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Chapter

Operational Framework for Rural Tourism Destination Management and Marketing Organizations

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Abstract

Malaysia is recognized as a country that has all kinds of tourist attractions within it. Malaysia is famous for its urban tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism, rainforest tourism, island tourism and also culture tourism. The facet of tourism which is the focus of this research is cultural tourism. Cultural tourism is also affected by matters relating to cultural tourism sustainability. Tourism activities in Malaysia, both concerning cultural tourism development as well as the consumption of tourism services and products can have detrimental consequences on the sustainability of cultural tourism in Malaysia. There are studies that have shown that badly managed cultural tourism activities can cause significant detriment to the heritage sites, thus resulting in the cultural tourism activity becoming unsustainable. Examples of these sites include Genting Highlands and Taman Negara, both of which are experiencing an erosion of their cultural value due to the degradation of the environment. This can then have dire consequences on the culture, tourism and the environment.

Keywords: rural tourism practice, sustainable development, local communities, rural tourism, destination management

1. Introduction

Malaysia is recognized as a country that has all kinds of tourist attractions within it. Malaysia is famous for its urban tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism, rainforest tourism, island tourism and also culture tourism. The facet of tourism which is the focus of this research is cultural tourism. Cultural tourism is also affected by matters relating to cultural tourism sustainability. Tourism activities in Malaysia, both concerning cultural tourism development as well as the consumption of tourism services and products can have detrimental consequences on the sustainability of cultural tourism in Malaysia. There are studies that have shown that badly managed cultural tourism activities can cause significant detriment to the heritage sites, thus resulting in the cultural tourism activity becoming unsustainable. Examples of these sites include Genting Highlands and Taman Negara, both of which are experiencing an erosion of their cultural value due to the degradation of the environment. This can then have dire consequences on the culture tourism and the environment. For example, the disaster at the Genting Highlands in 2022 was the result of heavy rainfall and landslides, which

caused widespread damage and casualties. This event highlighted the risks associated with natural disasters and the need for preparedness and planning to mitigate their impact. Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as heavy rainfall and landslides, which may increase the risk of similar disasters in the future. It is also important to consider the role of climate change in exacerbating such natural disasters, as the changing climate can cause increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. Therefore, it is essential that culture tourism management is carried out in a very strategic, responsible and sustainable way through the implementation and execution of effective public policies. This is to ensure that the culture tourism products and services in Malaysia are delivered to the consumers in a sustainable way. There are many justifications for this kind of a topic that investigates cultural heritage sites and the importance of preserving them through effective policies. These sites accentuate the fact in sustaining the culture that surrounds these sites and protects their sense of what they really are. The preservation of these sites provides a very strong connection to the past, to certain social values, beliefs, customs and traditions. It allows for an identification of oneself with others and deepens the sense of unity, belonging and national pride of societies. The main objective of this study is to examine the kind of policies needed to bring about the preservation of cultural heritage sites in Malaysia. The findings that are expected to be made consist of insights that can give an idea about a set of multipronged policies that can result in the preservation of cultural heritage sites. The implication of this study is that it will result in important cultural heritage sites being given protection through a set of laws and policies that preserve these sites.

Rural tourism is a kind of tourism that involves traveling and enjoying leisure activities in the countryside far, from the hustle and bustle of cities and crowded areas. It allows people to explore and experience the way of life the beautiful landscapes, unique traditions and rich culture [1]. Through rural tourism visitors, can connect with nature, immerse themselves in customs and get a true taste of how people live in rural communities. It is a part of promoting tourism by supporting economic growth, preserving cultural heritage and fostering environmental conservation in rural areas [2].

Community-based tourism (CBT) has been presented as an alternative means to traditional mass tourism in developing countries, and is developed as a community development tool that aids communities in seizing the tourism management and development and delivering benefits to the communities which are generated by tourism activities [3]. Furthermore, CBT as a community development tool helps to fortify and empower remote communities by assisting in tourism resource management and ensuring community participation [4].

Rural tourism provides a fulfilling adventure for both visitors and the local community. By highlighting the charm of areas, preserving traditions and promoting sustainable methods, rural tourism can play a significant role in advancing economic growth and protecting the environment [5]. To fully unlock its potential, it is essential to foster cooperation among important stakeholders involved, such as government entities, local communities, non-profit organizations and private businesses. This collaboration ensures that rural tourism benefits all parties while safeguarding the beauty and cultural heritage for generations [6].

