# THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF CITY LANDMARK TO TOURISTS AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF TERENGGANU DRAWBRIDGE

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# Analyzing revisitation dynamics: a scholarly analysis of bootstrapping, mediating Muslim-friendly context and impact on determinant factors in Terengganu's edutourism destinations

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper aims to investigate the relationships between key mediators, namely, Muslim-friendly context and the intention of tourists to revisit edu-tourism destinations in Terengganu.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study engages tourists and visitors who have explored seven distinct edu-tourism destinations, with a total sample size of 384 participants. Data analysis is conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences and Analysis of Moment Structures for structural equation modeling.

**Findings** – Findings indicate that Muslim-friendly does not mediate the relationship between tourism operators, events and investment concerning tourists revisiting Terengganu. However, it plays a significant mediating role between local communities, educational institutions and tourism organizations.

**Research limitations/implications** – Despite valuable insights, limitations arose due to a lack of Terengganu-specific literature on Muslim-friendliness in edu-tourism, leading to reliance on studies about Sharia-compliant hotels, the broader tourism industry and Islamic tourism.

**Practical implications** – The thriving halal tourism industry's growth has heightened awareness of Muslim-friendly destinations, like Terengganu. The state actively promotes diverse halal services for Muslim travelers, encouraging operators to prioritize Sharia-compliant facilities. Strategic marketing and government support for Sharia-compliant edu-tourism investments aim at fostering economic growth and ensuring sustainability.

**Social implications** – Social implications stress the need for inclusivity and cultural sensitivity in Terengganu's tourism. Prioritizing Muslim-friendly services not only boosts economic growth but also fosters an inclusive and welcoming environment for diverse travelers. Government support for Sharia-compliant edu-tourism investments aligns development with cultural and religious values, promoting a harmonious and inclusive society.

**Originality/value** – This research explores Terengganu's innovative edu-tourism approach, prioritizing Muslim-friendly services for diverse travelers. By emphasizing Sharia-compliant facilities and investments, the region aims to foster economic growth and create an inclusive cultural environment.

**Keywords** Muslim-friendly destination, Edu-tourism, Tourism development, Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), Halal tourism

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

Edu-tourism, as defined by Sa'ariwijaya *et al.* (2020), refers to organized programs where participants travel collectively to a specific location, primarily for immersive learning experiences directly tied to that location's offerings. This aligns with the perspective of Putri *et al.* (2021), who emphasize group travel for tourism activities with a focus on acquiring learning experiences linked to the visited location. In cultural tourism, activities vary, including edu-tourism, where visitors engage in experiences contributing to understanding local culture (Hasanah and Ruhimat, 2019).

Terengganu, spanning 1,295,638.3 hectares with a population of approximately 1,280,000, aims to become the primary tourist destination on Malaysia's east coast. Emphasizing nature, adventure and heritage, the state government aims to attract more visitors and extend their stays through enticing packages and modernized tourism products. Edu-tourism, woven into daily activities, provides leisure opportunities within subsistence economies (Hasanah and Ruhimat, 2019). The Tourism Action Plan (2009–2013) promoted tourism, including edu-tourism, contributing significantly to the local community's well-being (Hamid *et al.*, 2021).

Despite progress, it is crucial for Terengganu's edu-tourism to align with Islamic principles due to the region's Muslim majority. With Malay-Muslim cultures, islands and beaches, Terengganu can become a Muslim-friendly destination (MalaysiaAktif, 2019). The state government is formulating a master plan to position Terengganu as an Islamic tourism hub, aligning offerings with Islamic principles to boost the local economy (Astro Awani, 2018). Muslim-friendly tourism is gaining momentum, with the Muslim tourism market projected to grow substantially (Berita Harian, 2015, 2017).

Various studies highlight determinants influencing tourist satisfaction and revisitation intentions in tourism, including tourism operators, event management, local communities, investments, educational institutions and tourism organizations (Da Silva *et al.*, 2018; Mihajlović, 2017; Linderová *et al.*, 2021; Nguyen, 2021; Maga and Nicolau, 2018; Ojo and Yusofu, 2013; Unković, 2017). These factors play a significant role in elevating Terengganu's edu-tourism industry (Afthanorhan *et al.*, 2017; Mohamad *et al.*, 2015; Zulkefli *et al.*, 2017). This study aims to analyze the mediating impact of the Muslim-friendly context on these determinant factors in Terengganu's edu-tourism destinations.

Although Terengganu received recognition for its Islamic Quality Standards, there remains a discrepancy between the influx of Muslim tourists to Malaysia from West Asia and their visitation patterns in Terengganu. This discrepancy underscores the challenge of translating Terengganu's potential as a Muslim-friendly destination into tangible visitor numbers, especially within the edu-tourism sector (Berita Harian, 2017). The inconsistent growth in visitor arrivals at various edu-tourism destinations in Terengganu further accentuates the urgency for strategic interventions to enhance the appeal of key sites, such as the Terengganu State Museum, Wood Carving Village, Turtle and Marine Ecosystem Centre, foreign student at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin and Terengganu Handicraft Center. Addressing these issues is critical to maximizing Terengganu's edu-tourism potential and establishing it as a prominent destination in line with Muslim-friendly context (Haron and Izwan, 2022).

The research problem lies in the necessity to explore the significance of the Muslim-friendly perspective engaging with determinant factors in shaping edu-tourism products in Terengganu Despite the state's rich Islamic-based cultures that attract visitors, there is a lack of discussion on how the Muslim-friendly aspect acts as a mediator in edu-tourism, particularly influencing tourist intention to revisit. Determinant factors in edu-tourism have sometimes caused confusion among local communities regarding their alignment with

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Islamic principles, highlighting the need to address this aspect within the context of Muslim-friendly aspects (Haron and Izwan, 2022). In addition, while Malaysia has made strides in implementing Shariah frameworks, more assessment and alignment of government programs and policies are required to promote a better understanding of the Muslim-friendly concept in edu-tourism. Hence, the research gap is the lack of understanding on how the Muslim-friendly perspective shapes visitor experiences and patterns in Terengganu's edu-tourism, along with the need to clarify and enhance the alignment of determinant factors with Muslim-friendly context in the region's tourism offering.

The objective of this study is to investigate how the Muslim-friendly perspective interacts with determinant factors in shaping edu-tourism products in Terengganu. Despite the region's rich Islamic-based cultures and potential to become a Muslim-friendly destination, there is a lack of discussion on how the Muslim-friendly aspect mediates tourist intention to revisit. In addition, confusion among local communities regarding the alignment of determinant factors with Islamic principles underscores the need to address this within the context of Muslim-friendly context. Therefore, this study aims to examine the mediating effects of Muslim-friendly context between determinant factors and tourist intention to revisit, enhancing Terengganu's tourism offerings for Muslim visitors and maximizing its edu-tourism potential.

## 1.1 Need for the study

*1.1.1 Theoretical view.* In the realm of edu-tourism, understanding how attitude influences individuals' intentions is crucial, especially in areas like co-branded items, retail marketing and internet banking. Attitude significantly shapes tourist behavior, particularly among Muslim travelers (Haque *et al.*, 2019). A tourist's attitude strongly affects their intention to purchase products and services, especially those with halal features (Haque *et al.*, 2019). Applying the theory of planned behavior helps marketers develop effective strategies, particularly in meeting the needs of tourists within the Muslim-friendly concept (Haque *et al.*, 2019). Edu-tourism marketers can improve tourists' attitudes toward Muslim-friendly features through various approaches in edu-tourism's determinant factors (Haque *et al.*, 2019). To ensure social acceptance and alignment with Muslim-friendly concepts, edu-tourism players should consistently enhance their packages in edu-tourism's determinant factors (Haque *et al.*, 2019).

*1.1.2 Practical view.* Integrating significant traits from Islamic culture into event management plays a pivotal role in fostering Muslim-friendly edu-tourism (Islam, 2017). In the context of event management, which encompasses the planning, creation, marketing, supervision, coordination and evaluation of event activities, it is essential to consider the specific needs of Muslim travelers. Particularly within the realm of edu-tourism segmentation, event managers need to facilitate public assemblies for promotion, education, idea exchange and celebration. The findings of this study offer valuable insights for event managers to streamline and identify major themes, concepts and terms in each element of the event framework, providing a practical contribution to enhancing the overall experience of Muslim-friendly edu-tourism.

Incorporating these determinant factors, aligned with the government's initiative in promoting Muslim-friendly aspects toward international tourists (especially Muslim), is significant. Both state governments and private sectors should actively cultivate conducive environments at edu-tourism destinations, emphasizing the need for a welcoming atmosphere that encourages social interaction, particularly in areas where tourist-host interaction is limited (Othman *et al.*, 2020). To achieve this objective, collaborative efforts between the state government and local residents in providing edu-tourism services are

essential, ensuring practical strategies are implemented for the successful realization of a Muslim-friendly environment.

Embracing the principles of Muslim-friendly tourism introduces an innovative marketing strategy that prioritizes the preservation of local uniqueness and adherence to Shariah principles, ensuring the provision of halal products in every segment influenced by ethical business values (Jaelani, 2017). This will offer a comparative framework, equipping tourism promoters with the tools to enhance their capabilities in effectively attracting Muslim tourists. For tangible improvements in edu-tourism products and services, promoters can implement strategies derived from this study, empowering them to take proactive leadership, devise impactful strategies and construct portfolios that contribute to an enriched and culturally sensitive tourist experience. This study serves as a practical roadmap for tourism promoters, guiding them in elevating their initiatives and meeting the demands of the growing market for Muslim-friendly tourism.

## 2. Literature reviews
### 2.1 Muslim-friendly context
The Muslim-friendly context offers a distinctive segmentation of products, characterized by a clear path guided by Islamic principles, doctrines, rules and regulations. This approach closely aligns with Shariah compliance, ensuring adherence to the ethical, moral, social and political codes outlined by Islamic law systems (Bangsawan *et al.*, 2019). Thus, the Muslim-friendly context provides a structured framework catering specifically to the preferences and requirements of Muslim travelers, offering a unique and tailored experience in line with their cultural and religious values.

In recent times, there has been growing attention toward practices associated with Halal tourism, both from tourists and stakeholders in the tourism industry. The adoption of Muslim-friendly practices has become prevalent in certain destinations, serving as exemplary models for others aiming to attract Muslim tourists and position themselves as "Muslim-friendly destinations." One notable trend is the rise in the number of Shariah-compliant hotels, observed not only in Muslim-majority regions but also in non-Muslim destinations. These destinations promote their accommodations as "Muslim-friendly hotels," catering to the specific needs and preferences of Muslim tourists (Hasan, 2024).

Hotels catering to Muslim-friendly principles now offer amenities such as copies of the Quran, prayer mats and Qibla direction indicators in their rooms. In addition, toiletries provided for tourist use are certified Halal. To meet Muslim-friendly requirements, most hotels also provide prayer rooms with separate spaces for male and female worshippers. A recent development in the Halal tourism industry is the introduction of smartphone applications aimed at enhancing the vacation experience and ensuring comfort for Muslim tourists (Jaffar *et al.*, 2022).

Furthermore, Said *et al.* (2014) assert that suitable applications are extremely helpful for Muslim tourists seeking information about Muslim-friendly destinations, including Halal products and services such as hotels, destination guides, vacation packages, airport guides and Halal restaurants. Non-Islamic countries will gradually target Muslim tourists and develop tourism applications supporting the context of Muslim-friendly destinations within their countries (Said *et al.*, 2014).

Edu-tourism presents a viable avenue for introducing a fresh segment of Muslim-friendly tourism in Malaysia. According to research conducted by Tambak and Sukenti (2019), there is potential for the development of edu-tourism within a Muslim-friendly framework. This initiative can align with the objectives of the National Key Economic Areas by fostering growth through the creation of Muslim-friendly edu-tourism products.

*2.1.1 Muslim-friendly context in edu-tourism.* In recent years, numerous countries have actively promoted Halal tourism and Muslim-friendly destinations as integral components of their tourism offerings. This strategic approach aims to cater to Muslim travelers from both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority countries, emphasizing various attractions such as fashion, shopping malls, halal dining options, medical facilities adhering to Islamic principles and educational tourism experiences. The appeal of Muslim-friendly destinations extends beyond the Muslim demographic, attracting travelers interested in immersing themselves in Islamic culture and comfortable with the amenities provided. However, despite the proliferation of Halal tourism products, the development and involvement of Muslim-friendly edu-tourism remain relatively limited within the market (Eksan and Bakar, 2020).

The Islamic Tourism Center Malaysia published a blueprint regarding Islamic Tourism in 2012. This blueprint outlines a strategic plan for the development of Malaysian Islamic tourism through Islamic tourism standards and quality control in management, operation and implementation. Edu-tourism with a Muslim-friendly context is also a key aspect of the action plan and is receiving increasing attention (Eksan and Bakar, 2020).

Furthermore, there has been increasing sensitivity among Muslims toward consuming products and services that are halal, Shariah-compliant and Muslim-friendly (Said *et al.*, 2014). This heightened awareness has led to a greater preference among Muslims for Halal options in various aspects of their lives, including tourism. Consequently, there is a growing demand for edu-tourism offerings that cater to the needs and values of Muslim travelers. This trend underscores the importance of providing a Muslim-friendly context within the edu-tourism industry, aligning with the preferences and expectations of Muslim consumers.

Despite the growth of the edu-tourism industry in Terengganu, it is imperative that the elements and contents of this industry align with Islamic principles, considering the predominantly Muslim population in the state. Terengganu has the potential to become a Muslim-friendly destination due to its rich Malay-Muslim culture, stunning islands and beautiful beaches (MalaysiaAktif, 2019). Currently, the state government is developing a master plan to position Terengganu as an Islamic and Muslim-friendly tourism hub. This initiative aims to highlight Terengganu's tourism potential while ensuring that the offerings cater to the needs and values of Muslim travelers. By focusing on enhancing the state's local tourism sector, the government seeks to boost the economy and contribute to the social development of Terengganu (Astro Awani, 2018).

Tables A1–A5 (in Appendix) reveal inconsistent growth statistics in visitor arrivals at various edu-tourism destinations in Terengganu from 2012 to 2019. While the Terengganu State Museum experienced declines of −15% in 2014 and −13.3% in 2016, there was an increase of 33% in 2019. Similarly, other destinations such as the Wood Carving Village, Turtle and Marine Ecosystem Centre, foreign student enrollment at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin and Terengganu Handicraft Center showed fluctuating numbers of visitors over the years.

In 2017, there was a notable drop of −20% in visitor arrivals at the Wood Carving Village, indicating low attraction for tourists. Likewise, the Turtle and Marine Ecosystem Centre experienced a decline of −19% in 2015. The number of foreign students at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin also saw significant drops, reaching −68% in 2015 and −33% in 2019. Similarly, the Terengganu Handicraft Center witnessed a decrease of −47% in arrivals during certain years.

Overall, these statistics highlight the inconsistent growth in visitor numbers across Terengganu's edu-tourism destinations, suggesting a need for strategies to enhance their appeal and attract more visitors.

*2.2 Relationship between determinant factors and Muslim friendly*

Understanding the influence of the Muslim-friendly context on tourist satisfaction and revisitation intentions in edu-tourism destinations is crucial. Tourism stakeholders must grasp the Muslim-friendly context comprehensively to cultivate high-value tourism experiences for Muslim tourists. Each determinant factor within edu-tourism should align with the specific requirements of Muslim tourists, prompting providers to design and offer tailored products and services. Thus, the incorporation of Muslim-friendly elements should extend across all determinant factors within the edu-tourism domain (Haron and Izwan, 2022).

These determinant factors, including tourism operators, event management, local communities, investments, educational institutions and tourism organizations, should strategically formulate and implement practices guided by Shariah compliance. They are urged to endorse and incorporate Muslim-friendly elements to enhance awareness among both Muslim and non-Muslim demographics (Othman *et al.*, 2020).

Furthermore, it is crucial for these determinant factors to align their strategies with the government's initiatives, especially in promoting Muslim-friendly aspects to attract international tourists, particularly those from the Muslim community. However, despite the importance of Muslim-friendly environments, there remains a notable deficiency in garnering attention, resulting in a low level of awareness and acceptance among the involved stakeholders. The success of the Muslim-friendly approach hinges on each party within the determinant factors identifying and addressing the challenges they face (Othman *et al.*, 2020).

*2.2.1 Tourism operators.* Promoting Muslim-friendly aspects in tourism services is crucial for tapping into the growing Islamic market, attracting visitors from the Middle East and fostering intentions to revisit. This concept should be targeted by tourism promoters not only at Muslim travelers but also at non-Muslims, necessitating a clear definition for effective product promotion. Recognizing the diverse needs of leisure and business travelers, particularly Muslims, accommodation policies aligned with Shariah compliance, such as prohibiting alcohol and providing non-smoking areas, serve as unique selling propositions. These measures not only cater to specific preferences but also contribute to promoting a healthier lifestyle among tourists (Ramli and Zawawi, 2017).

*2.2.2 Event managements.* Malaysia, aspiring to become a prominent Islamic tourist destination, holds significant potential in its Muslim-friendly context for tourism. Leveraging the richness of arts, heritage and the unique Malay Muslim culture, aligned with Muslim-friendly concepts, presents an opportunity for event management to organize a series of global conferences as part of their edu-tourism offerings. These conferences not only showcase cultural diversity but also foster relationships among participants from Muslim countries, encouraging repeated visits (Shafaei and Mohamed, 2017).

*2.2.3 Local communities.* Traditionally, mass tourism has been associated with adverse effects on local social and cultural aspects. Nevertheless, establishing a positive relationship between local communities and Muslim-friendly tourism can mitigate these negative impacts. By avoiding prohibited behaviors such as alcohol consumption, illicit relationships and public displays of affection, the potential for negative tourism impact is significantly reduced (Dean Wickham, 2017).

*2.2.4 Investments.* Responsible financial institutions should provide ample capital investment for tourism players, fostering economic growth, effective communication, modern transportation and high-quality edu-tourism facilities. Incorporating Muslim-friendly principles in investments, aligned with Islamic trade and commerce principles, safeguards vulnerable communities from economic downturns. The increasing relevance of Muslim-friendly investments in the Philippine tourism industry is driven by the acceptance

of Islamic economic laws, offering adaptable elements beneficial for the country's economic development (Zainab Mansoor, 2024).

*2.2.5 Educational institutions.* To enhance intellectual and cultural knowledge across institutions, society and educational leaders have institutionalized Muslim-friendly aspects over time. This evolution has resulted in a well-integrated, organized and universally recognized framework, particularly within educational segments focusing on intellectual and cultural progress. Educational institutions now incorporate Islamic heritage committees to safeguard historical sites, monuments and cultural events within their curricula. Activating these measures attracts tourists and visitors interested in understanding the technical and professional skills that characterize the developmental stages of Islamic civilization, fostering heritage awareness among future generations (Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2018).

*2.2.6 Tourism organizations.* In Malaysia, a select few responsible tourism organizations have been designated to implement specific Muslim-friendly criteria. These organizations are tasked with assessing and awarding accommodation operators based on their adherence to Muslim-friendly requirements. A responsible tourism organization evaluating accommodation providers establishes Shariah compliance guidelines, with a particular emphasis on room considerations as a critical aspect of the tourism business, aimed at stimulating visitation intentions (Othman *et al.*, 2019).

*2.3 Relationship between Muslim-friendly and tourist intention to revisit*
Activities aligned with Muslim-friendly aspects encompass the appreciation of God's creations, adherence to the prohibition on defacement or damage of public or private property and a commitment to environmental preservation. Presently, Malaysia has instituted comprehensive strategies and plans aimed at offering ample edu-tourism products and facilities in accordance with the Muslim-friendly concept, catering specifically to Muslim tourists. These strategies are intricately interwoven with economic, cultural and religious conservative concepts (Samsudin and Othman, 2017).

The relationship between tourism and Muslim-friendly concepts poses challenges characterized by mutual influence, complementarity and widespread adherence. Furthermore, the interconnection among tourists from Islamic countries is not solely driven by general edu-tourism purposes; it extends to visitors' intentions to explore destinations predominantly inhabited by individuals sharing the same religious beliefs. This phenomenon underscores a growing affinity among tourists with similar religious affiliations (Samsudin and Othman, 2017).

The tourism industry has strategically acknowledged the imperative to develop tourism products, particularly in edu-tourism, that align with the principles of Muslim-friendly hospitality. This heightened interest in catering to Muslim-friendly preferences is a response to the global increase in the Muslim population. Policy makers, cognizant of Islamic concerns, are inclined to choose viable alternatives, crafting specific marketing messages and embracing the relevant concepts of edu-tourism. This strategic alignment not only addresses the specific needs of Muslim visitors but also contributes to the creation of intentions to revisit (Mohd Yousoof *et al.*, 2023).

However, this strategic approach presents challenges, particularly in ensuring satisfaction for non-Muslim visitors without compromising the Muslim-friendly context. Conversely, it opens up opportunities for businesses to demonstrate creativity and flexibility in meeting the diverse needs of both Muslim and non-Muslim segments. Future research endeavors should delve into constructing the Muslim-friendly context further, exploring

how edu-tourism destinations can be transformed into truly Muslim-friendly destinations (Mohd Yousoof *et al.*, 2023).

### 2.4 The mediating effect of Muslim friendly on the relationship between determinant factors that influence tourist intention to revisit

Muslim-friendly practices are perceived as crucial mediators, ensuring that tourism businesses adhere to ethical and permissible standards, free from prohibited or questionable elements. The role of Muslim-friendly practices is paramount, as it serves as a conduit for spreading Islamic culture, addressing pertinent issues and recommending Islamic solutions within society. This significance is particularly pronounced when considering the determinant factors in the edu-tourism sector, where the incorporation of Muslim-friendly elements serves as a catalyst for stimulating visitors' intentions to revisit destinations (Rasit and Razali, 2018).
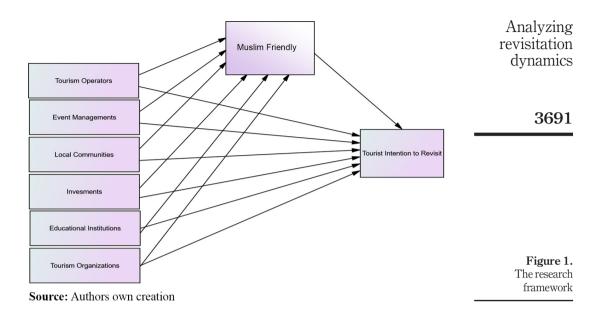
In the Malaysian context, the incorporation of Malay cultural values within the edu-tourism realm, aligned with the principles of civility and the purity of Islam, requires a deliberate emphasis on Muslim-friendly elements. These elements function as effective mediators, serving as a conduit for the dissemination of Islamic teachings and acting as integral components of the educational and cultural experiences offered within the framework of edu-tourism (Rasit and Razali, 2018).

Conversely, the level of tourist acceptance regarding Muslim-friendly concepts, coupled with consumer perceptions, is regarded as a mediating factor. Ultimately, this mediation contributes valuable assistance to managers in selecting and implementing products and services aligned with Muslim-friendly environments (Yusof *et al.*, 2019). This underscores the evolving mediating role of Muslim-friendly considerations in shaping the determinant factors within the edu-tourism domain, ultimately influencing visitors' intentions to revisit destinations (Salman *et al.*, 2017).

### 2.5 Theoretical foundation

The theory of planned behavior, introduced by Dr Icek Ajzen in the mid-1980s, offers a valuable psychological framework connecting attitudes to behaviors. This theory has demonstrated its applicability in the tourism industry, particularly within the context of edu-tourism. By emphasizing the role of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, the theory becomes a guiding tool for tourism players in effectively intervening with determinant factors such as tour operators, event management, local communities, investments, educational institutions and tourism organizations (Abbasi *et al.*, 2021; Pannilage and Lin, 2017; Maziriri *et al.*, 2021; Paramita *et al.*, 2018; Allam *et al.*, 2018; Liu *et al.*, 2017).

The theory of planned behavior proves instrumental in understanding tourists' decision-making processes, providing insights into their needs and responses. It highlights the importance of accessible beliefs in shaping evaluations and influencing behaviors, thereby presenting an opportunity to enhance the sustainability of the tourism industry. Moreover, in the specific context of Muslim-friendly tourism, studies using the theory of planned behavior, including those by Ali *et al.* (2018), Bakar *et al.* (2018), Asnawi and Sihombing (2021) and Purusottama and Prastowo (2019), reveal a robust correlation between attitudes and the Muslim-friendly context. Positive attitudes among Muslim tourists are demonstrated to translate into concrete purchase actions, underscoring the theory's relevance in developing strategies for fostering Muslim-friendly environments in the realm of edu-tourism (Haque *et al.*, 2019; Jalasi and Ambad, 2020). The research framework is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

**Source:** Authors own creation

Figure 1.
The research
framework

*2.6 The research framework*

*2.7 Hypotheses development*
*2.7.1 Relationship between tourism operators and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.*
Experienced tour operators, crucial for the success of edu-tourism, enhance repeat visitation
as visitors seek special access and exclusive experiences (Cruise, 2004). The role of tour
operators is pivotal, meeting tourist needs and preserving the appeal of edu-tourism
products, contributing to revisit intentions (Samat *et al.*, 2016). Thus, it is hypothesized that
the expertise of tour operators significantly influences tourists' intention to revisit in edu-
tourism:

   *H1.* There is a positive effect between tourism operators and tourist intention to revisit
        Terengganu.

*2.7.2 Relationship between event managements and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.*
The statement strongly supports the hypothesis that implementing innovative business
strategies in edu-tourism by event management yields significant benefits. The evidence
indicates that expanding potential partnerships nationally and internationally, nurturing
staff and stakeholders and ensuring extensive outreach to tourists substantially increases
the probability of repeat visits to destinations (Zlatanov, 2015):

   *H2.* There is a positive effect between event managements and tourist intention to
        revisit Terengganu.

*2.7.3 Relationship between local communities and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.*
The findings strongly support the hypothesis that the distinctive traditional and cultural
activities conducted by local communities substantially contribute to the attractiveness of
homestays in Malaysia. This appeal draws tourists, especially those seeking educational

experiences and fosters a tendency for repeat visits (Rabu *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, the evidence strongly indicates that the edu-tourism approach in Malaysia, which acknowledges the country's diverse local heritage and promotes harmony, respect and cross-cultural knowledge sharing, plays a vital role in enhancing tourists' intentions to revisit:

*H3.* There is a positive effect between local communities and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.

*2.7.4 Relation between investments and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.* The evidence supports the hypothesis that dedicating investment efforts to enhance edu-tourism yields a direct positive impact on the successful hosting of events, fostering long-term development within the tourism industry. The identification of milestones and strategic investments in event management, as a catalyst for expedited development, further contributes to the sustainability and growth of the tourism sector. This, in turn, is anticipated to positively influence tourists' intentions to visit (The South African Department of Labour, 2018):

*H4.* There is a positive effect between investments and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.

*2.7.5 Relationship between educational institutions and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.* The findings strongly support the hypothesis that the edu-tourism industry entices educational institutions to enrich the overall learning experience. In contemporary times, these institutions have evolved into a subset of the edu-tourist industry, contributing to heightened economic activity and significantly influencing tourists' intentions to visit and revisit (Ojo and Yusof, 2020):

*H5.* There is a positive effect between educational institutions and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.

*2.7.6 Relationship between tourism organizations and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.* The evidence strongly supports the hypothesis that Malaysia's positioning as a preferred edu-tourism destination is attributed to extensive tourism marketing activities and promotional efforts by Malaysian tourism organizations. These initiatives have effectively stimulated visitors' interest, fostering a likelihood of repeat visits (Mosbah and Al Khuja, 2015):

*H6.* There is a positive effect between tourism organizations and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.

*2.7.7 Relationship between mediating role of Muslim friendly in the relationship between tourism operators and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.* Recent studies have emphasized the significance of "Muslim-friendly" attributes in shaping tourists' travel experiences and influencing their revisit intention (Al-Ansi and Han, 2019). These attributes encompass various aspects of tourism services, including accommodation, dining, recreational activities and cultural experiences, tailored to meet the needs and preferences of Muslim travelers. For instance, Halal food availability, prayer facilities, gender-segregated amenities and culturally sensitive interactions are identified as crucial factors contributing to a positive Muslim-friendly experience (Al-Ansi and Han, 2019).

Muslim-friendly context attributes as a mediator influencing tourism operators in fostering revisit intention is contingent upon tourists' articulation of their experiences derived from the services provided by these operators (Yuliviona *et al.*, 2016). The term "tourists' travel experience" pertains to the services they engage with, actively participate in

and encounter. Therefore, it is imperative to assert that tourism operators in destinations effectively incorporate Muslim-friendly elements to enhance tourists' experiences (Yuliviona *et al.*, 2016).

Furthermore, scholars have highlighted the growing importance of Muslim-friendly tourism in the global travel industry, driven by the increasing demand from Muslim travelers seeking destinations that accommodate their religious and cultural requirements (Gössling *et al.*, 2020). As such, tourism operators and destinations are recognizing the economic potential of catering to this market segment and are actively integrating Muslim-friendly initiatives into their offerings (Gössling *et al.*, 2020).

However, it is essential to acknowledge the complexities involved in effectively incorporating Muslim-friendly elements into tourism operator services. While the provision of Halal-certified products and services is crucial, scholars argue that mere compliance with religious guidelines may not suffice to ensure a satisfactory experience for Muslim travelers (Al-Ansi and Han, 2019). Factors such as service quality, cultural sensitivity and authentic engagement with Islamic values and traditions are equally vital in shaping tourists' perceptions and satisfaction levels (Al-Ansi and Han, 2019). Studies indicate that positive travel experiences, characterized by factors such as service quality, cultural authenticity and religious sensitivity, are associated with higher levels of satisfaction and loyalty among Muslim travelers (Al-Ansi and Han, 2019). Thus, we propose that tourists who have a positive experience at Muslim-friendly destinations are more likely to express intent to revisit in the future:

*H7.* There is no positive effect between mediating role of Muslim friendly in the relationship between tourism operators and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.

*2.7.8 Relationship between mediating role of Muslim friendly in the relationship between event managements and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.* Event management in the context of edu-tourism has garnered increasing attention due to its significant impact on destination attractiveness and visitor experience. One emerging aspect within this field is the integration of Muslim-friendly elements to cater to the needs of Muslim tourists. While initial studies suggested a positive correlation between Muslim-friendly initiatives and tourists' intentions to revisit, recent research has brought forth nuanced insights.

Mahdzar (2019) indicates that the mediation of Muslim-friendly elements may not exert a significant influence on tourists' intentions to revisit. This finding challenges the conventional assumption that enhancing Muslim-friendly services inherently leads to increased satisfaction and loyalty among Muslim travelers. The study underscores the importance of broader experiential factors, such as participation in unique event programs, in shaping tourists' perceptions and memories.

Moreover, Adirestuty (2019) emphasizes the dynamic and subjective nature of tourists' experiences, cautioning against the application of uniform standards across diverse cultural contexts. This highlights the complexity inherent in catering to the needs of Muslim tourists within the event management sphere, where a one-size-fits-all approach may not be appropriate.

While the literature on the relationship between Muslim-friendly elements and tourists' intentions to revisit is still evolving, recent studies highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing visitor behavior. By considering the broader experiential context and embracing cultural sensitivity, event managers can better cater to the diverse needs of Muslim tourists and enhance destination competitiveness. Further empirical research is recommended to validate the proposed hypotheses and advance knowledge in this area:

*H8.* There is no positive effect between mediating role of Muslim friendly in the relationship between event managements and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.

*2.7.9 Relationship between mediating role of Muslim friendly in the relationship between local communities and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.* The involvement of local communities, combined with the integration of Muslim-friendly elements in tourism, has emerged as a crucial strategy for mitigating potential negative consequences and fostering sustainable tourism practices. While existing research suggests a positive correlation between sustainable tourism aligned with Muslim-friendly principles and tourists' intentions to revisit destinations, recent studies offer additional insights into this relationship.

Saffinee (2022) emphasized the significance of incorporating Muslim-friendly elements into tourism initiatives, noting their positive impact on the local community's environment and their appeal to tourists with Islamic values. The study underscores how aligning sustainable tourism practices with Muslim-friendly principles can lead to an increased intention among tourists to revisit the destination.

Furthermore, Santoso *et al.* (2023) have highlighted the importance of local communities in advancing sustainable tourism and augmenting destination allure. Through active engagement of local residents in tourism endeavors and the integration of their cultural heritage into the visitor experience, destinations can cultivate an authentic and enticing destination for tourists, including those with Islamic preferences.

The fusion of local community engagement with sustainable tourism practices aligned with Muslim-friendly principles offers potential for effective destination management. Through proactive participation of local residents and a focus on sustainability and cultural sensitivity in tourism development, destinations can elevate their appeal and competitiveness in the global tourism landscape. Empirical research is encouraged to corroborate the proposed hypotheses and deepen our comprehension of these associations:

*H9.* There is a positive effect between mediating role of Muslim friendly in the relationship between local communities and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.

*2.7.10 Relationship between mediating role of Muslim friendly in the relationship between investments and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.* The relationship between investments in tourists' intentions to revisit which mediated by Muslim-friendly attributes, is a topic of growing interest in destination management literature. While early studies suggested a positive correlation between investment in tourism facilities and repeat visitation, recent research indicates that the mediating role of Muslim-friendly attributes may not always be significant (Mallick and Ghosh, 2021).

Bintarti and Fahamsyah (2018) examined the relationship between investments and tourists' intentions to revisit Terengganu, specifically focusing on the mediation of Muslim-friendly attributes. Their findings suggest that despite investments in tourism infrastructure, Muslim-friendly attributes do not exert mediating effects on tourists' intentions to revisit. This lack of mediation is primarily attributed to insufficient enhancements in tourism facilities, which hinder destination competitiveness.

Moreover, Aziz (2018) highlights the importance of aligning the tourism quality framework, encompassing facilities, infrastructures and commercial management, with Muslim-friendly elements. Failure to integrate and prioritize these components may result in the insignificance of Muslim-friendly mediation in influencing tourist arrivals. However, while Bintarti and Fahamsyah (2018) study provides valuable insights into the dynamics between investments, Muslim-friendly attributes and tourist intentions to revisit, further research is needed to explore the underlying mechanisms and potential moderating factors.

In conclusion, while investments in tourism infrastructure play a crucial role in shaping tourists' intentions to revisit, the mediating effects of Muslim-friendly attributes require careful consideration. By aligning the tourism quality framework with Muslim-friendly principles and prioritizing enhancements in tourism facilities, Terengganu can enhance their attractiveness and competitiveness in the global tourism market. Further empirical research is recommended to validate the proposed hypotheses and deepen our understanding of the relationships between investments, Muslim-friendly attributes and tourist behavior (Aziz, 2018):

*H10.* There is no positive effect between mediating role of Muslim friendly in the relationship between investments and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.

*2.7.11 Relationship between mediating role of Muslim friendly in the relationship between educational institutions and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.* The relationship between educational institutions and tourists' intentions to revisit Terengganu, mediated by Muslim-friendly elements, represents an emerging area of interest within destination management literature. While initial findings suggest a positive mediating impact of Muslim-friendly practices, recent research provides further insights into this relationship.

Educational institutions are the pivotal role in managing the development of diverse communities and nations. Their study emphasizes the significance of integrating Muslim-friendly practices within educational institutions, not only for community development but also for enhancing the tourist experience and fostering intentions to revisit (Eksan and Bakar, 2020; Said *et al.*, 2015).

Moreover, study by Eksan and Bakar (2020) has highlighted the positive mediating impact of Muslim-friendly elements on tourists' intentions to revisit destinations with strong educational offerings. This suggests that tourists value destinations that prioritize cultural sensitivity and inclusivity, particularly within educational contexts.

The relationship between educational institutions, Muslim-friendly elements and tourists' intentions to revisit Terengganu holds promise for destination management, further research is needed to fully understand its dynamics. By integrating Muslim-friendly context within educational contexts and prioritizing cultural sensitivity and inclusivity, destinations can enhance their attractiveness and competitiveness in the global tourism market. Empirical research is recommended to validate the proposed hypotheses and advance our understanding of these relationships:

*H11.* There is a positive effect between mediating role of Muslim friendly in the relationship between educational Institutions and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.

*2.7.12 Relationship between mediating role of Muslim friendly in the relationship between tourism organizational and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.* The connection between tourism organizations and tourists' intentions to revisit Terengganu, facilitated by Muslim-friendly elements, is a crucial aspect of destination management. Although early research indicates a favorable mediating impact of Muslim-friendly practices, recent studies offer further insights into this correlation.

Hussin (2017) emphasizes the importance of tourism packages, products and services promoted by tourism organizations adhering to Muslim-friendly standards. Their study underscores the significance of ensuring that offerings cater to the needs and preferences of Muslim travelers, given the global attention garnered by events and exhibitions conducted annually in destinations like Terengganu.

Mannaa (2020) had highlighted that the positive mediating influence of Muslim-friendly elements on tourists' intentions to revisit destinations with strong organizational support for such initiatives. This suggests that tourists value destinations where tourism organizations prioritize cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in their offerings.

Although the interplay among tourism organizations, Muslim-friendly elements and tourists' intentions to revisit Terengganu shows potential for destination management, there is a need for deeper comprehension of its dynamics. By giving precedence to cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in their offerings and actively endorsing Muslim-friendly initiatives, tourism organizations can boost the attractiveness and competitiveness of the destination. It is advisable to conduct empirical research to confirm the proposed hypotheses and further elucidate these relationships:

*H12.* There is a positive effect between mediating role of mediating role of Muslim friendly in the relationship between tourism organizational and tourist intention to revisit Terengganu.

## 3. Methodology
### 3.1 Unit of analysis
Selecting the appropriate unit of analysis is crucial in shaping the research questions, as it influences various aspects of the study, including data collection methods, sample size and the variables incorporated into the framework. Therefore, the formulation of research questions is guided by the determination of the unit of analysis. In the context of this study, tourists and visitors who have explored the selected edu-tourism destinations in Terengganu have been identified as the designated unit of analysis.

### 3.2 Population and sampling
The study's population comprises tourists and visitors who have arrived and visited edu-tourism destinations in Terengganu. When selecting effective sampling locations, considerations such as representativeness, the nature of the process, accessibility and safety are paramount (Plans, 2006).

To streamline the process of statistical data collection, the researcher sought guidance from authorities responsible for visitor information and communication facilities, specifically the Terengganu Tourism Department. Based on advice from the Terengganu Tourism Department (Jabatan Pelancongan Negeri Terengganu, 2019), Table A6 outlines the selected edu-tourism destinations with accessible statistical data:

The recorded total attendance of 150,200 visitors from arrival data surpasses the representative threshold for the population size, aligning with the range of outcomes as outlined by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). This significant figure aids in determining the appropriate sample size for the study. The total sample for this study is 384. Table A7 show the summarizing the population and breakdown in each destination.

### 3.3 Sampling method
Sampling involves the scientific selection of units from a population. Given the impracticality of reaching every tourist in a survey due to the substantial population and resource constraints, the research relies on the adoption of the stratified random sampling technique applied to the total population of tourists who visited Terengganu's edu-tourism destinations in 2019. In essence, stratified random sampling entails the stratification process, wherein distinct classes are established, and subsequently, a random sample is drawn from each class (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

## 3.4 Research approach

The research approach used in this study is quantitative, utilizing numerical analysis to reduce data into numbers. Quantitative research aims to develop and apply mathematical models, theories and hypotheses to phenomena. Survey questionnaires were utilized to collect data for this study. The primary aim of the study is to understand tourists' perceptions and experiences at edu-tourism destinations in Terengganu. A quantitative approach through survey questionnaires allows for the systematic collection of data on various aspects such as visitor satisfaction, preferences, motivations and demographics. This aligns well with the research objectives of assessing tourists' experiences and satisfaction levels.

Given the substantial population of tourists visiting Terengganu's edu-tourism destinations and resource constraints, a quantitative approach is practical and feasible. Conducting face-to-face interviews or qualitative observations for every tourist would be impractical. By using survey questionnaires, the researcher can efficiently collect data from a representative sample of tourists, ensuring a balance between thoroughness and practicality.

The choice of quantitative method is justified by its widespread adoption in existing literature. Several authors, including Negruşa and Yolal (2012), Thompson (2009) and Panitsides (2013), have used quantitative approaches in their research. These studies have used structured questionnaires and surveys to gather data, aligning with the quantitative method chosen for this study.

## 3.5 Research instruments

The research instrument comprises questionnaires adapted from various scholars to suit the objectives of this study. Survey questionnaires will be used, divided into nine sections:

(1) Section A: General and profile information
(2) Section B: Tourist intention to revisit
(3) Section C: Tourism operators
(4) Section D: Event management
(5) Section E: Local communities
(6) Section F: Investments
(7) Section G: Educational institutions
(8) Section H: Tourism organizations
(9) Section J: Muslim-friendly aspects

Table A8 highlights each section addressing specific aspects relevant to the study's objectives, ensuring comprehensive data collection across various dimensions of the research topic.

