 107 orang pelancong arab)

Rajah 1 menunjukkan jumlah pelancong berdasar negara di timur tengah yang melawat pusat-pusat pelancongan di negeri Pahang. Pelancong dari Iraq mendahului berbanding negara-negara lain di semenanjung arab. Ini mungkin disebabkan oleh ramai pelancong Iraq keluar dari negara yang masih bergolak dan mencari tempat persinggahan atas alasan pelancongan seperti pelancong dari negara Yemen.



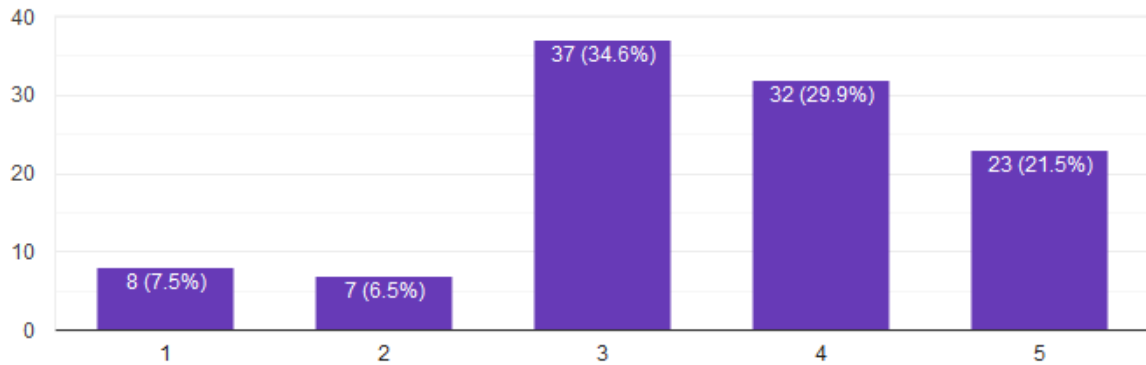
Rajah 2: Tumpuan Pelancong Arab Mengikuti Pusat-Pusat Pelancongan

Source: (Soal selidik dan temubual bersama 107 orang pelancong arab)

Rajah 2 menunjukkan Genting Highland merupakan destinasi paling ramai dilawati oleh pelancong arab di ikuti oleh Cameron Highland dan Bukit Gambang Resort. Ini menunjukkan gaya percutian orang arab lebih terarah ke kawasan tanah tinggi yang berhawa sejuk dan santai. Kawasan- kawasan eko-pelancongan agak kurang diminati atas beberapa faktor yang telah di kenal pasti.

The facilities offered are Arabic-friendly

107 responses



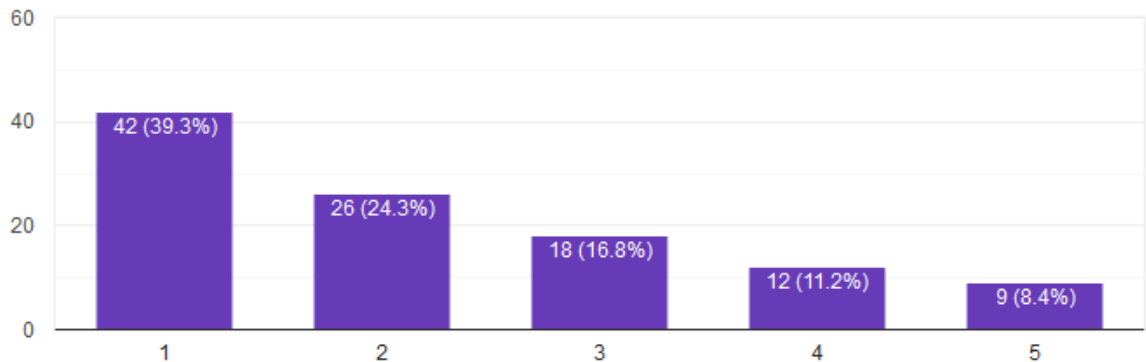
Rajah 3: Fasilitas Mesra Arab yang disediakan

Source: (Soal selidik dan temubual bersama 107 orang pelancong arab)

Rajah 4 menunjukkan fasiliti yang disediakan untuk pelancong dari timur tengah ini masih di tahap yang sederhana. Kemudahan seperti tempat solat, air untuk berhadass, tandas, restaurant, papan tanda, pemandu pelancong dan kemudahan-kemudahan lain.

Is the local people can communicate with you in Arabic?