Rural tourism presents an enriching adventure for both travelers and local communities. It showcases the breathtaking beauty of various rural areas, while also preserving their heritage and promoting sustainable practices [7]. This harmonious blend can be a catalyst for development and environmental conservation. To fully

unlock its potential, it requires collaboration among stakeholders including government bodies, local communities and NGOs. Rural areas boast landscapes, ecosystems and a tranquil ambiance [8]. Travelers yearn for moments of serenity, fresh air and an escape from the paced lifestyle. Rural communities are often guardians of traditions, local customs, folklore and artistic expressions that magnetize tourists seeking to immerse themselves in different ways of life [9]. Rural tourism offers visitors experiences without filters—a chance to engage with locals and gain insight into their activities like farming, handicrafts and traditional culinary practices [10].

Rural tourism has the potential to make a significant contribution to the economic growth of rural areas. When visitors are attracted to these areas, it supports not only businesses but also brings in income and creates job opportunities. Various stakeholders benefit from tourism-related activities, including accommodation providers, restaurants, transportation services artisans who create handicrafts and tour guides [11]. Additionally, the arrival of tourists often leads to improvements in infrastructure such as roads, communication facilities and hospitality services. These developments further enhance the region's attractiveness and overall living standards [12].

Ensuring the long-term viability of rural tourism necessitates embracing practices such as waste management, conservation of natural resources and fair distribution of economic benefits. Rural tourism often relies on the involvement of communities, which play a vital role in hosting tourists, providing accommodations, organizing guided tours and showcasing cultural events [13]. The experiences in tourism can differ depending on cycles, seasonal festivities and traditional celebrations. This allows visitors to witness and take part in one-of-a-kind events [14]. Collaborating with local business organizations and individuals is essential to ensure that rural tourism benefits everyone involved while preserving the cultural treasures for generations [15].

Malaysia's charm goes beyond its cities and it extends to the captivating rural landscapes that truly capture the essence of the country. To truly grasp tourism in Malaysia, it is essential for tourists to be capable of immersing themselves in the tapestry of cultures, traditions and natural beauty that defines this country [1]. Rural tourism is intricately intertwined with the lives of communities and their pristine surroundings. Within this particular rural tourism sphere, various institutions such as homestays, community-based tourism projects, agricultural tourism and ecotourism initiatives play a role in offering a sustainable travel experience [11].

It must be pointed out here that homestay programs hold a place within Malaysia's rural tourism sector. Facilitated by Malaysia's Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture these programs provide visitors with an opportunity to first-hand experience the lifestyle by living with local families and participating in their daily activities. These programs go beyond benefiting the tourism industry and they also promote exchange, boost local economies and contribute to overall rural development [16].

Community-based tourism projects are another component that supports communities while simultaneously preserving their environment and culture. These projects often involve villages working collaboratively with residents. These projects empower communities to effectively mobilize their resources in a seemly fashion while offering visitors an opportunity to immerse themselves in the authentic local culture [12].

In Malaysia's tourism scene, agricultural tourism, also known as agro-tourism plays a very important role in the Malaysian tourism industry. It allows tourists to delve into the country's side and experience first-hand the beauty of tea plantations and vast paddy fields. These initiatives, supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry, provide income for farmers but also promote sustainable farming practices [16].

Ecotourism projects often intertwine with community-based efforts that focus on preserving and appreciating environments. They offer nature-centered experiences such as jungle trekking, wildlife observation and exploration of parks. Through these activities, they aim to raise awareness about conservation and educate tourists about biodiversity [17].

The operational framework of these rural tourism institutions is carefully designed to prioritize sustainability, foster local development and ensure visitor satisfaction [18]. The Malaysian government regulates these initiatives through ministries by providing guidelines that maintain authenticity and sustainability while encouraging the growth of rural tourism [16]. Striking a balance between preserving culture, traditions and natural surroundings while meeting evolving tourist expectations is very important in ensuring the success of rural tourism in Malaysia [19].

Besides that, it is essential to emphasize the importance of collaboration among the government, private sector and local communities. This collaboration ensures that everyone shares responsibility and reaps benefits [9]. The government oversees regulations and it also provides support to the private sector and this is by investing in marketing initiatives and the local communities contribute by offering experiences that have both economic and social advantages through tourism activities [5].

One of the strategies employed by these organizations involves capitalizing on the cultural and natural resources found in rural areas [2]. By focusing on these qualities, rural tourism establishments can create experiences that cater to a wide range of tourist's interests. These experiences can range from immersing themselves in cultures to exploring nature or engaging in agritourism and eco-adventures [20].