## 3.6 Overall results of exploratory factor analysis analysis

Content validity was assessed to ensure that all items accurately measured the constructs under investigation. Validity and reliability are crucial in minimizing errors in measurement and data input, as they ensure that observed numbers accurately represent the characteristics being measured. In this study, content validity and construct validity were sought to ensure the adequacy and accuracy of the questionnaire in measuring the theoretical constructs of interest. Based on the results of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) analysis on the items of the questionnaire, no items were excluded. Table A9 shows the latest position of item categories after EFA analysis was conducted.

### 3.7 Construct reliability

The research instruments underwent a pilot study to identify and address any issues related to clarity and comprehension. Feedback from the pilot study was used to refine the questionnaire items by adding, removing or rephrasing as necessary. The pilot study involved distributing questionnaires to 100 tourists and visitors at the Terengganu Museum, organized into ten sections covering various aspects of the study. The demographic section had six items using both nominal and ordinal scales. Results showed that all constructs, including tourist intention to revisit, tourism operators, event management, local communities, investments, educational institutions, tourism organizations, tourist satisfaction and Muslim-friendly aspects, had Cronbach's alpha scores above 0.6, indicating good reliability. No items needed to be deleted before proceeding with the data collection process, ensuring the reliability of the instruments. The reliability values for each study construct are shown by the Cronbach's alpha value as shown in Table A10 below.

By using statistical techniques such as stratified random sampling and numerical analysis of survey responses, the study can generate quantitative data that can be statistically analyzed to draw meaningful conclusions and insights. This enhances the credibility and reliability of the study findings. The chosen methodology utilizing survey questionnaires is well-suited for addressing the research problem and objectives. It offers practicality, statistical rigor, alignment with previous literature and ensures standardization and replicability, thereby instilling confidence in the study's validity and reliability (Negruşa and Yolal, 2012; Thompson, 2009; and Panitsides, 2013.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive analysis for respondent's profile

A total of 384 questionnaires were distributed across 11 selected edu-tourism destinations in Terengganu. The respondents comprised 59.8% males and 40.1% females. The age distribution showed 30% were between 20 and 29 years old, 38.5% between 30 and 39 years old, 17.7% between 40 and 49 years old and 6.5% were 50 years old and above. Regarding travel information sources, 57% of respondents relied on the internet, 10% on magazines, 4% on television and radio, 3.6% on consultants and 13.5% on recommendations from friends and family. In addition, 4.2% preferred online travel agencies, 2.9% local travel agencies, 2.6% exhibition channels and 1.5% tourist information centers.

### 4.2 Measurement model assessment

*4.2.1 The fitness index for model.* In evaluating the model's fitness to the collected data, various goodness-of-fit indices were considered. The study notes a lack of consensus among researchers regarding the preferred fitness indices. However, following Awang's (2015) recommendation, a comprehensive approach was adopted, incorporating at least three fit indices from different categories: absolute fit, incremental fit and parsimonious fit.

Within the absolute fit category, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) stands at 0.043, falling below the threshold of 0.08. In the incremental fit category, the comparative fit index (CFI) is recorded at 0.943, surpassing the threshold of 0.90. In addition, in the parsimonious fit category, the ratio of Chi sq/df is 1.721, below the threshold of 3.0.

Consequently, the measurement model in this study satisfies the criteria for construct validity, as recommended by Awang (2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2015). The details, acceptance levels and comments for each fitness index category are outlined in Table A11 (in Appendix).

*4.2.2 The comparative fit index and the chi-square.* Tables A12 and A13 (in Appendix) show the results for the CFI and the chi-square/degrees of freedom (Chi sq/df), revealing

values below the acceptable thresholds of 0.95 (Meyers *et al.*, 2006) and 5.0 (Awang, 2015), respectively. In summary, the majority of the fitness indices meet the required standards in this analysis, confirming the appropriateness of the data for subsequent examination and analysis.

*4.2.3 Mean, standard deviation, average variance extracted and composite reliability.* The initial assessment of validity and reliability involved an examination of loadings, average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) following the approach outlined by Hair *et al.* (2020). Table A14 (in Appendix) reveals that all AVE values exceeded 0.5, while all CR values surpassed 0.7. The fulfillment of these established cutoff values for AVE and CR indicates that the measurement exhibits both convergent validity and reliability, leading to the conclusion that the measurement instruments used in the study are robust and dependable (Ramayah *et al.*, 2018).

*4.2.4 Discriminant validity.* Table A15 (in Appendix) highlights bolded diagonal values information which represent the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE), while the remaining values denote the correlations between the constructs within both columns and rows. The table provides evidence of discriminant validity for the model, as the diagonal values for all constructs surpass the correlations between the constructs (Awang, 2015).

## 4.3 The standardized regression weights

The provided information displays the outcomes of standardized estimates in Figure 2, indicating the proportion of variance explained within the model. In this study, the endogenous construct is tourist intention to revisit. The squared multiple correlations ($R^2$) for this study reveal a value of 0.31, equating to 31%. This implies that 64% of the variance was elucidated by factors such as tourist intention to visit, tourism operators, event managements, local communities, investments, educational institutions, tourism organizations and Muslim-friendly. Meanwhile, 31% of the total variance remains
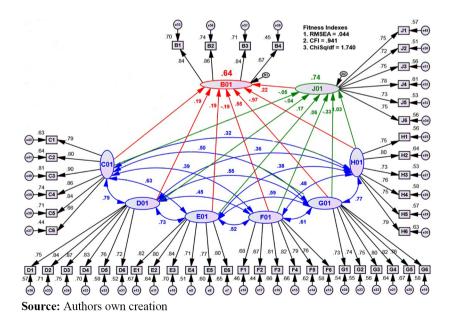


**Source:** Authors own creation

Figure 2.
The standardized regression weights for every path in the model

predictable by other unaccounted factors. Importantly, a value exceeding 26% is deemed a large effect, as corroborated in this study (Cohen, 1992).

### 4.4 Hypotheses testing

The examination of hypotheses using structural equation modeling (SEM) is presented in Table A16 below, offering a comprehensive output for assessing causal effects. The 12 ensuing hypotheses represent direct relationships (path analysis) delineating the impacts of exogenous constructs on their respective endogenous counterparts.

### 4.5 Testing mediations

The assessment of mediations encompasses six hypotheses, demanding scrutiny of indirect effects. The objective of this study is to examine hypotheses that focus on the mediating influence of Muslim-friendly constructs on the relationship between exogenous and endogenous constructs.

*4.5.1 Hypothesis 7.* The bootstrapping results regarding the connection between tourism operators and tourist intention to revisit. The direct effect in this route is recorded at 0.010, while the indirect effect stands at 0.608. This observation suggests the absence of a mediating effect of Muslim-friendly elements, as the indirect effect is lower than the direct effect in the relationship between tourism operators and tourist intention to revisit. Consequently, it can be concluded that the bootstrapping results indicate no mediation effects due to the lack of significance in the indirect effect.

*4.5.2 Hypothesis 8.* The outcomes of bootstrapping analysis concerning the impact of event management on tourist intention to revisit, encompassing constructs related to Muslim-friendly considerations. In this context, the direct effect is determined to be 0.126, while the indirect effect stands at 0.767. Notably, the findings suggest an absence of mediating influence from Muslim-friendly aspects, as the indirect effect is lower than the direct effect in the relationship between event management and tourist intention to revisit. Hence, it is reasonable to infer that the outcomes do not signify the presence of mediation effects, given that the indirect effect is found to be statistically insignificant.

*4.5.3 Hypothesis9.* The outcomes of bootstrapping analysis concerning the influence of local communities on constructs related to tourist intention to revisit. In this context, the direct effect through the same route is quantified at 0.126, while the indirect effect stands at 0.057. This finding suggests the presence of a mediating effect of Muslim-friendly considerations, as the indirect effect surpasses the direct effect in the relationship between local communities and tourist intention to revisit. Accordingly, it is plausible to assert that the bootstrapping findings indicate full mediation effects, given the significance of the indirect effect.

*4.5.4 Hypothesis 10.* The outcomes of the bootstrapping analysis regarding investments on constructs influencing tourist intention to revisit. The direct effect within the same route is recorded as 0.008, while the indirect effect is noted at 0.731. These values suggest a lack of mediating influence from the Muslim-friendly factor, with the indirect effect being lower than the direct effect in the relationship between investments and tourist intention to revisit. Considering these findings, it is reasonable to conclude that the bootstrapping results do not support the presence of a mediating effect, as the indirect effect is deemed insignificant.

*4.5.5 Hypothesis 11.* The outcomes of the bootstrapping analysis pertaining to the influence of educational institutions on constructs shaping tourist intention to revisit. In this context, the direct effect within the same route is noted as 0.004, while the indirect effect is quantified at 0.008. These findings suggest a mediating role of the Muslim-friendly factor, where the indirect effect surpasses the direct effect in the relationship between educational

institutions and tourist intention to revisit. The insights derived point toward partial mediation effects, as the direct effect remains statistically significant.

*4.5.6 Hypothesis 12.* The outcomes derived from the bootstrapping analysis, specifically focused on the interplay between tourism organizations and the constructs influencing tourist intention to revisit. Notably, the direct effect within the same route is identified as 0.004, while the indirect effect is calculated at 0.013. These findings suggest the existence of a mediating effect attributed to the Muslim-friendly factor, with the indirect effect outweighing the direct effect in shaping the relationship between tourism organizations and the intention of tourists to revisit. Significantly, the insights underscore partial mediation effects, as the direct effect maintains its statistical significance. Table A17 below presents the bootstrapping results for *H7–H12*.

## 5. Discussions

This study was conducted to explore the complex relationships among tour operators, event management, local communities, investments, educational institutions and tourism organizations. Notably, there was a lack of empirical findings regarding the impact of Muslim-friendly factors on tourists' intention to revisit Terengganu. The main objective of this study is to identify the determining factors influencing tourists' intentions to revisit Terengganu. These determinants include tourism operators, event management, local communities, investments, educational institutions and tourism organizations. In the research framework, these factors are classified as exogenous constructs, while tourist intention to revisit is considered the endogenous construct. In addition, the study investigates the potential mediating role of Muslim-friendly factors between the exogenous and endogenous constructs. Specifically, it examines Muslim-friendly considerations as potential mediators in the relationship between determinant factors and tourists' intentions to revisit Terengganu.

In testing hypotheses, SEM analysis assessed data normality, dimensionality, validity and reliability. Dimensionality success was indicated by all factor loadings exceeding 0.60. Validity, including convergent, construct and discriminant validity, was confirmed with values above 0.50. Discriminant validity was also established, ensuring the nonredundancy of all items. Model fitness indexes met criteria (RMSEA < 0.08, CFI > 0.9, IFI > 0.9, TLI > 0.9, Chi sq/df < 3.0), Hvalidating construct validity. Reliability and AVE met standards, indicating reliability. The Cronbach's alpha (>0.6) and AVE (>0.5) affirmed the model's reliability.

In evaluating the hypothesis concerning the significant effects between constructs, a structured analysis of the formulated structural model was undertaken. To provide a concise overview, 12 hypotheses were posited for this study. The results indicated support for hypotheses testing direct effects (*H1–H6*). Conversely, regarding hypotheses probing mediating effects, support was found for *H9*, *H11* and *H12*. Significantly, the role of Muslim-friendly factors demonstrated a nuanced pattern. While Muslim-friendly factors were found to significantly mediate in certain relationships, specifically *H9*, *H11* and *H12*, they did not exhibit a significant mediating influence in the relationships involving tourism operators, event managements and investments with tourist intentions to revisit. This suggests that the mediation role of Muslim-friendly factors varied across the constructs examined in the study.

### 5.1 Discussion on findings

The findings from a bootstrapping analysis suggest that Muslim-friendly practices do not act as a mediating factor between tourism operators, event management and investments in influencing tourists' intention to revisit Terengganu. Brown *et al.* (2010) argued that this approach enables a deeper understanding of how messages influence visitors' beliefs and

actions, leading to better responses based on their needs. This theory can be effectively applied in edu-tourism to intervene in factors such as tour operators, event managements, local communities involvement, investments, educational institutions and tourism organizations. In addition, it can help understand tourist satisfaction and the role of Muslim-friendly practices as mediators.

Given the distinctive challenges presented by edu-tourism, where tourists immerse themselves in destinations for extended durations, impacting both their place of stay and the local communities, a comprehensive grasp of this theory becomes pivotal. Such understanding significantly contributes to fostering hospitality and support within the Muslim-friendly context, emerging as a crucial factor for sustainable development in the field of edu-tourism (Alipour *et al.*, 2020).

*5.1.1 Tourism operators.* The research indicates that Muslim-friendly practices do not significantly mediate tourism operators' impact on tourists' intention to revisit. Tourists' expressions and experiences with services provided by operators heavily influence their decision to revisit destinations (Yuliviona *et al.*, 2016). It is crucial for tourism operators to ensure proper implementation of Muslim-friendly elements in destinations to enhance travelers' experiences (Yuliviona *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, the level of religiosity among tourists plays a significant role, influencing their satisfaction and likelihood to revisit destinations (Battour, 2019).

Tourism operators must understand that adherence to Muslim-friendly requirements may not uniformly satisfy all tourists due to differing levels of religiosity (Battour, 2019). Poor management of Muslim-friendly elements by operators can lead to decreased satisfaction and future intention to revisit (Han *et al.*, 2019). Schultz (2015) suggests that understanding tourists' perceptions of edu-tourism with a Muslim-friendly context can be achieved through the theory of planned behavior. This theory allows for the examination of tourists' attitudes, social influences and belief structures, aiding tourism operators in creating experiences that align with Muslim-friendly principles and meet tourists' needs effectively.

The research highlights the importance of understanding the nuanced preferences and needs of Muslim tourists, especially regarding the implementation of Muslim-friendly practices by tourism operators. Although the findings suggest that these practices may not significantly mediate the impact of tourism operators on tourists' intention to revisit, it is crucial to acknowledge the complexities involved. Future research directions could include investigating the specific aspects of Muslim-friendly practices that resonate most with different segments of Muslim tourists, exploring the role of cultural competency and training for tourism operators to enhance the implementation of these practices and examining the potential impact of technology, such as mobile applications or virtual guides, in facilitating Muslim-friendly experiences offered by tourism operators. (Fauzi and Battour (2024).

*5.1.2 Event managements.* The findings reveal that the concept of Muslim friendly does not mediate between event management and tourists' intention to revisit. Tourists typically cherish memorable experiences from unique event programs, but the significance of Muslim-friendly concepts diminishes if events do not align with these principles at destinations (Mahdzar, 2019). Event managers must recognize that tourists' experiences are subjective and diverse, and assumptions about uniform characteristics or values across cultures are inappropriate (Adirestuty, 2019). In addition, variations in religious understanding among Muslim tourists, influenced by their level of religiosity, impact their preferences for Muslim-friendly tourism services (Utami *et al.*, 2018). Thus, event managers need to design tourism packages that accommodate the diverse needs of Muslim tourists while catering to the preferences of the majority (Utami *et al.*, 2018).

The theory of planned behavior is beneficial for event management as it provides insights into the mechanisms driving tourist behavior during events. Understanding these mechanisms enables event planners to create experiences that align with the needs and preferences of Muslim tourists, leading to positive outcomes (Pannilage and Lin, 2016). Therefore, by integrating the theory of planned behavior into event planning processes, event managers can better cater to the diverse needs of Muslim tourists and enhance their overall satisfaction with event experiences.

The Muslim-friendly concepts may not directly influence tourists' intention to revisit through event management, yet underscore the importance of integrating such elements into event planning to cater to the diverse needs of Muslim tourists. Exploring additional research paths could involve delving into the effectiveness of various strategies, such as offering halal catering options or prayer facilities, in incorporating Muslim-friendly practices into event management. In addition, investigating the role of cultural sensitivity training for event planners in designing inclusive and culturally appropriate events for Muslim tourists could provide valuable insights. Furthermore, examining the impact of religious events or festivals on Muslim tourists' perception of destination attractiveness and their likelihood to revisit would contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between religious practices and tourism experiences (Muslim and Harun, 2022).

*5.1.3 Local communities.* The integration of Muslim-friendly practices in tourism has the potential to positively impact local communities and foster tourist intention to revisit. Sustainable tourism practices aligned with Muslim-friendly principles contribute to positive environmental impacts and enhance the appeal of destinations to tourists seeking Islamic values (Kamarudin and Nizam, 2013). Understanding the impact of Muslim-friendly initiatives on local communities in the edu-tourism market can provide a competitive advantage for encouraging repeat visits (Battour and Ismail, 2008).

The theory of planned behavior offers valuable insights for edu-tourism stakeholders by analyzing tourists' demographic profiles, attitudes and behaviors. This understanding aids in the development of targeted marketing strategies and services that meet Muslim-friendly requirements. Emphasizing the importance of assessing local community behavior, the theory advocates for the creation of a sustainable edu-tourism framework that integrates effectively with Muslim-friendly contexts (Schultz, 2015). Thus, by aligning with Muslim-friendly practices and incorporating the theory of planned behavior, edu-tourism players can enhance visitor experiences and promote destination sustainability.

Integrating Muslim-friendly practices not only enhances destination competitiveness but also presents an opportunity to positively impact local communities. Understanding the dynamics between these initiatives and their effects on local communities is crucial for fostering sustainable tourism development. Alternative research directions could include assessing the socioeconomic impact of Muslim-friendly tourism initiatives on local communities, encompassing aspects such as employment opportunities and cultural preservation. It is imperative to explore community engagement strategies aimed at ensuring the fair distribution of benefits derived from Muslim-friendly tourism. In addition, delving into the role of destination branding in promoting destinations as Muslim-friendly and examining its influence on tourist perceptions and behaviors would enrich our understanding of the subject (Abdullah *et al.*, 2020).

*5.1.4 Investments.* The findings reveals that Muslim friendly does not significantly impact in investment primarily due to inadequate investment facilities catering to tourist needs. Without proper alignment between tourism quality frameworks and Muslim-friendly elements, investments in this area do not effectively enhance destination competitiveness. However, investments adhering to Muslim-friendly principles can ensure ethical profit

generation and supervision. Yet, the lack of cooperation among stakeholders in implementing Muslim-friendly interventions leads to unsatisfactory tourism experiences, reducing tourist loyalty (Bintarti and Fahamsyah, 2018).

Investments in the tourism sector are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavior control. Recent studies highlight the positive impact of attitudes and perceived behavior control on investment intentions, especially when aligning with Islamic principles (Paramita *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, integrating Muslim-friendly elements into investments and tourism facilities can enhance destination competitiveness and foster tourist loyalty, particularly among Muslim communities.

While initial findings indicate that investments in Muslim-friendly practices may not have a significant impact on tourists' intention to revisit, there remains potential for leveraging investments to bolster destination competitiveness and cultivate tourist loyalty among Muslim travelers (Battour *et al.*, 2022). Future research could explore the involvement of public-private partnerships in advocating for investments that align with both Muslim-friendly principles and destination sustainability. Moreover, investigating consumer preferences and their readiness to pay premiums for destinations offering comprehensive Muslim-friendly infrastructure and services could yield valuable insights. In addition, delving into innovative financing mechanisms, such as Islamic finance instruments, to support investments in Muslim-friendly tourism development would be crucial for advancing this field of study and promoting sustainable growth in the tourism industry.

*5.1.5 Educational institutions.* The study reveals a positive impact of Muslim friendly in educational institutions on tourist intention to revisit (Said *et al.*, 2014). This aligns with research emphasizing the role of education in community development. Implementing Muslim-friendly systems in education positively influences future edu-tourism, attracting visitors interested in Islamic civilization. In addition, integrating Muslim-friendly orientations into curricula preserves heritage, making educational destinations appealing (Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2018). The theory of planned behavior aids in understanding tourist behavior, crucial for attracting Muslim tourists to educational tourism (Russo *et al.*, 2015). Overall, these findings underscore the importance of education in shaping tourist experiences and destination attractiveness through Muslim-friendly practices.

Highlighting the potential of educational tourism in attracting Muslim travelers interest in Islamic civilization and heritage preservation give positive impact of Muslim-friendly practices in educational institutions and it is significant (Alawi, 2023). Exploring additional research avenues could involve assessing the effectiveness of educational programs in promoting cross-cultural understanding and tolerance among tourists in Muslim-friendly destinations. In addition, investigating the role of educational institutions in shaping destination image and branding strategies to attract Muslim tourists, along with exploring the integration of technology, such as virtual learning platforms, in delivering immersive educational experiences for Muslim tourists, would further enhance our understanding of this area.

*5.1.6 Tourism organizations.* The findings indicate a positive mediating effect of Muslim-friendly initiatives on tourist intention to revisit, aligning with Hussin (2017), who emphasizes the importance of tourism organizations promoting Muslim-friendly products and services. However, challenges exist in implementing Muslim-friendly controls. Nonetheless, by incorporating policies that prioritize economic advancement, tourism organizations can enhance visitor intention to revisit destinations (Haque *et al.*, 2019).

In addition, the application of the theory of planned behavior in edu-tourism provides valuable insights into tourist behavior, particularly among Muslim travelers. This aids tourism organizations in designing effective strategies to improve Muslim-friendly

destinations (Chen and Liu, 2011). Overall, these findings underscore the significance of catering to Muslim tourists' needs and preferences in tourism organization practices, ultimately contributing to destination attractiveness and visitor satisfaction.

Recognizing the mediating effect of Muslim-friendly initiatives on tourists' intention to revisit underscores the significance of proactive efforts by tourism organizations in promoting Muslim-friendly products and services. Nonetheless, challenges persist in implementation, warranting further investigation. This could be delved into analyzing the impact of government policies and regulations on the development of Muslim-friendly tourism destinations. In addition, exploring the role of destination marketing organizations in promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity in tourism marketing campaigns, along with investigating the potential of collaborative networks and partnerships among tourism organizations in enhancing the quality and accessibility of Muslim-friendly tourism experiences, would contribute to a deeper understanding of this field (Kamarudin and Ismail, 2018).

## 6. Practical and theoretical contributions

### 6.1 Practical contributions

*6.1.1 Tourism organization contributions.* Over the past few decades, the halal tourism industry has gained significant traction, driven by the growing interest among Muslim tourists. This surge in popularity has led to increased awareness of Muslim-friendly destinations, not only in predominantly Muslim countries but also in non-Muslim nations. Countries with a Muslim-majority population have seen a rise in initiatives aimed at accommodating Muslim-friendly factors in their tourism offerings (Jeaheng *et al.*, 2020). To enhance the diversity of their offerings, tourism organizations in Terengganu can integrate a range of Muslim-friendly services in line with Islamic principles. These may include various facilities and amenities, such as a variety of halal dining options, designated prayer areas and accommodations that not only respect cultural sensitivities but also adhere to Sharia guidelines. By incorporating these services, tourism organizations cater to the preferences of Muslim tourists, increasing their appeal and providing a more inclusive and culturally sensitive experience.

In Terengganu's edu-tourism sector, organizations are implementing innovative strategies to cater to Muslim-friendly tourism. For instance, educational institutions are collaborating with local businesses to offer guided tours of historical Islamic sites, providing educational experiences aligned with Islamic principles. In addition, tourism organizations are developing specialized educational programs focused on Islamic art and architecture, enriching the cultural understanding of Muslim and non-Muslim visitors alike (PITAS2023, 2022).

*6.1.2 Tourism operators' contributions.* Tourism operators aiming to tap into the Muslim-friendly tourism segment should prioritize the enhancement of Muslim-friendly facilities. This includes focusing on Sharia-compliant hotels, separate gymnasiums, designated places of worship and shopping centers, aligning these amenities with the specific needs of a Muslim-friendly context to attract a greater number of Muslim visitors. To cater to dietary preferences, it is imperative for tourism industry entrepreneurs to offer halal and meticulously prepared food and drinks, visibly marked with halal logos and certificates. In addition, for tour operators in Muslim-friendly destinations, there is a recommendation to strengthen the emotional connection with visitors by providing halal products and services that offer an immersive experience characterized by beauty, tranquility and enjoyment (Hasan, 2024).

On the other hand, tourism operators in Terengganu are spearheading initiatives to enhance Muslim-friendly facilities within edu-tourism destinations. For example, operators are partnering with local mosques to organize educational tours highlighting Islamic history

and traditions. They are also offering specialized workshops on Islamic calligraphy and traditional crafts, providing immersive learning opportunities for visitors interested in Islamic culture and heritage (The Star, 2022).

*6.1.3 Marketing contributions.* From a marketing perspective, strategically addressing the needs of the Muslim-friendly segment enables tourism organizations to tap into the growing market of Muslim tourists. There is a noticeable trend among Muslim travelers who actively seek destinations and services aligning with their cultural and religious values within the framework of Islam. This evolving demographic presents a significant opportunity for tourism organizations to expand their customer base and cater to the specific preferences of Muslim travelers, thereby contributing to market growth.

Furthermore, the adoption of initiatives for Muslim-friendly programs can enhance competitiveness in the tourism industry market. As the demand for Muslim-friendly tourism options rises, tourism organizations that proactively address the needs of this segment distinguish themselves in the market, potentially gaining a competitive advantage. By cultivating a positive reputation and fostering an encouraging image, these organizations can concurrently build their brand within the tourism market for Muslim-friendly destinations, thereby attracting a greater influx of tourists.

Terengganu's tourism organizations are leveraging digital platforms to promote Muslim-friendly edu-tourism experiences. For instance, they are creating interactive online guides showcasing educational activities tailored to Muslim travelers, such as visits to Islamic museums and cultural centers. In addition, they are collaborating with influencers and bloggers from the Muslim community to highlight the region's diverse educational offerings, attracting a wider audience of Muslim tourists interested in edu-tourism (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2021).

*6.1.4 Economic and commercial impact.* The findings of this study offer valuable insights for entrepreneurs and business owners operating within the Terengganu sector. It highlights the critical importance of adhering to and implementing Muslim-friendly practices within the realm of edu-tourism. By doing so, they can effectively target a larger demographic of Muslim tourists within the tourism market. Furthermore, the downstream effects of a thriving tourism sector are noteworthy. These include an increase in the arrival of Muslim tourists from international destinations, heightened occupancy rates within accommodations and increased expenditure within local businesses. Such developments not only foster growth but also pave the way for forging new trade relationships, particularly within the halal sector. In essence, embracing and promoting Muslim-friendly initiatives not only enriches the tourism experience but also contributes significantly to the economic advancement and overall development of the region.

The adoption of Muslim-friendly practices within Terengganu's edu-tourism sector is driving economic growth and innovation. For instance, the investments in halal-certified dining options and prayer facilities are attracting Muslim travelers seeking culturally sensitive educational experiences. Furthermore, partnerships with local artisans and entrepreneurs are creating new opportunities for Islamic-themed souvenirs and handicrafts, stimulating economic activity and promoting cultural exchange within the edu-tourism industry (Yusuf *et al.*, 2021).

*6.1.5 Learning contributions.* From an educational perspective, the research findings can be integrated into tourism and hospitality education programs, where the Ministry can offer subjects focusing on the potential and unique needs within the Muslim-friendly destination segment. Students can gain a comprehensive understanding of how to develop and promote products and services within the Muslim-friendly destination segment more effectively. Such educational integration serves as a proactive step in preparing future

professionals and industry players who are more sensitive and creative in navigating the country's halal tourism industry landscape toward further growth. Students equipped with curricula and knowledge about Muslim-friendly destinations indirectly enhance the overall quality of service delivery in the state's tourism hospitality sector in the future, where they will better understand the specific needs of Muslim tourists.

Furthermore, integrating this research into the education curriculum at higher education institutions can directly foster a culture of inclusivity and diversity within tourism and hospitality programs. It emphasizes the importance of sensitivity and adaptation to various cultures among nations in meeting the needs of diverse traveler segments, ultimately contributing to the future professional competence in the field globally.

Essentially, by embracing the insights gained from this research, higher education institutions can play a crucial role in shaping the generation of tourism professionals and equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the increasingly dynamic tourism industry landscape. Furthermore, educational institutions in Terengganu could incorporate with Islamic studies into their tourism curriculum, offering specialized courses on Islamic history, architecture and art. In addition, organizing field trips to historical mosques and Islamic landmarks, providing students with firsthand exposure to Islamic heritage, guest lectures by renowned scholars and experts in Islamic studies will enrich students' understanding of Muslim-friendly tourism practices, preparing them for careers in the growing field of edu-tourism (The Star, 2022).

*6.1.6 Public policy.* From a public policy perspective, the research findings can significantly influence and shape the state action plan aimed at fostering the growth of Muslim-friendly tourism in Terengganu, particularly through the edu-tourism segment. This endeavor can target various crucial aspects to enhance the overall Muslim tourism experience within edu-tourism initiatives. Firstly, supporting incentives for halal certification can encourage businesses to invest in meeting the needs of Muslim-friendly destinations. In addition, backing the enhancement of infrastructure and facilities, such as prayer areas and halal dining options, can improve accessibility, comfort and safety for travelers. Finally, leveraging the findings to promote cultural sensitivity in marketing campaigns can attract more Muslim tourists by highlighting Terengganu's rich Islamic heritage and culture. By incorporating these recommendations into the state action plan, particularly in the realm of edu-tourism, Terengganu has the potential to emerge as a prominent Muslim-friendly destination, thereby fostering economic growth and development in the region.

Encouraging investments in the edu-tourism industry by the Terengganu state government plays a pivotal role in fostering economic growth, boosting business activities and enhancing competitiveness. This, in turn, initiates a positive cycle that not only improves tourist satisfaction but also contributes to long-term survival and growth. Notably, investments aligned with Muslim-friendly elements have the potential to significantly impact tourist loyalty, particularly among the Muslim demographic. Consequently, it is imperative for the government to promote and implement frameworks and policies for investments in accordance with Shariah law. Such measures inspire investors to participate in creating a Muslim-friendly environment, stimulating growth in the edu-tourism industry while adhering to principles that condemn unlawful interest rates and speculative business practices.

Influencing public policy is crucial for fostering the growth of Muslim-friendly tourism in Terengganu's edu-tourism segment. Recommendations from research findings can guide the development of state action plans to enhance the overall Muslim tourism experience. Incentivizing halal certification can stimulate investment, ensuring that businesses meet the specific needs of Muslim tourists. State guide policy development for Muslim-friendly

tourism in edu-tourism will incentivizing halal certification, improving infrastructure and promoting cultural sensitivity in marketing to enhance the overall visitor experience (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2021).

*6.1.7 Contribution to research.* This research makes a substantial contribution to the field of halal tourism by shedding light on the mediating influence of Muslim-friendly environments on various determinants within edu-tourism destinations. Alongside empirically illustrating how these Muslim-friendly factors impact tourists' decisions and experiences, the study enriches existing literature on Muslim tourists' behavior, destination competitiveness and effective tourism marketing strategies.

In addition, the findings of this research offer dynamic insights into the preferences and requirements of Muslim tourists, stressing the significance of integrating Muslim-friendly practices into edu-tourism offerings. By identifying these mediating effects, the research not only advances academic discussions but also provides practical implications for stakeholders in the tourism sector.

Furthermore, this study serves as a blueprint for future research endeavors, encouraging scholars to explore further dimensions of Muslim tourist behavior and the development of Muslim-friendly destinations tailored to the edu-tourism segment. By expanding on this groundwork, researchers can deepen their understanding of how to create more inclusive tourism experiences while boosting destination competitiveness.

In essence, this research significantly advances our understanding of edu-tourism and underscores the importance of incorporating Muslim-friendly contexts in its development and promotion. It represents a pivotal step forward in meeting the diverse needs of Muslim tourists and maximizing the potential of Muslim-friendly edu-tourism within the global tourism industry.

By shedding light on the mediating influence of Muslim-friendly environments on various determinants within edu-tourism destinations, the study offers valuable insights into tourist behavior, destination competitiveness and effective tourism marketing strategies. Moreover, by identifying mediating effects, the research not only advances academic discussions but also provides practical implications for stakeholders in the Terengganu's tourism sector (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2021).

*6.1.8 Impact on society.* By promoting a Muslim-friendly context in Terengganu's edu-tourism destinations, it has the potential to shape societal attitudes toward cultural diversity and inclusiveness, fostering acceptance and respect for diverse needs. This promotion cultivates a welcoming and respectful atmosphere for Muslim tourists from various backgrounds while also raising awareness of social unity, tolerance and harmony within society.

The provision of Muslim-friendly facilities and services not only caters to the specific requirements of Muslim tourists but also enhances their overall experience during their visit. By ensuring that Muslim visitors feel comfortable, appreciated and valued, the tourism industry in Terengganu can create positive impressions that may lead to return visits. Consequently, this reinforces Terengganu's reputation as a Muslim-friendly destination, attracting more visitors and contributing to the sustainable growth of the tourism industry in the region.

This impact extends beyond economic benefits to encompass social cohesion and cultural enrichment, positioning Terengganu as a model for inclusive and harmonious tourism practices within the broader societal context (Yusuf *et al.*, 2021).

## 6.2 Theoretical contributions

Implementing the theory of planned behavior is crucial for stakeholders in the tourism sector as they define the attributes of Muslim-friendly environments, serving as conduits for determinant factors influencing tourist arrivals in Terengganu's edu-tourism segment.

Grasping these nuances is vital for establishing a sustainable framework in edu-tourism, as highlighted by Schultz (2015). He emphasizes the need for a systematic approach, where edu-tourism players systematically assess and recognize tourist behaviors in connection with Muslim-friendly contexts within the edu-tourism segment. This theory empowers edu-tourism players to gain insights into tourists' demographic profiles, attitudes and behaviors toward Muslim-friendly environments, facilitating an evaluation of the effectiveness of determinant factors supporting edu-tourism. Additionally, it streamlines the development of future marketing strategies and services tailored to the Muslim-friendly context, aligning with insights provided by Jackowitz *et al.* (2016). Below are several theoretical contributions:

*6.2.1 Cultural sensitivity and adaptation.* Through the theory of planned behavior, stakeholders gain profound insights into how Terengganu's local culture influences tourist behavior within Muslim-friendly environments. This understanding enables them to adapt services in nuanced ways that amplify the satisfaction and experience of Muslim visitors, thus driving forward cultural sensitivity and adaptation within the edu-tourism domain. This perspective offers a fresh outlook on how cultural nuances can be leveraged to enhance the tourism experience, providing innovative solutions for catering to the needs of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds in edu-tourism settings.

*6.2.2 Community engagement and empowerment.* Application of the theory of planned behavior fosters a participatory approach toward community-driven initiatives in Muslim-friendly tourism locales. By actively involving local communities in decision-making processes, stakeholders empower them to take charge of tourism development, leading to more sustainable and culturally authentic experiences. This approach not only enhances support for Terengganu's Muslim-friendly destinations but also bolsters community resilience and cohesion within the edu-tourism sector. This perspective offers a novel solution by emphasizing community empowerment as a cornerstone of sustainable tourism development, paving the way for inclusive and community-driven tourism practices in edu-tourism destinations.

*6.2.3 Competitiveness and destination positioning.* Insights derived from the theory of planned behavior offer fresh perspectives on enhancing destination competitiveness and positioning Terengganu as a frontrunner in the Muslim-friendly tourism market. By delving deeper into tourist preferences and behaviors, stakeholders can craft innovative experiences that set Terengganu apart from other destinations, driving economic growth and propelling discussions on destination competitiveness within the realm of edu-tourism. This viewpoint introduces a novel approach to destination management by leveraging insights from tourist behavior to strategically position Terengganu as a leading destination in the edu-tourism market, thereby contributing to the advancement of destination management practices in the field of edu-tourism.

*6.2.4 Sustainable tourism development.* The application of the theory of planned behavior advocates for a comprehensive approach to sustainable tourism development in Terengganu. By integrating long-term environmental, societal and economic considerations into decision-making processes, stakeholders ensure that edu-tourism development aligns with principles of sustainability and responsible tourism management. This theoretical framework guides the implementation of forward-thinking practices that safeguard cultural heritage and natural resources, thus pushing forward discussions on sustainable tourism within the edu-tourism landscape.

This perspective introduces innovative solutions for promoting sustainability in edu-tourism destinations by integrating principles of responsible tourism management into decision-making processes, thereby contributing to the advancement of sustainable tourism practices in the field of edu-tourism.

*6.2.5 Crisis management and resilience.* In applying the theory of planned behavior to crisis management and resilience-building efforts in Terengganu's Muslim-friendly edu-tourism destinations, stakeholders leverage insights into tourists' attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. By understanding tourists' perceptions and responses to crises, stakeholders can develop proactive strategies and contingency plans to mitigate risks, ensure visitor safety and maintain educational continuity. This involves implementing enhanced security measures, providing clear information and training to empower tourists and collaborating with local stakeholders and authorities. Ultimately, these efforts aim to enhance destination resilience and recovery capabilities, safeguarding Terengganu's reputation as a safe and resilient edu-tourism destination.

*6.2.6 Visitor satisfaction and loyalty.* In exploring the theory of planned behavior's role in predicting visitor satisfaction and loyalty in Terengganu's Muslim-friendly edu-tourism sites, stakeholders delve into tourists' attitudes, intentions and behaviors within these destinations. By understanding what influences visitor satisfaction and loyalty, stakeholders can identify specific factors affecting the overall visitor experience. Armed with this knowledge, stakeholders can implement targeted interventions and enhancements to improve various aspects of the visitor experience, ultimately fostering greater satisfaction and encouraging repeat visitation to Terengganu's edu-tourism sites.

## 7. Conclusions
This study endeavors to explore the factors influencing tourists' intentions to revisit the edu-tourism industry in Terengganu, with a focus on the mediating effect of being Muslim friendly. Drawing from the theory of planned behavior, which posits that cognitive processes influence attitudes and tendencies, this research aims to illuminate how these factors impact tourists' behavioral intentions, loyalty, and, ultimately, their desire to revisit edu-tourism destinations. The study yields specific insights for bodies and agencies involved in the edu-tourism environment, particularly in the context of Muslim-friendly mediation. In addition, the framework proposed in this study offers practical suggestions grounded in empirical research from the perspective of tourists in the edu-tourism segment.

By using the theory of planned behavior, this framework provides a nuanced understanding of tourist behavior, encompassing crucial constructs such as tour operators, event management, local communities, investments, educational institutions, tourism organizations, tourist satisfaction and Muslim-friendly considerations.

The confirmation of the mediating role of Muslim-friendly commitment in this study holds significant implications for the management of edu-tourism. The findings contribute both theoretically and practically to tourism organizations, tour operators, event managers and the government sector.

Despite the valuable insights gained, it is crucial to acknowledge certain limitations encountered during this study. Notably, the scarcity of empirical literature specific to Muslim friendliness in Terengganu's edu-tourism posed a challenge, requiring reliance on related studies on Sharia-compliant hotels, the broader tourism industry and Islamic tourism. While these limitations are apparent, they serve as opportunities for future research to build upon, suggesting avenues for further exploration and the expansion of empirical data. This will, in turn, enhance our understanding of tourists' needs concerning Muslim-friendly aspects, particularly in the development of edu-tourism segmentation in Terengganu.