107 responses



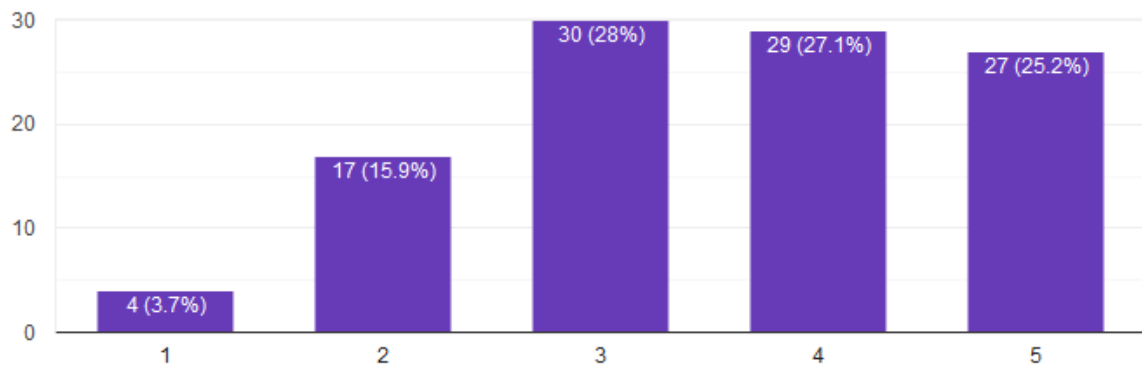
Rajah 4: Kebolehan Masyarakat Setempat Berbahasa Arab

Source: (Soal selidik dan temubual bersama 107 orang pelancong arab)

Carta 4 menunjukkan kebanyakan pelancong arab tidak mahir berbahasa inggeris. Walau bagaimanapun kebanyakan hotel, pemilik home stay tidak dapat menyediakan juru Bahasa, brochure dalam Bahasa Arab dan pemandu pelancong yang boleh berbahasa arab untuk membantu mereka memilih tempat bercutian dan menunjukkan arah ke destinasi yang menarik di negeri Pahang.

It is easy to find Arab food in Pahang

107 responses



Rajah 5: Kedai Makan Menjual Makanan Arab

Source: (Soal selidik dan temubual bersama 107 orang pelancong arab)

Carta 5 menunjukkan bahawa restoran-restoran yang menyediakan makanan arab mula berkembang di Pahang. Ini disebabkan oleh menambahkan pelancong arab dari tahun 2015 hingga 2017. Namun begitu gaya kedatangan pelancong arab masih kurang dan tidak memuaskan berdasarkan statistik dari Kementerian Pelancongan Malaysia terbaru pelancongan arab pada tahun 2018.

Kesimpulan

Tumpuan kini adalah lebih kepada usaha mempromosi dan membangunkan produk pelancongan berasaskan aset semula jadi bagi mengimbangi taburan pelancong ke negeri ini supaya manfaat ekonomi dapat dijana secara seimbang di seluruh negeri ini. Setiap daerah mempunyai aset semula jadi yang unik dan mempunyai ciri-ciri yang tersendiri. Menurut EN Azazi bin Ismail, Penolong Pengarah MOTA, sebahagiannya telah pun dimajukan, dan sebahagiannya masih belum lagi dibangunkan dan dimanfaatkan. Paling penting dari segi taburan reruang, pelancongan mampu menonjolkan negeri Pahang sebagai negeri paling kaya dengan kepelbagaian aset semula jadi, dari aset tanah tinggi sehinggalah ke tasik semula jadi.

Berdasarkan kajian ini, dapatlah disimpulkan pelancong negara Timur Tengah ini sentiasa mencari suatu tempat yang sangat selesa dan menarik untuk dilawati. tempat-tempat yang sering dilawati oleh pelancong arab ini berdasarkan kriteria berikut:

- Menyediakan infrastruktur yang lengkap, selamat dan mesra pelancong khusus bagi pelancong Timur Tengah
- Menyediakan pelbagai papan tanda, nota kecil berbahasa arab (brochure pelancongan) pengumuman, pemandu teksi/pelancong dan kakitangan yang boleh berbicara dalam Bahasa Arab setibanya pelancong Timur Tengah di lapangan terbang Sultan Ahmad Syah Kuantan.
- Menyediakan lorong imigresen khas bagi pelancong Timur Tengah.
- Kewujudan pelbagai kemudahan seperti makanan halal, tempat ibadah dan kemudahan infrastruktur (Aziz & Salleh 2017) (Samori & Sabtu, (2014).
- Keindahan pantai dan destinasi pelancongan semulajadi dan buatan manusia.
- Kemudahan tempat membeli-belah.
- Imej Pahang sebagai Negeri Bercirikan Islam (Samori et al. 2017)

Dengan adanya kemudahan dan fasiliti yang di sebutkan, pengkaji berkeyakinan penuh bahawa sasaran pelancongan dalam Tahun Melawat Malaysia 2020 berjaya dipenuhi dengan kehadiran lebih ramai pelancong arab ke negeri Pahang seterusnya menjadi pusat pelancongan yang paling diminati oleh pelancong luar negara khususnya dari negara-negara Timur Tengah pada masa akan datang.

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