Malaysia's rural tourism institutions form a network comprising bodies, private entities and local communities working together to provide genuine, sustainable and one-of-a-kind tourism experience. The operational framework governing them ensures a balance between meeting tourists' needs while supporting economies, preserving culture and environment as well as fostering rural development [1].

2. Organized or casual leisure farm or agricultural site visits and perceptions

Malaysia can be described as a country known for its diversity and natural beauty and it is famous for its cities, stunning beaches and lush rainforests. However, the charm of areas often goes unnoticed. In recent years, rural tourism in Malaysia has become increasingly popular as it provides visitors with an opportunity to immerse themselves in the traditional and agrarian way of life [18].

Organized leisure farm visits are often arranged by tour operators and these tours are known to provide tourists with itineraries that showcase different aspects of rural life. These visits are carefully curated to ensure that tourists engage in activities that reflect traditions offering them a rounded experience [14]. One of the attractions of organized leisure farm visits is the chance to participate in agricultural practices. Visitors can get involved in planting crops, harvesting produce or even taking care of livestock, hence allowing them to fully immerse themselves in the rhythm of life. These hands-on experiences create a connection, with both the land itself and the people who rely on it for their livelihoods [17].

During these organized tours, tourists also have the opportunity to learn about crafts and skills that are deeply rooted within rural communities. Local artists often showcase crafts like weaving, pottery and wood carving, hence providing tourists a glimpse into the artistic heritage that has been passed down for generations. Engaging in these activities preserves not only traditions but also helps visitors to cultivate an appreciation for the skills and craftsmanship of the local communities [21].

Furthermore, organized visits to leisure farms often include trips to markets and small-scale businesses. Tourists get to interact with farmers and entrepreneurs gaining insights into the challenges they face and the creative solutions they employ [15]. This first-hand experience helps tourists grasp the importance of agriculture in economies and improves their appreciation for the work that goes into producing the food they enjoy [17].

It is understood here that spontaneous visits to leisure farms or agricultural sites offer a relaxed and flexible experience. Unlike tours, casual visits allow tourists to explore areas at their own pace, hence granting them the freedom to choose which activities they want to participate in. Casual visitors might stumble upon farms or agricultural sites while traveling through regions leading to unexpected and delightful encounters [18]. The authenticity provided by leisure farm visits is one of their attractions. Tourists have an opportunity to directly engage with farmers and villagers without any intermediaries from the tourism industry. This direct interaction provides a chance for an authentic exchange of cultures, ideas and experiences [14].

During visits, tourists also have the opportunity to taste cuisines made from fresh produce sourced from the farms they visit. Sharing a meal with the locals offers a glimpse into their lives and culinary traditions. Such experiences promote understanding and respect, and this has the effect of breaking down barriers and fostering unity between tourists and rural communities [13].

Both organized and casual visits to leisure farms contribute to shaping the perception of tourism in Malaysia. As tourists engage in these experiences, their views on life undergo transformations as notions and stereotypes are challenged. They develop an appreciation for the richness of culture, the resilience of communities and the interdependent relationship between humans and nature [12].

One common perception that often changes is the notion that rural life is dull or stagnant. Through leisure farm visits, tourists witness first-hand the vibrancy of economies and societies. They observe how rural communities adapt to changing times, while still preserving their traditions and values. This newfound understanding challenges an urban-centric worldview by encouraging a nuanced perspective on Malaysia's ways of living [16]. The way people perceive agriculture in today's society has undergone a shift. Many city dwellers view agriculture as something disconnected from their lives. However, when they visit leisure farms, they start to understand how important agriculture is in their lives. They begin to appreciate the importance of farming practices, the need to support farmers and the value of consuming locally-grown produce [11].

Informal visits to farms or agricultural sites are incredibly important for tourism in Malaysia. These visits provide tourists with an experience that challenges their preconceived notions, encourages cultural exchange and promotes sustainable tourism [10]. Whether it is through guided tours or spontaneous encounters, these visits offer an enriching glimpse into life. As more tourists embrace tourism in Malaysia, both tourists and rural communities benefit from an increased appreciation for heritage and the significance of agriculture [22].