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**Appendix**

| No. | Year | Overall no. of visitors ('000) | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2019 | 213,206 | 33 |
| 2 | 2018 | 159,637 | 8.4 |
| 3 | 2017 | 147,148 | 14.3 |
| 4 | 2016 | 171,799 | −13.3 |
| 5 | 2015 | 198,282 | 5.8 |
| 6 | 2014 | 187,353 | −15 |
| 7 | 2013 | 220,452 | 9.5 |
| 8 | 2012 | 201,402 | 18.9 |
| 9 | 2011 | 169,370 | − |

**Table A1.**
Number of visitors to Terengganu State Museum

**Note:** Table courtesy to Terengganu State Museum (2021)

| No. | Year | Overall no. of visitors | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2019 | 185 | −1.6 |
| 2 | 2018 | 188 | −38 |
| 3 | 2017 | 302 | −20 |
| 4 | 2016 | 381 | 150 |
| 5 | 2015 | 152 | 36 |
| 6 | 2014 | 112 | 1 |
| 7 | 2013 | 111 | −24 |
| 8 | 2012 | 146 | −56 |
| 9 | 2011 | 335 | − |

**Table A2.**
Number of visitors to Wood Carving Village

**Note:** Table courtesy to Wood Carving Village (2021)

| No. | Year | Overall no. of visitors ('000) | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2019 | 37,411 | 70 |
| 2 | 2018 | 22,003 | 28 |
| 3 | 2017 | 17,144 | 17 |
| 4 | 2016 | 14,587 | −3.4 |
| 5 | 2015 | 15,096 | −19 |
| 6 | 2014 | 18,564 | 15 |
| 7 | 2013 | 16,168 | −11 |
| 8 | 2012 | 18,144 | −22 |
| 9 | 2011 | 23,245 | − |

**Table A3.**
Number of visitors to Turtle and Marine Ecosystem Centre

**Note:** Table courtesy to Turtle and Marine Ecosystem Centre (2021)

Analyzing
revisitation
dynamics

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| No. | Year | Overall no. of students | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2019 | 240 | −33 |
| 2 | 2018 | 361 | 3.1 |
| 3 | 2017 | 350 | 103 |
| 4 | 2016 | 172 | 68 |
| 5 | 2015 | 55 | −68 |
| 6 | 2014 | 171 | 94 |
| 7 | 2013 | 10 | 4 |
| 8 | 2012 | 2 | 1 |
| 9 | 2011 | 1 | – |

**Note:** Table courtesy to Post Graduate School, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (2021)

**Table A4.**
Number of foreign
students to Universiti
sultan Zainal Abidin
(first enrollment
program)

| No. | Year | Overall no. of visitors | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2019 | 24,000 | −47 |
| 2 | 2018 | 45,000 | – |
| 3 | 2017 | Not recorded | Not recorded |
| 4 | 2016 | 60,000 | −14 |
| 5 | 2015 | 70,000 | −46 |
| 6 | 2014 | 130,000 | 170 |
| 7 | 2013 | 48,000 | 20 |
| 8 | 2012 | 40,000 | – |

**Note:** Table courtesy to Terengganu Handicraft Center (2021)

**Table A5.**
Number of visitors to
Terengganu
Handicraft Center

| No | Edu-tourism destinations |
|---|---|
| 1 | Terengganu State Museum |
| 2 | Setiu Wetlands |
| 3 | Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin |
| 4 | Universiti Malaysia Terengganu |
| 5 | Turtle and Marine Ecosystem Center |
| 6 | Pusat budaya Kraf Terengganu |
| 7 | Wood Carving Village |

**Note:** Table courtesy to Jabatan Pelancongan Negeri Terengganu (2019)

**Table A6.**
List of edu-tourism
destinations

| No. | Edu-tourism destinations | Population (2019) | Total (%) | Total sample | Each destination |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Terengganu State Museum | 83,045 | 55 | | 211 |
| 2 | Setiu Wetlands | 4,846 | 3 | | 11 |
| 3 | Wood Carving Village | 185 | 1 | | 4 |
| 4 | Universiti Malaysia Terengganu | 473 | 1 | 384 | 4 |
| 5 | Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin | 240 | 1 | | 4 |
| 6 | Pusat budaya kraf Terengganu | 24,000 | 15 | | 58 |
| 7 | Turtle and Marine Ecosystem Center | 37,411 | 24 | | 92 |
| | Total | 150,200 | 100 | 384 | 384 |

**Table A7.**
Summary population and breakdown in each destinations

**Source:** Authors' own creation

| No. | Variables | Measurement scales | Author(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | General and profile info | Likert scale | Winkler and Zimmermann (2015) Lee *et al.* (2017) |
| 2 | Tourist intention to revisit | Likert scale | Rauemi (2001) |
| 3 | Tourism operators | Likert scale | TZO Punat (2015) Shodhganga (2019) Survio (2019) |
| 4 | Event managements | Likert scale | The Audience Agency (2016) |
| 5 | Local communities | Likert scale | The Audience Agency (2016) Arts Education Survey (2009) Muganda (2009) |
| 6 | Investments | Likert scale | Jed Emerson (2001) |
| 7 | Educational institutions | Likert scale | Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory (2019) Ovsenik (2013) |
| 8 | Tourism organizations | Likert scale | World Tourism Organization (2014) The Ability Advisor (2019) |
| 9 | Muslim friendly | Likert scale | Ridzuan and Zahari (2012) Lee *et al.* (2017) |

**Table A8.**
The measurement instruments

**Source:** Authors' own creation

| No | Constructs | Items | Total items |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Tourist intention to revisit | 1–4 | 4 |
| 2 | Tourism operators | 5–10 | 6 |
| 3 | Event management | 11–16 | 6 |
| 4 | Local communities | 17–22 | 6 |
| 5 | Investments | 23–28 | 6 |
| 6 | Educational institution | 29–34 | 6 |
| 7 | Tourism organizations | 35–40 | 6 |
| 8 | Tourist satisfactions | 41–46 | 6 |
| 9 | Muslim friendly | 47–52 | 6 |
| | Total | | 52 |

**Table A9.**
tem questionnaire category after EFA

**Source:** Authors' own creation

| No | Constructs | Cronbach's alpha |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Tourist intention to revisit | 0.849 |
| 2 | Tourism operators | 0.925 |
| 3 | Event management | 0.943 |
| 4 | Local communities | 0.934 |
| 5 | Investments | 0.841 |
| 6 | Educational institution | 0.858 |
| 7 | Tourism organizations | 0.921 |
| 9 | Muslim friendly | 0.885 |

**Source:** Authors' own creation

Table A10.
Cronbach's alpha
reliability value

| Name of category | Name of index | Index value |
|---|---|---|
| Absolute fit | RMSEA | 0.044 |
| Incremental fit | CFI | 0.941 |
| Parsimonious fit | Chisq/df | 1.863 |

**Source:** Authors' own creation

Table A11.
The fitness index for
model

| Model | NFI Delta1 | RFI rho1 | IFI Delta2 | TLI rho2 | CFI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Default model | 0.875 | 0.863 | 0.944 | 0.937 | 0.943 |
| Saturated model | 1 | | 1 | | 1 |
| Independence model | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**Source:** Authors' own creation

Table A12.
The comparative fit
index (CFI)

| Model | NPAR | CMIN | DF | P | CMIN/DF |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Default model | 171 | 2,076.843 | 1,207 | 0 | 1.721 |
| Saturated model | 1,378 | 0 | 0 | | |
| Independence model | 52 | 16,607.333 | 1,326 | 0 | 12.524 |

**Source:** Authors' own creation

Table A13.
The chi-square/
degrees of freedom
(chi sq/df)

| Construct | CR | AVE | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tourism operators | 0.920 | 0.659 | 8.07 | 1.346 |
| Event managements | 0.920 | 0.660 | 8.12 | 1.333 |
| Local communities | 0.911 | 0.631 | 8.18 | 1.277 |
| Investments | 0.888 | 0.571 | 8.74 | 0.914 |
| Educational institutions | 0.897 | 0.591 | 8.57 | 1.057 |
| Tourism organizational | 0.898 | 0.596 | 8.89 | 0.960 |
| Muslim friendly | 0.883 | 0.558 | 8.60 | 0.887 |

**Source:** Authors' own creation

**Table A14.**
Mean, standard deviation, average variance extracted and composite reliability

| Constructs | Tourist intention to revisit | Tourist operators | Event managements | Local communities | Investments | Educational institutions | Tourism organizations | Muslim friendly |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tourist intention to revisit | 0.806 | | | | | | | |
| Tourist operators | 0.35 | 0.812 | | | | | | |
| Event managements | 0.21 | 0.29 | 0.812 | | | | | |
| Local communities | 0.27 | 0.35 | 0.15 | 0.794 | | | | |
| Investments | 0.29 | 0.39 | 0.43 | 0.52 | 0.756 | | | |
| Educational institutions | 0.51 | 0.50 | 0.27 | 0.21 | 0.27 | 0.769 | | |
| Tourism organizations | 0.27 | 0.32 | 0.34 | 0.37 | 0.47 | 0.35 | 0.772 | |
| Muslim friendly | 0.25 | 0.21 | 0.24 | 0.33 | 0.40 | 0.21 | 0.15 | 0.747 |

**Table A15.**
Discriminant validity

**Source:** Authors' own creation

| Construct | Path | Construct | Estimate | SE | CR | P-value | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tourist intention to revisit | ← | Tourist operators | 0.428 | 0.093 | 4.587 | *** | Significant |
| Tourist intention to revisit | ← | Event managements | 0.205 | 0.102 | 2.017 | 0.044 | Significant |
| Tourist intention to revisit | ← | Local communities | 0.219 | 0.097 | 2.254 | 0.024 | Significant |
| Tourist intention to revisit | ← | Investments | −0.265 | 0.086 | −3.063 | 0.002 | Significant |
| Tourist intention to revisit | ← | Educational institutions | 0.767 | 0.257 | 2.99 | 0.003 | Significant |
| Tourist intention to revisit | ← | Tourism organizations | −1.395 | 0.577 | −2.418 | 0.016 | Significant |
| Muslim friendly | ← | Tourism operators | −0.036 | 0.052 | −0.696 | 0.487 | Not significant |
| Muslim friendly | ← | Event Managements | −0.029 | 0.059 | −0.489 | 0.625 | Not significant |
| Muslim friendly | ← | Local Communities | 0.13 | 0.051 | 2.529 | 0.011 | Significant |
| Muslim friendly | ← | Investments | 0.058 | 0.049 | 1.165 | 0.244 | Not significant |
| Muslim friendly | ← | Educational institutions | −0.299 | 0.084 | −3.558 | *** | Significant |
| Muslim friendly | ← | Tourism organizations | 0.962 | 0.088 | 10.934 | *** | Significant |

**Source:** Authors' own creation

Table A16.
Hypotheses testing

| The significance of indirect and direct effects | | |
|---|---|---|
| Hypotheses 7 | Indirect effect (a × b) | Direct effect (c) |
| Bootstrapping result | 0.608 | 0.010 |
| Bootstrapping P-value | 0.625 | 0.010 |
| result | Insignificant | Significant |
| Type of mediation | Not mediation | |
| Hypotheses 8 | Indirect effect (a × b) | Direct effect (c) |
| Bootstrapping result | 0.767 | 0.126 |
| Bootstrapping P-value | 0.629 | 0.126 |
| result | Insignificant | Insignificant |
| Type of mediation | Not mediation | |
| Hypotheses 9 | Indirect effect (a × b) | Direct effect (c) |
| Bootstrapping result | 0.057 | 0.125 |
| Bootstrapping P-value | 0.014 | 0.125 |
| result | Significant | Insignificant |
| Type of mediation | Full mediation since direct is insignificant | |
| | Indirect effect (a × b) | Direct effect (c) |
| Hypotheses 10 | Bootstrapping result | 0.731 | 0.008 |
| Bootstrapping P-value | 0.273 | 0.008 |
| result | Insignificant | Significant |
| Type of mediation | Not mediation | |
| Hypotheses 11 | Indirect effect (a × b) | Direct effect (c) |
| Bootstrapping result | 0.008 | 0.004 |
| Bootstrapping P-value | 0.004 | 0.004 |
| result | Significant | Significant |
| Type of mediation | Partial mediation since direct is also significant | |
| Hypotheses 12 | Indirect effect (a × b) | Direct effect (c) |
| Bootstrapping result | 0.013 | 0.009 |
| Bootstrapping P-value | 0.004 | 0.009 |
| result | Significant | Significant |
| Type of mediation | Partial mediation since direct is also significant | |

**Source:** Authors' own creation

Table A17.
Bootstrapping results

**Instruction: Please tick and complete the following questions with your most appropriate response.**

**SECTION A-GENERAL INFO**

Local Tourists/Visitors  ☐                    Foreign Tourist/Visitors  ☐

Age:

    i.   <  20 years  ☐
    ii.  20-29 years  ☐
    iii.  30-49 years  ☐
    iv.  49-50 years  ☐
    v.  50 years  >  ☐

Occupation:

    i.   Government Sectors  ☐
    ii.  Private Sectors  ☐
    iii.  Self Employed  ☐
    iv.  Others

Educational Level:

    i.   Primary Education  ☐
    ii.  Secondary Education  ☐
    iii.  Diploma  ☐
    iv.  Degree Bachelor  ☐
    v.  Master/PhD  ☐
    vi.  Others

House Income (Ringgit Malaysia):

    i.   24,000 or below  ☐
    ii.  24,001 up to 48,000  ☐
    iii.  48,001 up to 72,000  ☐
    iv.  72,001 up to 90,000  ☐
    v.  90,001 or above  ☐

Channel for travel information (you may choose more than one):

    i.   Internet  ☐
    ii.  Magazine/Newspaper/Book  ☐
    iii.  TV/Radio  ☐
    iv.  Consultant  ☐
    v.  Friends or Family recommendation  ☐
    vi.  Online travel agency (Agoda etc.)  ☐
    vii.  Local travel agency  ☐
    viii.  Exhibition  ☐
    ix.  Tourist information centre  ☐
    x.  Other  ☐

**Figure A1.**
Questionnaire

**SECTION B- TOURIST INTENTION TO REVISIT**

| ITEMS | HIGHLY DISAGREE | | | | | | HIGHLY AGREE | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I like to revisit Terengganu | | | | | | | | | | |
| I will revisit edu-tourism places ( Setiu Wetland, Kenyir Lake, Museum & etc.) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Terengganu has my interest on tourism sites | | | | | | | | | | |
| I will revisit Terengganu again within 2 years | | | | | | | | | | |

**SECTION C- TOURISM OPERATORS**

| ITEMS | HIGHLY DISAGREE | | | | | | HIGHLY AGREE | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Tourism Operators are warm hearted | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tourism Operators are fluent in oral communication | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tourism Operators give a good information on edu-tourism | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tourism Operators are helpful | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tourism Operator's services meet my expectation | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tourism Operators prove a friendly website | | | | | | | | | | |

**SECTION D- EVENT MANAGEMENTS**

| ITEMS | HIGHLY DISAGREE | | | | | | HIGHLY AGREE | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Varieties of events at edu-tourism destinations | | | | | | | | | | |
| The event delivered good information at edu-tourism destinations | | | | | | | | | | |
| The event team were professional | | | | | | | | | | |
| I am satisfy with the event overall at edu-tourism destinations | | | | | | | | | | |
| Great event adds positive future for edu-tourism industry | | | | | | | | | | |
| I will recommend the event to a friend or colleague | | | | | | | | | | |

**SECTION E- LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

| ITEMS | HIGHLY DISAGREE | | | | | | HIGHLY AGREE | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Local Communities contribution in edu-tourism sector is essential | | | | | | | | | | |
| Local Communities support for edu-tourism activities are essential | | | | | | | | | | |
| Local Communities should take the leading role as entrepreneurs | | | | | | | | | | |
| Reasonable prices of local goods at edu-tourism destinations | | | | | | | | | | |
| Encouraging Local Communities to involve in edu-tourism activities | | | | | | | | | | |
| Local Communities have the ability to develop the edu-tourism sector | | | | | | | | | | |

(*continued*)

Figure A1.

**SECTION F- INVESTMENTS**

| ITEMS | HIGHLY DISAGREE | | | | | | HIGHLY AGREE | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Islamic investment help to develop edu-tourism sectors | | | | | | | | | | |
| Islamic investment is needed in edu-tourism sectors | | | | | | | | | | |
| Islamic investment is needed to organize events | | | | | | | | | | |
| Islamic investment is needed in accommodation | | | | | | | | | | |

**SECTION G- EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

| ITEMS | HIGHLY DISAGREE | | | | | | HIGHLY AGREE | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Educational Institutions need more tourism planning and development education program | | | | | | | | | | |
| Educational Institutions allow people to learn tourism | | | | | | | | | | |
| The Educational Institutions environment need to be friendly | | | | | | | | | | |
| Educational Institutions administration need to be supportive | | | | | | | | | | |
| Educational Institutions allow people to experience the local culture | | | | | | | | | | |
| Implementation of new tourism programme is crucial | | | | | | | | | | |

**SECTION H- TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS**

| ITEMS | HIGHLY DISAGREE | | | | | | | HIGHLY AGREE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Tourism Organizations help you to have a better edu-tourism experience | | | | | | | | | | |
| The important of Tourism Organizations to develop international product standard in edu-tourism sectors | | | | | | | | | | |
| The important of Tourism Organization to develop standards and concepts in edu-tourism sectors | | | | | | | | | | |
| The important of Tourism Organization to provide international or global web portal for edu-tourism sectors | | | | | | | | | | |
| Great strategies from Tourism Organizations will contribute sustainability in edu-tourism sectors | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tourism Organizations in Terengganu provides good quality services | | | | | | | | | | |

**SECTION G- MUSLIM FRIENDLY CONTEXT**

| ITEMS | HIGHLY DISAGREE | | | | | | | HIGHLY AGREE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Attires at edu-tourism venues should follows according to Islamic regulations | | | | | | | | | | |
| Alcohol should not be served in any premise near edu-tourism areas | | | | | | | | | | |
| Delicious Halal food in edu-tourism destinations | | | | | | | | | | |
| The edu-tourism venues have larger function rooms to cater males and females separately | | | | | | | | | | |
| The edu-tourism site provide place for Muslim to pray | | | | | | | | | | |
| The edu-tourism venues are safe from immorality activities | | | | | | | | | | |

**Figure A1.**

**Source:** Authors own creation

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## ARTICLES FOR FACULTY MEMBERS

# THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF CITY LANDMARK TO TOURISTS AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF TERENGGANU DRAWBRIDGE

City branding: Leveraging historical heritage with Kyrenia Castle / Pooyanmehr, M., & Gurdalli, H.

# City Branding: Leveraging Historical Heritage with Kyrenia Castle

Mahrokh Pooyanmehr[1], Huriye Gurdalli[2]

## Abstract

*In this research, as cities fight to draw businesses, investors, and visitors, city branding has grown in significance in the global environment. The ancient site of Kyrenia Castle is a major historical treasure for Kyrenia, a charming seaside city in Cyprus. With origins in the Byzantine era, this ancient iconic structure has been influenced by several different civilizations, notably the Lusignans, Venetians, and Ottomans. Kyrenia Castle's architectural prominent status and rich history make it an underutilized asset in the city's current branding initiatives. The purpose of this study is to investigate how Kyrenia Castle may be used to improve the city brand of Kyrenia, which will increase tourism, promote pride among citizens, and stimulate economic growth. The goal of this study is to offer strategic insights and useful recommendations for stakeholders and municipal authorities through assessing the castle's historical relevance and potential as a key component of city branding.*

**Keywords:** *City Branding, Historical Landmarks, Kyrenia Castle, Heritage Tourism, Cultural Identity.*

## Introduction

In today's competitive global landscape, city branding has emerged as a critical urban development strategy Üzümcüoğlu, D., and Polay, M. (2024)[1]. Cities are looking for new and creative ways to stand out from the crowd and develop enticing identities that draw visitors, investors, and locals[2]. Developing a city's identity strategically to set it apart from competitors and project a positive image is a key component of effective municipal branding (Nursanty, E., Hassan, R. A., & Prastyadewi, M. I. 2023)[3]. Promoting distinctive historical, cultural, and architectural assets might help achieve this. Cyprus's Kyrenia is a charming seaside city steeped in culture and history, with Kyrenia Castle serving as a significant historical landmark (İpek, & Can. 2022)[4]. With origins in the Byzantine era, this ancient iconic structure has been influenced by several different civilizations, notably the Lusignans, Venetians, and Ottomans. The city's present branding initiatives don't make enough use of Kyrenia Castle, despite its architectural beauty and historical significance. Incorporating this historic location into the city's branding plan is vital in order to increase tourism and promote community pride Shirvani Dastgerdi, A., and De Luca, G. (2019)[5].

*Aim of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to determine how Kyrenia Castle may be used to improve the city brand of Kyrenia in order to increase tourism, promote civic pride, and stimulate economic growth Scott, J. (2002)[6]. Creating strategic recommendations for integrating Kyrenia Castle into Kyrenia's municipal branding initiatives is the main goal of this study Üzümcüoğlu, D., and Polay, M. (2022)[7]. The research project aims to offer insights and useful suggestions for local authorities and stakeholders by analysing the castle's historical relevance and potential as a key component of city branding Vehbi, B. O., Günçe, K., and Iranmanesh, A. (2021)[8].

*Scope*

This study aims to investigate the historical and architectural development of Kyrenia Castle, investigate current theories and practices related to city branding, and conduct a comparison analysis with other cities that have important cultural assets and have achieved success with city branding Taluğ, M., and Kurt, S.

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(2024)[9]. The project will concentrate on improving promotional tactics to draw attention to Kyrenia Castle's distinctive features and incorporating historical tales into municipal branding. The goal of this comprehensive approach is to give a full knowledge of how Kyrenia Castle may be positioned as a crucial component of Kyrenia's city branding initiatives. Incorporating historical and cultural elements into a city's branding strategy aims to preserve its legacy while also telling a compelling story that appeals to locals and tourists alike, strengthening the feeling of place and identity.

*Research Questions*

- "How can Kyrenia Castle be effectively integrated into Kyrenia's city branding efforts to boost tourism, foster local pride, and contribute to economic development?" is the main research question that directs this investigation. In order to provide a response, the study will focus on the following related sub questions:

- What is Kyrenia Castle's architectural and historical significance?

- In what ways have other cities effectively used historical monuments into their strategy for city branding?

- How may Kyrenia Castle be strategically used into the city's branding initiatives?

*Significance of the Study*

By answering these questions, this study seeks to close the knowledge gap in the literature on Kyrenia Castle's place in the city's branding strategy and offer a framework for utilizing the city's historical legacy in urban planning Üzümcüoğlu, D., and Polay, M. (2024)[1]. This study is especially noteworthy since it emphasizes the value of cultural preservation and community involvement in the context of city branding, in addition to the possible economic advantages of heritage tourism. This research seeks to further the knowledge of city branding by providing a thorough analysis and strategic recommendations, as well as useful solutions that cities with comparable historical assets may use to strengthen their identities.

## Literature Review

The idea of city branding includes the deliberate cultivation of a city's identity to set it apart from competitors and cultivate a positive perception that draws visitors, investors, and locals AlShaalan, M. K., and Durugbo, C. M. (2024)[10]. A thorough framework for comprehending the numerous components of city branding, such as culture, tourism, exports, and government, may be found in (Simon Anholt's 2007)[11] Nation Brand Hexagon. Anholt stresses the value of authenticity and a city's distinctive features in building a powerful brand. Anholt claims that authenticity is attained by matching the identity of the city with its rich cultural and historical past, making sure that the branding initiatives are embraced by locals and tourists alike.

The need of integrating historical and cultural narratives with stakeholder participation is further emphasised by Keith Dinnie (2011)[12] in his discussion of city branding. According to Dinnie, the active involvement of local companies, government agencies, and communities is necessary for successful city branding. He contends that via including various parties, cities may create a unified and appealing brand that captures the ambitions and sense of community among its citizens. By using a participative approach, branding initiatives are certain to be accepted both within and outside[10].

The field of heritage tourism is closely associated with city branding, since it focuses on utilizing historical and cultural landmarks to draw tourists and produce economic advantages Giorgallis, A. (2024)[13]. Research shows that heritage assets boost local pride and identity in addition to attracting tourists. Timothy and Boyd (2003)[14] contend that by protecting cultural assets and generating income from visitors, heritage tourism may be a major factor in regional development. They draw attention to the fact that heritage sites

serve as both tourist destinations and representations of regional history and culture Giorgallis, A. (2024)[13].

Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000)[15] have explored the idea of "heritage commodification," which is especially pertinent to city branding. They contend that historical landmarks may still be commercialized and advertised to tourists while maintaining their historical relevance (Bui, H. T., & Lee, T. J. 2015)[16]. Cities can sustain their cultural integrity and draw tourists and income while maintaining and advertising these locations with care Güvenbaş, G., and Polay, M. (2021)[17]. Achieving a healthy balance between marketing and preservation is crucial for historic tourism (Bagus, S. I., Imade, S. U., Nyoman, S. I. A., and Putu, W. S. N. 2019)[18].

(Beattie, J. M., and Schneider, I. E., 2018)[19] Edinburgh, where Edinburgh Castle is essential to the city's character, and Athens, where the Acropolis is essential to the city's identity, are two cities that have effectively incorporated history into their branding. According to Ashworth and Graham (2005)[20], Beattie, J. M., and Schneider, I. E. (2018)[19] Edinburgh has developed a strong city brand that draws millions of visitors each year by making good use of its historical resources. They stress the relevance of having a clear narrative that accentuates the cultural site's distinctive qualities and historical significance. In the case of Edinburgh, the castle serves as both a prominent tourist destination and a representation of the historical and cultural legacy of the (cityCvijić, S., and Guzijan, J. 2013)[21].

The Acropolis in Athens is a global tourist destination that represents Greek tradition and pride, as Ioannidou, M., Moullou, D., and Egglezos, D. (2008)[22] emphasizes. Athens' reputation as a top cultural and historical destination has been greatly aided by the incorporation of the Acropolis into the municipal branding plan. According to Ioannidou, M., Moullou, D., and Egglezos, D. (2008)[22], the secret to Athens' branding success is the Acropolis's smooth transition into the city's larger cultural story, which highlights the monument's historical significance and ongoing legacy (Poulios, I., and Senteri, E. 2015)[23].

Wang and Zhao's (2024)[24] recent research highlight the value of social media and digital marketing for municipal branding. They draw attention to how important digital platforms are for connecting with potential customers and reaching a worldwide audience. Heritage sites may greatly increase in exposure and appeal via the use of digital marketing tactics such as social media campaigns, virtual tours, and interactive websites. Cities can attract a varied audience and improve their brand by utilizing digital technologies to create immersive and engaging experiences. The idea of "digital storytelling," which entails utilizing digital media to communicate the tale of the background and value of heritage monuments, is another topic Wang and Zhao (2024)[24] cover. With this strategy, cities can tell captivating stories that appeal to both domestic and international audiences. When it comes to emphasizing the distinctive qualities of cultural places and building an emotional bond with visitors, digital storytelling may be very successful.

The literature that has been written on the castle in Kyrenia thus far has mostly concentrated on its architectural and historical value. A thorough history of Kyrenia Castle is given by Bounia, A., and Stylianou-Lambert, T. (2011)[25], who describes the Byzantine era of its construction and the Lusignan, Venetian, and Ottoman changes that followed. On its possible function in municipal branding, there is a research vacuum. By offering a thorough examination of Kynia Castle's historical story and investigating tactical ways to incorporate it into Kyrenia's city brand, this research aims to close this gap (Türksoy, N., and Toros, E. 2021)[26]. The goal of this research is to provide a framework for integrating Kyrenia Castle into Kyrenia's city branding initiatives by examining the tactics used by other towns with noteworthy historical buildings Güvenbaş, G., and Polay, M. (2021)[17]. Incorporating historical tales into city branding not only increases tourism appeal but also strengthens citizens' feeling of pride and identity. This approach supports the conclusions of Hospers (2011)[27], who contends that a thorough grasp of the city's distinctive qualities and the capacity to successfully convey them to a wide range of audiences are necessary for successful city branding.

## Methodology

This research's methodology takes a broad approach, combining existing literature evaluation with onsite investigation to create a strong city branding plan centered around Kyrenia Castle. A literature review and a historical analysis are the two main stages of this methodological approach. All the phases are carefully planned to provide deep understandings of the historical relevance of Kyrenia Castle and how it may contribute to enhancing the city's reputation.

With its roots in the Byzantine era and its progression through changes by the Lusignans, Venetians, and Ottomans, Kyrenia Castle's architectural and cultural evolution will be explored in detail during the historical analysis phase. Archival research, reading historical materials, and careful on-site observations will all help with this examination. The aim is to create a complex story that highlights the castle's architectural uniqueness and historical significance. The process of doing archival research will entail a thorough investigation of historical records, manuscripts, and documents related to the building, renovations, and historical turning points of Kyrenia Castle. To get important insights into the castle's history, this project will draw on a wide range of sources, including scholarly archives and local archives.

Analysis of academic publications and historical materials will be conducted in conjunction with archival research to clarify the architectural styles and cultural influences that have shaped Kyrenia Castle over the ages. A thorough history of the castle's development will be provided by the works of renowned historians like Bounia, A., & Stylianou-Lambert, T. (2011)[25]. In addition to these efforts, on site observations will be conducted, which will involve a careful examination of the architectural elements, interior design, and current state of Kyrenia Castle. The goal of this practical method is to provide a concrete grasp of the historical and architectural context of the castle, supported by photographic data and architectural drawings.

City branding, heritage tourism, and the significance of historical monuments in shaping urban identity will all be covered in the literature review phase Üzümcüoğlu, D., and Polay, M. (2024)[1]. This will offer a theoretical foundation for comprehending the essential elements of a successful city branding strategy as well as the untapped potential of historical places. The evaluation will also emphasize how historical sites and tourism are mutually beneficial, showing how legacy assets may be used to increase a city's attraction. This research intends to identify strategic imperatives for Kyrenia and extract best practices from successful case studies such as Beattie, J. M., and Schneider, I. E. (2018)[19] Edinburgh and Athens. The creation of strategic proposals targeted at augmenting Kyrenia Castle's position in city branding will ensue from the synthesis of findings. These suggestions will focus on improving tourist experiences, improving marketing tactics, encouraging community involvement, and maintaining the historical integrity of the castle. This research intends to build a complete city branding plan that enhances Kyrenia Castle's appeal, augments tourist potential, and promotes Kyrenia's worldwide identity by combining on site analysis with a thorough assessment of the existing literature.

*Case Study: Kyrenia Castle*

Known for its strategic location at the crossroads of several civilizations throughout history, Cyprus is the third biggest island in the Mediterranean. Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Lusignan, Venetian, Ottoman, and British dynasties, among others, have left a lasting cultural and architectural legacy on the island, resulting in a history that is a mosaic of varied cultural influences (Bounia, A., and Stylianou-Lambert, T. (2011)[25]. On the northern coast of Cyprus, Kyrenia also referred to as Girne in Turkish and Keryneia in Greek is a charming seaside city. Kyrenia is a popular travel destination because of its peaceful waterfront and quaint ancient town Üzümcüoğlu, D., and Polay, M. (2024)[28]. The most important historical site in the city is Kyrenia Castle, which serves as both a focus for modern tourism and a reservoir of rich historical narratives O'Connor, J., Gu, X., and Lim, M. K. (2020)[29], (Bounia, A., and Stylianou-Lambert, T., 2011)[25].

*Historical Significance of Kyrenia Castle*

Dating back to the Byzantine era, Kyrenia Castle is an architectural gem that stands guard over the eastern end of the city's bay. Built in the seventh century AD as a defense against Arab assaults, the castle has

undergone expansion and modification under the rule of several monarchs, each of whom left their architectural mark. Robust defensive constructions, large walls, and a prime site overlooking the harbor which provides both protection and control mark its Byzantine roots (Bounia, A., and Stylianou-Lambert, T., 2011)[25]. The castle underwent major renovations with Gothic architectural elements, such as pointed arches and reinforced walls, during the Lusignan period (1192–1489), reflecting the military requirements and artistic sensitivities of medieval Europe. The castle's dual use as a fortress and a noble dwelling was further demonstrated by the Lusignans' addition of a central keep, which served both defensive and residential objectives.

Known for its strategic location at the crossroads of several civilizations throughout history, Cyprus is the third biggest island in the Mediterranean. Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Lusignan, Venetian, Ottoman, and British dynasties, among others, have left a lasting cultural and architectural legacy on the island, resulting in a history that is a mosaic of varied cultural influences (Bounia, A., and Stylianou-Lambert, T., 2011)[25]. On the northern coast of Cyprus, Kyrenia also referred to as Girne in Turkish and Keryneia in Greek is a charming seaside city. Kyrenia is a popular travel destination because of its peaceful waterfront and quaint ancient town Üzümcüoğlu, D., and Polay, M. (2024)[28]. The most important historical site in the city is Kyrenia Castle, which serves as both a focus for modern tourism and a reservoir of rich historical narratives (Bounia, A., and Stylianou-Lambert, T., 2011)[25] In reaction to the Ottoman Empire's growing danger, further defenses were built during the Venetian era (1489–1571). The fortress was a strong defensive because the Venetians erected bastions, strengthened the walls, and modified the design to accommodate cannon (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000)[15]. In spite of these defenses, the Ottomans took control of the castle in 1571, preserving its structural integrity and using it mostly for administrative functions. Inscriptions and little architectural alterations that discreetly incorporated their cultural influences while maintaining the castle's original architecture were among the Ottoman adaptations (Bounia, A., and Stylianou-Lambert, T., 2011)[25].

As one of the best-preserved fortifications in the Mediterranean today, Kyrenia Castle is an important cultural and historical landmark due to its rich history and variety of architectural styles. Among the many museums housed in the castle is the Kyrenia Shipwreck Museum, which has one of the oldest shipwrecks ever found a well-preserved Greek commerce ship from the fourth century BC (Bounia, A., and Stylianou-Lambert, T., (2011)[25].

*Kyrenia Castle and the Surroundings*

Situated on a high promontory at the eastern end of Kyrenia's gorgeous port, Kyrenia Castle commands a strategic location. With its expansive views of the Mediterranean Sea and the surrounding coastline, this site was chosen for its defensive benefits Camiz, A., Khalil, S. I., Demir, S. C., and Nafa, H. (2016)[30]. The harbor is a deep-water port that has traditionally been important for commerce and military operations. Today, it is a busy place with many of eateries, cafés, and retail establishments that draw both residents and visitors Güvenbaş, G., and Polay, M. (2021)[17]. Visitors interested in cultural history and current Cypriot life will find a unique atmosphere in Kyrenia's old town, which is close to the castle and features a fascinating combination of ancient buildings and contemporary conveniences Güvenbaş, G., and Polay, M. (2021)[17].

There are many of historical and cultural sites in the Kyrenia Castle area. The area's ancient ambience is enhanced by the typical Cypriot buildings around the castle and the area's winding cobblestone lanes. Remarkable sites in the vicinity are Bellapais Abbey, a 13th Century Gothic monastery situated in the village of Bellapais, and the Kyrenia Gate, which was formerly a component of Nicosia's Venetian defenses (Bounia, A., and Stylianou-Lambert, T. (2011)[25]. These locations, in addition to Kyrenia Castle, form a network of historical sites that tell the story of the region's varied past. In addition, there are verdant gardens and open spaces all around the castle, offering guests a peaceful setting to explore. The castle's function as a communal and cultural center is strengthened by the frequent usage of these areas for cultural events including concerts, medieval festivals, and historical reenactments.

Kyrenia Castle is a priceless asset for Kyrenia's municipal branding strategy because of its advantageous position, historical value, and the vibrant surrounding area. Kyrenia has the potential to greatly increase

tourism, promote community pride, and encourage economic progress by utilising these qualities. By incorporating Kyrenia Castle into the city's branding plan, it may become a key component of the city's identity, attracting a wide range of visitors and enhancing Kyrenia's general cultural and economic vibrancy (Dinnie, 2011)[12].

*Analysis*

*Historical Significance of Kyrenia Castle*

With its well-preserved architecture, expansive views, and historical exhibitions, Kyrenia Castle is currently a popular tourist destination (Bounia, A., and Stylianou-Lambert, T. (2011)[25]. Its promise as a key component of Kyrenia's city branding plan, however, is yet mostly untapped. The castle has a number of noteworthy features, such as a shipwreck museum with artifacts from a Greek merchant ship from the fourth century BC, historical displays, and sweeping views of the city and port from its battlements (Bounia, A., and Stylianou-Lambert, T. (2011)[25]. Despite these advantages, Kyrenia's identity and attractiveness are not fully enhanced by the castle's inadequate integration into a larger city branding story, which misses opportunities to capitalize on its historical and cultural relevance (Dinnie, 2011)[12].

Although instructive, Kyrenia Castle's tourist experience lacks the immersive and engaging qualities of effective heritage tourism destinations (Timothy & Boyd, 2003)[14]. There isn't much being done in the way of promotion right now, and social media, virtual tours, and interactive websites aren't used very often. These online channels have the potential to greatly raise the castle's profile and draw in more visitors, both domestically and abroad (Wang and Zhao, 2024)[24]. Moreover, the potential influence of the castle on Kyrenia's city branding endeavors is diminished due to the absence of a logical narrative that links its historical significance with the city's wider cultural legacy (Anholt, 2007)[11].

*Historical Significance of Kyrenia Castle*

Reviewing successful case studies from other towns that have made good use of their historical sites will help Kyrenia better understand how Kyrenia Castle might fit into its city branding plan. The Acropolis in Athens and Scotland's Edinburgh Castle are prime examples. A major component of the city's character, Edinburgh Castle welcomes millions of tourists each year (Ashworth and Graham, 2005)[20]. Well planned guided tours, historical reenactments, and a heavy reliance on internet marketing are all part of the castle's integration into the city's branding strategy (Anholt, 2007)[11]. Edinburgh Castle is now a popular tourist destination and a representation of the historical and cultural legacy of the city because to this all-encompassing strategy (Ashworth and Graham, 2005)[20]. Every year, more than two million tourists visit Edinburgh Castle, one of the most popular tourist destinations in the UK. Travelers from all over the world are drawn to the castle by its prominent position in the skyline of the city and its extensive historical legacy. Held annually on the castle esplanade, the Edinburgh Military Tattoo draws an estimated 220,000 people and contributes £77 million to the Scottish economy. The castle promotes regional companies, generating employment and a boost to the local economy. Its use as a venue for festivals and other cultural events amplifies its economic influence Chan, C. S., & Marafa, L. M. (2016)[31].

Beattie, J. M., & Schneider, I. E. (2018)[19] Edinburgh Castle is included into the city's identity by means of a number of marketing techniques. In advertising brochures, the castle is emphasized for its historical significance and breathtaking panoramic views. Utilizing the castle's iconic position, digital marketing and social media efforts draw in a worldwide audience. The castle has a sizable fan base on social media, with over 200,000 Instagram followers and 250,000 Facebook fans. The castle's accessibility and attractiveness are improved via virtual tours and interactive experiences made available through digital platforms. The story of the castle is interwoven with more general cultural themes that the city promotes, such its thriving arts scene, festivals, and literary legacy. By presenting Edinburgh as a vibrant, modern city with a rich history, culture, and tradition, this all-encompassing strategy guarantees that the castle is a key component of the city's cultural and historical narrative O'Connor, J., Gu, X., and Lim, M. K. (2020)[29] (Karvelyte, K., and Chiu, J. H. 2011)[32].

Comparably, the Acropolis in Athens, which represents Greek pride and tradition, is essential to the city's identity (Ioannidou, M., Moullou, D., and Egglezos, D. (2008)[22]. A combination of traditional and modern advertising techniques is used to highlight the Acropolis' historical significance and continuing cultural influence as part of Athens' branding strategy (Ioannidou, M., Moullou, D., and Egglezos, D. (2008)[22], 2016). Athens' capacity to tell a gripping story that appeals to both residents and visitors accounts for its success in utilizing the Acropolis (Ioannidou, M., Moullou, D., and Egglezos, D. (2008)[22], 2016). In depth marketing initiatives draw attention to the importance of the Acropolis and combine digital and on-site media to reach a worldwide audience (Wang and Zhao, 2024)[24]. With millions of tourists visiting each year, the Acropolis in Athens is a major tourist destination. In 2019, the Acropolis Museum alone welcomed approximately 1.8 million tourists, which has a substantial impact on the local economy. It is one of the most visited ancient monuments in the world, drawing large crowds to the larger Acropolis complex.

The flood of visitors brings in money for nearby companies, lodging facilities, dining establishments, and other services Güvenbaş, G., and Polay, M. (2021)[17]. Additionally, the Acropolis draws major conferences and cultural events that raise the city's prestige internationally and stimulate its economy. Utilizing the Acropolis as a representation of ongoing cultural and historical continuity, Athens has incorporated it into its municipal branding initiatives. Promotional advertisements emphasize the Acropolis's importance as a reminder of Greek civilization and its influence on contemporary culture. Social media is used in digital marketing initiatives. To engage potential visitors, digital marketing strategies make use of social media platforms, virtual tours, and interactive web material. Additionally, the Acropolis is included in larger cultural narratives that highlight concepts of democracy, philosophy, and ancient art. This strategy presents Athens as a culturally rich historical city.

By comparison, Kyrenia Castle's present branding efforts are disoriented and lacking of the strategic coherence observed in Edinburgh and Athens (Bounia, A., and Stylianou-Lambert, T. (2011)[25]. Kyrenia Castle has to be included into the city's broader branding plan in a way that is more dynamic and harmonious. According to Dinnie (2011)[12], this entails strengthening digital marketing initiatives, creating a cohesive historical narrative, and interacting with the neighborhood to promote a feeling of pride and ownership.

## Findings

Regarding Kyrenia Castle's present status and future potential in the city's branding initiatives, the report presents a number of significant conclusions. First off, there is an enormous gap in the under-use of digital marketing (Wang and Zhao, 2024)[24]. In contrast to Edinburgh and Athens, Kyrenia Castle is not as well represented online, making little use of social media, virtual tours, and interactive websites that may draw visitors from all over the world (Anholt, 2007)[11]. Secondly, unified storytelling is absent. Kyrenia Castle's historical past is not well integrated into the city's larger branding strategy, which is a wasted chance to provide a gripping and cogent tale that emphasizes the castle's relevance over time (Dinnie, 2011)[12].

Thirdly, Kyrenia Castle has a significant yet untapped tourism potential (Timothy & Boyd, 2003)[14]. Even though the castle draws crowds of people, there is still opportunity to improve the visitor experience with better signage, educational guided tours, and cultural events that are centered on the castle. Finally, more community involvement in the branding process is required (Dinnie, 2011)[12]. Involving local companies, artists, and citizens in castle related activities and projects may promote a feeling of pride and ownership, strengthening the castle's place in the neighborhood and drawing in more visitors.