3. Adventurous or mountaineering/rock-climbing tours and analysis

Beyond the cities and pristine beaches, Malaysia has a captivating beauty that extends to its magnificent mountain ranges and rock formations. These awe-inspiring landscapes attract adventure enthusiasts from all corners of the globe [1]. Rural tourism in Malaysia opens up thrilling opportunities for tourists to embark on mountaineering and rock-climbing expeditions. The rural areas of Malaysia offer thrill seekers a chance to conquer some of the peaks and cliffs in the region through mountaineering and rock-climbing tours. The country is blessed with mountain ranges like Mount Kinabalu in Sabah and Gunung Tahan in Taman Negara National Park. These mountains cater to climbers of varying skill levels accommodating both adventurers and beginners seeking challenges [2].

One of the draws for mountaineering enthusiasts in Malaysia is the opportunity to immerse themselves in nature's splendor. As climbers ascend these peaks, they traverse through ecosystems encountering unique plant life and wildlife that thrive at different altitudes. The lush rainforests cascading waterfalls and sweeping vistas create a captivating backdrop for this adventure fostering an appreciation for Malaysia's biodiversity [5].

Rock-climbing enthusiasts are also drawn to Malaysia for its limestone formations that are renowned worldwide. Popular climbing destinations like Batu Caves near Kuala Lumpur and Bukit Keteri in Perlis have become well-liked among climbers due to their challenging routes and stunning scenery. The rise in mountaineering and rock-climbing tours has had an impact on communities' economies [6]. These activities create opportunities for guides, porters and support staff offering them employment options and a source of income. Consequently, rural residents who previously relied on subsistence agriculture or traditional crafts can now explore livelihoods in the tourism industry contributing to the diversification of economies [11].

Furthermore, the growth of mountaineering and rock-climbing tourism leads to investments in infrastructure and services within areas. Local communities and authorities often invest in improving trail conditions establishing climbing facilities and upgrading accommodation options to meet the rising number of adventure tourists. These investments enhance the experience for visitors and also benefit local residents by providing improved amenities and services [12]. However, adventure tourism is about associating with a new culture or a new landscape and being physically active simultaneously. It is not about being risky or pushing visitors' boundaries. In fact, it is especially crucial to know and respect their limits while they are in an unfamiliar area. Mountaineering and rock-climbing activities can potentially strain ecosystems by causing soil erosion, littering or disrupting wildlife habitats. Uncontrolled tourism can become a problem when popular routes get overcrowded which worsens the impact on the environment [18].

To tackle these concerns, it is crucial to adopt sustainable tourism practices. Local authorities and tour operators should take steps to regulate tourist activities impose limits on the number of climbers and set up waste management systems to minimize harm to the environment. Besides that, raising awareness about climbing practices and educating tourists about the importance of preserving nature plays a role in fostering a culture of sustainability among adventure-seeking tourists [20].

Moreover, engaging and empowering communities in the decision-making processes is essential for the tourism industry. By involving residents in planning and managing tourism activities, it is possible to tap into their knowledge and expertise to ensure that tourism efforts align with preserving both cultural heritage and natural

beauty [1]. The impact of mountaineering and rock-climbing tourism goes beyond environmental aspects and it also plays a significant role in shaping social connections within rural communities. As adventure-seeking tourists interact with locals during their tours, they gain insights into ways of life, customs and cultural practices specific to rural Malaysians [5]. These interactions create opportunities for cultural exchanges that foster mutual understanding and appreciation between tourists and locals. The diverse mix of Malaysia's groups and their unique cultures truly come alive during these encounters creating an enriching experience for visitors [2]. Also, mountaineering and rock-climbing tours often cultivate a sense of camaraderie among participants. Climbers from different backgrounds and nationalities unite through their shared love for adventure and nature. This feeling of community and shared moments can have a lasting impact on individuals, hence inspiring them to advocate for tourism and conservation [5].

Rural Malaysia's mountaineering and rock-climbing tours offer adventure enthusiasts an experience amidst the country's natural surroundings. These activities are capable of testing climbers' physical and mental endurance and also provide an opportunity to appreciate the diverse ecosystems and cultural heritage of Malaysia [1]. However, it is crucial to adopt practices that minimize impact while involving local communities in decision-making processes to ensure the sustainability of adventure tourism [2]. When executed properly mountaineering and rock-climbing tourism can positively contribute to the well-being of communities by fostering growth, cultural exchange and a deeper admiration for Malaysia's natural splendor [20].

4. Rural resort management and other related issues & case studies

In recent years, there has been an increase in the popularity of rural tourism in Malaysia. Many tourists are now looking for immersive experiences in the countryside of this country. To meet the demands of these tourists, rural resorts have become crucial in providing a mix of nature, culture and relaxation. Rural tourism in Malaysia has seen a surge in popularity as more and more travelers yearn for immersive experiences amidst the country's countryside. Rural resorts play a role in meeting the demands of these explorers, offering a blend of nature, culture and comfort [20].

One primary reason behind the increasing favorability of tourism in Malaysia stems from travelers longing to escape the hectic pace and technology-driven environments found in urban life. Many tourists seek solace from bustling cities, they yearn for an experience that embraces tranquility. Rural areas provide a backdrop with landscapes and close proximity to nature, and this is a perfect haven for those seeking respite [2].

Furthermore, the growth of tourism can be attributed to the growing interest in ecotourism and sustainable travel practices. Today's travelers are increasingly aware of their impact on both the environment and local communities. They are inclined to support tourism initiatives that prioritize conservation efforts while preserving cultures. Rural resorts that adopt eco practices while promoting tourism appeal greatly to this environmentally conscious demographic [5].

Rural retreats offer an array of attractions that capture the interest of travelers seeking experiences. The charm lies in the chance to engage with communities participate in age customs and witness traditional practices that have been passed down through generations. Visitors can take part in activities like planting rice, fishing or creating handicrafts allowing them to gain an understanding of the way of life [6].

The cultural immersion provided by retreats promotes cultural exchanges and fosters mutual respect between travelers and local communities. Through interactions with villagers, visitors gain insights into the customs, traditions and values upheld by Malaysians. This intercultural engagement cultivates an appreciation for diversity and nurtures an understanding of the country's rich heritage [8].

Furthermore, rural retreats serve as platforms for promoting entrepreneurship and supporting artisans and businesses. These establishments often source their supplies and ingredients locally providing a marketplace for small-scale farmers and producers. By purchasing handicrafts and locally made goods, travelers contribute to the well-being of communities while helping preserve traditional crafts [7].

The economic impact of tourism extends beyond the resort facilities themselves. The impact of tourism in areas goes beyond the resorts themselves. It has an effect on various businesses nearby including restaurants, transportation services and souvenir shops. This increased tourist spending helps to boost the economy and creates job opportunities, hence reducing the reliance on agriculture as the sole source of income [19].

Another appealing aspect that attracts tourists to resorts is the chance to engage in activities and to look for adventure. Malaysia's diverse landscapes ranging from rolling hills to rainforests and majestic mountains offer a range of possibilities for recreational pursuits [22]. Activities like hiking and jungle trekking cater to travelers looking for thrilling experiences amidst the country's beauty [10].

To ensure growth in tourism, it is vital for resort management to prioritize sustainability and responsible practices. Conservation efforts should be at the core of how rural resorts operate in order to protect the resources that initially attract tourists. Implementing eco-initiatives like waste reduction and energy conservation can help to minimize their impact [11].

Moreover, establishing connections with communities is crucial for long-term success in rural tourism. Resort management should actively collaborate with villagers by involving them in decision-making processes and ensuring that they share in the benefits brought by tourism [16]. Promoting the involvement of the community in the tourism industry can be further strengthened through training programs and initiatives to build their capacity [12].

Over the years, both the Malaysian government and non-governmental organizations have acknowledged the potential of rural tourism in driving sustainable development. To attract tourists, efforts are underway to promote tourism and upgrade infrastructure in rural areas. This includes developing facilities like eco-parks, hiking trails and cultural centers to enhance the tourist experience and encourage longer stays in regions [13].

Successful case studies of managing resorts in Malaysia demonstrate how responsible and sustainable practices can positively impact communities and the tourism industry as a whole. These examples that will be provided below would serve as models for resorts emphasizing the significance of preserving cultural heritage, protecting the environment and actively engaging with local residents [18].

The rise of tourism in Malaysia can be attributed to a growing desire for travel experiences that deeply immerse visitors. Rural resorts play a role in meeting these demands by offering a blend of nature, culture and comfort [17]. The allure of tourism lies in opportunities for immersion, outdoor adventures and supporting sustainable initiatives. Rural resorts play a role in promoting environmentally friendly practices, which have a dual impact on the economic growth of rural areas and the preservation of Malaysia's natural and cultural heritage [21]. By focusing on the

development of rural tourism, there would be a beneficial relationship between tourists and local communities paving the way for a prosperous and enduring future for Malaysia's rural regions [20].

4.1 Case study 1: eco-adventure Pahang

The Eco Adventure Retreat, in Pahang serves as an example of how a rural resort can balance tourism and environmental preservation. Through the adoption of eco practices and active engagement with the community, the resort has successfully established a sustainable tourism model that benefits both visitors and the surrounding environment [20].