## Discussion

Several strategic recommendations may be made based on the findings to improve the role of Kyrenia Castle in Kyrenia's municipal branding initiatives. First and foremost, it is imperative that Kyrenia Castle's online presence be improved (Wang and Zhao, 2024)[24]. The exposure and attraction of the castle may be greatly increased by creating a complete digital marketing plan that include social media advertising, virtual

reality tours, and an interactive website (Wang and Zhao, 2024)[24]. Visitors can have a more interesting and immersive experience when the rich history of the castle and its significance to Kyrenia's cultural identity are told through digital storytelling (Anholt, 2007)[11].

According to Dinnie (2011)[12], developing an integrated narrative strategy is crucial. Kyrenia Castle's prominence in the city's branding strategy may be increased by creating a cohesive narrative that links it to the city's larger historical and cultural legacy (Anholt, 2007)[11]. A captivating narrative that appeals to both residents and visitors may be created by working with historians and regional artists to create multimedia content for advertising materials (Ashworth and Graham, 2005)[20].

Enhancing the Kyrenia Castle tourist experience should be the main goal of tourism development plans (Timothy and Boyd, 2003)[14]. The visitor experience can be greatly improved and more tourists can be drawn by implementing themed guided tours that highlight the various historical periods of the castle, planning cultural events like historical reenactments and medieval festivals, and upgrading informational signage (Bounia, A., and Stylianou-Lambert, T. (2011)[25].

Ultimately, the success of Kyrenia's municipal branding initiatives depends on cultivating community involvement (Dinnie, 2011)[12]. A sense of pride and ownership among the locals may be promoted by including local businesses and craftsmen in castle related events and promotions and by forming an organization called "Friends of Kyrenia Castle" to encourage community involvement and funding for preservation initiatives (Anholt, 2007)[11]. This will increase the castle's attraction to tourists as well as its place in the community (Dinnie, 2011)[12].

## Conclusion

With its illustrious past and magnificent architecture, Kyrenia Castle is a key component of the city's branding strategy. Kyrenia can successfully incorporate the castle into its city brand to boost tourism, promote local pride, and spur economic progress by taking inspiration from successful case studies such as Edinburgh and Athens. The study's strategic suggestions emphasize the necessity of integrated storytelling, community participation, tourist development, and a complete digital marketing plan. By putting these tactics into practice, Kyrenia Castle may be positioned as a key component of the city's identity, drawing a wide range of visitors and enhancing the city's general economic and cultural vibrancy. Kyrenia can establish a strong city brand that appeals to both locals and tourists by embracing the historical significance of the castle and utilizing contemporary marketing strategies. This will guarantee that the castle's legacy will be an inspiration and source of pride for future generations.

**Author Contributions**: For research articles with several authors, a short paragraph specifying their individual contributions must be provided. The following statements should be used "Conceptualization, X.X. and Y.Y.; methodology, X.X.; software, X.X.; validation, X.X., Y.Y. and Z.Z.; formal analysis, X.X.; investigation, X.X.; resources, X.X.; data curation, X.X.; writing—original draft preparation, X.X.; writing—review and editing, X.X.; visualization, X.X.; supervision, X.X.; project administration, X.X.; funding acquisition, Y.Y. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript." Please turn to the CRediT taxonomy for the term explanation. Authorship must be limited to those who have contributed substantially to the work reported.

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## ARTICLES FOR FACULTY MEMBERS

# THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF CITY LANDMARK TO TOURISTS AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF TERENGGANU DRAWBRIDGE

Cycling activities new attraction destination image and response behaviour for sports tourism in Terengganu / Johari, J., & Rashid, M. M.

# CYCLING ACTIVITIES NEW ATTRACTION DESTINATION IMAGE AND RESPONSE BEHAVIOUR FOR SPORTS TOURISM IN TERENGGANU

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**Abstract***: Cycling activities play a very important role in ensuring the well -being of life in terms of health and quality of life. It is a key component in the campaign to promote a healthy lifestyle among the Malaysian community. This study to investigate the cycling activities is new attractions of a destination images and response behaviours of cycling enthusiasts in determining sports tourism. This study used qualitative methods and four (4) male cyclists were interviewed for this study using the "Drawbridge" route is a new tourism attraction in Terengganu. The semi -structured interviews were guided by a set of core questions and were designed for cyclists related to the new attractions of the location and their behavioural responses. Investigations show that cycling is an activity that can be made a tourist destination attraction, and it attracts continuous engagement, resulting in better social relationships and well -being.*

**Keywords:** Cycling, Response Behaviour, Destination Image, Qualitative Study.

## 1. Introduction

Cycling is a form of exercise and sport that is gaining ground in our country. This sport is open to all ages whether children or adults. Healthy lifestyle practices are now a trend in most communities to balance a busy schedule with daily activities (Araújo Vila, Fraiz Brea & de Araújo,2020). In fact, in residential areas there are now cycling groups that cycle after work or on weekends. Although this activity is seen as a sport competed in a major sporting event, but it is actually among the sports that are suitable and easy to handle by all groups. In addition, cycling is a combination of humans and technology (Powell, Stuart & Godfrey,2021). So, every individual who wants to venture into this sport needs to be prepared, equipped, knowledge, training and planning.

Old -fashioned bicycles are not the same as they are now sophisticated, and even the frame of new model bicycles is much lighter than the old bicycles. The deep interest in healthy activities drives certain individuals to spend up to tens of thousands of moneys to own quality bicycles Buning, Cole & Lamont (2019). Cycling activities also need to be according to the suitability of the place and the type of bike such as bike ride bike, mountain bike and touring bike. Those who are new in sport cycling are advised to choose the right bike (Han, Lho, Al-Ansi, Yu (2020). If you are interested in on road then buy a road bike. If you are interested in on road and offroad, buy a Mountain Bike. If you are interested in traveling and need bag space on a bike, then buy a touring bike.

The phenomenon of cycling has become a buzzword as more and more people are starting to own bikes and join cycling groups. This increasingly popular sport is proving to be a trend as more and more cyclists can be seen in traffic and recreational parks, as well as social media sharing from both artists to politicians (Wenner,2021). There are many benefits that can be gained from cycling activities, not only for mental and physical health but also these activities are very good for socializing. Despite the benefits, there are definitely other factors that encourage the involvement of Malaysians in this activity, as well as a trend and often a mention on social media (Salleh, Malek, Othman & Thani,2019). According to Abdullaev (2020), can see various age groups make the activity a hobby either with family, friends or alone. Most interesting when a group of teams choose popular areas for their cycling activities.

In Terengganu, the use of bicycles for daily activities and for exercise is becoming increasingly popular. The number of residents cycling has increased in recent years. State Governments and Local Authorities also play a role in encouraging the use of bicycles in line with the *"Clean City"* recommendation. The direction of this effort needs to be strengthened with policies and guidelines for the provision of bicycle routes and facilities. Since the 2000s, especially in recent years, the use of bicycles by locals and tourists has increased. Along with this, bicycle lanes either separately or shared with motor vehicles have been provided in several corridors in the tourist hotspots in Kuala Terengganu. In 2015, Tourism Malaysia launched and introduced the Cycling Tourism Guidebook for tourists to experience a unique experience of exploring Malaysia's nature, based on the information contained in the book *'Discover Malaysia by Bicycle Guidebook'*. The main purpose is to plan to create a more detailed master plan looking at connectivity, safety and facilities for cycling.

## *Drawbridge*

The Kuala Terengganu Drawbridge is a new landmark in the capital of Terengganu and the first of its kind in Southeast Asia. Opened exclusively to the public in August 2019. A 638-meter-long bridge spanning the mouth of the Terengganu River connects Kuala Terengganu City and Seberang Takir, (Kuala Terengganu City Council, 2019). The architecture of the lift bridge is modern and striking, with its 15-storey four -tower design inspired by Tower Bridge in London. Drawbridge Route is a popular location for cycling enthusiasts because it provides a good route as well as an interesting panorama around the Kuala Terengganu and Seberang Takir areas. Beaches, rivers, floral landscapes, arrangements of buildings and government offices as well as public recreational park facilities make cycling in the city a lot of fun.

## 2. Literature Review

Beecham & Wood (2014), in detail defines cycling as a journey that involves nature-related activities performed by a person to deal with unusual places and people with the aim of traveling, exploring, recreation, sports, sightseeing, communicating, trade, and study. Lyons, & Wearing (2012), stated that cycling tourism activities until now have not received serious attention from researchers to conduct in -depth analysis. According to him, the existing theoretical framework for understanding cycling tourism is derived almost entirely from the literature of outdoor recreation and education with only too little analysis on the commercialization of this activity. Among the main factors contributing to this situation is the ambiguity of definitions and concepts between cycling activity tourism, ecotourism, outdoor recreation, and nature tourism (Hall & Richards, Eds. 2000, Kaltenborn, Haaland & Sandell 2001, Lamont 2009, Mckercher 2010).

Therefore, the initial stage, research that leads to the level of motivation of involvement, especially the push factor and tourism attraction is important as a basis to understand the tourism market of this cycling activity. The tourism push factor refers to the internal aspect of a person that is specific in motivating them to make a tourism decision for example to travel out of their normal environment to enjoy different scenery and living arrangements, while the tourism attraction factor refers to aspects or characteristics of something. Destinations that influence a person's decision to choose it as their destination of choice (Sirgy & Su,2000). Desmet & Dijkhuis (2003), explained that tourism involves travel and recreational activities that are combined to produce an experience of pleasure in addition to other forms of emotion. It also involves risks and challenges intellectually, spiritually, physically, and emotionally. Tung & Ritchie (2011), who focuses on the role of outdoor recreation in providing challenges to all groups suggests that the degree of activity depends on the level of skills and effort required, the level of responsibility to produce the experience and also the level of remoteness of the destination that attracts the activity involved.

A study conducted by Ritchie Tkaczynski & Faulks (2010), showed that there is a pattern of increasing high interest in the global market for tourism activities based on cycling activities. The study also found that all groups have begun to engage in cycling tourism activities at all ages and are willing to spend large sums of money for that purpose. These family -based tours are also beginning to receive special attention in addition to packages that have a uniform tour schedule. Weed & Bull (2012) who studied a group of cycling enthusiasts in a recreational tourism program, has found various factors that influence the involvement of tourists in the activity. Among the key push factors that have been identified include acceptance of risk and mastery over the fascinating and impressive nature and environment of the day. Other

influences that have been identified are personality and lifestyle factors of the individual himself who desires sensation, freedom and serenity. Positive or enjoyable aspects of past experiences in relation to recreational sports activities influence a person to continue to share experiences that may be higher or more challenging in the future (Wellard,2013).

## 3. Methodology

This study using a qualitative method to describe the understanding of cycling activities of riders and response behaviors using the main route of the tourist attraction destination to Terengganu *"Drawbridge"*. A total of 4 people were interviewed for this study and all of them were cyclists and data were collected in January 2022.

This semi -structured interview was guided by a set of core questions that took an approach to cycling activities and the main routes that are the focus of cycling riders. Questions have been designed for cyclists regarding cycling can be a source of tourist attractions, behavioral response to cycling activities and social impact on the activity focus area. The question consists of "*How do we want to encourage cycling activities in the community*?", "*What packages are provided in cycling activities as a tourist destination?*", "*Do you feel this kind of activity should be disseminated to the public*?", "*Why is the "Drawbridge" route one of the main choices for cyclists*? "and "*Do you will inform to the public, about the importance of cycling activities to increasing sports tourism sector*?". On average, the interview lasted roughly 40 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded and completely transcribed to guarantee that the data was correct and accountable. Real names were removed from the data and replaced with pseudonyms to make it anonymous.

Cycling riders frequently answer with one-word responses, fragmented words, or half sentences throughout the interview procedure. We integrated the meanings of their verbal exchanges and non-verbal expressions using narrative writing rather than exact quotations to ensure that their contributions could be included and acknowledged throughout the study. All of the direct citations in this study's results were obtained through semi-structured interviews, while the contextual data was obtained through semi-structured interviews and observations. After obtaining data, inductive thematic analysis using the Braun and Clarke approach was used before writing the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## 4. Result and Discussion

The analysis found five main findings that emerged from the data collection:

### (i)    *'How do we want to encourage cycling activities in the community?'*

Cycling is one of the modes of transportation that can help reduce pollution and protect the environment. It is reported that this cycling culture helps improve local air quality as it reduces 65 percent of nitrogen oxide (NOx) released into the air per kilometer of cycling. Gas (Nox) usually results from the recreation between nitrogen and oxygen during fuel combustion and contributes to the formation of smoke and acid rain.  There are more than one billion bicycles in the world, twice that of automobiles. In recent years, bicycle production has increased to over 100 million a year. Bicycles were introduced in the 19th century, and have since been used not only for recreation, work but also in between the military, performance and sports fields. In the United States for example, bicycles are used for the purpose of managing the body

because cycling burns 600 calories per hour but in China and other parts of Asia, bicycles are used as a form of transportation necessities.

*"Introduce road design that promotes safety and a perfect environment for cycling. This should include traffic calming measures to reduce car speeds. The government can also play a role in increasing this activity. This is because the government has the financial resources to build a place to hold recreational activities and further encourage the community involved."* (Rider 1)

Some ways to encourage cycling activities in the community include providing facilities, routes and tightening the level of user safety. This activity has many benefits to the community and the country. This activity should be nurtured among children from an early age. By doing cycling activities, our health will definitely be better and our life will be happier.

*"The government can also conduct campaigns to encourage cycling activities at the national level. In addition, the government can also take action against those who damage public facilities available at the location of activities in order to ensure the comfort of people who want to cycle with their families."* (Rider 2)

In addition, the Ministry or agency can also play a role in providing awareness and encouraging the community to participate in these activities (Wang, Douglas & Hazen,2021). Among the methods of issuing pamphlets on the benefits of this activity, can hold talks in schools, institutions of higher learning, the public sector as well as the private sector and local community service.

*"To make cycling as a tourism product that can bring foreign and domestic tourists closer to the beauty of nature and the villagers around Kuala Terengganu. This cycling activity is not only good for health but also for the care of the environment. If you look at the trend of cycling tourism is now growing rapidly around the world."* (Rider 3)

*"Authorities need to focus on making cycling a major recreational activity, and making it a major transportation option. The community should be encouraged to use environmentally friendly vehicles and exercise more. Cycling is definitely one of the most ideal ways."* (Rider 4)

**(ii)** **"What packages are provided in cycling activities as a tourist destination"?**

Cycling tourism packages need to be developed and promoted aggressively as the trend of cycling tourism is now growing rapidly around the world. Tourists all over the world are starting to choose to travel while cycling because it is more relaxing, healthy and environmentally friendly and this trend has also started to gain a place among the locals Jonkeren, Kager, Harms & Te Brömmelstroet (2021). The production of the package also shows the creativity of local tour operators to diversify tourism products in the country as well as attract domestic and foreign tourists to travel while cycling in various destinations in Malaysia and Terengganu.

*"Normally, they try to introduce a public bicycle sharing program by building self - service bicycle parking in urban areas for the convenience of tourists and locals to move around the city faster. The bike sharing program has been running well in Europe, the United States and most recently in HangZhou, China".* (Rider 1)

The concept of bicycle sharing is gaining popularity among consumers in China when several companies introduced the concept of public transportation that can reduce congestion and air pollution Shui & Szeto (2020). The concept is to use an application, where users can borrow the smart bike anywhere to use the fastest route to avoid traffic jams to the destination. The concept of bicycle sharing is now attracting the attention of public capital investment companies, especially with more and more companies competing to dominate the market. The Chinese-made business model involved is believed to be able to succeed, not to mention by leveraging the capabilities of smartphones and the interest of the country's population to use bicycles as a recreational activity Conrow, Mooney & Wentz (2021). Several Chinese companies are looking to expand the idea to the rest of the world.

*"Normally, package is held such as Fun Ride and purpose of this program is to give exposure to the community to be active in sports programs in the form of health and leisure and at the same time strengthen the relationship between the community. This activity is carried out to give the experience of long -distance cycling through the village road against the backdrop of the beach and the beauty of nature."* (Rider 2)

There are various categories of bikes that need to be known before engaging in cycling activities, however it depends on the comfort of the rider to carry the bike either on the road or in hilly or sloping areas Chen, van Lierop & Ettema (2020). Among the bicycle categories are off road bicycles, on road bicycles, track bicycles, downhill bicycles and shuttle bicycles from home to work and vice versa. This type of off-road bike or known as a mountain bike is suitable for routes in forests and mountains while the on-road type bike is suitable on the road with thin wheels as if it were a racing bike. Track bikes are bikes that are played on a bicycle race track or known as a velodrome and downhill bikes will be played in areas where there are various obstacles such as going down slopes, stairs and through hilly and rocky areas. The type of shuttle bicycle is a daily bicycle that is specially used as transportation to work. Various trends in cycling activities nowadays such as cycling for charity programs, cycling for sightseeing or fun, cycling in groups and cycling individually.

*"Most interesting and very impressive, when this cycling sport is a field to find and dig out new talent in cycling events in Terengganu. Those who have talent in the sport of cycling as this is the best opportunity to join the national and state squads are felt to be included in the cycling tour package."* (Rider 3)

In order to realize Malaysia's aspirations as a sports nation, community participation at all levels in sports activities and the involvement of the organization is an important step and needs to be done jointly Thomas, Beaudry, Gammage, Klentrou & Josse, (2019). Based on (Wunderlich, Follert, & Daumann,2021), movement is in line with the objectives of the National Sports Policy to strengthen sports culture among the community and form a disciplined and united society. In addition, cycling is the best way to strengthen inclusivity among the people. The factors of sports culture as a medium to strengthen harmony, consensus and unity among the community. Organizing cycling sports clinics with the involvement of athletes as role models in the program for the purpose of finding new talents who can be polished to become back-up athletes.

*"Desired cycling patterns and activities, whether leisurely cycling, jamboree or racing and each of these packages provides complete facilities to individuals or those who come*

*in groups to visit interesting or historical locations, get to know the local culture or see the beauty of flora and fauna.*" (Rider 4)

**(iii)** **"Do you feel this kind of activity should be disseminated to the public"?**

In this era of globalization, the health of a person is something that should be given priority in achieving quality in terms of the career pursued Runacres, Mackintosh & McNarry (2021). This is said to be so because today's society is busy with work or studies, and there is no time to engage in worthwhile activities such as cycling activities. Cycling activities with family members on weekends are becoming popular in our society. Cycling both indoors and outdoors is a form of fun that can be easily obtained. Cycling is very effective and becomes an exercise that will reduce mental stress and can be made an activity suitable for all ages to form physical fitness Naviaux (2019). The question is, to what extent should the benefits of this activity be disseminated to the community.

*"Yes, I'm totally agreed, that these activities should be disseminated to the public, One of the social activities. The advantages of group cycling can contribute ideas, experiences, travel and challenges as well as exchange views. For those who are actively writing, it is a bonus to be able to channel sharing on a blog or website."* (Rider 1)

*"For me, positively agree, cycling activities that can benefit the elderly between the ages of 60 and above such as improving strength, balance and body coordination. This exercise, which is categorized as non-weight bearing, is able to put a little pressure on the joints, especially in the legs, but it is not like other exercises such as running and exercising."* (Rider 2)

*"Of course, agree, this activity can result in extraordinary attitude changes such as gaining self -confidence, balancing stress as well as enjoying a more prosperous life. Disorders such as difficulty sleeping, fatigue and medication intake are also less common in daily life."* (Rider 3)

*"Agree, gain new friends through cycling groups and clubs. Participating in charity programs in order to benefit others in addition to yourself will remain fit and active while participating in the program."* (Rider 4).

**(iv)** **"Why is the "Drawbridge" route one of the main choices for cyclists?**

The bike path be integrated with the city's public transport network. Principles and procedures regarding the planning, design, construction and operation of bicycle roads, bicycle stations and bicycle parking lots have been determined Podgórniak-Krzykacz & Trippner-Hrabi (2021). Regulations on Urbanization on the Design and Construction of Bicycle Roads, Bicycle Stations and Bicycle Parking in City Roads came into force after being published in the Official Gazette. These rules set out the principles and procedures for planning, planning, constructing and operating bicycle lanes, bicycle stations and bicycle parking lots on city streets Zhu & Zhu (2020).

According to the rules, bike paths are designed to meet the transportation needs of users and ensure safe intersections and crossings in traffic flow systems, where topography is available, and to create networks connecting transportation points and central settlement areas with each other Marshall (2021). When designing bike paths and networks, the most suitable route for cycling will be selected. A network of bike paths will be built with intersections and urban furniture, landscaping elements and building packages to ensure that bike operators can move from the starting point to the destination without interruption.

*"The "Drawbridge" route is the focus and it is located near Kuala Terengganu City, is one of the most famous recreational parks in Terengganu. In addition to exercise activities and a children's playground, there are extensive cycling paths provided by the management for the public. Cycling activities while enjoying the beauty of the environment are well managed by the management."* (Rider 1)

*"The relaxed atmosphere of Seberang Takir Beach with breath taking views attracts the public. Cycling along the village area while enjoying the village atmosphere and culture of the Terengganu community will give you a new experience not found elsewhere."* (Rider 2)

*"Cyclists who pass through the "drawbridge" can take beautiful panoramic pictures, various facilities there make it a recreational area suitable for the whole family to visit to relax while breathing the afternoon air in a comfortable atmosphere in addition to cycling activities."* (Rider 3)

*"Drawbridge" something that does not exist in other state, indirectly, the longest lift bridge in the world is changing Terengganu's sports tourism landscape which is well known for coastal and island tourism as well as cycling activities."* (Rider 4)

**(v)** **"Do you will inform to the public, about the importance of cycling activities to increasing sports tourism sector?"**

The main goal of the National Sports Policy is to create a sports culture among Malaysians. Although the revised National Sports Policy, (NSC, 2009) is more geared towards the culture of sports among Malaysians, this policy still emphasizes the strengthening of national integration through the involvement of the community as a whole and the achievement of excellence at the international level. Sports culture includes participation in sports activities and physical activities through Sports for All, High Performance Sports, and the Sport Industry. The National Sports Policy is to form a healthy, disciplined and united society providing opportunities and infrastructure to meet the basic social, psychological and physiological needs of individuals develop and improve enjoyable leisure sports practices in the community and achieve excellence at the highest, national and international levels Logan, Cuff, LaBella, Brooks, Canty, Diamond & Stricker (2019).

*"Absolutely yes, through cycling activities we can strengthen relationships and add contacts. We can get acquainted with anyone regardless of age, race or religion. Usually, when we cycling in a focal location, we will greet individuals in the area. This will strengthen the relationship and unity between the races can be fostered."* (Rider 1)

*"Of course, I will inform, through activities like this hopefully will be able to benefit and establish cooperation which is closer between the community and other parties in shaping a harmonious and safe environment to live in."* (Rider 2)

Organizing cycling activities is an effort that should be encouraged because it is one of the tourism products that can attract many tourists to this country Kaya & Erdoğan (2020). It can encourage Malaysians not only to perform every activity but also as one of the events that allow us to cultivate a sense of belonging among Malaysians who come from all over the country. Terengganu has many beautiful places and is suitable for sports tourism such as the "Drawbridge" route.

*"Every member of society should tame themselves with the sport of cycling that suits their respective interests, abilities, and capabilities. In this regard, efforts to increase public awareness to be involved in this activity should be implemented from time to time."* (Rider 3)

Political stability, peaceful domestic situation, technological progress and good research are considered as factors that make Terengganu such a conducive environment for Sports Tourism. The main agency that develops sports tourism is the Ministry of Youth and Sports while the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture assists in terms of promotion.

*"It is appropriate for all communities to care about the development of cycling activities and its development so that the country can produce better quality athletes and become the focus of the world. Therefore, respond to the challenges and calls of the government to succeed and improve the standard of sports in the country to the most optimal level."* (Rider 4)

## 5. Conclusion

According to (Nusair,2020) more tourists attracted to the autonomy and perspective available when riding a bike, the trend of cycling tourism is still growing rapidly. Cycling activity is also a tourism product in the form of sports tourism activities, this tourism activity has great potential to be an income -generating industry. Tourists who come to Terengganu can be given the opportunity to participate in fitness and wellness programs offered by the industry operators. Cycling not only provide overall health benefits, but it is also one of the most suitable methods of physical activity to be carried out easily as a part of daily life Ma, Ye & Wang (2021).

## 6. Acknowledgement

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## ARTICLES FOR FACULTY MEMBERS

# THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF CITY LANDMARK TO TOURISTS AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF TERENGGANU DRAWBRIDGE

Directions for improving the system of municipal management of recreational services development in the city of Novorossiysk / Cherniaeva, R., Sannikova, A., & Alekseeva, O.

# Directions for improving the system of municipal management of recreational services development in the city of Novorossiysk

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**Abstract.** The development of recreational services could become one of the "locomotives" of the social and economic growth of the municipal entity of "the Town of Novorossiysk", as well as the entire Krasnodar Territory. The city of Novorossiysk has good recreational potential. There are favorable climatic conditions, landscapes with unique natural landmarks, a variety of geomorphological conditions, a great number of convenient beaches, and rich historical and cultural heritage. It is necessary to use modern methods to increase the competitiveness and innovative attractiveness of the resort and tourist destination businesses. Effective municipal management of the development of recreational services will solve the problem of increasing employment and will contribute to the growth of welfare and improvement of the quality of life of the local people by providing better social and economic conditions. Therefore, the development of recreational services will have a multiplicative effect on the economy of the city of Novorossiysk. In its turn, the improvement of the municipal management system will allow recreational services of tourist resort destination to gain more weight in the economy of the municipal formation.

## 1 Summary

The purpose of the article is to analyze the effectiveness of the municipal management system for the development of recreational services in the territory of the municipal formation of Novorossiysk City and to develop proposals for its improvement. The practical significance of the work lies in the fact that introduction of the proposals and implementation of the measures developed by the Municipal Flagman Project "Novorossiysk is the Center of Tourism" will increase the efficiency of the municipal management system and form a competitive resort and tourist destination in the municipal formation of Novorossiysk City with a level of recreational services that meet international quality standards. This will lead to an increase in the income of the resort and tourist destination enterprises, and, accordingly, an increase in tax revenues to the budget. Sustainable development of recreational services at the resort and tourist destination will create new jobs and improve the level and quality of life of the people of the municipality of Novorossiysk.

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In the course of the work, we studied the theoretical aspects of managing the development of recreational services, analyzed the effectiveness of the municipal management system for the development of recreational services in the territory of the municipal entity of Novorossiysk, and worked out measures for its improvement. Also, we made an assessment of the recreational potential resort and tourist destination and carried out the territory zoning of the municipal entity of Novorossiysk, a SWOT analysis of the municipal management efficiency for the development of recreational services in the territory of the municipality, identified and analyzed the existing problems, and conducted a sociological study.

## 2 Introduction

In the "Strategy for the social and economic development of Krasnodar Krai until 2030" the determining direction of the transition to the socially-oriented economic development of the region is indicated as "creating conditions for improving the quality of life of the population by measures that include the development of infrastructure for recreation and tourism ensuring the quality, accessibility and competitiveness of recreational services." [1]

Krasnodar Krai has great recreational potential. Favorable climatic conditions, a variety of plain and mountainous landscapes, a huge number of the comfortable Azov and Black Sea Coast beaches, rich historical and cultural heritage determined the region's high competitive ability to develop all types of recreation activities: health-improving, cultural-cognitive, active and extreme, hunting, fishing and others. ... The contribution of the tourism and recreation industry to the GRP of Krasnodar Krai reaches 14-15%. Krasnodar Krai is the leader in domestic tourism in the Russian Federation. The region is very attractive for investment in the tourism and recreation industry. However, authorities at all levels have to make efforts to increase investment flows in this area development. The significant recreational potential of the territory is unattractively highlighted by the underdeveloped infrastructure which requires significant financial investments. And the level of prices which does not correspond to the service quality hinders the attraction of a large number of tourists, reducing the competitiveness of domestic recreational services in comparison with foreign ones.

## 3 Materials and methods

In many published materials, tourism is recognized by scientists and economists around the world as one of the largest and fastest growing sectors of the economy [2-12]. Both Russian and foreign researchers devote their work to the possibilities of developing entrepreneurship in the field of tourism in coastal areas [2], sociological surveys of residents about the impact of urban tourism [13], tourism multiplier [10, 14], the topic of public-private partnerships with the introduction of resources in the development of tourism [3, 4, 12, 15, 16]. Tourism in Krasnodar Krai as an object of economic analysis is attractive to many domestic researchers. At the same time, many social and economic aspects of regional tourism require versatile coverage today more than ever.

The information base of this study is made up of statistical and documentary materials of all-Russian and regional organizations, as well as articles in periodicals. The work used the primary data collected by the State Statistics Committee of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Resorts and Tourism of the Krasnodar Territory, and the Federal Agency for Tourism. The published analytical materials and data were obtained from the Internet resources.

In order to take into account the opinions of residents and guests of the city of Novorossiysk about the efficiency of actions of the local authorities in solving the problems

of the development of recreational areas and services, a sociological study was carried out. Using the online survey method through social networks, 75 residents and 75 guests of the city of various social strata, aged 18 to 70, were interviewed. The level of reliability of statistical processing of the survey results is 95%.

# 4 Results

Novorossiysk has a long-established status of an industrial city and a leading port in Russia. Remembering Novorossiysk, most often the guests of the city imagine the smoking pipes of cement plants, many cargo cranes and ships in the port. The city is rarely associated with secluded recreation areas, beautiful lakes, picturesque valleys and relict juniper forests. Meanwhile, the municipal formation of Novorossiysk occupies an advantageous marketing position for the development of recreational services. Here, climatic and physical-geographical conditions are favorable for recreation: pebble beaches are long and comfortable, there are a lot of tourist attractions. The combination of these factors forms a significant potential for the development of medical and health-improving, historical, ecological, agricultural, business and other types of tourism. The target audience is wide: these are families with children, young people looking for an active holiday of the economy class, organized groups of children, businessmen, etc. The development of recreational services could bring significantly higher revenues to the municipal budget, especially in a difficult demographic situation.

Any territory has its own permissible recreational load depending on the ability of the environment to assimilate hazardous waste and reproduction of natural resources, and, to a large extent, associated with the availability of an effective environmental infrastructure. When comparing the capacity of local ecosystems with the maximum recreational load, it is possible to establish the degree of the territory imbalance from the standpoint of the development of the tourist trade sector and environmental degradation. It is important to optimize the interaction of management and business systems to bring the scale and forms of management into line with the regional natural capabilities. In the Strategy of Social and Economic Development, the municipal formation of Novorossiysk City for the period up to 2030 the sanatorium and resort industry is considered promising. In this regard, it is planned to implement the municipal flagship projects "Resort Abrau-Dyurso", "Novorossiysk is the center of sea and business tourism", "Novorossiysk is the city of health". The municipality is actively involved in the implementation of the Interregional Tourism Project "The Golden Ring of the Bosporus Kingdom". In 2020-2022, the regional budget provides subsidies for "the organization of water disposal for renovating the infrastructure of the tourist cluster "Abrau-Utrish ". This is reflected in the subprogram "The Development of the Health Resort and Tourist Complex" of Krasnodar Krai of the State Program "The Development of the Health Resort and Tourist Complex". Of the 25 municipal programs implemented in the territory of the Novorossiysk municipality, there is not a special program with planned measures for the development of the resort and travel sector. In contrast to the well-known resort cities of Krasnodar Krai, the sanatorium and resort industry is not basic for the economy of the municipality of Novorossiysk. And the indicator of the tourist load in Novorossiysk is significantly lower than in the popular resort cities of Krasnodar Krai. However, the development of recreational services is important for the Novorossiysk municipality as it leads to the creation of new jobs, contributes to an increase in tax revenues to the local budget and an improvement of the quality of life of the local population. In addition, the great recreational potential of the municipality of Novorossiysk is a competitive advantage of the territory for potential investors.

In terms of the tourist flow, the municipal formation of Novorossiysk takes the 6th place among the municipalities of Krasnodar Krai. The leading resort cities are Sochi, Anapa,

Gelendzhik, as well as the municipal areas of Tuapse, Yeisk and Temryuk. According to the Department for Resorts and Tourism of the City Administration, in 2019 the municipality of Novorossiysk was visited by over 652.3 thousand tourists, the growth rate was only 53% as compared to the level of 2018. The volume of provided recreational services amounted to more than 7.20 million USD, with a growth rate of only 74%. Tax payments to the consolidated budget of Krasnodar Krai amounted to 1.43 million USD, with a growth rate of 106%. Over the past five years, the indicators of development of the recreational services sphere reached the highest values in 2017 and 2018. The highest number of tourists who visited the municipality was observed in 2018: 1240.2 thousand people. The volume of services in the industry reached 14.8 million USD in 2017. The dynamics of the main indicators of the recreational services sphere development in 2015-2019 is shown in Fig. 1.



**Fig. 1.** Dynamics of the main indicators of the development of the sphere of recreational services of Novorossiysk in 2015-2019.

The indicators of the development of the recreational services sphere depend on the effective work of local authorities in promoting the resort potential of Novorossiysk, the successful implementation of the targeted advertising campaign, the use of federal and regional media resources, as well as the developed transport infrastructure.

By number of accommodation facilities, the municipal formation of Novorossiysk takes the 5th position, and by number of rooms – the 6th place among the 6 municipalities of the Azov-Black Sea economic zone of the region. There are 109 collective accommodation facilities on the territory of the municipality. There is a positive dynamics: the growth rate of their number, for 3 years it amounted to 119.7%. According to Krasnodarstat, the income of collective accommodation facilities from the services provided amounted to 24.92 million USD in 2018 (5th place). Among them, the income of specialized accommodation facilities (sanatoriums, tourist centers) amounted to 12.51 million USD. In terms of the average annual number of placed persons, the municipal formation of Novorossiysk also takes the 5th place (Fig. 2).
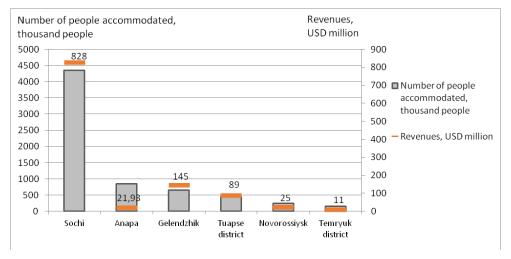
**Fig. 2.** Indicators of activites of collective accommodation facilities for the provision of recreational services for 2018.

In Novorossiysk municipality, the main consumers of recreational services are mainly the residents of the Southern Federal District (39%). However, over the past 5 years, the share of tourists from the northern regions of Russia and from the neighboring and distant foreign countries has increased.

The analysis of the dynamics of the calculated occupancy coefficient of available places in the collective accommodation facilities of Novorossiysk over the past five years has revealed a negative trend towards a decrease in the occupancy of the available room stock. For 2015-2019, the occupancy coefficient of the available room stock (OCARS) decreased from 0.40 to 0.23 (Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3.** Decrease in the coefficient of occupancy of available places of collective accommodation facilities in the municipal formation of Novorossiysk City in 2015-2019.

The Imperial Hotel, the Fregat Sanatorium-and-Health Complex, the Novorossiysk Group of Companies, the recreation centers Chernomor-Laguna, Goluboy Torch, and Golubaya Volna maintain high values of OCARS . The management of these accommodation facilities invests in the development of recreational services to improve their quality and year-round provision. In the struggle for the quality of recreational services provided to guests and residents of the Novorossiysk municipal formation, of great help was the implementation of the Federal Law of June 7, 2013 No. 108-FZ, obliging the owners of all accommodation facilities to classify them. From July 1, 2019, responsibility was introduced for the provision of services by hotels with a fund of more than 50 rooms without mandatory classification. These measures will help to ensure a consistently high quality of recreational services which will increase the flow of tourists.

Thus, the functioning of the municipal management system for the development of recreational services is quite effective. There are positive trends in the growth of income from the provided recreational services and tax revenues to the consolidated budget. The renovation and development of transport infrastructure has increased the access of tourists to attractions and simplified the process of movement of their flows. For the viability of the resort and travel sector in the long term, as well as business profitability and growth in investment flows and tax revenues to the budget it is necessary to expand the range of recreational services provided year-round in order to develop new popular types of tourism.

The SWOT analysis identified the weaknesses of the municipal management of recreational areas and services in the territory of the municipal formation of Novorossiysk and made it possible to identify a number of unresolved problems.

The first problem is the insufficient occupancy of sanatorium and health-improving organizations and other accommodation facilities, especially in the off-season, and the low percentage of enterprises providing recreational services all year round. The share of sanatoriums with year-round services for recreants is 72.5%, the share of such hotels is 37%, and the share of year-round tourist centers is 19%. The "underutilization" of collective accommodation facilities of the municipality of Novorossiysk is due to unreasonably high prices, outdated material and technical base and the low level of service. The consumer price index for recreational services in sanatoriums and hotels in 2019 amounted to over 105%.

The second problem is the concealment of income and real turnover of funds in the unorganized sector of private mini-hotels, trade enterprises, service enterprises, and the seasonal entertainment industry. The short holiday period of 3-4 months makes it difficult to carry out strict administrative control over their income. Also, the rights of recreants using the services of "shadow" entrepreneurs are not sufficiently protected. Due to the inclusion of unauthorized entrepreneurs in the number of taxpayers (it is possible to sell licenses, permits for a certain type of activity for a short period), the local budget of the municipal formation of Novorossiysk could be significantly replenished.

The third problem concerning the concealment of income and sanitary protection of the recreational zones of the Novorossiysk municipal formation is based on various abuses and misuse of land plots. At the same time, environmental legislation is often violated: the "lease" of land plots of the Abrau Nature Reserve, collecting "Red Book" plants, etc. According to Art. 95 of the Land Code of the Russian Federation "activities which are not related to the preservation and study of natural complexes and objects" are prohibited on the territory of protected areas, that is, wildlife sanctuaries and natural monuments, which include the juniper plantations of the Sheshkari Forestry, the Sudzhuk Spit, the lagoon of Lake Abrau and the Sladky Estuary and others. It is important to take into account and control the anthropogenic load on a resort and a natural complex with recreational potential.

The fourth problem is the underdeveloped tourist infrastructure. There are not enough sites for sports tourism, organized ecological routes. There are no signs and noticeboards to

the sights and objects of display like, for example, at the resorts of the Crimea. Not everywhere there are access roads of acceptable quality to the tourist attractions. The road transport network cannot cope with passenger traffic during the high holiday season.

The fifth problem is ineffective advertising campaigns to promote the recreational opportunities of Novorossiysk. The sector of attracting tourists from abroad does not work, rather low is the level of awareness of the domestic potential target audience about the services of medical and health-improving, balneological, sports, extreme, historical and cultural, pilgrimage, agronomic, gastronomic and other types of recreation on the territory of the municipality.

Guests and residents of the city are not satisfied with the inflated prices of collective accommodation facilities and additional services, with the quality of service, with the state of transportation, information and infrastructure, with the lack of qualified guides, with the unavailability of water transport, with the small number or absence of offers of ecological, sports and extreme tourism services. More than a third (35%) of the surveyed residents and municipality guests believe that the level of development of recreational services is still low. On the other hand, the guests of the municipality really like the favorable climatic conditions, natural landscapes with unique natural monuments, a variety of geomorphological conditions, a large number of comfortable beaches, and rich historical and cultural heritage. The residents and guests of the municipality expect the local authorities to intensify management activities in increasing the quality services in hotels and sanatoriums, and in developing services for marine, social, ecological, sports and extreme tourism. Television advertisements and Internet resources are called the priority sources of information.

Thus, for the development of recreational services in the municipality of Novorossiysk, the municipal authorities need to intensify their activities in promoting the resort and tourist complex. The problem of renovation the tourist, transport and engineering infrastructure are to be solved, the activities of "shadow" mini-hotels and public catering facilities that evade taxes must be under strict control of the authorities. Regular verification of violations in the use of land plots in recreational zones is necessary as well as accounting and control of anthropogenic load on the resort and natural complex according to its recreational potential. Inflated prices of collective accommodation facilities, the inappropriate quality of the provided recreational services, low qualification of guides lead to the dissatisfaction of tourists.

To expand recreational areas and increase the attractiveness of Novorossiysk for tourists, it is important to optimize the activities of municipal authorities in solving the identified problems, in pursuing active investment policy in the resort and travel sector, in the implementation of municipal flagship projects (MFP) related to the destination, in positioning and promotion of the brand "Novorossiysk - the center of tourism." Of the 12 MFPs planned in the Strategy of Social and Economic Development of the Novorossiysk Municipal District for the period up to 2030, the implementation of 4 projects ("Novorossiysk is the center of maritime and business tourism", "Abrau-Durso Resort", "Novorossiysk is the center of viticulture and winemaking", "Novorossiysk is the city of sports") will contribute to the expansion and increase the attractiveness of recreational areas and services in the municipal formation of Novorossiysk City. The implementation the first project will diversify the services of sea and business tourism, the second project – the recreational services of agricultural, beach, gastronomic, ecological tourism, the third project – the new demanded services of agricultural tourism, and the fourth project – the services of sports (active) tourism. The coordination of the implementation the MFP will be carried out by "The Agency for the Development the Municipal Formation of Novorossiysk" with the participation of specialized working groups of representatives the Projects Department of the Administration, the Department of Resorts and Tourism,

enterprises and organizations of the resort and tourist destination of the municipality. In order to expand recreational areas and form new competitive services based on the unique natural and historical and cultural potential of the municipal formation of Novorossiysk, and subsequently receive a stable increase in income from the resort and tourist destination in the budget, first of all, it is necessary to invest in ecological and geographical research with assessment of the recreational potential of the territory, in the implementation of MFP activities, renovation of the necessary infrastructure, in information support and advertising campaigns.

Strengthening the international ties and cooperation, attracting foreign investors with well-known brands in the tourism business, cooperation with the Federal State Unitary Enterprise National Marketing Center for Tourism (Visit Russia), the World Without Borders tourism association, and the Tourism Association of Russian Regions will increase the competitiveness of Novorossiysk as a center of tourism in the foreign and domestic market of recreational services. This will contribute to solving a number of identified problems simultaneously.

First of all, it will solve the problem of insufficient occupancy of sanatorium and recreation organizations and other collective accommodation facilities, because the utilization rate of available places in 2019 was only 0.23. The efforts of local authorities should be aimed at increasing the number of accommodation facilities with year-round provision of recreational services, at updating the material and technical base. To improve the quality of the services provided, it is important to complete the classification of accommodation facilities, which is mandatory from 01.07.2019, in accordance with Law of 05.02.2018, No. 16-FZ and Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of 16.02.2018, No. 158 "On Approval of the Regulations on the Classification of Hotels". It is required to intensify work with the Federal Social Security Service of the Russian Federation to increase the number of preferential vouchers to sanatorium and health organizations of the municipal formation of Novorossiysk.

On the part of local authorities, together with the officers of the Federal Tax Service and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, it is necessary to strengthen the control over the "unorganized" sector of tourist services, increasing the share of registered taxpayers, it is possible to issue licenses allowing a certain type of activity for a short period. According to research, up to 66% of vacationers on the Black Sea Coast are accommodated in "private houses". The income of mini-hotels and other individual accommodation facilities during the holiday season is on average 62 USD per tourist. For the possibility of expanding recreational zones while preserving the natural potential of the territory, strict control by the authorities is required over the targeted use of natural resources with observing the requirements of environmental legislation, especially in protected areas. In order to protect the sea water and soil in recreational areas against pollution it is necessary to renovate the wastewater treatment and solid waste disposal systems.

Infrastructure is the basis for the formation of the recreational services market. The development of the necessary engineering and tourist infrastructure, the construction of new and the expansion of old highways are extremely important for the municipal formation of Novorossiysk. To promote the resort and tourist destination of the municipality, it is necessary to develop new popular types of recreational services of ecological, sports (active), agricultural, gastronomic and sea tourism. The municipal authorities, together with local tour operators and tourism industry enterprises, should intensify the development of new ecological routes, projects of popular services for hang gliding, cycling, mountain biking, diving, surfing, yachting, and sea trips. In mid-May 2020, the Ministry of Resorts, Tourism and Olympic Heritage of Krasnodar Krai developed the Rules for the Provision of Active Tourism Services, the observance of which must be monitored by the local government bodies. When rendering recreational services, according

to these Rules, "environmental safety, minimizing harmful effects on air and water basins, fauna, flora and soil" must be observed.

In order to create a positive image of the municipal formation of Novorossiysk as a territory with high natural, historical and cultural recreational potential and to promote the municipal brand "Novorossiysk is the Center of Tourism", active work on information and marketing support of the resort and tourist destination is required. Within the framework of the MFP, it is advisable to develop measures for positioning and promotion of the resort and tourist destination and the brand "Novorossiysk is the Center of Tourism". It is possible to cooperate with the Novorossiysk branch of the Russian Geographical Society. For positioning and PR-promotion of the resort and tourist destination and the brand "Novorossiysk is the Center of Tourism ", it is important to rely on comfortable, safe, comprehensive services and entertainment conditions of stay on the attractive for tourists territory of the municipality. The development of recreational services is a kind of investment project the payback of which depends on the number of recreational flows, the formation of their loyalty, and the acquisition of regular customers. The demand for the municipal formation of Novorossiysk from tourists will entail an influx of investments, new participants and business partners. This will contribute to a gradual increase in the number of new jobs, an increase in tax revenues to the budget and an increase in other indicators of the social and economic development of the territory.

The implementation of the developed recommendations for optimizing the activities of local authorities will make it possible to form a competitive year-round resort and tourist destination on the territory of the municipal formation of Novorossiysk, with resort and tourist services that meet international quality standards.

## 5 Conclusions

In order to improve the system of municipal management of the development of recreational services, it is necessary to carry out a transition to multipurpose coordination and implement the municipal flagship projects. It is required to solve a number of tasks facing the local government. These include: the development of year-round recreational services of sanatoriums and recreation centers with the renewal of their material and technical base, support for new popular recreational services, modernization of engineering, transport and tourism infrastructure, regulation of the legal functioning of the "unorganized sector of private entrepreneurs". It is important to control the state of all recreational resources, especially over the excess of the permissible load on natural recreational areas. For sustainable social and economic development of the municipal formation of Novorossiysk it is necessary to implement a municipal flagship project to position and promote the resort and tourist destination and the brand "Novorossiysk is the Center of Tourism".

The implementation of the developed proposals will contribute to the popularization of the recreational services the resort and tourist destination the municipal formation of Novorossiysk and an increase in the number of tourists. With an increase in the flow of recreants, in addition to an increase in the occupancy of accommodation facilities, the demand for excursion services, the level of attendance of display facilities will also increase; other additional services not only for collective accommodation facilities, but also for other enterprises of the resort and tourist destination of the municipal formation of Novorossiysk will also become more demanded. This will lead to an increase in the income of enterprises of the resort and tourist destination, and, accordingly, an increase in tax revenues to the budget. Sustainable development of recreational services of the resort and tourist destination will create new jobs, increase the level and quality of life the population municipal formation of Novorossiysk. Even with the projected minimum growth rate the

volume of services rendered is equal to 103%, for 5 years of implementation of the MFP "Novorsiysk is the Center of Tourism" the economic effect will amount to over 1.12 million USD. The volume of tax revenues from the enterprises of resort and tourist destination of the municipal formation of Novorossiysk to the consolidated budget will amount to over 1.41 million USD. Already in 2021, the consolidated budget of Krasnodar Krai can replenish the resort tax in the amount of 105,184 USD. These funds will be spent on the development of infrastructure for recreational services of the municipal formation of Novorossiysk. In addition to the resort tax, each vacationer will leave hundreds and thousands of times more money in the resort and tourist destination of Novorossiysk. Taking into account the tourist multiplier, the economic effect of the development of recreational services will be 2-5 times greater.

With an increase in the competitiveness of the resort and tourist destination, taking into account the tourist multiplier, the positive effect of the development recreational services will be reflected in the formation of a favorable image and improvement of the territory, in the creation of high-quality infrastructure, in the growth of the level of medical services, in the demand for cultural and sports institutions, in the quality and standard of living of the population of the municipal formation of Novorossiysk. And this is the main goal of the functioning of the municipal government system.

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## ARTICLES FOR FACULTY MEMBERS

# THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF CITY LANDMARK TO TOURISTS AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF TERENGGANU DRAWBRIDGE

Factors of local community participation in tourism-related business in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia / Mokhtarulbari, N. F., & Mhd Rashid, M.

SELECTIVE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION (SDI)

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*Original Article*

# Factors of Local Community Participation in Tourism-Related Business in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia

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**Abstract:** Tourism development has enabled the involvement of local communities, particularly in tourism-related business. Community involvement can improve the socio-economic status of the locals, especially in removing them from the clutches of poverty. Recognizing the importance of community involvement, this study attempts to measure the level of local participation in tourism-related business and identify the factors that stimulate community involvement in tourism-related business. A quantitative method of survey questionnaire was employed for data collection on the tourism-related micro and small enterprises in Kuala Terengganu. The study employed a purposive sampling method, obtaining responses from 113 tourism-related businesses across various categories, including accommodation, amenities, attractions, accessibility, and activities. The study used descriptive analysis, multiple regression and mean analysis. The result of the study reveals a high level of local community participation in tourism-related business in Kuala Terengganu, and encouragement from family was found as the most significant factor for participation. This study contributes to the body of knowledge on tourism-related business in suburban areas. The findings of the study will be useful for the tourism and authority stakeholders in the planning to promote participation of the local community in the tourism industry through involvement in business.

**Keywords:** Local community; Participation factors; Tourism-related business, Kuala Terengganu-Malaysia

## 1. Introduction

The development of tourism has facilitated the engagement of local communities, especially in businesses associated with tourism. These businesses encompass services catering to tourists' requirements and desires, including food, lodging, transportation, and other essentials. Haber and Reichel (2005) assert that the tourism sector encompasses a variety of enterprises and endeavors providing diverse tourism experiences and activities for tourist. The money tourists spend not only on their actual stay but also on local businesses has a positive impact on the economy of the nations where they travel. Also, it generates a significant amount of employment opportunities for those employed in the transportation and hospitality sectors, among others. Moreover, tourism has the potential to strengthen linkages between states or corporations, produce chances for amusement and relaxation, and raise the worth of a currency. For tourists,

it can result in more happiness, wellbeing, and education, and it can also create chances for cultural exchange. According to Mitchell and Reid (2001), a community drives the development of tourism. Since the community is more conscious about how much the environment should be developed in relation to tourism related activities, it will be easier to conserve the environment when ecotourism is included. Due to the community's increased awareness of how much the environment should be developed in relation to tourism-related activities, the environment will be conserved in the context of ecotourism with the involvement. The most crucial aspect of local communities' involvement is allowing them to profit from the development happening in and around their neighborhood.

In addition, the most crucial aspect of local communities' involvement is allowing them to profit from the development happening in and around their neighborhood. Besides that, it is believed that community involvement in the tourism industry have the potential to support tourism development (Murphy & Medin, 1985). The local community has benefited from the growth of tourism. When it comes to most job openings in the tourism industry, local community are given preference. This will keep them from being cast aside, allowing them to continue participating in conventional economic activities, and preventing them from experiencing any economic change. Failure to include the local community will result in ongoing poverty among locals, which will eventually have a detrimental impact on the population's tourist development and impede its future success (Ranis et. al, 2000). These facts require that local community involvement be encouraged.

## 1.1. Tourism Development in Kuala Terengganu

Terengganu is emerging as a top spot for domestic tourism in Malaysia, ranking second in attracting visitors from across the country, based on the Domestic Tourist Statistics, Terengganu Socioeconomic Report 2022, (Terengganu Strategic & Integrity Institute, 2022). The number of domestic tourists to Terengganu increased by 175.2% in 2022, reaching 805.3 thousand visitors, contributing an estimated RM3.9 billion to the state's economy. This surge could be credited to effective marketing, better services, and new tourism initiatives. This growth has positioned tourism as a key economic driver, creating jobs and boosting local incomes. Heritage, culture, and ecology are the three main elements that the state government has determined are essential to creating a unique identity in the tourism industry. Terengganu has an abundance of traditional goods that can be promoted, such as batik, silk, mengkuang weaving, crafts, wood carving, copper products and musical performances (Abdul Halim & Che Mat, 2010). As a result, the creative industries are essential to Terengganu's tourism industry. Creative industry also referred to as the cultural industry, is essential to tourism industry and make significant contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) of Southeast Asian countries (Abdul Halim & Che Mat, 2010).

Tourism is a prominent industry with the capability to generate income for developed as well as developing countries. Most countries view the tourism sector as a crucial one that needs strategic and development planning to remain competitive in the modern world and increase advantages to the nation and its local populations. According to the amount of money it has brought in, the Terengganu tourism sector has likewise established itself as a significant source of income for the nation. In 2021, the sector demonstrated an increase in overall revenue of 1.2 billion recorded due to increasingly positive economic growth momentum reported by the Central Terengganu Development Authority (KETENGAH). This accomplishment is attributable to the dedication of many parties, in introducing and marketing Kuala Terengganu as a well-liked tourist destination that should be visited by both domestic and foreign tourist. The main attractions in Terengganu include Kuala Terengganu, Kemaman, Kuala Nerus, Dungun, and Marang districts, each offering unique experiences ranging from scenic beaches to cultural heritage sites. These areas are popular due to their accessibility, good infrastructure, and promotional efforts. Key destinations for tourists include Terengganu Drawbridge, Pasar Besar Kedai Payang, Batu Buruk Beach, Warisan Island, and i-City Terengganu, catering to diverse interests from cultural exploration to leisure activities (Terengganu Strategic & Integrity Institute, 2022). Nonetheless, Malaysia's domestic tourism sector experienced a downturn in 2021. Domestic visitor arrivals plummeted by 49.9% to 66.0 million, compared to the previous year's 131.7 million. Expenditure on domestic travel and tourism also saw a sharp decline of 54.5%, reaching a record low of RM18.4 billion, down from RM40.4 billion in 2020. This decline was attributed to the impact of Covid-19 and the enforcement of Movement Control Orders (MCO) across all states, reflecting the overall performance of domestic tourism in Malaysia.

Community involvement in the development's core activities is necessary. Entries will boost the tourism sector's overall revenue, but more crucially, they will extend the advantages to the nearby communities (Salleh et al., 2011). Long-term sustainability of their life will be indirectly ensured by this, allowing them to participate freely in the mainstream development of the tourism business (Clayton et al.,

1998). In the context of Terengganu, before the development of tourism in Terengganu, most of the locals were involved in fishing (Zain et al., 2018). However, with the establishment of tourism sector, they had shifted to better economic sector especially to the tourism sector. In this sector, some of them work in resorts, as tourist guides and establish tourism related businesses. Nevertheless, fishermen are often categorized among the poor, especially fishermen in Asia. Employment as fishermen is a weather-dependent job, if the weather is good, they will go out looking for sustenance and if the weather is otherwise, their work will be stunted for several months until the end of the monsoon season. This generally makes fishermen work as jobs that depend on the weather and cause the quality of life to be low (Zain et al., 2018). Tourism-related business can boost the local and national economies. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the factors influencing local community involvement in tourism-related businesses. This study only focuses on micro and small enterprises. This study is trying to accomplish the following objectives: (i) To measure the level of local community participation in tourism related-business. (ii) To examine the most influential factor of local community participation in tourism related-business.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Impact of tourism activity on the local community

The impact of tourism-related business can be seen when the number of tourist arrivals, nonetheless, the development of the tourism industry is meaningless if it is notable to reduce the economic gap in the local communities (Salleh et al., 2016). This is due to the involvement of local communities in the development of the tourism industry is often regarded as the key to stable development sustainable (Taylor, 1995). Moreover, communities are expected to share some of the benefits such as employment and income growth and cost reduction due to low wages. Enterprise often refers to small and medium-sized businesses, known as SMEs. Understanding SMEs involves knowing their size and scale. Three types of SMEs in Malaysia are micro, small, and medium-sized businesses. The National SME Development Council (NSDC), which is the leading body for SME development, classifies SMEs according to their annual turnover and size, with some differences between industries.

Manufacturing, agriculture, mining, construction, and services are some of these industries. According to the classifications of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the service sector includes a range of industries, including business, communication, education, finance, healthcare, tourism, and transportation. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourism as the movement of people for leisure, business, or professional reasons to locations outside of their typical habitat. They are referred to as guests. In general, a visitor is categorized as a same day visitor if their journey does not involve an overnight stay and a tourist if it does. Other than to be employed by a resident entity in the nation or location visited, the trip's objective can be for business, leisure, or personal reasons (Theobald, 2005). When business or professional travel is the primary reason for a trip, it is frequently further separated into two categories: attending meetings, conferences or congresses, trade fairs and exhibitions and other business and professional purposes.

### 2.2. Factors of local participation in tourism-related business

Previous studies suggest the importance of community involvement in mainstream development. Such engagement can not only boost tourism industry revenue but also ensure that local communities receive the benefits (Salleh et al., 2011). Over time, this approach can help sustain community livelihoods and foster their independence within the tourism industry's development trajectory.

#### 2.2.1. Family

According to Gersick et al. (1997) across the world, family companies have a significant impact. In the world, families are thought to own or run more than two- thirds of all enterprises. The distinctive characteristic of family enterprises is that family members, including children, work together for economic goals, but in non-family businesses, the business and family worlds are typically distinct. According to Basu (2004), to put it another way, "the family is not just a social unit, it is also an economic unit". Because of this, family interactions and rituals, particularly those involving children, frequently take place in public (Seymour, 2015). Most business owners in all four groups had at least one additional family member working for them when their companies first started. Thus, according to Gersick et al. (1997) their more sophisticated perspective on the family life cycle may help to explain the significance that these entrepreneur place on family-first goals that motives, and goals may alter over the family life cycle. Few people with

young children who are still in the early phases of their lives aspire to family-first goals like family employment or generational succession. This is not surprising because it might be too early to think about these. According to the context of the family, it implies that expectations for the family may change over time.

### 2.2.2.Interest

Interest is defined as passion to run a business Saleh et al., (2016). When a local community is passionate about its business, its success is the top priority. This indicates that the local community will put forth great effort to provide a good that the intended consumers will buy. They will strive to offer the greatest customer care possible to keep their current clients loyal to their company. Instead of experiencing short-term results that can never be recovered, the entire focus is on generating long- term success for their business. According to Saleh et al., (2016) participation in the business allows them to make drastic decisions independently and without being bound by any party. Despite the hurdles along the path to success, the local community should be motivated by their aspirations to excel. Moreover, community members often take pride in becoming business owners (Saleh et al., 2016).

### 2.2.3. Confidence

The local community has self-confidence in operating their business, which has faced all the challenges of business. According to Anderson et al. (2009) stated that entrepreneurial attitudes predict entrepreneurial intentions that lead to individual behaviors. Ho and Koh (1992) argued that self-confidence is a required entrepreneurship characteristic and self-confidence is related to other psychological characteristics. The local community also practices the knowledge while operating their business. In business, confidence is crucial because it enhances communication, helps local community cope with conflict better, makes them happier at work, makes it easier for them to accept criticism, and can help them become better managers or leaders. An effort to build self-confidence, local communities stated that they should be prepared to improve the situation when there is a complaint from a customer. Knowledge or skill is the lowest item. However, these items are still at a high level of agreement (Saleh et al., 2016).

### 2.2.4. Opportunity

A business opportunity is the possibility to start a firm by utilizing an event in the market involves some sort of market-wide advantageous circumstance. Some businesses prosper because of a business opportunity, whereas others fail. Leaders are successful because they identify opportunities before others do, plan for them, and then create business models to take advantage of them. An opportunity is crucial for success in business. A business cannot start, grow, or be successful without it. An opportunity's primary function is to provide the foundation for any activity that leads to financial gain and company expansion. Opportunities give firms the chance to develop, adopt, and improve their ideas and inventions. According to Saleh et al. (2016) local communities felt that going into business will give more time as compared to other occupations that are bound by working hours. Most of them became businessmen as they want to work independently.

### 2.2.5. Income

Income is defined as the amount that local community received from clients in exchange for the items or services that they provide. For this study, income is referring to the thing that approach and encourage an individual or local community to involve with businesses related to tourism. Which mean the reason why local community involve with business related to tourism is because of they can gain more profit and income by selling or providing their service to the customer or client. Figure 1 indicate the determinant factors of participation local community in tourism-related business; family, interest, confidence, opportunity and income. The involvement of the local community is contingent upon five distinct independent variables: family, interest, confidence, opportunity, and income (Saleh et al., 2016). When the local community satisfies these independent variables, their propensity to engage in tourism-related business increases. These independent variables wield considerable influence over the local community in Kuala Terengganu. Understanding the category of firm sizes is facilitated by defining the characteristics of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). As defined by SME Corporation Malaysia, a micro enterprise comprises an organization with fewer than 5 full-time employees and an annual sales turnover of less than RM300,000 in both the manufacturing sector and the services and other sectors. In the manufacturing industry, a small

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business is characterized by 5 to 75 full-time employees and an annual sales turnover ranging from RM300,000 to RM15 million. Conversely, within the services and other industries, a small business employs 5 to 30 full-time employees and generates annual sales turnovers between RM300,000 and RM3 million.
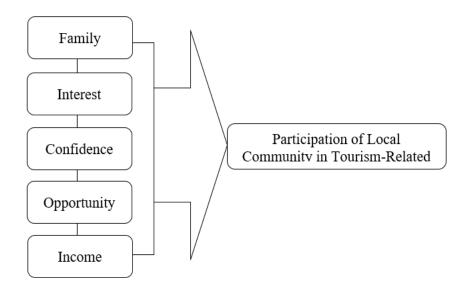


**Figure 1.** Proposed model of determinant factors of local community participation

Source: Adapted from Saleh et al. (2016)

The aims of the study are to measure the level of local community participation in tourism-related business and to examine the most influential factor of local community participation in tourism-related business. The conclusions are on factors that influence the local community participation in the tourism related business. Initially, for this purpose, all the variables namely family, interest, confidence, opportunity and income are expected to be the factors that stimulate the community to be involved in tourism-based businesses in Kuala Terengganu. Based on the above literature review, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: There is positive relationship between family encouragement and participation of local community in tourism-related business
H2: There is positive relationship between interest and participation of local community in tourism-related business
H3: There is positive relationship between confident and participation of local community in tourism-related business
H4: There is positive relationship between opportunity and participation of local community in tourism-related business
H5: There is positive relationship between income and participation of local community in tourism-related business

## 3. Materials and Methods

### 3.1. Research Design

A quantitative method of survey questionnaire was employed for data collection on the tourism-related micro and small enterprises in Kuala Terengganu. Quantitative research is esteemed for its prestige and utility, as it aids in mitigating biases inherent in research endeavors, thereby enhancing the accuracy of findings. According to Guo (2013), quantitative methods are based on numerous probability and statistical theories, with rigorous proofs and support from both simulated and empirical data. Regression analysis plays a paramountcy important role in contemporary statistical methods, which include event history analysis, generalized linear modeling, hierarchical linear modeling, propensity score matching, and structural equation modeling. Quantitative methods can be employed in all stages of a scientific inquiry ranging from sample selection to final data analysis.

## 3.2. Data Collection Method

Data collection was conducted at Kuala Terengganu involved participants from the local community engaged in micro and small tourism-related businesses. This study employed purposive sampling research method. Specifically, the scope of the study was confined to businesses directly associated with tourism, excluding those unrelated to this sector. This selective criterion posed challenges in data collection, as it necessitated adherence to specific requirements. Open-source data sourced from official government websites, notably including the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC), Tourism Terengganu and Terengganu Strategic & Integrity Institute have served as primary references for statistical and businesses information. Face-to-face questionnaire dissemination was conducted among local businesses providing accommodation, transportation, attractions, amenities, and recreational activities. The intended respondents comprise local community involved in micro and small businesses within the tourism sector.

## 3.3. Population and Sampling

Table 1 shows the population of tourism businesses in Terengganu based on 5A of tourism which is accommodation, amenities, accessibility, attractions and activities.

**Table 1.** Business types in tourism

| Business Types | Details | Source |
|---|---|---|
| Accommodation | 188 registered premises | MOTAC (2024) |
| Accessibility | Bus, taxis, boat providers | - |
| Amenities | 168 travel agencies | MOTAC (2024) |
| Attractions | Several main attractions in Kuala Terengganu, which are Terengganu State Museum, Terengganu Cultural Village, Chinatown, Tengku Tengah Zaharah Mosque (Floating Mosque), Crystal Mosque, Payang Market, The Islamic Civilization Park, Noor Arfa Complex (NACC), Kuala Terengganu Drawbridge, Terengganu Science & Creativity Centre | Tourism Terengganu (2020) MOTAC (2024) |
| Activities | River Cruise and other activities are included are sightseeing, recreational, heritage, culture and more. | Tourism Terengganu (2020) |

The population does not precisely delineate the population of micro and small businesses within the tourism sector, as necessitated by the study's objectives. Consequently, the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator was utilized to determine the requisite sample size. Utilizing the Raosoft Calculator with an assumed population size of 20,000, a margin of error of 10%, and a confidence level of 90%, a sample size of 68 was established. Through this data screening process, all data underwent stringent filtering procedures to identify and address outliers. Initially, the dataset comprised 117 respondents; however, following the screening and outlier removal process, the dataset was refined to include data from 113 respondents.

## 3.4. Research Instrument

This questionnaire developed based on the five independent variables: family, income, interest, opportunity, confidence and the dependence variables are participation of local community in tourism-related business (see Table 2). Each question used Likert scale method from scale 1 to 5. 1 represents strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for neither agree or disagree, 4 agree and 5 represents strongly agree. The questionnaire is divided into two sections; section A and section B. Section A requires information of the business profile such as name of business, name of business owner, types of business, number of employees and location of business.

**Table 2.** Studied variables

| Construct | Source |
|---|---|
| Family | |
| Income | |
| Interest | |
| Confidence | Adapted from Saleh et al. (2016) |
| Opportunity | |
| Participation of local community in tourism-related business | |

In order to address the objectives of this study, both descriptive and regression analyses will be employed. Descriptive analysis will encompass an examination of the business profile, including variables such as the owner and business information, business type, employee number, and location. The regression analysis, on the other hand, will assess the interplay between independent variables namely, familial background, income level, interest, perceived opportunities, and confidence and their potential influence on the dependent variable, namely, the extent of local community involvement in tourism-related enterprises within the Kuala Terengganu locale. This analytical approach seeks to ascertain the degree to which these independent factors contribute to variations in community participation within the tourism sector. All data collected will undergo rigorous analysis utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Moreover, the study utilized the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator to determine an appropriate sample size, given the absence of precise population figures for tourism-related businesses in Kuala Terengganu. With a presumed population size of 20,000, the calculated sample size is determined to be 68, ensuring adequate representation for statistical analysis and inference.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Descriptive Analysis

Table 3 reveals that 65.5% male and 34.5% female according to respondents. The types of businesses that operate in Kuala Terengganu in the amenities sector are 43.4%, accommodation 23.9%, accessibility 12.4%, attraction 16.8% and activities 3.5%. While the category of business in Kuala Terengganu, which is micro enterprise, is 15.9% and the category of small enterprise is 84.1%.

**Table 3.** Business profile (N=113)

| Demography/ Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 74 | 65.5 |
| Female | 39 | 34.5 |
| Types of business | | |
| Amenities | 49 | 43.4 |
| Accommodation | 27 | 23.9 |
| Attraction | 19 | 16.8 |
| Accessibility | 14 | 12.4 |
| Activities | 4 | 3.5 |
| Category of business | | |
| Micro | 18 | 15.9 |
| small | 95 | 84.1 |

To achieve the first objective, descriptive analysis has been executed which is to find the level of participation of local community in tourism-related business. The level of participation has been categorized into three level which are low, medium and high level. The results of the analysis revealed that 78.8% from the respondents have high participation in tourism-related business, which indicates 89 from 113 respondents. 24 respondents represent to 21.2% has medium participation in tourism-related business in

Kuala Terengganu. The mean value of 4.0248 also indicates a high level of participation local community. This suggests that a substantial portion of individuals in Kuala Terengganu is actively involved in, and likely benefiting from the tourism industry. This trend may be reflective of a conducive environment for business growth, potential economic opportunities, and a community that recognizes and capitalizes on the potential within the local tourism sector. Furthermore, understanding the characteristics and dynamics of high- level participants is crucial for policymakers and stakeholders seeking to enhance and sustain the positive trends in tourism-related business engagement. The descriptive result underscores the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms that cater to the specific needs and challenges faced by high-level participants, ensuring their continued success and contribution to the local economy.

In addition to the high level of participation, it is essential to explore the medium level of participation among the respondents. Although specific numerical details regarding medium-level participation are not provided, the presence of individuals within this category signifies a diverse entrepreneurial landscape. Analyzing the characteristics, motivations, and challenges faced by those with medium participation levels can provide valuable insights into the factors influencing various degrees of engagement within the local tourism sector. The descriptive result emphasizes the noteworthy prevalence of high-level participation in tourism- related businesses among the respondents in Kuala Terengganu. This information serves as a foundation for further research and targeted policy initiatives aimed at fostering a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and sustaining the positive trends in local community participation within the vibrant tourism industry of Kuala Terengganu.

**Table 4.** Level of participation in tourism-related business (N=113)

| Level | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Medium | 24 | 21.2 % |
| High | 89 | 78.8 % |
| Total | 113 | 100 % |
| | Mean | SD |
| Participation of local community in tourism-related business | 4.0248 | 0.39291 |

## 4.2. Regression Analysis

The second objective is to examine the most influential factor of local community participation in tourism business. To achieve the objective a regression analysis has been implemented. In the regression analysis to participation local community in tourism-related business, the unstandardized beta coefficients provide insights into the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The results (see table 5) reveal that ($\beta = 0.334$) the positive coefficient for family indicates a significant positive relationship between strong family ties and local community participation in tourism- related businesses. This aligns with the theoretical premise that familial support fosters entrepreneurial engagement. Next, other factors reveal that does not hold a substantial impact on the participation of local community as evidenced by a low number of unstandardized beta coefficient of income ($\beta = -0.032$) the negative coefficient for income suggests a slight inverse relationship between income levels and local community participation. While the effect size is small, the result implies that lower-income individuals may be more inclined to participate in tourism-related businesses. Next, interest ($\beta = 0.150$) the positive coefficient for interest indicates a positive association between individual interest and participation in tourism-related businesses. This supports the theoretical notion that personal interest plays a pivotal role in entrepreneurial endeavors. Confidence does not hold a substantial impact on the participation of local community as evidenced by a low number of unstandardized beta coefficient of ($\beta = -0.274$) the negative coefficient for confidence implies a negative relationship between confidence levels and local community participation. Individuals with lower confidence levels may face barriers to engaging in tourism-related business. Opportunities ($\beta = 0.133$) the positive coefficient for opportunity suggests a positive relationship between perceived opportunities and local community participation in tourism-related business. This underscores the theoretical premise that favorable opportunities stimulate entrepreneurial engagement.

The t-value is a crucial statistic in regression analysis that helps assess the significance of each independent variable's contribution to the model. In this study, the t-value for the family variable is 3.404, surpassing the critical threshold of 1.96. This suggests that the coefficient for family is significantly different

from zero, indicating a robust relationship between family and participation in tourism-related businesses in Kuala Terengganu.

**Table 5.** Regression analysis

| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 2.579 | 0.98 | | 2.631 | 0.01 |
| Family | 0.334 | 0.098 | 0.31 | 3.404 | 0.001 |
| Income | -0.032 | 0.115 | -0.026 | -0.278 | 0.781 |
| Interest | 0.15 | 0.123 | 0.113 | 1.218 | 0.226 |
| Confidence | -0.274 | 0.125 | -0.194 | -2.186 | 0.031 |
| Opportunity | 0.133 | 0.139 | 0.09 | 0.959 | 0.340 |

a. Dependent Variable: Participation

The t-value essentially quantifies how many standard deviations the coefficient is from zero, providing evidence of the variable's impact on the dependent variable. Additionally, the associated p- value (Sig. 0.001) is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, further confirming the statistical significance of the family variable. With a p-value below the threshold, there is strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis that the coefficient for family is equal to zero. This result aligns with the positive coefficient, indicating that as family ties strengthen, individuals are more likely to participate in tourism-related business activities. Overall, the positive and statistically significant t-value for the family variable underscores its importance in influencing participation in the local tourism sector, reinforcing the study's overarching finding that all the hypothesized relationships are positively significant. Policymakers and stakeholders can rely on these statistically supported results to formulate targeted strategies aimed at leveraging and promoting familial ties to enhance entrepreneurial engagement in the tourism-related business landscape of Kuala Terengganu.

**Table 6.** T-value analysis

| Variables | t – value | Sig. | Hypothesis | Conclusion |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family | 3.404 >1.96 | Sig. 0.01 < 0.05 | H1 | Supported |
| Interest | 1.218 <1.96 | Sig 0.226 > 0.05 | H2 | Not supported |
| Confidence | -2.186 <1.96 | Sig 0.031 < 0.05 | H3 | Supported |
| Opportunity | 0.959 <1.96 | Sig 0.340 > 0.05 | H4 | Not supported |
| Income | -0.278 <1.96 | Sig 0.781 > 0.05 | H5 | Not supported |

For the second analysis, mean analysis was executed to compare these five factors which are family, income, interest, confidence and opportunity (see Table 7). The mean value for the family factor, with a score of 4.6088, suggests a relatively high average perception among respondents regarding the influence of family dynamics on their participation in tourism-related businesses. A mean above the mid-point of the scale (assumed to be 3) indicates that, on average, respondents perceive family as a positive and supportive factor contributing to their engagement in entrepreneurial activities within the local tourism sector. These findings align with the theoretical underpinning that strong family ties can foster and encourage entrepreneurial ventures. Besides that, the mean value for income, calculated at 4.5717, signifies a relatively positive perception among respondents regarding the impact of income levels on their participation in tourism-related businesses. With a mean above the mid-point, it suggests that on average respondents believe that income plays a favorable role in influencing their entrepreneurial engagement in the local tourism sector. While the mean does not indicate a strong deviation from the mid-point, the positive score suggests that income is generally perceived as a facilitator. rather than a hindrance to participation.

The mean value for interest, recorded at 4.5062, reflects a positive average perception among respondents regarding the influence of personal interest on their participation in tourism-related businesses. A  mean above 4 indicates that, on average, respondents hold a favorable view of the role of interest in driving their involvement in entrepreneurial activities within the local tourism industry. This aligns with the notion that individuals with a genuine interest in tourism are more likely to actively engage in related

business ventures. Next, the mean value for opportunity is calculated at 4.5345, indicating a positive average perception among respondents regarding the influence of perceived opportunities on their participation in tourism-related businesses. With a mean above the mid-point, it suggests that respondents, on average, perceive favorable opportunities in the local tourism sector as conducive to their entrepreneurial engagement. This finding underscores the importance of recognizing and capitalizing on perceived opportunities for increased community participation in tourism-related ventures. The mean value for confidence is recorded at 4.4850, suggesting a generally positive average perception among respondents regarding the influence of confidence levels on their participation in tourism-related businesses. A mean above 4 indicates that respondents, on average, consider confidence as a positive factor contributing to their engagement in entrepreneurial activities within the local tourism sector. This finding aligns with the notion that individuals with higher confidence levels are more likely to initiate and sustain entrepreneurial ventures.

The mean test results provide a nuanced understanding of the respondents' perceptions regarding the factors influencing their participation in tourism-related businesses in Kuala Terengganu. The positive mean values across all factors suggest that, on average, respondents view family, income, interest, opportunity, and confidence as factors that positively contribute to their entrepreneurial engagement in the local tourism sector. Policymakers and stakeholders can leverage these insights to tailor interventions and support mechanisms that capitalize on the perceived positive influences, fostering a conducive environment for sustained community participation in the vibrant tourism industry of Kuala Terengganu.

**Table 7.** Mean analysis

| Variable | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| Family | 4.6088 | 0.36488 | 1 |
| Income | 4.5717 | 0.31495 | 2 |
| Opportunity | 4.5345 | 0.26517 | 3 |
| Interest | 4.5062 | 0.29649 | 4 |
| Confidence | 4.485 | 0.27878 | 5 |

## 5. Conclusions

To further enhance community participation in tourism-related business, the factors that serve as stimulants to the involvement are important to be noted. This is the objective of this study as well as to discover the level participation and most influential factors participation in tourism-related business. Based on the business profile in Kuala Terengganu, there are many males that operate business is influenced by one factor, namely family encouragement. These factors are also aided by income, confidence, interests and opportunities available in Kuala Terengganu. The significance of this study is to promote local business related to tourism. The Terengganu state government through the State Tourism Department has been planning and implementing several actions to transform the tourism industry to be competitive in a global market. The body of knowledge is also enriched by this investigation. Future scholars interested in the local community's involvement in tourism related businesses may find this investigative study to be a valuable source of scientific information. The information gleaned from this study can be use and can serve as the most recent source of information for future cruise researchers. The government also use this report as a source of reference. Ministries like MOTAC can add this study as a resource for tourism related business, and MOTAC can act independently by promoting this tourism-related industry widely in order for it to become the main source of national income and be able to support the addition of more research resources for Malaysian tourism related businesses.

The recommendations for future studies in Kuala Terengganu, focusing on local operators of small and medium-sized tourism-related businesses, carry significant implications for advancing research in the field. While the current study delves into five key factors influencing community participation, namely family, income, interest, opportunity, and confidence, there is an opportunity for more comprehensive research by expanding the scope to incorporate the 10 As of tourist destination development. The current study provides valuable insights into the specific factors that impact local entrepreneurs in the tourism sector in Kuala Terengganu. However, by transitioning to the 10 As framework for the next research, a broader and more holistic approach can be adopted. The 10 As encompass a range of dimensions, including attractions, accessibility, amenities, accommodation, activities, authenticity, ambience, advocacy, awareness, and alliances. Expanding the focus to these additional dimensions will offer a more comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping tourism-related businesses, incorporating elements beyond individual

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motivations and perceptions. Furthermore, the expanded scope allows for a more in-depth exploration of the synergies and interdependencies among the different dimensions of destination development. Understanding how improvements in accessibility, for example, can positively influence accommodation or activity offerings can lead to more targeted interventions and policy recommendations. In addition, incorporating the 10 As framework may provide a platform for benchmarking and comparative analyses. By comparing the findings with other tourist destinations that have successfully implemented strategies across all 10 dimensions, Kuala Terengganu can gain valuable insights and potentially adapt best practices to enhance its tourism sector.

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# IDENTIFYING DESTINATION ATTRACTIVENESS OF KUALA TERENGGANU PERCEIVED BY DOMESTIC TOURIST

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## ABSTRACT

The mission of Terengganu Tourism Department is to attract and increase tourists so that they will spend on the increased attractiveness and delivery of high-quality services, create an unforgettable experience, and make Terengganu a great destination. However, the last statistics proved that Terengganu is among the states that received a small number of domestic tourists, including tourism receipts, as compared to other states. Terengganu was ranked in the ninth place of visited domestic tourists and receipts in 2018. Therefore, this study aims to identify the underlying factors of destination attractiveness of Kuala Terengganu: assuring that the advertising strategies will use the best strategy which has been formulated to attract the groups of domestics' tourists to visit Kuala Terengganu. Data collection has been carried out using a Google Forms online questionnaire. A total of 90 respondents who had experience visiting Kuala Terengganu were involved in this study. The method of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) divided destination attractiveness construct into three factors namely 1) recreation, leisure and amenities; 2) accessible and; 3) attractions. The findings of this study are very useful to marketing practitioners in designing promotional campaigns of destination attractiveness towards Kuala Terengganu.

**Contribution/ Originality:** This study contributes to the existing literature on destination attractiveness in the tourism industry. The findings revealed, destination attractiveness personified by recreation, leisure and amenities, infrastructures and attractiveness enable Kuala Terengganu to distinguish itself from other competing destinations in Malaysia.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Domestic tourists have generally proven essential to the survival of many countries' tourism sectors, and this holds true for Malaysia as well. Ever since Malaysia is focusing on the arrival of international visitors, the Malaysia

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Tourism Ministry (a.k.a Malaysian Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism, MOCAT) acknowledged that domestic tourism receipts are rising at an estimated 15% annually. In 2018, a total of 221.3 million domestic visitors were recorded, an increase of 7.7 percent over the previous year (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2019). Domestic visitors made 302.4 million visits within the country in terms of total tourism visits. Domestic tourism expenditure has continued to register a double-digit growth with 11.4 percent in 2018 compared to the previous year, which recorded a growth rate of 11.1 percent (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2019). Tourism Malaysia (2018) argued that domestic tourism remained a pivotal contributor to the local economy and it is promoted through travel fairs, travel marts, and smart partnerships. Aligned with the role of Tourism Malaysia in promoting the growth of domestic tourism, the Ministry must understand the needs of domestic tourists to formulate specific and strategic promotions of destinations (Tourism Malaysia, 2018). Acknowledging the remarkable performance and prospects of domestic tourism, every state in Malaysia promotes its tourism products attractively, thus increasing domestic tourists visits. These initiatives are geared toward facilitating and supporting the local economy of the states.