A fundamental pillar of the Eco Adventure Retreats sustainability approach lies in its dedication to minimizing its carbon footprint. The resort has implemented initiatives aimed at mitigating its carbon footprint and conserving resources. For instance, they have embraced rainwater harvesting as a means to reduce reliance on groundwater and alleviate pressure on the water supply, which is particularly crucial in rural areas with limited access to water sources [23].

In line with their commitment to sustainability, solar power plays a role at the Eco Adventure Retreat. By harnessing the sunlight in the region, they generate energy to power their facilities and operations. This reliance on energy reduces not only dependency on non-renewable sources but also contributes toward efforts in combating climate change [2].

Effective waste management is another aspect of their eco practices. The management has implemented a waste management system that promotes recycling and minimizes waste sent to landfills [23]. The resort takes care to educate tourists on waste disposal with strategically placed recycling bins throughout the premises. This helps to reduce waste and make an impact on the environment contributing to a cleaner and more eco-friendly community [24].

In addition, the Eco Adventure Retreat actively participates in reforestation efforts to restore the surrounding forest areas. The resort places importance on preserving biodiversity and recognizes the valuable ecological services provided by forests [23]. By organizing tree-planting activities, the resort is able to offset its carbon emissions, and also creates a welcoming habitat for wildlife and protects the local watershed [5].

One of the resort's sustainability initiatives is educating guests about tourism. Through workshops and guided nature walks, tourists are made aware of the ecosystem they have come to explore. By sharing knowledge about flora and fauna and promoting practices, the resort empowers visitors to become conscious travelers and advocates for preserving our environment [8].

Beyond its endeavors, the Eco Adventure Retreat has formed a partnership with the local community. Understanding that community involvement is crucial for tourism, villagers are actively engaged in aspects of resort operations [23]. The Eco Adventure Retreat in Pahang Malaysia goes above and beyond to offer guests experiences. They involve artisans and performers who provide a taste of the local way of life, allowing tourists to fully immerse themselves in the community [11].

Moreover, the resort's dedication to supporting the economy is commendable. They actively source special local food and handicrafts for their gift shop which boosts economic activity in surrounding villages and also helps to preserve traditional crafts and practices. In addition to these efforts, the Eco Adventure Retreat understands the significance of giving back to the community [23]. They reinvest a portion of their revenue into community projects, such as education and infrastructure

development. This approach ensures that local residents benefit from tourism and feel a sense of pride and ownership in their heritage [16].

By engaging with the community and promoting responsible tourism among visitors, the Eco Adventure Retreat has become a shining example of sustainable rural resort management in Malaysia. Their success demonstrates that it is possible to strike a balance between catering to tourists' needs while preserving both the environment and local culture [12].

Rural resorts like the Eco Adventure Retreat play a role in driving the growth of tourism throughout Malaysia. These resorts are meeting the increasing demand for responsible travel by providing tourists with immersive experiences in the countryside [23]. The Eco Adventure Retreat sets an example of management for resorts through its eco-friendly practices and community involvement, demonstrating that tourism can have a positive impact on rural areas [13]. As more people are attracted to tourism, it is crucial for other resorts to follow suit by adopting practices and contributing to the sustainable development of Malaysia's rural regions [18].

4.2 Case study 2: agro-Tourism Farmstay Sabah

The Agro-Tourism Farmstay in Sabah showcases an approach to managing resorts by offering tourists an immersive experience in traditional farming practices. However, the resort encounters challenges that require navigation to ensure its long-term success and sustainability [25]. A major hurdle faced by the Agro-Tourism Farmstay is retaining personnel to handle day-to-day operations [26]. The resort's rural location surrounded by landscapes poses difficulties in recruiting qualified staff due to the absence of urban amenities and lower wages compared to urban areas. Potential employees might be enticed by rewarding opportunities in hospitality establishments located in cities, leaving the resort with a limited pool of talented individuals [16].

In order to address this issue, the resort management has implemented strategies focused on investing in the growth of the workforce. By providing training and skill development opportunities for residents from villages, the resort creates a pipeline of employees who have a vested interest in its success [25]. These training programs would not equip individuals with valuable skills, but also offer them promising prospects for career advancement within the resort's operations [1].

Furthermore, the resort management actively fosters a sense of ownership and pride among the community regarding the achievements of the resort. By involving the community in decision-making and providing employment opportunities, the Agro-Tourism Farmstay plays a role in supporting the economic well-being of the villagers [25]. This beneficial relationship ensures that the advantages of tourism are fairly distributed and the success of the resort becomes intertwined with the prosperity of the surrounding villages [2].