The well-known riverine city in District of Kuala Terengganu is located at the estuary of Terengganu River. For decades, Kuala Terengganu used to be the main port for those who are doing trading, exchanging the knowledge and also as a transit for sailors from the nearby region; including from other parts of the world. As a waterfront city with the mixed of historical buildings, Kuala Terengganu has been chosen as a main attraction for tourism as well as a corridor for investors. For Kuala Terengganu has thousands of fascinating places and attractions, where people will find the uniqueness of life; mixing with local tradition and urban lifestyle, people will be blended in rich cultures, heritage, beauty of nature, and the warmth of its people; all together in the developing city of Kuala Terengganu. The Terengganu State Economic Planning (2008) believed that the tourism industry is set to become one of the major contributors to Terengganu's gross domestic product and positioned the industry as the second most important economic sector after the petroleum and gas industry. The mission of Terengganu Tourism Department is to attract and increase tourists so that they will spend on the increased attractiveness and delivery of high-quality services, create an unforgettable experience, and make Terengganu a great destination. Terengganu Tourism Department claimed that by 2025, the state aims to attract 6.5 million tourists which would generate about RM6 billion in total in tourist receipts. According to the Department of Statistic Malaysia (2019), the top five states receiving the most domestic tourists and tourism receipts in 2018 were Selangor (30.2 million visitors), Sabah (20.4 million), Sarawak (19.4 million), W.P. Kuala Lumpur (19.2 million), and Pahang (18.1 million). Unfortunately, Terengganu was among the states that received a smaller number of domestic tourists (refer to Figure 1). Terengganu ranked in the ninth place of visited domestic tourists in 2018. Therefore, it is important to study on destination attractiveness since it builds a tourist's personal positive connection, where visitors value the experience at the destination and become a competitive advantage to the destination (Mohamad, Nasir, Ab Ghani, & Afthanorhan, 2019). In other words, without attraction, tourism is impossible. Most of the tourism destinations are bound to enhance their attractiveness in order to boost tourism receipts, government and employment revenues (Ramseook-Munhurrun, Seebaluck, & Naidoo, 2015). Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify destination attractiveness of Kuala Terengganu as perceived by domestic tourists. This is very useful to marketing practitioners in designing promotional campaign of destination attractiveness.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Destination Attractiveness

According to Hu and Ritchie (1993), the term "destination attractiveness" refers to an individual's feelings, beliefs, and opinions about a destination's perceived ability to satisfy his or her unique vacation needs. This definition denotes that destination attractiveness comprises of cognitive and affective evaluations of tourists on the destination's offerings during their holiday Hu and Ritchie (1993).
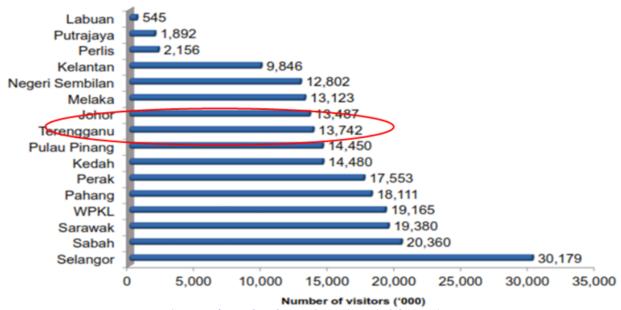
**Figure-1.** The Number of Domestic Tourist Arrivals by State in 2018.
**Source:** Department of Statistic Malaysia (2019).

On the other hand, Krešić and Prebežac (2011) contended that destination attractiveness is inextricably linked to destination image analysis, as the concepts of destination image and destination attractiveness are conceptually linked. As a result, the appeal of a destination is largely determined by its image, and vice versa. Meanwhile, Ariya, Wishitemi, and Sitati (2017) claimed that destination attractiveness is frequently illustrated with the features or attributes of a specific destination. Features or attributes of a specific destination refer to natural attribute (such as beaches, forests, and animals) and man-made attribute (like resorts, theme parks, and restaurants) (Ariya et al., 2017). Hence, this study adopted destination attractiveness as cognitive and affective evaluations of tourists on natural attribute and man-made attribute that destination could provide to satisfy tourist's vacation needs.

According to Buhalis (2000), destination attractiveness is defined as areas or geographical areas that provide a combination of tourism products and services with tangible and administrative boundaries that define their management, images, and perceptions of market competitiveness. Buhalis (2000) further described that the aspect comprises the entire range of facilities and services offered locally, together with all socio-cultural, environmental resources and public goods. According to Kresic (2008) attractiveness is defined as 'those characteristics of a tourism destination that, by their unique characteristics, attract or encourage tourists to attend.' Similarly, Cho (2008) explained that attractiveness 'is an aggregated indicator of attributes that make a specific location appealing as a potential destination to travellers'. 3

Based on the above literature review on tourism destination attractiveness, this study conceptualized destination attributes as meeting the tourists' needs and goals. This is further derived from the declaration that the shortage in the literature is still the need to identify what sector-specific attributes influence people towards a particular tourist activity and further lead them to choose one destination over another (Nasir, Mohamad, Ghani, & Afthanorhan, 2020). Recent studies revealed differences and similarities in features or attributes of destinations. For instance, Chaudhary and Islam (2020) study identified nine attributes of destination namely  cultural attractions, tourist activity, transport facilities, hygiene and cleanliness, food attractions, natural attractions, accommodation facilities, cost, and tourists amenities need to be considered in order to evaluate the attractiveness of the destination. However, Nasir et al. (2020) only delineated two attributes of destination in their study, specifically cultural attractiveness and infrastructures. Raimkulov, Juraturgunov, and Ahn (2021) study also identified two similar attributes as Nasir et al. (2020), and they further added natural attractiveness, local people and superstructure, and price attractiveness to the destination features. The presented differences and similarities of attributes of a

particular destination may be explained by local specific differences in terms of destination administration, socio-cultural, environmental resources and services.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design. The unit of analysis for this study was the individual level. The study population was domestic tourists in Kuala Terengganu. This study used the definition of domestic tourist as per (UKM Report, 1999), i.e. "any person residing in Malaysia regardless of his/her nationality who travels to a place at least 40 kilometres away (one way) from his/her usual place of residence for at least one night or less than one night for any reason other than following an activity remunerated at the place visited". Non-probability with a purposive sampling method was used to identify the study's respondents. The selection criteria of the study was domestic tourists who had experience visiting Kuala Terengganu.

A total of 90 respondents participated in this study through Google Forms, an online survey administration software used for data collection. The development of destination attractiveness was adapted from Islam, Hossain, and Noor (2017). The survey's list of 41 items measures a destination's attractiveness. Respondents must rate their level of agreement with the statements using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 7 indicating strong agreement. With the goal of reducing and summarising the items of destination attractiveness, the acquired data was analysed using Exploratory Factor Analysis from the Statistical Package for Social Science programme (SPSS version 23). Reliability analysis was also performed to test reliability and validity of the study instrument.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Respondent's Profile

The study findings revealed that most domestic tourists in Kuala Terengganu originated from Negeri Sembilan (33.3%) and Selangor (32.2%). Majority of them were married (92.2%), female (63.3%), and represented the age group of 32 to 52 years old and above (52.3%). In addition, majority (62.2%) indicated that they visited Kuala Terengganu more than 5 times. About 75 percent of them purposively visited Kuala Terengganu for holidays. On average, most domestic tourists (40.0%) spent at least three days and almost all (90.0%) spent about RM101 - RM 1600 mainly on food and beverage as well as local shopping (83.3%). During they visit to Kuala Terengganu, majority of them (51.1%) chose to stay at hotels than other types of accommodations.

### 4.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis on Attractiveness of Kuala Terengganu

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) function is to describe and summarize the data by grouping together the variables that are correlated (Zikmund & Babib, 2010). After conducting the study's pilot test, EFA was conducted to generate the underlying dimensions of destination attractiveness of Kuala Terengganu. Several conditions were taken into consideration prior to the conduct of EFA on the study data set. First, the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) should be greater than 0.50 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014a). Second, Bartlett's test of Sphericity results should be significant at $p < 0.001$ as suggested by Hair et al. (2014a). Third, the extraction of factors in EFA was examined using principal component analysis to identify the number of factors to be retained while Varimax rotation was applied as it is the most popular, and orthogonal factor rotation method was performed to clarify the analysis of factors (Hair et al., 2014a). Fourth, as suggested by Hair et al. (2014a) the items with factor loadings of absolute value below than ±0.5 were discarded whilst those with greater value than ±0.55 were considered necessary to be measured; thus retained. Table 1 depicts the guidelines for identifying factor loadings based on sample size as proposed by Hair et al. (2014a).The scale loading with eigenvalues of 1 and above was used. Furthermore, as suggested by Hair et al. (2014a), the variance explained must

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be higher than the recommended point of 60 percent. Therefore, the current study primarily relied on this recommendation in order to conduct EFA.

**Table-1.** Sample size identification guideline for factor loading.

| Factor loading | Required sample size for significance |
|---|---|
| 0.30 | 350 |
| 0.35 | 250 |
| 0.40 | 200 |
| 0.45 | 150 |
| 0.50 | 120 |
| 0.55 | 100 |
| **0.60** | **85** |
| 0.65 | 70 |
| 0.70 | 60 |
| 0.75 | 50 |

**Source:** Hair et al. (2014a).

Table 2 indicates the result of KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity for destination attractiveness. The value of KMO was higher than 0.5 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity result was significant ($p < 0.001$) which met the standard as suggested by Hair et al. (2014a). Therefore, the variable of destination attractiveness was appropriate for EFA.

**Table-2.** Result of examination of construct (Destination attractiveness) for exploratory factor analysis suitability.

| KMO and Bartlett's Test | | |
|---|---|---|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | 0.924 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 2640.197 |
| | df | 300 |
| | Sig. | 0.000 |

Forty items were initially selected to measure destination attractiveness. After EFA was performed, 25 items remained with factor loading higher than 0.60. Table 3 summarizes the EFA result on destination attractiveness. Three dimensions were extracted which accounted for 74 percent of the total variance and eigenvalues with each dimension ranged between 1.440 and 15.980, which were above than 1 as suggested by Hair et al. (2014a). What was the underlying structure of destination attractiveness as perceived by the domestic tourists of Kuala Terengganu? As shown in Table 3, the EFA results demonstrated that three factors had eigenvalues exceeding the Kaiser criterion of 1.0, precisely, Factor 1 (15.98), Factor 2 (7.36) and Factor 3 (1.44). This three-factor solution explained 74.00 percent of the variance in the domestic tourists' perceived destination attractiveness. Factor 1 contributed the highest variance of 35.8 percent, followed by Factor 2 with about 21.30 percent, while Factor 3 contributed the least variance with about 16.90 percent.

A total of 15 items on recreation, leisure and amenities were clustered into Factor 1. The highest factor loading of Factor 1 was 0.800, whereas the lowest was 0.603. The top five items with strong loadings above 0.750 suggested that this factor was measured best based on the variety and diverse tourism activities available in the city. 'Varieties of water sports' ($D38:h^2=0.800$), 'exciting nightlife' ($D34:h^2=0.786$), 'varieties of festivals and special events' ($D36:h^2=0.785$), 'reasonable price of local handicraft products' ($D29:h^2=0.763$) and 'opportunities to visit friends and relatives' ($D35:h^2=0.763$) were the top five items measuring Factor 1. With relatively lower factor loadings of lesser than 0.750, Factor 1 was also explained by ten items which included gauging hygiene and cleanliness, costing, accommodation facilities and food attractions in the city. In a descending order of factor loading values, 'pleasant weather and good environment' ($D33:h^2=0.734$), 'discounted tourism packages' ($D30:h^2=0.724$), 'clean city and preserved environment' ($D32:h^2=0.723$), 'fresh and clear air' ($D31:h^2=0.687$), 'sport opportunities' ($D32:h^2=0.686$), 'well-decorated, comfortable and good quality of accommodations' ($D23:h^2=0.683$;

D40:h²=0.650) and finally, 'variety of food and beverages in restaurant's (D39:h²=0.603) explained the parts of Factor 1. Reflecting on the conceptual meaning of the 15 items, it illustrates the vacation needs of the domestic tourists; thus, Factor 1 was named as 'Recreation, leisure and amenities'.

Factor 2 was named as 'Accessibility' which was illustrated by six items. This factor was dominantly characterized by four items related to accessibility with loadings ranged from 0.8 to 0.7 that specifically involved 'ATM services' (D15:h²=0.805), 'Kuala Terengganu city' (D19:h²=0.798), 'public transportations' (D18:h²=0.771), 'transportation services' and 'local travel information' (D17:h²=0.733). Good shopping store facilities in the city (D25:h²=0.650) also explained 'Accessibility' but with the lowest factor loading.

Factor 3 was characterized by four items with factor loadings ranged from 0.7 to 0.6. The top three identical items measuring this factor were associated with the varieties of local attractions, specifically 'Islamic tourist attractions' (D5:h²=0.767), 'cultural attractions' (D6:h²=0.764), and 'natural attractions' (D7:h²=0.759). The iconic Terengganu drawbridge as the newest local attraction also explained Factor 4 but with a relatively lower factor loading (D1:h²=0.666). Reflecting on the conceptual level of the items on local attractions, therefore, Factor 3 was named as 'Attractions'.

**Table-3.** EFA: Item retained in destination attractiveness.

| No. | Items | Factor Loading | Eigen Value | Total Variance Explained (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 74.008 |
| | **Factor 1: Recreation, Leisure and Amenities** | | 15.980 | 35.813 |
| 1 | There are varieties of water sports offered (D38) | 0.800 | | |
| 2 | Exciting nightlife with endless entertainment in the city (D34) | 0.786 | | |
| 3 | Variety of festivals as well as special events around the city (D36) | 0.785 | | |
| 4 | Reasonable price of local handicraft products (D29) | 0.763 | | |
| 5 | Opportunity to visit friends and relatives during the stay (D35) | 0.763 | | |
| 6 | Pleasant weather and good environment during the stay (D33) | 0.734 | | |
| 7 | Discounted tourism packages offered throughout the year (D30) | 0.724 | | |
| 8 | The city has a clean and preserved environment (D32) | 0.723 | | |
| 9 | Local products are cheaper than in other places (D28) | 0.715 | | |
| 10 | The air in the city is fresh and clear (D31) | 0.687 | | |
| 11 | Sports opportunities can be accessed in the city (D37) | 0.686 | | |
| 12 | Well-decorated and comfortable accommodations in all properties (D23) | 0.683 | | |
| 13 | Good quality of accommodation offered in the city (D26) | 0.667 | | |
| 14 | Good quality and appetizing foods and beverages are offered (D40) | 0.650 | | |
| 15 | Variety of food and beverages are offered in restaurants (D39) | 0.603 | | |
| | **Factor 2: Accessible** | | 7.364 | 21.299 |
| 1 | ATM services are easy to be found (D15) | 0.805 | | |
| 2 | The city of Kuala Terengganu is easily accessible (D19) | 0.798 | | |
| 3 | Public transportations are easily available (D18) | 0.771 | | |
| 4 | The transportation services are easily booked (D20) | 0.761 | | |
| 5 | Local travel information is easily available (D17) | 0.733 | | |
| 6 | Good shopping store facilities in the city (D25) | 0.650 | | |
| | **Factor 3: Attractions** | | 1.440 | 16.895 |
| 1 | Islamic tourist attractions [e.g.: The Islamic Civilization Park (TTI) & Tengku Tengah Zaharah Mosque (known as Floating Mosque)] (D5) | 0.767 | | |
| 2 | Variety of cultural attractions (ex. China Town, Noor Arfa Craft Complex & Kota Duyong) (D6) | 0.764 | | |
| 3 | Variety of natural attractions (ex. Batu Buruk Beach, Pantai Teluk Ketapang Beach, Tok Jembal Beach & Marang River Estuary) (D7) | 0.759 | | |
| 4 | The iconic Terengganu drawbridge is amazing (D1) | 0.666 | | |

### 4.3. Reliability Test

Following EFA operation, an internal consistency reliability analysis of destination attractiveness was undertaken. Cronbach's alpha coefficient value for destination attractiveness was 0.976, which was greater than 0.7.

This meant that the 25 items pertaining to destination attractiveness were possibly free of random error and thus qualified for the actual survey.

### 4.4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

After conducting EFA, CFA was employed to validate the measurement model (Hair, Gabriel, & Patel, 2014). The EFA result would include the underlying factors that most accurately reflect the data, as well as their associated measurement items. Following EFA, CFA was used to determine the variables' goodness-of-fit to the study construct. As recommended by the literature, any measuring items with factor loadings less than 0.6 and squared multiple correlations (R2) less than 0.4 should be excluded from the analysis (Awang, 2015). The measurement model for destination attractiveness is depicted in Figure 2. Following the item deletion process, several items were eliminated, leaving 16 items with three factors that define a more fit model.



**Figure-2.** Measurement Model of Destination Attractiveness - Consists of 16 items.

The fitness indices for the measurement model of destination attractiveness for domestic tourists are shown in Table 4. The RMSEA was one of the indicators used as a reference in this analysis. The RMSEA value in this model was 0.08, indicating a better fit. CFI and NFI results provided better estimate of 0.963 and 0.905 respectively, which were similar to Hair et al. (2014) suggested for model fit. The normed chi-square value was less than 3.0, indicating a more fitted model (Hair et al., 2014).

**Table-4.** Goodness-of-fit indices for the measurement model of destination attractiveness.

| Total No. of Items | No. of Items Remaining | RMSEA (=0.08) | CFI (=0.90) | NFI (=0.90) | Chi-square/df |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 | 16 | 0.08 | 0.963 | 0.905 | 1.569 |

It is critical to assess the measuring model of destination attractiveness' one-dimensionality, validity, and reliability. The standardised factor loadings of each factor in the measurement model were used to assess unidimensionality (Awang, 2015; Hair et al., 2014). The standardised factor loading values of variables for destination attractiveness exceeded the cut-off point of 0.6, suggesting that the constructs achieved the unidimensionality requirement. The reliability of the measurement model was ascertained by examining composite

reliability (CR). Composite reliability (CR) measured the reliability and internal consistency of the variable which required a value = 0.6 to achieve composite reliability (Hair et al., 2014). Meanwhile, the measurement validity was tested using convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was achieved by looking at the value of Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The AVE value of above 0.5 was considered acceptable in achieving adequate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2014). The values of AVE and CR in Table 5 suggested that the model achieved the acceptable level of validity and reliability since AVE and CR values surpassed the acceptable cut-off point of 0.5 and 0.6, respectively.

**Table-5.** Test of validity and reliability for destination attractiveness measurement model.

| Construct/Items | Factor Loading | CR | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Factor 1: Recreation, Leisure and Amenities | | 0.961 | 0.756 |
| There are varieties of water sports offered (D38) | 0.88 | | |
| Exciting nightlife with endless entertainment in the city (D34) | 0.90 | | |
| Variety of festivals as well as special events around the city (D36) | 0.92 | | |
| Pleasant weather and good environment during the stay (D33) | 0.84 | | |
| Discounted tourism packages offered throughout the year (D30) | 0.86 | | |
| Sports opportunities can be accessed in the city (D37) | 0.84 | | |
| Well-decorated and comfortable accommodations in all properties (D23) | 089 | | |
| Good quality of accommodation offered in the city (D26) | 0.88 | | |
| Factor 2: Accessible | | 0.950 | 0.992 |
| The city of Kuala Terengganu is easily accessible (D19) | 0.82 | | |
| Public transportations are easily available (D18) | 0.91 | | |
| The transportation services are easily booked (D20) | 0.94 | | |
| Local travel information is easily available (D17) | 0.90 | | |
| Factor 3: Attractions | | 0.923 | 0.752 |
| Islamic tourist attractions [e.g.: The Islamic Civilization Park (TTI) & Tengku Tengah Zaharah Mosque (known as Floating Mosque)] (D5) | 0.87 | | |
| Variety of cultural attractions (ex. China Town, Noor Arfa Craft Complex & Kota Duyong) (D6) | 0.92 | | |
| Variety of natural attractions (ex. Batu Buruk Beach, Pantai Teluk Ketapang Beach, Tok Jembal Beach & Marang River Estuary) (D7) | 0.90 | | |
| The iconic Terengganu drawbridge is amazing (D1) | 0.77 | | |

The requirement of discriminant validity was satisfied by examining the value of the correlation between two variables and the square root of AVE of the variables (Hair et al., 2014). Table 6 suggests that all the variables between amenities, infrastructure and attractiveness in this study achieved the discriminant validity requirement. The values of square root of the average variance extracted from each variable (diagonal values in bold) were higher than the values of the correlation between each variable.

**Table-6.** The discriminant validity index summary.

| | Amenities | Infrastructure | Attractiveness |
|---|---|---|---|
| Amenities | 0.86 | | |
| Infrastructure | 0.80 | 0.99 | |
| Attractiveness | 0.74 | 0.71 | 0.86 |

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Destination attractiveness is a critical factor in the tourism industry's success. This factor contributes significantly to the creation of a suitable and acceptable image for potential tourists. The data from this study has uncovered the underlying structures that may affect the domestics tourist in choosing their destination place. The domestic tourists participated in this study characterized destination attractiveness of Kuala Terengganu by three factors namely, 1) recreation, leisure and amenities; 2) accessible and 3) attractiveness. In summary, these domestic tourists perceived Kuala Terengganu offered them amenities that were dominantly characterized by a variety of

choices of tourism activities (festivals, water sports, tourism package), good quality and comfortable amenities of accommodation. Simultaneously, their perceived amenities were highly associated with conducive infrastructure mainly characterized by ease in accessing local transportation services and travel information. The local tourists also perceived that Kuala Terengganu has varieties of attractiveness that are mainly described by cultural and natural attractions, followed by Islamic tourists attractions and finally the new iconic Terengganu drawbridge.

Based on the study's findings, destination attractiveness personified by recreation, leisure and amenities, infrastructures and attractiveness enable Kuala Terengganu to distinguish itself from other competing destinations in Malaysia. Therefore, Terengganu's brand image can be established after conducting thorough research from tourists' perspectives. The study's findings will help the Tourism Terengganu agency strategically enhance the unique local characteristics that are meaningful to the domestic tourists. The study's findings were in contrast with the overseas studies that suggested different target markets require different marketing strategies. As such, Tourism Terengganu can design suitable promotional strategies by highlighting the positive destination attractiveness of Kuala Terengganu which are more appealing to the cognitive and affective evaluations of domestic tourists (Ariya et al., 2017). Therefore, they will be most likely inclined to select Kuala Terengganu as their travel destination endless times.

## 6. LIMITATION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study was conducted not without limitations and these limitations should be addressed in future studies. The first limitation was the study location. This study only focused on identifying the destination attractiveness of Kuala Terengganu. Therefore, future study should focus on the Terengganu state as a whole to capture the wholistic image of the state as perceived by domestic tourists. Second, a neighbouring city in the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, specifically Kota Bharu, Kelantan should be included as a comparison capital city to verify perceived destination attractiveness of Kuala Terengganu. Third, this study was conducted during Covid-19 pandemic, thus the data were derived through online google form among domestic tourists who had experience visiting Kuala Terengganu. Future research undertaking should conduct similar study via face-to-face at the tourism spots of Kuala Terengganu to secure more impactful perception on destination attractiveness of Kuala Terengganu.

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# ARTICLES FOR FACULTY MEMBERS

# THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF CITY LANDMARK TO TOURISTS AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF TERENGGANU DRAWBRIDGE

Re-scripting Riyadh's historical downtown as a global destination: A sustainable model? / Klingmann, A., Almohaya, A. A., Mohammed, S., Aldash, A., Abdulwahab, J., Alshamsi, M., Saleh, N., Aldamegh, A., Hamad, N., Alasheikh, A., Ibrahem, G., Fawzi, D. M., Muhammed, J., Raneem, A., Munir, N., Hanbali, A., Abdullah, H., Almosa, A., Saad, A., ... 93, A.

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# Re-scripting Riyadh's historical downtown as a global destination: a sustainable model?

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to explore the planned urban renewal and re-scripting of Riyadh's downtown as part of the capital's aim to become a globally recognized city. Specifically, this paper examines in how far internationally established values and narratives are leveraged in the creation of an urban mega-destination that seeks to attract a transnational class of knowledge workers and tourists. The question is explored, in how far and to what extent urban heritage sites and iconic architectural projects are used as strategic tools to promote a process of cultural and economic transformation and in how far the resulting symbolic capital is leveraged to create a status of singularization that appeals to a national and international audience. This study investigates several neighborhoods in the area, analyzing how these will be transformed by Riyadh's plan to turn the downtown into a commercially viable mixed-use destination by means of designated heritage destinations and iconic architecture.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This paper examines the views and experiences of governmental agencies, architects, developers and residents who are directly or indirectly involved with the planned restructuring of Riyadh's historical downtown. In total, 40 semi-structured interviews were drawn from this stakeholder group to investigate their current understanding of the downtown associated with the effort to convert Riyadh's historical downtown into a profitable urban destination. Five of these interviews were conducted with involved planning offices, and 35 with current residents in the area. In addition, a detailed site survey was conducted through a series of maps to reveal existing land uses, building typologies, states of disrepair, activity levels, pedestrian and car circulation patterns, as well as landmarks, and public spaces in each of the areas.

**Findings** – The subsequent data show that despite many positive outcomes in terms of commercial redevelopment, the adaptive reuse of the existing urban fabric is not considered, nor the preservation of underutilized or abandoned buildings along with its resident diverse communities, activities and milieus, many of which carry on evolving traditions.

**Research limitations/implications** – This is significant because this paper presents a massive case study that ties into a larger debate on cultural globalization where similar practices around the world entail a spatial reorientation of urban districts to attract a transnational cosmopolitan middle class along with a simultaneous displacement of diverse and migrant communities, albeit on a much larger scale. While highlighting the rationale and effectiveness of this approach to create a well-packaged commodity, this paper also underscores the ambiguous consequences of this strategy, which entails the loss of a layered urban fabric that documents the city's evolution through different economic periods, along with the dispersal of migrant communities and their vernacular practices.

**Social implications** – Within this context, the current cultural value of the downtown as a heterogeneous, dynamic and multilayered fabric is debated, which documents the socio-economic conditions of the times in which these layers were formed. Departing from the UNESCO's 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban

Landscape and globally accepted sustainability standards, this study contrasts the proposed top-down tabula rasa approach proposed by the local authorities with an inclusive bottom-up approach, which would focus on the adaptive reuse of existing structures by taking into consideration the social meanings of belonging that heritage has for contemporary communities while fostering a more inclusive understanding of heritage as an ongoing cultural process.

**Originality/value** – The implications of the planned conversion of Riyadh's historical downtown into an urban destination have not been previously explored and as a result, there is a conflict of interest between the creation of a marketable image, the preservation of heritage values, sustainable urban practices, social inclusion and Riyadh's aim to become a globally recognized city.

**Plain abstract** – This paper explores the employment of urban renewal and city branding within the context of Riyadh's aim to become a world city. Within this framework, the paper examines the capital's plan to convert the historic downtown into a mega-destination for the country's middle class and national and international tourists.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Vision 2030 as a socio-spatial blueprint for urban change

In response to the potential decline of global long-term demand for oil, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman introduced an economic blueprint in 2016 titled "Saudi Vision 2030" and an accompanying National Transformation Plan that would enable the Kingdom to diversify its heavily oil-dependent revenue base and promote long-term economic growth by boosting investment in the private sector. The plan includes opening up new industries, most notably in the tourism sector, by capitalizing on its long-ignored historical and cultural treasures to create jobs for Saudi Arabia's booming population. As Kinninmont (2017) comments in her paper "Vision 2030 and Saudi Arabia's Social Contract," Vision 2030 is not limited to economic issues. It includes many social and cultural aspects as well that are related to shaping a new image and perception of Saudi Arabia. Targeting a relatively young population where more than 30% are under the age of twenty-five, the strategy also implies a degree of social liberalization with its embedded "Quality of Life Program." The envisioned improvements include "developing an ecosystem to support citizens and residents' participation in cultural, leisure, and sports activities," along with implementing a cultural infrastructure. The intention is to launch a social-spatial reform by constructing a comprehensive lifestyle set-up that appeals to various social segments in different regions and a young urban aspiring Saudi middle class. By promoting active participation in cultural and entertainment activities and by encouraging a culture of public life in general, the government seeks to foster an entrepreneurial spirit, particularly among young Saudis (currently mainly employed in governmental sectors) to open creative ventures and to improve the image of Saudi cities nationally and abroad.

A related target of Vision 2030 is to position one or more Saudi cities within the world's best 100 cities. Aligned with the Quality of Life Program, government officials launched a Saudi Cities Program to create a framework for a sustainable urban future in Saudi Arabia following international standards (UN-Habitat, 2018). To meet this goal, the Kingdom has expended large sums of money in crafting iconic destinations that prepare Riyadh and other Saudi cities for the post-carbon era and reposition their image as the next big destination for tourism. Guided by the aim to transform Saudi cities and municipalities into people-friendly places, streamlined urban environments are being designed to attract high-profile national and international professionals with the prospect of considering Riyadh and other Saudi

cities as quality places to "visit, live, and work." Since Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, (colloquially known as "MBS") rose to power, many government-sponsored megaprojects have been announced, motivated by the goal to change the image of the Kingdom, attract tourism and create employment (see also England and Al Omran, 2020).

*1.2 Urban mega-destinations*
Gravari-Barbas (2016) argues, "contemporary cities are characterized by policies expressing a simultaneous attachment for urban heritage and a fascination for iconic architectural projects." This also holds true for Riyadh, which strives to conserve and promote its heritage while also pursuing iconic developments to increase its percentage of global notoriety and brand representation. Both aspects combined, the preservation of heritage and future-oriented developments follow the country's aim as a whole, which is to "strengthen, preserve and highlight the Kingdom's national identity so that it can guide the lives of future generations" (Vision 2030).

As part of this socio-economic reform and spatial vision, government officials announced several giga-projects for Riyadh in 2019, which include "King Salman Park," "Sports Boulevard," "Green Riyadh," "Riyadh Art," and "Capital Oasis." The projects' concept is to showcase and implement the Saudi Vision 2030's "Quality of Life" Program in the urban realm on a grand scale to solidify the colloid between physical creation and envisioned social behavior patterns. According to the government, this multi-tiered initiative aims to "significantly improve the lives of its citizens, transform the city into an attractive destination, and make it one of the world's most livable cities" (Quality of Life Program, 2020). All five projects are targeted at "improving Saudis' way of life" by providing various new leisure opportunities in a city that currently lacks such amenities. The mega destinations are also regarded as urban catalysts to open up Saudis' reclusive lifestyles by encouraging more physical activity, leisure and out-of-home entertainment in the conservative capital. Simultaneously, these destinations seek to align with the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, "to create sustainable cities and communities, driving urgent action against climate change" (Riyadh's ambitious $23bn program, 2019). All five grand projects together seek to embrace globally established formulas of sustainability by promoting a greener, healthier environment, for Riyadh to become a recognized sustainable city – one that according to the Arriyadh Development Authority (2017) "will enhance the lives of its citizens while finding solutions to the difficult challenges facing all cities across the world today" ("First phase of Riyadh Green," 2019).

A related goal of the Riyadh program is to transform the city from a composition of isolated car-driven neighborhoods into a network of connected walkable districts, which would enhance social integration, physical activity, walkability and public life in general (all Quality-of-Life criteria). Following this paradigm, "Riyadh Art," "Sports Boulevard" and "Green Riyadh" all constitute massive city-wide master plans that aim at the upgrading of the urban realm to make it more pedestrian-friendly and culturally attractive by integrating art districts, high-end shopping areas, public parks, outdoor cinemas and other programmed gathering spaces which use under-leveraged spaces within the city. Covering 13.3 square kilometers, King Salman Park will host the largest urban park in the world on the grounds of the old airport in Riyadh (Omrania, 2019), comprising a variety of ecological, cultural and recreational, amenities merged with a large-scale mixed-use development to reflect the Kingdom's Vision 2030 goals. While the aforementioned projects are all built on empty land, aiming to densify a sprawled suburban fabric, the "Capital Oasis" project is unique in that it navigates the complex terrain of rescripting the historical downtown of Riyadh, which

entails the demolition of much of its multilayered urban fabric and displacement of migrant communities to be replaced by a curated mix of new residential buildings, iconic architecture and wide-open boulevards to attract a young Saudi Middle class and tourists.

## 2. Toward a more sustainable model of placemaking and urban destinations: a review of relevant literature

This guides us into the interrelated domain of rescripting urban centers through branding and placemaking and the role of cultural identity, belonging and adaptive reuse, which will be described in the literature review below.

Many researchers have investigated the relationship between urban destination planning, place marketing and placemaking (Habibah *et al.*, 2013; Gravari-Barbas, 2016; Dupre, 2018). However, there is less research on the relevant role that adaptive reuse could play within this discourse. Lew (2012) defines placemaking as a pursuit through which people recognize, define and create places. In this respect, placemaking is closely tied to culture and identity. Freire (1974) argues that people produce cultural reality through acts of creation and re-creation. Goldbard (2006) reiterates this argument by stating, culture includes both material elements (buildings, artifacts, etc.) and immaterial ones (ideology, value systems, languages). "Therefore, it could be argued that placemaking is an important process to shape the cultural identity of a place."

Bosman and Dredge (2011) defined two different kinds of placemaking processes: organic place-making, which is typically associated with bottom-up, local initiatives that progress incrementally and top-down placemaking, which entails the strategic planning of urban destinations by governments and tourism authorities. Understanding placemaking from both its organic and planned perspectives, according to Lew (2012), is an essential part of tourism destination development and marketing. As argued by several researchers (Tuan, 1977; Coates and Seamon, 1984; Massey, 2005; Wortham-Galvin, 2008; Rose-Redwood and Alderman, 2011; Othman *et al.*, 2013), organic placemaking entails a process by which a culture group imprints its values, perceptions, memories and traditions on a certain locale. This entails local initiatives, everyday activities and social practices (Dyck, 2005; Lems, 2016). According to Hawkes (2001), organic placemaking is, therefore, closely tied to social memory and contributes to a sense of belonging. Top-down placemaking, on the other hand, as defined by Lew (2012), is a purpose-driven economic activity, and demands a targeted professional planning effort used to actively influence people's behavior and shape their perceptions of a place, often for the purpose to draw tourism and qualified human capital. Governments frequently use this type of highly planned strategic placemaking as a tool to inspire economic development, employment growth, image and status building (Bosman and Dredge, 2011) by transforming places into themed destinations. According to Wyckoff *et al.* (2015), urban design, when linked to strategic placemaking, became "the process of creating quality places where people want to live, work, play, shop, learn, and visit." Design-based placemaking, aside from planning, frequently entails a strategic scripting process. Typical destination themes may represent an ethnic or heritage identity (Wortham-Galvin, 2008) or reflect a more global cosmopolitan image. Both – heritage and contemporary themes are typically staged in a safe, walkable and predictable setting that is easy to navigate (Lew, 2017). Ironically, planned placemaking often neglects the cultural identity of places. By applying the same standardized formulas and by hiring the same consultants across the world (Klingmann, 2010), design-based placemaking has resulted in the homogenization of places (Richards, 2014), a diminishing of localness and an increasing placelessness (Relph, 1976; Friedman, 2010). For planned placemaking to foster a true and satisfying sense of place requires, therefore, allowing the

necessary space for organic placemaking to influence master-planned environments with vernacular elements and practices. According to Bosman and Dredge (2011), the best solution might be a combination of both top-down and bottom-up placemaking, an argument which is echoed by other researchers, who acknowledge public participation, daily practices and traditional architecture as enhancements of local distinctiveness, which should be incorporated in the planning process to preserve a continued sense of cultural identity and belonging (Hou and Rios, 2003; Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014; Wyckoff *et al.*, 2015). This can be achieved by preserving the authentic qualities of neighborhoods: historic buildings, small businesses, cultural traditions and spatial memories. Bedoya (2014) defines this approach as "place keeping," which entails "preserving the buildings and keeping the cultural memories associated with the locale alive."

Within this context, the adaptive reuse of older buildings and traditional urban fabrics that are derelict can play a crucial role to strengthen organic, bottom-up placemaking within larger urban planning schemes to promote a sense of cultural identity and belonging, increase social equity and livability, as well as resource efficiency and sustainability. Adaptive reuse, defined by Douglas (2002), is any construction work aimed at changing a building's capacity, performance, or program to adjust, reuse or upgrade a structure to accommodate new conditions or needs. According to Tate (2017), this goes beyond the physical preservation of building envelopes to an understanding of the historical and urban context so that the environmental, cultural, social and economic benefits are maximized and fitting to its locale. As argued by De Medici *et al.* (2019), building reuse can be considered a medium to reveal the legacy of a particular culture, consisting of heritage buildings as physical artifacts and the wealth of information provided by each item. The consideration of the built environment as a resource consequently not only implies the acknowledgment of its value as a built object; instead, as De Medici *et al.* indicate, the built heritage also acquires value for its ability to trigger memories, acquire knowledge and tell stories; put differently, it constitutes a vital source of cultural heritage. Langston (2008) asserts the social benefits of adaptive reuse, arguing that traditional buildings and urban fabrics are more relatable to the human scale and contribute to a level of comfort ignored in generic urban architecture. Urban fabrics and buildings that grew over time create attractive streetscapes, providing a sense of belonging that cultivates social capital. (Langston, 2008) Furthering this argument, Tate (2017) proposes incorporating adaptive reuse into placemaking initiatives to alleviate marginalized communities' displacement. According to the Preservation Green Lab (2016), adaptive reuse can also add a lot of environmental benefits to urban placemaking endeavors as the reuse of buildings with an average energy performance level consistently offers immediate climate change impact reductions compared to more energy-efficient new construction. In particular, older buildings and traditional urban districts incorporate many passive design strategies of heating and cooling that respond to the environment and do not require electricity. By reusing buildings, new materials would not need to be sourced, harvested and transported because existing structural elements are already in place, known as embodied energy. According to Langston (2008), adaptive reuse can decrease carbon footprint, save on resources, promote cultural equity, and, if done wisely, will provide a means of realizing sustainability objectives in destination planning without compromising investment levels or economic viability for the industry.

## 3. Downtown Riyadh: "Capital Oasis" case study

The below case study research, conducted by the author in part with several students at Prince Sultan University, investigated the current status of several neighborhoods in Riyadh's historic downtown, analyzing how these will be transformed by Riyadh's plan to turn the downtown into a "globalizing project" (Short, 2004) using top-down placemaking to craft a new identity through designated heritage destinations and iconic architecture.

Within this context, the current cultural value of the downtown as a heterogeneous, dynamic and multilayered fabric is debated, which documents the socio-economic conditions of the times in which these layers were formed. Departing from UNESCO's 2011 (UNESCO, 2011) *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* and globally accepted sustainability standards, the study challenges the proposed top-down *tabula rasa* approach proposed by the local authorities with an inclusive, bottom-up approach, which would focus on the adaptive reuse of existing structures by taking into consideration the social meanings of belonging that heritage has for the citizens of Riyadh and its migrant communities with the hope to foster a more inclusive understanding of placemaking and cultural identity.

*3.1 Methodology*
To this effect, the author conducted a phased research project, which used a combination of qualitative methods that included on-site field research, urban and architectural surveys and analysis, and conversational interviews with various stakeholders that include representatives of involved architectural and urban planning offices, members of the academic community and citizens of various professions and age groups.

*3.1.1 On-site field research, urban and architectural surveys and analysis.* The author's team analyzed the district of Ad Deirah and surrounding neighborhoods in the southern part of Riyadh's downtown through first-hand urban and architectural surveys. As part of this investigation, the team devised a series of maps to reveal existing land uses, building typologies, states of disrepair, activity levels, pedestrian and car circulation patterns, as well as landmarks, and public spaces in each of the areas. The site analysis demonstrated that Al Madinah Road, a throughway constructed in the 1980s, severed the southern districts from the center of Ad Deirah. Acting as a significant barrier, Al Madinah Road severely impacted the pedestrian and vehicular connectivity between both areas. Activity levels in Ad Deirah to this day remain high, primarily because of a series of markets, public spaces and landmarks, all of which are frequented by the population of greater Riyadh. The quarters in the south, in contrast, became insular revealing active neighborhood edges that envelop derelict urban cores. Furthermore, the team observed that all areas show various degrees of deterioration and abandonment, particularly visible in the decay of mud buildings and early concrete structures. Despite these factors, the team concluded that the area harbors great potential for revitalization, which can be achieved by strengthening vehicular and pedestrian connectivity and accessibility between the individual neighborhoods and by preserving (and in some cases rebuilding) the area's traditional sustainable urban fabric through the employment of adaptive reuse of abandoned and/or decayed building structures.

*3.1.2 Participant interviews.* To analyze how people with different backgrounds and ages view their life in the downtown of Riyadh, what they appreciate about the urban fabric, and which aspects should be improved, the author conducted on-site interviews with current residents in a conversational format. The total number of participants in the survey was 35. Of these, 5 were Saudi and 30 were non-Saudis. Saudis that were interviewed in the downtown were either visitors, people who own shops there, or government employees. The total number of male participants was 28, or 80%, and 20% of the participants were female. Of non-Saudis, 11 were of Yemeni descent, 6 were Egyptian, 5 were Bengali, 10 were Pakistani and 3 were Hindus. Because of the nature of research questions and the sensitive context in which the research team was operating, this research was largely based on qualitative methods. The survey conducted in this research, therefore, did not for the most part yield statistically significant results. Rather the survey lead the team to sample diverse viewpoints from which to draw conclusions. Frequently, particularly, when asked about

what types of improvements residents would suggest to the area, or if women are safe walking around by themselves, the team concluded that respondents tended to misrepresent their true attitudes possibly believing that they might conflict with prevalent social norms and power structures.

### 3.2 Downtown Riyadh: historical overview and urban analysis

The history of Riyadh's old center dates back to the 1800s, where it stood as the center of the ancient Najd culture and still to this day continues to be the historic core of the modern city of Riyadh. However, as Riyadh experienced rapid waves of urban expansion, especially during the oil boom period in the 1970s and 1980s, the area progressively suffered neglect and disarray, as people chose to move to newly built suburban areas, leaving behind the clustered fabric of traditional mud houses, which formed the old city. As Riyadh progressively expanded, ever-widening areas at the center fell into decline. Complex and fragmented family ownership structures of the older buildings posed challenges to rehabilitation, and the buildings soon became difficult and expensive to maintain. According to Harrigan (2015), by the 1970s, many Saudi families from Riyadh who could trace their roots to the old historic city had moved home, some of them several times, relocating away from the center to settle in more spacious walled villas in suburban areas.

Over the past five decades, this outward movement from the capital's center encouraged more expatriates to settle in the traditional downtown. Because of inexpensive rents, low-income workers re-inhabited many abandoned (and decaying) properties while also using some as warehouses to store their goods. Today, most of the residents that live in the historic center are foreigners who work in the same area in one of the areas many souks and small businesses. The current population of Ad Deirah, which forms the core of the historic downtown, comprises 45% of Yemenis, 18% of Egyptians, 18% of Bengalis, 9% of Pakistanis and 9% of Hindis, along with a sprinkling of older Saudis who remained in the area. As Tayeh (2018) remarks, 90% of the residents earn a low income, which falls substantially below the median Saudi income of 8,000 SR ($2,133) per month. Poor living conditions and a decaying urban fabric, which conflict with Riyadh's ambition to become a modern international city, reflect significant poverty levels in the area. A total of 50% of the families residing in the downtown live below the poverty line compared to 15% in Riyadh as a whole. Saudi nationals are rarely seen in the downtown except for the few that work in one of the nearby governmental offices or visit one of the markets to shop for traditional items, particularly before and during the religious holidays.

The core of the historical downtown comprises a string of distinct neighborhoods: the most prominent is the Ad Deirah district, which is adjacent to the core of Qasr al Hokm, the traditional seat of the government characterized by several surrounding historical landmarks, including the Al-Masmak Fortress, which for many Saudis resembles a central icon where modern Saudi history began. The Turki Bin Abdullah Grand Mosque, Alsafat Square, Imam Muhammad bin Saud Plaza, Al-Thumairi Gate and Dekhna Gate are other key monuments in the center of Ad Deirah, surrounded by many traditional markets, most notably Ad-Deerah Souq, Altaameer market, Souq Al Zel and others, selling traditional and everyday items.

Because of its traditional urban fabric, characterized by an intricate maze of narrow alleyways offering shade to pedestrians, Ad Deirah can be easily traversed by foot versus most other Riyadh neighborhoods, which lends the area a lively, vibrant and public atmosphere. The old city's fabric spreads further to the south in a series of neighborhoods, which were seamlessly connected to the center through a series of northwest corridors. However, in the late twentieth century, when Al Madinah Road was constructed as a large

traffic artery that connects the east and west of Riyadh, these areas were permanently severed from Ad Deirah, and now form a series of isolated quarters, which have lapsed into a state of disrepair over the years. Consequently, while Ad Deirah provides many commercial, governmental and cultural services that people use daily, the south's neighborhoods consist mainly of residential buildings lined with commercial edges that solely serve each neighborhood. Although travel distances between Ad Deirah and the surrounding districts are close, vehicular and pedestrian exchange is not supported, which lends these neighborhoods an insular and territorial atmosphere.

An exception is Salam Park, which presents a large public attraction that is frequented by visitors from the greater metropolitan area. Al Salam Park used to be a privately owned date farm, located outside of the old city walls, accommodating a residential palace, various government buildings and a 70-year-old mosque. In the early 2000s, the Riyadh Development Authority (now the Royal Commission of Riyadh City) converted the land into a large public park, featuring a large lake and many gardens lined with family attractions. Meanwhile, the areas adjacent to the north-east of the park have been developed as a campus-style square for governmental buildings, with the criminal court and the general court at the center, both completed as iconic landmarks by AS+P Architects in 2007 (see also Albert Speer and Partners (2015).

In contrast, the adjacent neighborhoods to the east – Al Buteiha, Al Jabrah and Al Wuseita – have been left untouched by new development and are characterized by a traditional compact urban fabric, lined by a mix of traditional mud houses and 1950s' concrete buildings, many of which have deteriorated over the years. A good number of concrete buildings mimic the tan color of mud-bricks and are characterized by small windows and blank walls designed to prevent the older and smaller mud-brick homes from being overlooked. Buildings are separated by shaded and narrow alleys, many of which have dead-ends, which is a characteristic of the traditional Arab urban fabric to protect residents' privacy and control the neighborhood. While the edges of each neighborhood are lined with active shops, the inner urban fabric consists of poorly maintained traditional mud houses in varying disrepair stages. Some of the more stable mud houses are partially inhabited or reused as warehouses by shopkeepers to store their products. Others have been abandoned completely, showing signs of vandalism and graffiti. Al Jabrah also features the traditional Eid Mosque, which used to be a designated land located outside of the traditional walled city and is now a large urban void in the center of the neighborhood, designated for the annual Eid prayer. This seasonal landmark attracts thousands of people from other Riyadh areas for this important rite and celebration. However, the absence of public activities during the rest of the year lends this and the surrounding neighborhoods a territorial and insulated feel. Outsiders who visit these local areas tend to feel alienated and unwelcomed because of the lack of public attraction points within each neighborhood's cores.

### 3.3 Sense of place and belonging

Affective ties between people and places have been studied at different spatial scales, using different conceptual lenses, such as place attachment, sense of place, sense of belonging and feeling at home (Antonsich, 2010; Fenster, 2005, 2016; Morley, 2001). Indeed, as Mee and Wright (2009) argue, it is possible to belong in many different ways at many different scales. Most commonly, belonging appears in the phrase, a "sense of belonging" (Mills, 2006; Walsh, 2006). Here, the affective aspects of belonging are mobilized and the focus is on feelings of being in place. According to Fenster (2005), a significant aspect of "everyday belonging" develops through people's spatial knowledge of environments. As has been

demonstrated in the literature review, organic placemaking in the form of everyday activities, a human-scale urban fabric and non-scripted buildings that grew over time and allow for an appropriation of different uses are vital elements for different communities to create a sense of place, home and belonging. The below text summarizes how the different expatriate groups currently residing in the downtown express a sense of belonging to the neighborhood they live in. Even though almost none of the residents are citizens, they feel a strong sense of belonging to their neighborhood, sometimes more than their home. This is because the downtown community has formulated a community or a "network of belonging" similar to what they had back home.

As illustrated earlier, the social composition of the downtown area residents consists of different ethnic groups, some of whom have lived in Riyadh their entire life and others who have moved recently for work. Among the foreign populations in the downtown, the Yemeni community is the most prominent. Yemenis have formed an integral part of the Saudi culture for a long time, as most of them have been Saudi Arabia residents since birth. The majority of resident Yemenis have never visited Yemen, and their families have been living together in the downtown area for several generations. They dress and look like Saudi citizens, have close cultural ties and display a special loyalty toward Saudi Arabia and its people. Pakistani, Indian and Bengali communities are also quite dominant in this area, working and living in the downtown, albeit often apart from their extended families. There is also a small Egyptian community comprising mainly single men who travel back and forth between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The few Saudis who live downtown are senior citizens who have spent their childhood and adolescent years in this area. From the researchers' observations, all of the above population segments express a strong sense of belonging to the neighborhood and are attached to what was described as a warm and welcoming atmosphere, where people meet and greet each other and help each other out. The people interviewed consider these forms of informal social support to be good neighboring practices, and it is one of the reasons they value living in the historic downtown so much. While many respondents live together with people who share the same background, many interactions between different ethnic groups occur outside, when people meet each other in the streets, in the shops, or in one of the many markets. These findings resonate with the research literature on how a sense of neighborhood is performed through everyday practices (Laurier *et al.*, 2002). As many of them live and work here, the fact that they can go to and from work by foot with all essential services close-by also played a major role in feeling part of a community fabric. For many, downtown is also a source of pride because of its particular social and architectural history. Although not all of the respondents grew up in the neighborhood, most of them refer to the fact that the downtown is a welcoming and safe place to live in. When asked about what is "relevant" or "important" about the neighborhood, 100% of the respondents noted that it was "the people" that made the downtown special. When interviewees were asked to elaborate, several participants recounted childhood stories growing up there or referenced when they first moved to the neighborhood. Participants who had migrated to the neighborhood from other cities or countries discussed an attraction to the place, its vibrancy, cultural familiarity and the people's warmness. Throughout the interviews, a familiar refrain was that downtown's central identity was a "mecca of diversity," open and welcoming to all people. The most frequently mentioned sentiment about the importance of the downtown (besides the people) was that it symbolized a sense of "home."

When the research group conducted interviews about the lack of services and maintenance in the area, one subject, who has lived in the area for 30 years, pointed to the street behind him and said: "Everything is good, as you can see, the services are good, the

streets are good, everything is good!" Yet the streets he was referring to were lacking maintenance, but he did not seem comfortable pointing out the obvious. Women are rarely seen walking alone in the area, only in groups and with other family members. Whenever men were asked if women are safe to walk in the streets, they responded similarly: "If they are with the family, but not alone!" A group of women sitting with a grandmother and her granddaughters was asked if they faced any difficulties while walking the area. As the teenage granddaughter was about to respond, her grandmother cut her off and said: "There are no difficulties, thank god! God bless Saudi Arabia!" Even with Saudi citizens, there were many encounters where people refused to comment negatively on the area's neglected conditions. The researchers' conclusion from the conducted interviews was that people might have been afraid to comment on anything critically. Despite their ethnic and cultural differences, the respondents' default answer was "everything's good – god bless!" While most of their statements had a patriotic ring, the researchers' impression was that they were rather anxious about impending gentrification and envisioned changes by the authorities. The research group's overall conclusion was that the respondents felt comfortable downtown because of a shared sense of community, reasonable rents and little impediment by the authorities.

## 4. Converting the downtown into "national capital oasis"
To raise the symbolic and economic capital of its downtown along with enhancing the "poor physical environment which characterizes much of the area, combined with lack of modern infrastructure, traffic congestion, social disadvantage and crime," the Royal Commission for Riyadh City approved a massive integrated plan in 2015, known as the National Capital Oasis to transform the various districts into a "national historical, administrative and cultural center of global significance." The plan, according to the RCRC, includes the "conservation of urban and cultural heritage, preservation of the existing commercial activities, creation of more employment opportunities, diversification of housing patterns, the achievement of social and demographic balance and consolidation of urban security, in addition to improvement of the area's road network and public utilities" (RCRC, 2015). As Harrigan (2015) comments, "the redevelopment will align with the overall vision for the city and the Metropolitan Development Strategy for Arriyadh Region (MEDSTAR), support planning initiatives for the wider Riyadh Region and the Kingdom's vision and link with national strategies for both housing and tourism." The ambitious renewal plan for the 15-square-kilometer National Capital Oasis has a 20-year horizon and offers investment packages to the private sector institutions that involve real estate owners and investors through encouraging individual development initiatives.

Underlined by the country's Vision 2030 and Quality-of-Life Program, a significant aim is to increase the number of Saudi residents, consolidate urban security and improve life quality in the area. As part of the plan, the insertion of more open areas is proposed that are linked to planned metro stations via pedestrian walkways along with an eastward expansion of Salam Park, the building of a green boulevard, the establishment of public gardens and afforestation along existing roads and streets to align with global sustainability mandates. Parks will be increased to 10% of land use, forming a hierarchy of district parks, local parks and pocket parks.

To promote culture, tourism and heritage, the plan considers the area within the old city walls as an "area with special regulations." This includes the preservation and rehabilitation of historic landmark buildings in the old city core as well as the development of the two historic districts of Thaheera and Addoho into touristic villages, which will link to a planned

touristic, cultural and heritage track stretching between King Abdulaziz Historical Center in the north to a "Cultural Village" to be constructed in Shumaisi in the south (RCRC, 2015).

The new metro system's construction plays a key role in the downtown plan, converting the area into a modern transit-oriented development where land prices are expected to rise exponentially once completed. Well accessed by the important King Fahad Road and Al Batha Road and three metro lines with two interchanges and seven stations within an area of 590 hectares, the area will qualify as having the highest connectivity within the capital. The German architects AS+P, the Anglo-Saxon firm Atkins and various other international consultants completed several proposals and action area plans for an extensive transit-oriented redevelopment of the area, designed at the city officials' request in 2015. These plans play an important role in understanding the massive extent of this undertaking, which covers approximately 1,500 hectares, envisioning the conversion of built-up urban fabric into a streamlined modern development, where little of the old fabric aside from designated landmarks will be left standing. According to AS+P, the proposal for "Capital Oasis" will reinterpret the downtown as an "integrative public space," with the insertion of residential, commercial, cultural and leisure uses to guarantee a homogeneous 24-h vitality and an economic degree of capacity utilization in public transport. As stated by the architects, "a variety of unique architectural addresses" interlinked by a system of pedestrian, cycling and vehicular corridors will make the difference to the fast-growing and highly economized predominant urban fabric evident elsewhere in the capital" (Albert Speer and Partners (2015).

In translation, the plan currently in place will entail a major rebuilding effort of most of the downtown with standardized commercial and residential buildings designed with optimized floor plates to appeal to today's middle-class standards. According to Tayeh (2018), a range of housing typologies is proposed (84,700 units) to accommodate different economic groups as follows: 21% of high-end housing, 40% of medium-income family housing, 15% medium/low-income housing along mixed-use corridors, and 24% of low-income housing designated for expatriates and locals. The area's block structure will be almost entirely replanned to allow for an optimized traffic network that can incorporate cycling paths and bus routes, new mixed-use nodes and transit-oriented districts.

## 5. Heritagescapes and brandscapes

This massive planning objective's key objective is to rebrand the area to attract more tourists and well-educated medium to high-income Saudis into the downtown to live, work and visit. The Riyadh Season, which was launched at the end of 2019, played a crucial role in this endeavor. Conceived as an annual mega-event, the Riyadh Season included various concerts with international stars, cultural events, dining experiences and theatrical happenings, many of which were strategically staged at underexposed inner-city sites of historical significance that are rarely visited by the Saudi middle class (Saudi Seasons, 2019). Through this event, many Saudis rediscovered these locales reinvented and transformed through curated happenings in anticipation of the "New Capital Oasis.

In addition to hosting international events, the Royal Commission aims to create value through a curated mix of heritage districts and iconic signature destinations. Several researchers, including Gravari-Barbas (2016), demonstrated that globality is followed by its symbols, mainly through emblematic or iconic architecture. Any city that aspires to become part of the "world cities" (Amin, 2002; Sassen, 2001; Short, 2004) is expected to construct internationally recognized buildings by "starchitects." As Gravari-Barbas (2016) comments, "the rise of starchitecture is the result of several factors: the action of "urban boosters" which are keen to put their city on the international map; the globalized trusts seeking to transform

their capital into "bricks and mortar." According to the author, heritage sites and world heritage strategies have the same objective: by obtaining UNESCO's world heritage label, the objective is to raise the city's profile while attracting international and national tourism. Both strategies combined owe their success to the specific and highly prescriptive demand of a well-educated cosmopolitan middle class, keen to integrate its activities, both regular (work or housing) and periodic (tourism), into places that bring symbolic added-value to their lifestyles. The recognition and use of iconic architecture and restaged heritage sites play thus a crucial role in the tourism development of Downtown Riyadh to attract an affluent, mobile young Saudi middle class, who have an appetite for globally accepted standards, as demonstrated by the Riyadh Season and visible in Riyadh's state-of-the-art lifestyle destinations that are scattered around the capital.

In addition to making the downtown more attractive to young Saudis, government officials are also aiming to attract a clientele of upscale middle-class tourists and educated knowledge workers, both of which have similar culture and leisure standards. As Martinotti (1994) argues, this transnational middle-class social group demands similar services worldwide, including hotels, office and meeting places, restaurants and shopping centers, situated either within a heritage setting or spectacular architecture, thereby significantly impacting the morphology and functions of all large urban centers. And as Gravari-Barbas (2016) mentions, "the UNESCO heritagescape (Di Giovine, 2009) and the brandscapes (Klingmann, 2010) of iconic architecture (global architects and firms) are the expressions of the hyper-valorization of central metropolitan areas of world cities" – or cities aspiring to be: an expression of the "worlding" process (Cochrane and Passmore, 2001), which they engage. Riyadh is following up on both paradigms, as demonstrated in the following research. By combing staged tourist villages in heritage sites with brandscapes in the form of iconic architecture in a "sustainable urban fabric," animated by events and festivals, planning officials aim to create a "state-of-the-art" metropolitan fabric for the aspiring cosmopolitan middle class.

### 5.1 Addoho heritage destination

As mentioned earlier, the Riyadh Downtown Development Program also includes a cultural and heritage development plan, which focuses mainly on the two districts of Al-Zuhairah and Addoho. These are considered the most important neighborhoods of historical significance in Riyadh's old city, located close to the Qasr al Hokm area. The aim is to preserve these quarters from demolition and expand them into mixed-use attraction centers for national and international tourists.

Addoho is one of the oldest parts of Ad Deirah and occupies a strategic location within the traces of the 200-year-old Riyadh city walls. For many years, its mud-brick structures lay in ruins until the RCRC designated them for conservation and redevelopment. Ayes Saint Gross, a firm operating out of Baltimore, has since developed this quarter's new masterplan that re-envisions Addohho as a 4.5-hectare destination with a mix of restaurants, offices, hotels and markets that stage the old Arabia. The firm worked with Mahmoud Bendakir of MB Conservation to save much of the historic fabric making extensive repairs to the houses with traditional handmade mud bricks. According to the architects, "a heritage hotel," combining modern amenities with a traditional setting will be accommodated within the restored residences "to offer guests the experience of living in an authentic Saudi home" (Ayes Saint Gross, 2015). A large restaurant located in the center of the site is envisioned to serve traditional Saudi meals in traditional Saudi style dining rooms. Other converted mud-brick houses will contain galleries that showcase indigenous arts and crafts and indoor marketplaces that sell traditional goods. Beyond the restoration of the old buildings on site,

the architects extended the district with new and taller buildings built in the traditional style, albeit with substantially larger footprints to accommodate commercial functions that include governmental offices and ground-floor retail.

To complete the desired image of a traditional Arabic setting, all modernist buildings, including two mosques in the area, are set to be demolished to be replaced by contemporary mixed-use complexes designed with a neo-traditional flair that "blend into the neighborhood." While the original mud-brick houses will be reconstructed with traditional means, all new buildings will be constructed in concrete, clad with a mud-like patina to convey an "authentic" look-and-feel. Concealed behind adobe facades at the northern end of the development will be a 350-space parking garage to grant visitors easy access to the various activities in the newly established quarter. The narrow lane system will be reconstructed, albeit without traditional cul-de-sacs, to make the fabric permeable with easy access for visitors and tourists. The quarters' main routes seamlessly link to the planned heritage trail, which traverses Riyadh's old town from the National Museum in the north through the center of the old Masmak and the Grand Mosque through Al-Zuhairah, Qasr Al-Hokm District and Salam Park. Besides, the district is directly linked to the Qasr Al Hokm metro station, which is envisioned to bring most visitors into the district.

*5.2 Iconic Qasr Al Hokm station*

Qasr Al Hokm station will be one of the new downtown's main focal points and is expected by many to become a globally recognized icon. The metro station, designed by the star architect Snohetta is currently under construction across from the Addoho heritage quarter on a site immediately adjacent to the criminal court. Above ground, the station presents itself as a futuristic icon through a large sculptural stainless steel canopy that provides shade to a vast surrounding urban plaza. Underground, it harbors an urban-scale public concourse area, shops and offices, ticketing facilities and access points to two major intersecting metro lines. In addition, the below ground levels include a three-story parking facility and connections to an off-site plaza.

As such, the building features a metro station, which has been expanded into a multistory multifunctional complex that vertically descends into the ground. The hyperbolic stainless steel structure brings together ground level with the below-ground levels using a build-in daylight harvesting system, based on fiber optic, which channels light to the underground levels. A glazed steel façade separates the subway lines from a below-ground atrium, which surrounds an accessible indoor park lined with palm trees. According to the architect, "the station highlights a new consciousness of this generation, to build a future that recognizes the value of natural resources and its important role in urban regeneration, based upon the principles of sustainable urbanism – environmentally sustainable in providing energy, water conservation, daylight harvesting, natural shading and ventilation; economically sustainable in providing an efficient public transport hub in a densely populated city to reduce traffic congestion, and above all socially sustainable, providing a vibrant public space for all the citizens of Riyadh to enjoy" (Snohetta, 2019). Located right in the center of the historic downtown, this government-sponsored icon presents not only a significant catalyst in rewriting the urban context in anticipation of similarly spectacular developments that will surround it in the future but also provides the necessary infrastructure for the envisioned investments to materialize.

## 6. Discussion

Within the plans, great improvements can be witnessed in terms of public transportation services, the introduction of activity corridors and the improvement of walkability, parks and

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public spaces. Other enhancements include green boulevards proposed as connectors between districts and transit-oriented mixed-use and residential development, complemented by a new infrastructure for walking and cycling to connect the inner districts and create an attractive public realm. Historical monuments, museums, selected souks and some commercial venues that contribute to the central downtown area's envisioned image are retained and further enhanced, linked via a cultural heritage path that will further emphasize their significance.

However, none of the plans considers the significance and integration of the current historic neighborhood fabric, which is to a large degree already very walkable, consisting of varied communities and building types that trace the evolution of the historical urban structure from the early 20th century through the present. Per the current schemes, many of these neighborhoods will be demolished in their entirety and replaced by a completely new urban structure in an unapologetic grand move to turn the historic downtown into a polished urban destination.

A more cautious approach that would entail a mix of rehabilitation, adaptive reuse and rebuilding of deteriorated or otherwise dysfunctional structures has not been considered. As demonstrated in the AS+P plan, rehabilitation schemes will be limited to singular historical landmarks that will be preserved. The urban fabric of vernacular mud brick and early concrete houses will be – aside from the previously mentioned staged touristic villages – eradicated. As the plan further indicates, a large degree of expropriation and resettlement of current tenants is anticipated. No public participation in the developed plan had been reported. However, it is widely accepted that as part of a sustainable redevelopment, urban regeneration processes should pursue participatory planning strategies that involve multiple stakeholders, including residents and other civil communities of interest (Czischke *et al.*, 2015). As such, the National Capital Oasis's planning model has been developed in a top-down approach together with a consortium of foreign consulting firms, which have no stake in the local fabric or its milieus. This might also explain the fear of the current residents to voice their opinions or suggestions. The effects of such severe demographic changes are, of course, to a large degree intended (and perhaps needed) to make the project a commercial success and stay true to its target, which is expected to increase Riyadh's GDP substantially. In this respect, the plan follows the tried-and-true recipes of the global city, which – guided by commercial prerogatives – tend to smooth away local communities and diversity to cater to the middle class's predictable tastes offered a similar mix of heritagescapes and brandscapes wherever they go.

Thus, even though it is a governmental project, the Capital Oasis has been designed as a commercially viable mixed-use destination driven by neoliberal prerogatives that map a market-driven social and spatial transformation in which state institutions actively promote market-based regulatory arrangements in the form of private-public partnerships. In terms of planning, the downtown is regarded as an "underutilized site," which requires optimization and a complete makeover to "provide a showcase of Saudi Arabian culture and lifestyle to the world, reinforcing Riyadh's emerging status as a city of consequence" (Ministry of Culture, 2019). Branded as a new investment opportunity with expected clichés of "sustainability" and planned according to a mix of profitable assets, it is a well-packaged commodity to suit a cash-rich middle-class market.

However, then there is the cultural dimension of the old Riyadh, its diverse urban fabrics made up of walkable lanes and narrow streets lined by vernacular building types tracing different eras and styles; and diverse communities, activities and milieus, which carry on evolving traditions, transform over time and make up the city's soul. The downtown's heterogeneous layering, vitality and the stimulations of differences, both visual and social, produce a sense of openness and freedom, which lends this part of the city a specific character – it is this living heritage that makes the old part of Riyadh truly unique.

While heritagescapes such as Addoho consist of well-made products that stage a scripted heritage that never existed in this form, they constitute consumable images frozen in time. As Gravari-Barbas (2016) questions, "Who really takes advantage of these repacked commodified spaces?" Rarely the local inhabitants. While a living heritage consists of complex, incomplete, errant, conflictual and non-linear places for people to practice their daily tasks, a "totemic architecture" in the form of iconic developments and a museumified heritage composed of neatly contained, preserved and mostly rebuilt historic districts, constitute simplified consumerscapes that speak to the cursory gaze of transnational target groups.

In this context, sustainable urban design is interpreted as an opportunity to cater to an established value system favoring mallified mixed-use projects, green boulevards and bicycle lanes, all arranged in a determinate and predictable manner, balanced in form and style, complete with a vernacular veneer. Ironically, this marketable image of the "sustainable city" requires an enormous amount of building resources as almost the entire urban fabric is designed from scratch, operated and managed top-down without any active participation of the community.

## 7. Conclusion
One would expect a sustainable planning model to preserve existing resources wherever possible and honor what is paradoxically already a very sustainable fabric in terms of materiality, walkability and density. However, to be able to recognize such qualities would command a shift in value perception and a much different process from established neo-liberalist planning practices, correlating to what is termed by sociologist Richard Sennett "open-city planning" (Sennett, 2018). This approach to planning entails a process of co-production, involving citizens and experts, people inside and outside the community and laypeople, which is much different from the "consultation by international experts" that treat the downtown as a distant *tabula rasa*. An integrative process also aims to build upon each community's existing fabric, block-by-block and street-by-street, to adaptively reuse what is there, transform, where opportune and add depending on the condition in a non-linear process that does not aspire to homogeneity or neatness. According to Sennett (2018), "open city planning attends to conflicts and possibilities in sequence; there's problem-solving, but also problem-finding, discovery rather than merely clarity." The planner's role, in this case, is to welcome dissonance, allow for creative adaptations, transformations and additions while encouraging the evolution of public spaces, all of which do not always have to fit neatly together. This approach undoubtedly deviates from the simplified tried-and-true formulas of big capitalism, where profit-oriented developers and private investors favor targeting a homogeneous class structure. Within this climate, a certain degree of courage and risk-taking would be needed to recognize the cultural and societal value of the downtown, its cumulative heritage, its diverse communities and their vernacular practices, forming a complex system to different voices while fostering social cohesion.

In turn, this raises the question of the value of living heritage, of urban cultures that make up a stimulating urban fabric. Against the over-determined, homogenized grand visions of so-called "sustainable" megaprojects, we might argue that there is an increasing shortage in the world – of places and cultures that can prompt the unexpected encounter, the chance discovery, a living and complex urban heritage which is the quintessential genius loci of cities. As Bortolotto (2015) comments in her paper on the revision of UNESCO standards, the main innovation in heritage definition does not depend on the tangibility or intangibility of new heritage categories but lies in the progressive shift away from considering cultural expressions as objects to considering them as ongoing cultural processes. And as Sennett (2018) mentions, "healthy, clean, and safe: you can experience these environmental virtues in any middle-class suburb if you are rich enough, but

only a certain kind of place, an open city, will stimulate you and that stimulation comes in a particular form."

The Brazilian philosopher, author and literary critic Eduardo Portella (2000) once wrote:

A cloned culture is an aborted culture because when a culture ceases to be interdependent, it ceases to be a culture. Interaction is the hallmark of culture. And interaction leads to hybridity, not cloning. With cloning, one is an exact copy of the other. With hybridity, the one and the other give birth to a new entity, which is different but also naturally retains the identity of its origins. Wherever it has occurred, cultural hybridity has sustained roots and forged new solidarities, which may be an antidote to exclusion.

It remains crucial for architects to consider local institutions' latent potential in local situations to create the multiplicity necessary to maintain a balance between a city's origin and its potential for growth. If we view architecture as a catalyst for realizing a city's shifting aspirations tied to a contemporary expression of its local identity, we need to separate architecture's strategic potential to act as an engine for urban renewal from its formal expression as spectacle. Only by operating from the "inside out," and not (as seems to be the current fad) "from the outside in," can scenarios emerge that are particular and unique to one specific place (Klingmann, 2010). Rather than viewing vacant properties as obstacles to placemaking, public and private sectors should recognize underutilized, vacant, or derelict urban spaces as opportunities to build social, cultural and environmental equity, which will lend a planned destination a unique position in the global marketplace through elements of diversity, unpredictability and local distinctiveness.

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## ARTICLES FOR FACULTY MEMBERS

# THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF CITY LANDMARK TO TOURISTS AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF TERENGGANU DRAWBRIDGE

Terengganu identity: Proposed harbourscape tourism at Kampung Seberang Takir, Terengganu / Amirah Mohd Rozadi, F., Mukrim Baharuddin, Z., & Haryati Ibrahim, P.

# 02

# TERENGGANU IDENTITY: PROPOSED HARBOURSCAPE TOURISM AT KAMPUNG SEBERANG TAKIR, TERENGGANU

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## ABSTRACT

Waterfront developments have received attention from the Malaysian government for their East Coast Economy Region (ECER). Kuala Terengganu has transformed the urban master plan to be more comprehensive, especially for the Tourism industry. Furthermore, the construction of the new Terengganu Drawbridge has positive and some negative impacts on the village's surrounding economy and the cultural heritage, especially Kg. Seberang Takir. This landscape development project at Seberang Takir, Terengganu, along the Terengganu estuary near Seberang Takir beach, is a 39 acres site. Kg. Seberang Takir is rich in its cultural heritage, such as Batik and Bot Penambang (boat transport). The site is by water bodies, i.e. Terengganu estuary, facing Kuala Terengganu town. This project aims to create spaces at Kg Seberang Takir in terms of cultural heritage, economy, and environmental aspects that have been affected by the fast development around it. The design concept is '*Warisan Persisir Air*', literally meaning inherited coastal property by the sea. The design strategies of '*Harborscape Tourism' emphasise* the three aspects - cultural heritage, economy and environment. The design proposals are Seberang Takir Resort and other tourism facilities such as boardwalk and restaurants. An enhancement imitative of the existing Bot Penambang jetty is made by proposing an art and craft centre for batik, boat craft and accommodating fisheries enhancement activities such as *ikan bilis*, *belacan* and *keropok* production centre. The planting concept on 'Coastal Tropical Beauty' is also part of the proposal in designing the Harbour waterfront design in Malaysia.

Keywords: Tourism, Waterfront, Cultural heritage, Estuary, Kuala Terengganu
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Figure 1: Key and location plan of the site.

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this project is to implement and amplifying the Terengganu identity using Harbourscape Tourism at Kg. Seberang Takir, Terengganu. The design aims to create spaces for harbourscape development that consider cultural heritage elements and economic and environmental aspects. The surrounding issues include cultural heritage, economic income and environmental issues that affect the local community of Kg. Seberang Takir. The study found that cultural heritage was affected and slowly disappearing due to the vast on-site development. In terms of economics, the existence of the Drawbridge has wiped out most of the Bot Penambang customers as they prefer to use the land route as the Drawbridge to save travel times by 10 to 15 minutes compared to Bot Penambang transportation. On environmental issues, some of the villagers involved in cultural heritage, such as Batik entrepreneurs, tend to throw their waste into the river. However, this issue is not less critical and can be resolved through strict enforcement by the local authority. The objectives of the projects are:

1. To design a space that can boost villagers' economy at Kampung Seberang Takir, Terengganu.
2. To maintain and preserve cultural practices and heritage values of Kampung Seberang Takir, Terengganu.
3. To propose the Terengganu identity and elements through design.
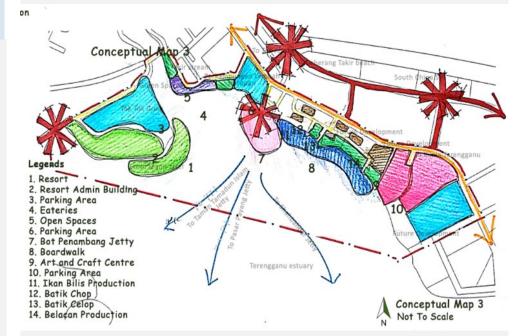


Figure 2: Zoning area and demographic data of the site study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Definition of Harbour
A harbour is partially enclosed water and generally situated along the seashore or river estuary to promote navigation through the sea. It also can be defined as a basin or haven of navigable waters well, protected naturally or artificially from the action of winds and waves. *Harbourscape* is a landscape dominated by the harbour and situated at a seashore, river estuary or canal connected to the sea.

### Types of Harbour
1. Commercial harbour - is where loading and unloading of cargos take place.
2. Fishery harbour – is where cargos carrying seafood or aquatic animals are designated.
3. Military harbours – are naval bases where warships are kept in docked while there is no exercise at sea or during a repair.
4. Harbour of refuge – is a large area harbour that shelters the ships during an emergency.
5. Marina harbour – is a small harbour with moorings for yachts and small ships.

### Case Study: Sutera Harbour Resort, Sabah
This resort is nestled between the shores of the South China Sea, fronting the tropical islands and the majestic Mount Kinabalu as background at the grand expanse of the Sutera Harbour Resort. The 384-acres resort provides a spectacular array of activities from luxurious five-star hotels, championship golf course, marina, and recreational facilities.

### Kuala Terengganu's Waterfront
Terengganu holds the charms and splendour from others states in Malaysia. Despite rapid development and modernisation, Terengganu is unique, and it manages to attract tourists from all over the world. It is home to a diverse and close-knit society, where people are friendly with a charm that exuberate warmth and grace, with strong morals and values. Terengganu is rich with its customs and tradition such as *songket,* arts, handicrafts, tradition through generations, visible in its way of life and heritage. Endowed with unmatched natural beauty, the lush tropical rainforests, and having the longest coastline (244km) of beautiful beaches, Terengganu make their own as a vibrant tourists destination. Historically, Kuala Terengganu was known for its harbour activities such as fisheries, transportation, local and international businesses. In addition, the city is by the many traditional Malay villages that act as the catalyst of social-economic, environmental, and religious development.

## METHOD / PROCEDURE

### Checklist and Observation
In conducting data collection, the site inventory and observation checklist are done by mapping the existing site condition and taking pictures of the site condition.

## Site Inventory And Analysis

### 1. Site Background
Figure 3 shows that fishery activities contribute the most in terms of economic generators at Kg. Seberang Takir. The highest percentage by rank are; fishery (55%) followed by craft (25%), activities at the Bot Penambang jetty (5%) and others (15%). The site has many prominent historical values and cultures that make the place different from other places. However, the locals know many cultural heritage values but are not known to others, especially those outside Terengganu.
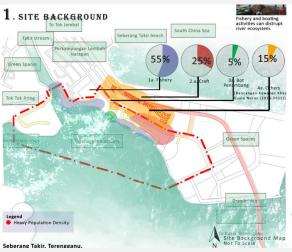


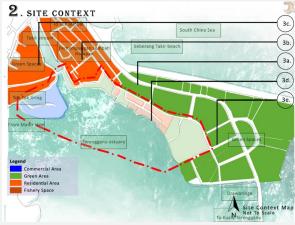Figure 3: Analysis map for site background.



Figure 4: Analysis map for site context.

### 2. Site Context
Figure 4 shows the location of the site and its context. Site context is essential in considering the circulation and accessibility of the visitor to the site. Some areas have tremendous potential to be developed and help in improving the economy of the villagers. However, the villagers can use these spaces and opportunities to gain more income by providing some services such as tour services.

### 3. Land Use

Figure 5 shows the land use plan of the site. It consists of commercial area, residential area, green area, and fishery area. The site is primarily green areas, which lead to the potential for new development. Keropok Seberang Takir is one of the significant potential industries as a site context in introducing the site area to tourists and passers-by.

Seberang Takir has many historical areas as tourism spots and educational purposes. Furthermore, Seberang Takir has a higher rate of development as stated in the Rancangan *Kawasan Khas Terengganu. However*, some of the historical areas are not well maintained. Thus, reduce the number of tourists coming to the sites.



Figure 5: Analysis map for landuse

### 4. Socio-Economy

A socio-economic study conducted at the site shows villagers of Kg. Seberang Takir economic income is being shaped based on their surrounding behaviour. Most villagers are Malays, either river fishermen or sea fishermen, who still practised their culture and heritage, such as producing dry food from sea sources. Despite the new development of the drawbridge and the enhancement of Seberang Takir beach near the village, it had somehow affected the economic income of Kg. Seberang Takir.



Figure 6 : Section of villager's economy source at Kg Seberang Takir

Socio-culture is an aspect related to behaviours of Kg Seberang Takir villagers such as their practised customs, lifestyle as well as beliefs. Thus, the significant character of Malay cultural heritage can be seen throughout their daily lifestyles by producing the cultural heritage products as one of their main sources of income. Even though almost all of the community at Kg. Seberang Takir knows about their cultural heritage, but not all of them are practising it. Furthermore, the study found that the element of cultural heritage is slightly affected by the new development around Kg Seberang Takir such as the construction of Drawbridge and the enhancement of Seberang Takir beach.

### 5. View and Sense

Kampung Seberang Takir is widely known by its famous Bot Penambang. Bot Penambang is a traditional boat that is used to transport people to cross Terengganu River to Pasar Kedai Payang jetty. This area is located within the important places at Kuala Terengganu city and Sultan Mahmud Airport. The landmark helps to introduce the village as people keep using the road between these two places.
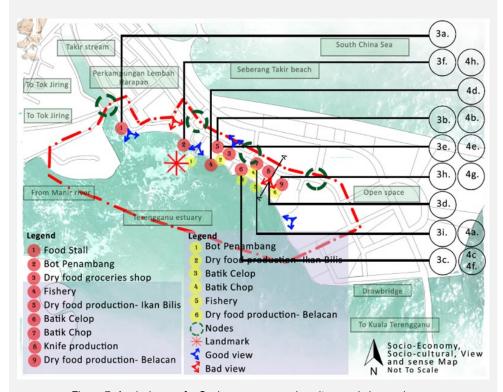


Figure 7: Analysis map for Socio-economy, socio-culture and view and sense

## 6. Circulation

Figure 8 shows the circulation map consists of primary road, secondary road, tertiary road, and water route. Almost 30 years ago, water route was the main transportation medium to Pasar Payang, Pulau Duyong, and Pulau Warisan. However, the new development of its surrounding areas has affected the preference of using the water route. The land route has become the primary access since the opening of Kuala Terengganu Drawbridge.
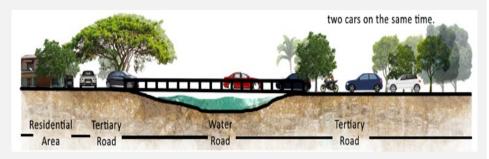


Figure 8: Section of one of the road at Kg Seberang Takir..

## 7. Facilities and Amenities

Most of the facilities are practical to the users and are in good condition. The facilities accommodate the demand of users, such as the presence of community halls. However, these facilities should be improved and maintained regularly.

## 8. Hydrology

The study found that the water route contributes to the environmental issues around the site. Oil spills from the fishermen's boats and Bot Penambang operators contribute to river pollution and disrupt the ecosystem.

Batik production near the river affects the ecosystem as the effluent from the process is drained into the river. Several of these rivers eventually flow into the Terengganu estuary. The study found that pollutions have affected the river's high tide and low tide, especially during the monsoon season.



Figure 9: The river flows into Terengganu estuary.