Dealing with seasonality poses another challenge for the Agro-Tourism Farmstay as visitor numbers fluctuate throughout the year like tourist destinations. During peak seasons like school holidays and festive periods, there is an influx of tourists seeking a getaway. The resort must be well prepared to accommodate these numbers while still delivering top-notch service as expected by its guests [8].

During off-peak seasons, maintaining an income to support year-round operations becomes challenging for the resort. With tourists visiting during these months, strategies need to be devised to attract visitors and generate revenue [7]. To tackle this seasonality issue, the Agro-Tourism Farmstay positions itself as a destination for

retreats and team-building activities. Corporate groups are drawn to this setting during off-peak periods, for team-building exercises and workshops [11]. To ensure a flow of visitors throughout the year and reduce the impact of fluctuations on financial sustainability, the resort cleverly markets itself as an ideal venue for corporate events [16].

Moreover, by attracting corporate visitor groups, the management creates opportunities for engagement with rural communities through various corporate social responsibility initiatives. During their stay, corporate clients can actively participate in community development projects. These initiatives benefit not only the well-being of the surrounding communities but also strengthen the resorts' bond with the local population [12].

Furthermore, to diversify its sources of revenue, the Agro-Tourism Farmstay has embraced tourism as a core concept. In addition to providing accommodation services, this resort offers tourists an experience in farming practices. Visitors can immerse themselves in activities like planting crops, harvesting produce and taking care of livestock, and this is a hands-on encounter with life [18].

The introduction of tourism enhances not only guests' experiences but also generates additional income streams for the resort. Tourists are often willing to pay for experiences while seeking eco-friendly and sustainable travel options [15]. To ensure that Agro-Tourism remains sustainable, it is crucial for the resort to find a balance between meeting the demands of tourists and preserving the environment and culture. The management of the resort should implement practices to safeguard the resources in the area ensuring that tourist activities do not cause any harm to the ecosystem [1]. Furthermore, the resort can collaborate with farmers and artisans to source produce and handicrafts that can be sold to tourists. This collaboration supports not only the economy but also promotes traditional crafts and agricultural methods [2].

Sabah's Agro-Tourism Farmstay offers an approach to managing resorts by providing tourists with an authentic experience in traditional farming practices. To overcome challenges like attracting staff and managing fluctuations in tourist arrivals, the resort has implemented strategies that prioritize community involvement, professional development for local workers and diversification of income sources [1].

By involving and investing in the development of the community, the resort fosters a mutually beneficial relationship between tourists and rural residents. Moreover, their commitment to promoting responsible practices through tourism demonstrates their dedication to a better future [2]. As tourism in Malaysia flourishes, resorts such as the Agro-Tourism Farmstay set an example for tourism showcasing how tourism can bring positive transformation to rural areas. By finding a ground between meeting the needs of tourists and preserving the environment and culture, these resorts play a vital role in fostering sustainable development in rural regions, while also sharing Malaysia's vibrant cultural legacy with the global community [25].

4.3 Case study 3: Genting Highlands case study

Genting Highlands stands as a fascinating case study of tourism in Malaysia. Situated amidst the Titiwangsa Mountains and an hour's drive away from Kuala Lumpur, this area has transformed into one of the most sought-after tourist destinations in the country. With its climate, landscapes and abundance of attractions, Genting Highlands has become a beloved retreat for both locals and international travelers [1].

In the 1960s, Genting Group, led by Malaysian entrepreneur Tan Sri Lim Goh Tong embarked on developing Genting Highlands. The grand vision was to create a resort

that offered visitors an escape from the sweltering heat and humidity of the lowlands while providing a range of leisure activities and entertainment options [27]. The journey began with the establishment of Genting Hotel and a splendid golf course soon followed by Malaysia's casino known as Casino de Genting [5].

Thanks to its strategic location and visionary leadership under Tan Sri Lim Goh Tongs guidance, Genting Highlands swiftly emerged as a prominent player in Malaysia's tourism industry. Genting Highlands has gained popularity among city dwellers looking for a getaway due to its proximity to the capital city Kuala Lumpur and easy access via constructed roads [6].

The resort's continuous expansion has added to its allure. The completion of the Genting Skyway cable car system in 1997 has provided a convenient mode of transportation from the foothills to the peak offering views of the surrounding rainforest and mountains. Moreover, the Genting Highlands Theme Park, which has undergone renovations and upgrades over time has become an attraction for families and thrill seekers alike [27].