The level of hige tide and low tide sometimes happen twice a day, it is a roughly six-hour period separates each. (Compendium Data dan Maklumat Asas JPS)

Figure 9: Section of low tide and high tide at Terengganu estuary..
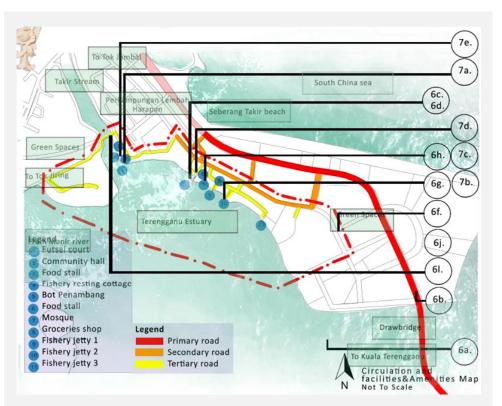


Figure 10: Analysis map for hydrology.
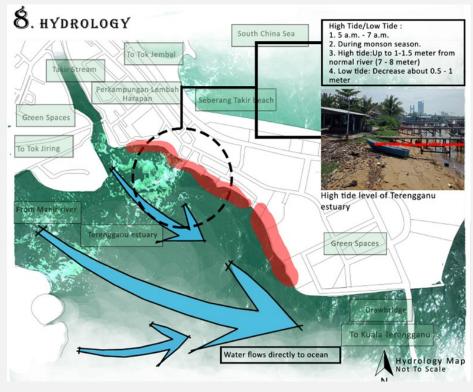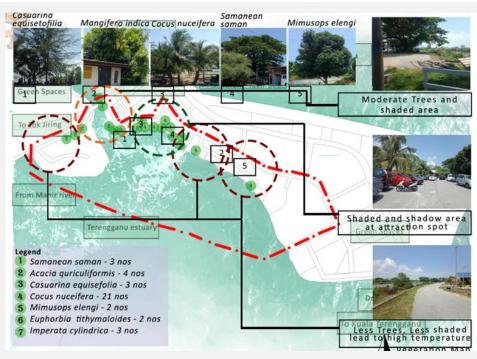


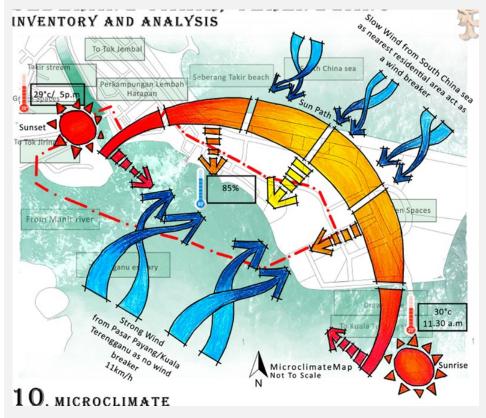Figure 11: Analysis map of Hydrology

Figure 12: Analysis map vegetation

## 9. Vegetation

Figure 8 illustrates the vegetation map, which shows the shadow and shaded area of the site. The study found many coconut trees at Kg Seberang Takir, which indicates a robust rural landscape character. There are also various types of tree species that provide shades and comfort to the users of the space.

However, several areas lack vegetation. As a result, it leads to hot temperatures, especially during noon, contributing to fewer tourists coming to the site. Additionally, the trees are decreasing to make way for vast development at the surrounding sites.

## 10. Microclimate

Figure 12 shows Kg Seberang Takir lacks trees that contribute to hot temperatures, especially during the day, around 10 a.m until 4 p.m. On average, March until June is the hottest temperature, while November until January is excellent.

For humidity, as Seberang Takir is rarely received heavy rain, the humidity is low. Therefore, it can be said that November is the most humid while March is the least humid month.

The average annual percentage of temperature is 27°c meanwhile for humidity is 84.0%.



Figure 14: Section of monsoon season at Kg Seberang Takir



Figure 13: Analysis map microclimate



Figure 15: Section of shaded and shadow area

Fakhriah Amirah Mohd Rozadi,
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## DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

### Aim
To implement and amplifying Terengganu Identity into harbourscape Tourism at Kg Seberang Takir, Terengganu.

### Objectives
1. To design a space that can boost villagers' economy at Kg Seberang Takir through cultural heritage activities.
2. To maintain and preserve cultural practises and heritage values of Kg Seberang Takir.
3. To propose Terengganu identity through elements within the design.

### Design Concept
The design concept was initially derived from '*Warisan Persisir Air*', which means inherited coastal property by the sea.. (Figure 16)
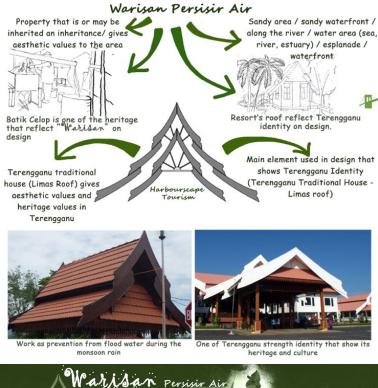


Figure 16: Illustration for Harbourscape tourism.

### Space Programming
Figure 17 shows the space programming of Harbourscape Tourism. It is divided into three main zones which are accommodation area, commercial area, and cultural heritage area.
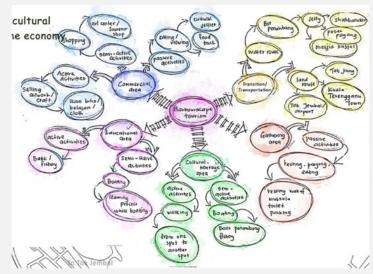


Figure 17: Space programming



Figure 18: Design Strategies

### Design Strategies
Figure 18 shows the design strategies of Harbourscape Tourism. It can be seen that the three aspects highlighted are cultural heritage, economy, and the environment. It also can be seen that cultural heritage is the major design strategy that needs to be focused on and followed by the economy for villagers. Finally, the environment is the least highlighted design strategy.

## Conceptual Plan

Figure 21 shows the conceptual plan, results of the merging layers of the functional diagram, and detail explanations of the element proposed onto the site.
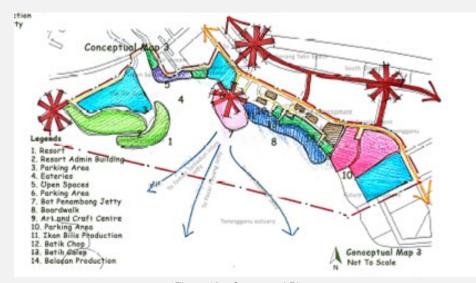


Figure 19 :  Conceptual Plan.

## Alternative Plan

Figure 20 shows the alternative plan, develop after conceptual plan, and a stage before the schematic plan.



Figure 20: Alternative Plan.

## Schematic Plan

Figure 21 shows the schematic plan, results of the merging layers of functional diagrams with detail explanation on the element proposed to the site, after conceptual and alternative plans.



Figure 21 :  Schematic Plan.

# FINDINGS
## Preliminary Master Plan
Figure 22 shows the preliminary master for Harbourscape Tourism at Seberang Takir, Terengganu.



12 PRELIMINARY MASTER PLAN DAY VIEW

Street Planting along the main road of Harbourscape Resort to give shaded and shadow.

Terengganu Batik Pattern on bridge pavement gives aesthetic values and show Terengganu Identity.

Terengganu Traditional Eateries

Entrance 2

Parking Area

Bot Penambang Jetty

Fishery Jetty

Ikan Bilis Production

Batik Chop Production

Batik Celop Centre

keris and Knife Production

Trash Trap

Belacan Production

Art and Craft Centre Main Building

Entrance 1

Harbourscape Resort Admin Building

Batik Chop Production

Batik Celop Production

1. Brick pavement for parking area at Harbourscape tourism help in reducing heat and

2. Orange concrete pavement texture to indicate main road at Harbourscape tourism.

Accommodation Area (Zone 1)

Commercial Area (Zone 2)

Terengganu estuary

Preliminary Master Plan
Scale 1:750

Cultural Heritage Area (Zone 3)

Figure 22: Preliminary Master Plan



Boardwalk that located on river gives new experience to user

Harbourscape resort admin building reflect Terengganu Idenity

Harbourscape resort at the site helps in boosting villager's economy

Eateries at Art and Craft Centre gives opportunity to visitors to taste Terengganu food

## FINDINGS

### Perspectives

Figure 23 shows the perspectives for Harbourscape Tourism at Seberang Takir, Terengganu.



Figure 23: Elevation of Harbourscape Tourism.

# FINDINGS

**Detail Development Plan**

Figure 24 shows the detailed development plan for Harbourscape Tourism at Seberang Takir, Terengganu.

## FINDINGS

### Elevations

Figure 25 shows the elevations for detail development area (art and centre) at Seberang Takir, Terengganu.



Figure 25: Elevations.

## FINDINGS

### Perspectives

Figure 26 shows the perspectives for detail development area (art and centre) at Seberang Takir, Terengganu.



Figure 26: Perspectives of art and centre area at Harbourscape Tourism.

## FINDINGS

### Softscape Plan

Figure 27 shows the softscape plan of Harbourscape Tourism at Seberang Takir, Terengganu.



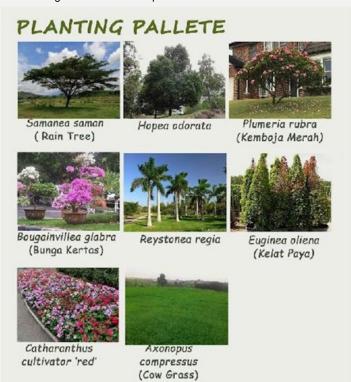Figure 25: Harbourscape Tourism



Figure 28: Planting Schedule



Figure 29: Planting Pallete

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## ARTICLES FOR FACULTY MEMBERS

## THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF CITY LANDMARK TO TOURISTS AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF TERENGGANU DRAWBRIDGE

Tourism-induced transformations of cities: Insights from the Old Bazaar in Skopje, North Macedonia / Petrevska, B., Nestoroska, I., & Matlievska, M.

SELECTIVE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION (SDI)

25TH JUNE 2025

# Tourism-Induced Transformations of Cities: Insights from the Old Bazaar in Skopje, North Macedonia

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## Abstract

The Old Bazaar in Skopje, North Macedonia, stands as a prominent city landmark, attracting numerous tourists and visitors. Beyond its role as a tourist attraction, it is recognized as a cultural heritage site of significant importance for the country and warrants permanent protection. Given its substantial daily tourism flow, the Old Bazaar serves as a compelling case for in-depth analysis.

This paper delves into the transformation of the Old Bazaar resulting from tourism development by interpreting the perceptions of local supply-enablers. Through a series of interviews, data were collected and evaluated using a scale that facilitated the quantification of respondents' perceptions. Additionally, qualitative data was assessed, contributing to the empirical generalization of the findings.

The findings underscore a dramatic transformation of the Old Bazaar over the years, primarily attributed to the rapid growth of tourism and extensive commercialization. A singular focus on the economic aspect of the Bazaar's functioning jeopardizes its cultural values. Consequently, the study advocates for the formulation of strategies to sustain tourism while preserving the authentic essence of the Old Bazaar.

**Keywords:** Old Bazar, Transformation, Cultural landmark, Tourism development, Perception, North Macedonia.

## Introduction

Architecture dating from the Ottoman period, particularly during the Ottoman rule (1392-1912) has left behind a heritage of significant interest, owing to its historical grandeur spread across a vast geographical expanse. The alluring and exotic fragrance of the Orient, brought by the Ottoman Empire has imprinted itself on traditions, mentalities, and languages. This era has ushered in a new cultural wave on the Balkans, and many cities still boast sites and artifacts as remains of that rich culture (Cipan, 1966). Today, these sites attract tourists and visitors, offering a connection to a specific heritage, history, background, or cultural experience. In the past, each city and a bazaar served as an economic center surrounded by

public buildings such as hammams, bedestens, caravanserais, and other facilities, all adorned with the distinctive Ottoman spirit reflected in fully decorated architecture.

Over the years, old bazaars have often become integral parts of cultural tourism routes (Council of Europe, 2010; Graf & Popesku, 2016; Majdoub, 2009). Recognized as heritage sites, they provide tourists and visitors with experiences based on the tangible and intangible remnants of the past. Therefore, bazaars serve as foundations for establishing a link between cultural heritage and specific types of tourism (Fonseca & Ramos, 2012; Garrod & Fyall, 2000; Loulanski & Loulanski, 2011).

Nevertheless, tourism can exert both positive and negative impacts on cultural sites. While it plays a crucial role in maintaining, protecting, and supporting the conservation of these sites (Hazen, 2008; Jimura, 2011), tourism also has the potential to leave lasting footprints that may provoke transformations, endangering the authenticity, uniqueness, and cultural values of the heritage sites (Hassan & Ekiz, 2021; Katahenggam, 2020; Su & Lin, 2014). The continuous influx of tourists and visitors poses a persistent threat to cultural heritage, risking changes that could compromise its identity.

The maintenance, restoration, protection, and safeguarding of cultural heritage involves implementing strategies for responsible action, embracing sustainability from sociocultural, environmental, and economic perspectives (Rasoolimanesh & Jaafar, 2017). In this regard, the UNWTO (UNWTO, 2005) emphasizes the importance of balancing the three pillars of sustainability while addressing the needs of industry, visitors, environment, and local communities.

This study aims to explore the transformation of the Old Bazaar in Skopje, North Macedonia, resulting from tourism impact. Its objectives are to evaluate the transformations and to identify future development challenges. Contrary to other studies that emphasize the cultural value of heritage sites in North Macedonia (Petrevska & Nestoroska, 2023; Petrevska et al., 2020; Namicev, 2017a, 2017b; Namicev & Namiceva Todorovska, 2022), this paper specifically focuses on the perception of local supply-enablers. The objective is to identify how the Old Bazaar has transformed due to exposure to tourism, emphasizing the content aspect of attitude rather than the structural aspect. This emphasis may guide tourism policymakers in developing sustainable practices and approaches to maintain tourism flows while preserving the authenticity of the Old Bazaar.

## Literature Review

Scholars exhibit significant interest in cultural heritage and tourism valorization, with exploration of heritage sites from the Ottoman period generally approached in two distinct ways. One perspective emphasizes the monumentality and functionality of buildings dating from the Ottoman Empire, while the other investigates the relationship between Ottoman heritage and tourism.

Daskalov and Vezenkov (2015) position the legacy as a foundation of historical culture and a perspective on the present that stems from a divided past. Hartmuth (2008) directs attention to assessments of the past that have shaped the understanding of the region's architectural heritage, with a focus on artistic expression and material legacy. Kiel (1990) also discusses monumental examples of Ottoman architecture, highlighting its pragmatic outlook with a centralized and hierarchical nature.

In contrast, another group of authors (Alp, 2009; Arslan & Polat, 2015; Davis, 2013; Freely, 2011; Luke, 2013; Nance, 2007) emphasizes the importance of understanding the authentic interpretation of cultural heritage alongside its preservation and promotion. For example, Nance (2007) introduces a facilitated access model, providing a framework for understanding how local communities engage with tourism in the context of Ottoman heritage. This model delineates the historical and contemporary utilization of tourism by these communities.

Alp (2009) asserts the existence of a comprehensive cultural heritage stemming from the Ottoman period (14-20 century) in the Balkans, characterizing it as a shared legacy among all nations in the region. Despite not attaining the architectural magnificence observed in Bursa,

Edirne, or Istanbul (Freely, 2011), the diverse array of remnants constitutes a significant cultural heritage, proving to be a magnet for a substantial flow of tourists.

In the exploration of Ottoman heritage representation in Israel, Davis (2013) focuses on the Hammam al-Pasha as a pivotal tourist attraction. This case study provides insights into the nuanced ways in which Ottoman cultural elements are presented and consumed in an international context.

Luke (2013) contributes to the literature by examining the rehabilitation of Islamic heritage in the Balkans. He contends that preservation initiatives within cultural heritage projects serve as manifestations of symbolic cultural sovereignty. Through varying perspectives, Luke (2013) sheds light on the intricate dynamics involved in reclaiming and preserving cultural identity in the context of Islamic heritage in the Balkan region.

Arslan and Polat (2015) discuss the Ottoman Empire's initial endeavors to establish hotels in Istanbul, drawing from scrutiny of the earliest extant documents related to this historical initiative. This examination provides valuable insights into the nascent stages of the hospitality industry within the Ottoman capital, contributing to our understanding of the historical evolution of accommodations in this significant cultural and economic hub.

North Macedonia has endured five centuries under Ottoman rule, fostering an exceptional mixture of cultures and religions. Todorova (2004) emphasizes that the Ottoman heritage in the region is essentially the accumulated remnants from the era of Ottoman domination over the Balkan Region, with the 15th-16th century witnessing a particularly strong influence and expansion of Ottoman architecture (Korunovski, 2008). As a result, North Macedonia boasts over 150 cultural assets scattered across its territory, constituting the second-largest collection of cultural heritage in the country (Marinoski, 2012). However, only half of these cultural assets are currently evaluated from a tourism perspective (Petrevska et al., 2020). Considering the significance of the buildings, the extent of their preservation, and accessibility to the public, North Macedonia currently recognizes only 33 significant Ottoman heritage sites with distinctive features (Jahic, 2013; Korunovski, 2008; Marinoski, 2012; Pavlov & Petkova, 2008).

**Background Material on the Old Bazaar in Skopje**

The Old Bazaar in Skopje stands as one of the largest and most significant collections of Ottoman architecture and history in North Macedonia (Fig. 1). Its primary purpose is to preserve the essence of Skopje by maintaining its traditional form. Strategically situated within the central Balkans, Skopje's geographical location makes it conducive to hosting various military garrisons continuously, facilitating economic development and the establishment of a vibrant bazaar (Cipan, 1966).

During the 17th century, Skopje's bazaar plays a crucial role in supplying the needs of the city's 11,000 residents across 70 neighborhoods. The bazaar boasts an impressive array of structures, including 120 Islamic buildings, 20 tekkes, and nine schools housed within mosques. Moreover, it features around 1,000 bathrooms, over 2,000 shops, and approximately 200 inns of various kinds (Celebi, 1971). In that era, Skopje, along with its bustling bazaar, gains recognition as a major trading city. The presence of numerous crafts in the bazaar fosters craftsmanship and trade, solidifying Skopje's status as a significant center for handicraft trade during Ottoman rule (Zografski, 1980).

Many neighborhoods spring up near the bazaar, accompanied by the construction of numerous shops. This organic development naturally shapes the residential and trade-public character, forming the vibrant core of the city during the 19th century (Bogojevic, 2014). Over time, the bazaar shapes the primary monumental core, encompassing a cluster of buildings such as mosques, inns, and hammams, alongside a mix of commercial and residential buildings.

Following the Second World War, the absence of legislation for the protection of historical buildings leads to the disappearance of certain ambient values. A considerable portion of commercial buildings undergoes reconstruction without due regard for historical significance, thereby altering the stylistic and historical unity of the area (Namicev & Namiceva Todorovska, 2022).
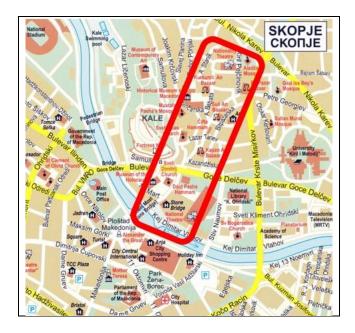
**Fig. 1:** Location of the Old Bazaar in the city core of Skopje, North Macedonia
Source: Vidiani.com (http://www.vidiani.com/large-detailed-tourist-map-of-central-part-of-skopje-city/)

In the 1960s, a comprehensive plan is devised to safeguard the ethnographic and architectural elements, coupled with the formulation of a general urban plan (Arsovski, 1967). Particular attention is devoted to enhancing the visual appeal of the narrow streets and preserving the monumental buildings that hold important positions within the bazaar, such as Daut Pashin hammam, Chifte hammam, Gjulchiler hammam, Kurshumli inn, Suli inn, and others.

Following the devastating earthquake in Skopje in 1963, which results in the collapse of many historic buildings, substantial funds are allocated for restoration efforts, including those in the Old Bazaar (Cipan, 1966). To maintain authenticity and uniqueness, the original wooden construction system is predominantly reused in the restoration of most buildings within the Old Bazaar. The bazaar is officially incorporated within its authentic boundaries, designated as a protected historic core crucial for conserving the spirit and chronology of the city's development (Namicev & Namiceva Todorovska, 2022).

Presently, the Old Bazaar accommodates new facilities that have become integral parts of its structure, such as the Museum of Macedonia, the National Theater, and the shopping mall, functioning as a bridge. These additions contribute value to the traditional landscape of the bazaar, attracting tourists and visitors. Public cultural projects, including initiatives for animation and revitalization (1980, 2005), actively play a role in bridging the traditional old core of the bazaar with the new urban complex of the city.

Recognizing its profound cultural, historical, social, architectural, educational, and scientific significance, a Law is enacted in 2008 to declare the Old Bazaar a cultural heritage of special importance. Since then, it has been under the protection of the state. In early 2010, a comprehensive five-year revitalization program is initiated. The primary objectives are the restoration of facilities, the promotion of local crafts, and the pursuit of both economic and cultural development (Namicev & Namiceva Todorovska, 2022).

However, the grand national project "Skopje 2014" (Wikipedia: Skopje 2014) is a subject of controversy. This project aims to construct around 20 buildings and over 40 sculptures, monuments, and fountains in the core city center, right next to the Old Bazaar. The government, underscoring the importance of tourism for Skopje's economic development, prioritizes it as a high-impact agenda item. One of the objectives of the project is to enhance

the tourism supply of the core urban center by installing monuments intended to further attract tourists and visitors.

## Research Methodology

By interpreting the perceptions of local supply-enablers, the research pursues a dual objective: (i) To investigate the impact of tourism on the Old Bazaar and its subsequent transformation; and (ii) To suggest the creation of strategies to sustain tourism while preserving the authentic essence of the Old Bazaar. This was accomplished through a multi-stage methodology (Fig. 2)
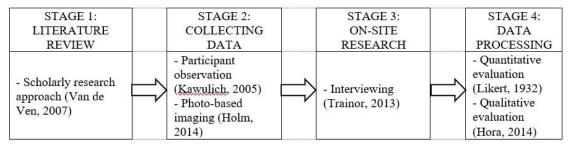


**Fig. 2:** Research methodology
Source: Authors

The first stage encompassed a literature survey of Ottoman heritage that attracted tourists and visitors. For this, a scholarly research approach, as advocated by Van de Ven (2007), was applied to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge.

In the second stage, visual data were collected through participant observation (Kawulich, 2005) and photo-based imaging (Holm, 2014). The observation and photography of local shops allowed developing a practical understanding of the Old Bazaar as a focal point of interest. Additionally, the inclusion of old photos from postcards adds scientific and analytical depth to the study, facilitating more profound conclusions.

The third stage involved on-site research conducted in September 2023, with the primary aim of collecting data that describe the perceptions of local supply-enablers. This data was crucial for a more detailed examination of the factors influencing the diversification level of the Old Bazaar. A total of 25 in-depth interviews (Trainor, 2013) were carried out in an informal manner, using the local language, with conversation times ranging from 20 to 30 minutes (averaging 24 minutes). The target group included owners/managers and employees of local shops located in the core of the Old Bazaar (Table 1).

The interviews were conducted using open-ended questions, allowing respondents to freely structure their discourse on the proposed topics, with minimal intervention to guide the process and quantify responses. Prior to commencing the interviewing process, a protocol, previously approved by two experts in tourism policy, was prepared. Piloting was undertaken to ensure the validity, clarity, and layout of the protocol, identifying possible omissions, irrelevant items, and determining the time required to complete each interview (Cohen et al., 2007).

The protocol served as a guiding framework during the interviewing procedure, during which comprehensive notes were taken for later summarization of responses. It consisted of four sections, encompassing two primary elements: (i) The current status perceived by assessing the up-to-date tourism impact; and (ii) The development perspective, suggesting that the Old Bazaar may allow for ongoing synergy with the current tourism flow and past traditional cultural values.

The protocol comprises the following sections:

**Section 1**: Introduction. The research aims and the critical role of respondents in providing first-hand data were briefly explained. This aims to prevent any attempts to manipulate the survey process and potentially bias the results.

**Section 2**: Perception. This section facilitated easy quantification of collected data during the interview through multiple-choice closed questions. Respondents answered a set of

neutrally phrased questions to describe their perception of the transformation level of the Old Bazaar due to tourism exposure. The questions followed the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) indicators (European Commission, 2016) for measuring tourism impacts on the sustainable dimensions of the researched site, in this case the Old Bazaar. Four groups of questions were addressed, covering the three pillars of sustainability (socio-cultural, natural, and economic environment), along with items describing the overall perception of the respondents towards their personal identification with the Old Bazaar. Respondents used a five-point Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

       **Section 3**: Challenges. This section facilitated the collection of more subjective and qualitative data during the interview through an open-ended questioning session. Respondents answered a set of direct questions exploring the challenges for the further development of the Old Bazaar. They were asked to briefly explain their first-hand insights on the sustainability of the Old Bazaar concerning: (i) Unique cultural experience; (ii) Sense of place; (iii) Authenticity; and (iv) Monitoring and management practices and policies for sustaining cultural identity.

**Table 1**: Interviewee data
Source: Authors

| Data | % (∑ = 25) |
|---|---|
| **Gender** | |
| Male | 88 |
| Female | 12 |
| **Age (years)** | |
| 18–35 | 40 |
| 36–60 | 48 |
| 60+ | 12 |
| **Nationality** | |
| Macedonian | 16 |
| Turk | 32 |
| Albanian | 48 |
| Other | 4 |
| **Education** | |
| High school | 92 |
| University | 8 |
| **Working position** | |
| Owner/Manager | 88 |
| Employee | 12 |
| **Type of local shop** | |
| Traditional artisan shops (Jewelry shop, Leather shop, Potter shop, Clothing shop, etc.) | 52 |
| Cuisine store | 20 |
| Combined shops (Shops that sell handcrafted goods along with modern products) | 20 |
| Other (Decorative art shop, Souvenir shops, etc.) | 8 |

       **Section 4**: Interviewee Data (Table 1). Most respondents were male (88%), aged between 36-60 years, of Albanian ethnic origin (48%), and had completed high school education (92%). Generally, they were owners or managers of local shops (88%) working at traditional artisan shops (52%).

       The fourth and final stage encompassed data processing. Quantitative data, expressed as Likert scale items (Likert, 1932), were transformed into scale marks, allowing for the interpretation of mean values. This adaptation facilitated the quantification of respondents' perceptions. Conversely, qualitative data were succinctly summarized. The sentences used by the respondents, including any repetitions and the vigor of their expressions, guided an overall expert judgment (Hora, 2014). The subjective assessment enabled the comprehensive compilation of judicial sentences and the empirical generalization of findings and conclusions.

**Analysis, Findings and Discussion**
The research findings are elaborated in a two-fold manner:
Firstly, the assessment of supply-enablers' perceptions yields findings regarding the transformation of the Old Bazaar due to tourism impact. The respondents perceived and quantified the structural transformation of the Old Bazaar, keeping in mind the three-pillar concept of sustainability, along with their overall identification with the Old Bazaar. Additionally, based on the authors' observations and photo imaging, further insights are presented regarding the diversification of the Old Bazaar.
Secondly, through direct questioning, the supply-enablers explained their development perspective of the Old Bazaar in terms of strategic challenges to sustain the unique cultural experience, the sense of place, and authenticity. They also provide insights into managing practices aimed at sustaining cultural identity.
These findings can contribute to the development of solutions for reshaping and enhancing management efficacy for more sustainable development, implying the continuous preservation of the Old Bazaar and the promotion of responsible tourism development.

**Transformation of the Old Bazaar in Skopje**
Local supply-enablers have assessed that the appearance of the Old Bazaar has undergone a substantial transformation, shifting from an authentically traditional setting to a point of interest for tourism. Table 2 presents the summarized results obtained from the quantitative data processing, addressing three pillars of sustainability.

**Table 2**: Summarized quantitative data
Source: Authors

| Item | Mean |
|---|---|
| I. Socio-cultural impacts (6 items) | |
| Positive | 4.0 |
| Negative | 3.23 |
| II. Environmental impacts (3 items) | |
| Negative | 2.78 |
| III. Economic impacts (4 items) | |
| Positive | 4.39 |
| Negative | 3.12 |
| IV. Overall perception (3 items) | |
| Positive | 4.31 |
| Negative | 1.72 |

Based on the Table 2, the study reveals that local supply-enablers identified economic benefits as having the highest mean impact value (4.39), followed closely by positive overall perception (4.31) and positive socio-cultural impacts (4).
According to the respondents, economic sustainability impacts, both positive and negative, emerged as the most crucial dimension. Specifically, respondents highly prioritize the positive economic benefits of tourism, emphasizing the direct creation of local business opportunities (Dyer et al., 2007) and the use of tourism as a source of income (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). They enhance their local businesses by producing and selling goods, particularly during the high season (May-October). Consequently, the Old Bazaar's attractiveness leads to direct economic benefits, including increased money flow, job opportunities, and the prosperity of local businesses (Kim et al., 2018; Li et al., 2008). Therefore, the economic environment, characterized by direct benefits, significantly influences respondents' perceptions, and fosters a positive attitude towards tourism. As a result, it is reasonable to anticipate that the economic environment may further facilitate the development of tourism and shape the local business landscape. Conversely, and not surprisingly, respondents perceived pricing (the increase in prices due to tourism) as having a significantly negative economic effect.

Moreover, as indicated in the Table 2, respondents express a strong positive impact on the socio-cultural aspects of tourism, with a mean value of 4. The perceived benefits predominantly arise from tourism's ability to enhance shopping, restaurant offerings, and entertainment opportunities (4.21), coupled with financial support for the preservation of the Old Bazaar (3.78). This positive evaluation aligns with the common trend of appreciating tourism's role in incentivizing heritage protection and conservation (Jimura, 2011).

Despite a moderate influence of all negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism (3.23), two findings stand out for their strong negative effects. Respondents highlighted concerns about "Facilities with a modern outlook (cafeterias, housing, etc.) destroying traditional values of the Old Bazaar" (4.07) and noted that "Tourism increases illegal building construction (shops, cafeterias, restaurants…)" (4.19). These findings raise important issues for discussion and warrant serious consideration in the formulation of tourism development policies. Additionally, there is a cluster of negative socio-cultural effects with low to moderate influence, encompassing concerns about an unsafe environment and changes in working styles.

An intriguing perception emerged during the analysis of the negative environmental impacts of tourism. Specifically, items such as pollution with solid waste, destruction of green areas, and the noise generated by tourists, are identified as having low to medium impact, with a mean value of 2.78. Consequently, respondents appear to be less concerned about the degradation of the natural environment, viewing it as the least important issue and not a matter of serious concern.

In general, the findings suggest that further mass visits to the Old Bazaar could potentially lead to even higher levels of socio-cultural degradation (3.23), negative economic impacts (3.12), and degradation of the natural environment (2.78). This raises critical questions about the sustainability of this historical heritage. Such concerns are often prevalent in developing countries with early stages of tourism development, where awareness of the need to protect cultural heritage is low (Látková & Vogt, 2012).

On the other hand, the overall positive perception is very high (4.31), indicating that respondents express extreme satisfaction with owning, managing, or working in a local shop in the Old Bazaar. This signifies a surplus value for personal identification (Jeon et al., 2016). Conversely, the lowest mean value of only 1.72 is linked to negative overall perception. This implies that local supply-enablers are not in favor of imposing a day limit for visitors (1.13), thereby not perceiving the Old Bazaar as a congested and unpleasant site due to tourist activity (2.31).

Moreover, an in-depth analysis of the transformation of the Old Bazaar is presented based on the personal observations of the authors and photo imaging.

Fig. 3 visually depicts a significant and rapid increase in the number of catering facilities along the central core of the Old Bazaar. These establishments are primarily dispersed along the main walking path, indicating a notable growth in the presence of such facilities in this area. This illustrates a significant change in the Old Bazaar concerning both physical alterations and anthropogenic pressure resulting from tourism. Particularly during the high season (May-October), when the daily flow of tourists and visitors is substantial, the Old Bazaar undergoes a complete transformation. Uniqueness, traditionalism, and authenticity are replaced by mass-produced, commercialized souvenirs lacking additional value, inexpensive industrial products imported from China, modern cuisines devoid of local traditional tastes, and the neglect of valuable architectural features embedded in the Old Bazaar. This clearly indicates a tourism-oriented economic attitude.

**Fig. 3:** Current outlook of the Old Bazaar
Source: Original photos of Biljana Petrevska (co-author)

Contrasting Fig. 3 (current outlook) with Fig. 4 (past outlook) highlights that the Old Bazaar is under significant stress in terms of socio-cultural and aesthetic pressure. Local supply-enablers prioritize the economic benefits of tourism over concerns about socio-cultural and environmental damage. This prioritization of economic advantages over the preservation of the cultural identity of the Old Bazaar raises the question of re-evaluating the current monitoring system for safeguarding cultural heritage.
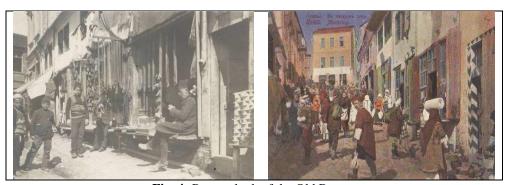

**Fig. 4:** Past outlook of the Old Bazaar
Source: Postcards from Biljana Petrevska (co-author)

As a result, the Old Bazaar has undergone a transformation, evolving from a purely authentic cultural heritage site into a market area predominantly offering tourism and hospitality services. This shift prompts the need to reconsider tourism patterns, emphasizing a reorientation from quantity to quality and moving away from the objective of ever-increasing number of tourists and visitors to sustainable increase.

It is crucial to recognize that conservation and preservation are not accidental outcomes but require consistent and strategic developmental planning for the Old Bazaar. As highlighted by Seraphin et al. (2018), both local and national governments must implement policies to

ensure the social sustainability of the site, going beyond merely advocating for a reduction in tourist activity.

## Development Perspective of the Old Bazaar in Skopje

During the interviews, respondents were tasked with identifying and describing challenges for the further development of the Old Bazaar, delving into the who, what, and why of these obstacles. Through direct questioning, they briefly shared their firsthand insights on the sustainability of the Old Bazaar, focusing on its unique cultural experience, the sense of place it imparts, and its authenticity. Additionally, respondents were prompted to explain the development perspective in terms of managing practices and policies to sustain the cultural identity of the Old Bazaar.

Respondents acknowledged the significant transformation that the Old Bazaar has undergone over the years. Despite these changes, it continues to draw visitors and tourists, primarily due to its unique cultural experience, identified as a key attraction (Hall & Mitchell, 2000), adding an extra layer of value (Patuelli et al., 2012). They passionately argued that the sense of place embedded in the Old Bazaar acts as a fundamental trigger, fostering a sustainable tourism experience within this cultural heritage site.

Simultaneously, respondents engaged in a discourse on the authenticity of the Old Bazaar, deeming it a fundamental concept and criterion for conservation (Hassan & Ekiz, 2021; Katahenggam, 2020). They pinpointed private tourism initiatives and government support as a foundation for reinforcing the conservation efforts of the Old Bazaar. These initiatives open vast opportunities to enhance tourism dynamics by introducing new experiences to tourists and providing benefits to service providers as integral components of the tourism value chain. More precisely, respondents proposed approaches to attract visitors, such as narrating legends, myths, and stories, thus enhancing the overall visitor experience.

Finally, respondents emphasized the imperative to enhance site management by adopting efficient and effective practices and policies, all revolving around maintaining and sustaining the uniqueness, sense of place, and authenticity of the Old Bazaar. They highlighted the absence of a comprehensive monitoring policy at all levels, resulting in unguarded spatial expansion of the bazaar, over commercialization, and a lack of sustainable practices. While acknowledging a few short-term measures and management actions supporting local communities in defining tourism-oriented development, respondents underscored the pressing need for more comprehensive strategies for sustainable tourism development. These findings align with those of Xu and Deng (2020), who argue for the creation of strategies that inevitably include the protection of cultural sites in the pursuit of sustainable tourism development.

Being aware of the advantages that the Old Bazaar for tourism development empowered respondents to fully agree that it embraces culturally, socially, and environmentally unsustainable forms of mass tourism. Without less destructive forms of tourism, the Old Bazaar may face the paradox of tourism jeopardizing the very essence that attracts tourists (Aggelos & Pisano, 2021). In the absence of significant change, the Old Bazaar is poised to lose either cultural balance or authenticity, and likely both. In addition to preserving its economic benefits, the monitoring of the Old Bazaar must shift towards qualitative growth.

## Conclusion, Limitations and Future work

The research focuses on the Old Bazar in Skopje, North Macedonia, as a specific and valuable structure of the Ottoman cultural heritage. Since 2008, it has held the status of a cultural heritage of special importance under permanent protection by the state. However, over the years, it has faced numerous tourism-related challenges, some of which persist and pose a threat to its cultural significance and identity.

By examining the perspectives of local supply enablers, the study delves into two key aspects related to the Old Bazaar and tourism impacts.

Firstly, it explores the three sustainability pillars (social equity, environmental preservation, and economic efficiency) along with assessing the overall perception of the structural, aesthetic, and functional transformation of the Old Bazaar resulting from tourism.

Through the quantification of standardized indicators, the study reveals that the Old Bazaar strives to align with sustainability principles while recognizing the impacts of tourism. Notably, positive economic impacts emerge as the most dominant, providing evidence-informed guidance for authorities in formulating appropriate policies (McLoughlin et al., 2020). It was also found that the cultural values of the Old Bazaar are of exceptional significance and importance for both, present and future generations. This means that positive economic opportunities of tourism impacts may be taken in serios consideration but also as a responsibility to maintain, protect, and preserve the Old Bazaar's cultural identity.

Regarding socio-cultural impacts, respondents expressed strong positive perceptions, citing benefits such as improved shopping, expanded restaurant options, and enhanced entertainment opportunities resulting from tourism. However, concerns arise about the potential erosion of traditional values due to the proliferation of modern facilities, including cafeterias and housing. This underscores the necessity for a thorough reconsideration in the development of conservation policies.

Interestingly, the research identifies the negative environmental impacts of tourism as the least prioritized concern among respondents. This finding raises concerns about the sustainability of the cultural heritage, particularly if further tourist visits lack appropriate measures for protection and conservation.

On the other hand, respondents demonstrate a high overall identification with the Old Bazaar, indicating satisfaction with owning, managing, or working in local shops within the area, thus adding substantial value.

Through personal observations and photo analysis, the paper concludes a profound transformation of the Old Bazaar. Recent photos of local shops (Fig. 3) compared to old postcards (Fig. 4) reveal a significant penetration of industrial commercialization in this cultural site. It was found that the Old Bazaar failed to properly address and manage its growth and its concentration over time and space, facing challenges from the growing number of tourists and visitors. The analysis confirms a shift in the Old Bazaar's identity from a cultural point of interest to a purely economically-oriented one, resulting in a diminished understanding of its cultural and intrinsic values (Aleksova & Miranda, 2017).

The research, secondly, explored the challenges impeding further development by drawing insights from respondents to sustain the unique cultural experience, sense of place, and authenticity of the Old Bazaar. Through firsthand data, the study explored the creation of a strategic policy to sustain tourism while effectively monitoring, protecting, and preserving the cultural essence of the Old Bazaar. The analysis revealed that despite existing legislation and an institutional framework aimed at safeguarding the core elements of cultural identity, numerous concerns persist as threats to the values of this cultural heritage.

Moreover, the research identified that the Old Bazaar faces significant challenges due to the lack of effective systems and policies, elements crucial for ensuring sustainability, particularly upon rapid tourism development. Respondents affirmed that strategic documents designed for the preservation and protection of the authenticity and aesthetic cultural value of the Old Bazaar have only yielded short-term impacts, lacking adequate monitoring and management at the local level. Ensuring the long-term viability of the Old Bazaar as a tourism heritage site necessitates the implementation of responsible policies for future-oriented cultural site management (Bernardo & Pereiro, 2020).

The study found a transformative shift in the focus of this cultural site over the years, moving from its emphasis on aesthetic, traditional, and architectural values to a more objective sustainability dimension, a notion already explored by Labadi (2013). The research brought to light that tourism has reshaped the outlook of the Old Bazaar, posing a serious threat to the delicate balance of cultural identity (Schmutz & Elliott, 2016). This implies that the current efforts to reconcile the protection of the Old Bazaar are inadequate. Drawing from a supply-side perspective, the conclusion was drawn that enhancing the protection of the Old Bazaar stands as the primary requirement for developing and maintaining sustainable tourism in this historical site. This involves creating synergies for a more holistic range of values (Cameron, 2020).

However, the study acknowledges several limitations that could be addressed in future research.

Firstly, data collection took place at the end of the tourism season (September), potentially neglecting the perceptions of respondents during peak visitation months such as May (start of the season) and July (midseason), when the daily number of visitors is significantly higher.

Secondly, the interview process involved a relatively limited set of research items, suggesting the potential for further expansion in future studies. The reliability of the research method may also be questioned, as it relies solely on the interviewee's mood during direct questioning. Introducing free-form conversations in an explorative manner could be considered in future work.

Thirdly, the study had a relatively small sample size, suggesting the possibility of extending the sample for more robust results. The research focused solely on the perception of local supply-enablers, overlooking the perspectives of demand and mediating aspects.

Finally, the study's sample scope concentrated on only one bazaar, the Old Bazaar in Skopje, as an Ottoman cultural site. Future research could consider a broader range of cultural sites for a more comprehensive understanding.

Despite these limitations, the paper offer valuable insights for future work, and provides a broad context for understanding the impact of tourism on local cultural landmarks and the process of transforming their identity. within its limitations, the research yields practical findings and suggestions for preserving Ottoman cultural heritage through tourism valorization. The findings have practical implications for all stakeholders in the tourism industry, facilitating a better understanding of the impacts on cultural heritage.

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