One of the factors contributing to Genting Highlands' success as a tourism destination is its wide range of attractions and amenities. Apart from the casino and theme park, visitors can engage in outdoor activities such as shopping at the SkyAvenue mall, enjoying diverse dining options, witnessing cultural shows or indulging in outdoor adventures like nature walks and jungle trekking [27].

In addition to its array of offerings, Genting Highlands takes advantage of its setting by hosting an array of events and entertainment shows that attract international tourists. Concerts, festivals and cultural performances are regularly organized throughout the year to provide visitors with a vibrant experience [1]. Genting Highlands has successfully attracted a range of tourists due to its offerings. It caters to families in search of a fun-filled vacation, couples seeking a getaway and even gamblers looking for entertainment and gaming. This broad appeal ensures a stream of visitors throughout the year making Genting Highlands a preferred destination [9].

One of the factors contributing to Genting Highlands' success is its variety of accommodation options. The resort offers hotels and resorts that cater to budgets and preferences, ensuring that visitors from all walks of life can find lodging. From hotels with breathtaking views to affordable choices, Genting Highlands has taken care of the needs of various types of travelers. However, as Genting Highlands rapidly develops and expands, it faces challenges [27]. The growth in infrastructure and tourist facilities has had an impact on the environment resulting in deforestation and disruption to the ecosystem. Moreover, with its increasing popularity comes pressure on the community. Employment opportunities are affected as living costs for those residing nearby increase [16].

While Genting Highlands has provided job opportunities for the community, the increasing number of tourists has resulted in rising housing prices and living expenses, hence making it difficult for some residents to afford accommodation and maintain their traditional way of life [1]. Furthermore, the significant influx of tourists has raised concerns regarding waste management and environmental sustainability. The large volume of visitors generates an amount of waste. If not properly managed, this can lead to pollution and degradation of the environment. To ensure that Genting Highlands remains a tourism destination in the long run both resort management and relevant authorities must actively address these environmental issues [27].

To mitigate these effects on the environment, the Genting Group has implemented sustainability practices. They have introduced initiatives aimed at reducing waste generation and promoting recycling [2]. Additionally, they have adopted energy-saving measures to minimize their carbon footprint and conserve resources. These efforts are

crucial in preserving the region's beauty for future generations of both tourists and locals [20]. Despite the challenges faced, Genting Highlands continues to thrive as a rural tourism destination in Malaysia. The resort's ability to adapt to changing consumer preferences through expansion and innovative approaches has been vital to its success. This showcases the resilience and thinking mindset of the Genting Group [27].

Genting Highlands is a case study of tourism in Malaysia. It has come a long way from its beginnings and is now a thriving tourism hub. This success can be attributed to the leadership, strategic location and a wide range of attractions the resort offers. However, there are also challenges that need to be addressed, such as managing its impact and ensuring the well-being of the community [16]. To maintain its reputation as a tourism destination, it is crucial to strike a balance between tourism growth and preserving the environment while actively involving the community. Genting Highlands serves as an example for the tourism industry, shedding light on both the opportunities and obstacles associated with rural tourism development, in Malaysia [1].

5. Tourist behaviors and cultural impact on local rural population and case studies

In years the past few years, rural tourism in Malaysia has experienced growth, hence enticing travelers who are looking for genuine experiences in the countryside. This phenomenon has had an impact on the rural communities shaping their cultural identity and way of living [2].

5.1 Case study on Sarawak

Sarawak is situated on the island of Borneo and is renowned for its range of cultures and captivating natural attractions. Rural tourism in Sarawak attracts visitors who are eager to immerse themselves in the traditions and ways of life of various indigenous communities [28]. When tourists explore Sarawak, they actively engage in experiences, such as attending traditional ceremonies witnessing tribal dances and visiting longhouses to gain insights into local customs and lifestyles [20]. In an effort to promote tourism practices while supporting communities' economic well-being, Sarawak has introduced community-based ecotourism initiatives that allow tourists to stay with local communities [26]. Visitors can also participate in activities like jungle trekking, handicraft-making workshops and traditional cooking sessions [1].

The impact of tourism on the fabric of Sarawak is a complex issue with both positive and negative implications. On one hand, the interest and appreciation demonstrated by tourists toward Sarawak's cultures have instilled a sense of pride among the rural population. They actively celebrate their customs and practices as aspects of their identity [25]. Additionally, tourism has opened up avenues for communities through community-based initiatives [26]. The income generated from these tourism activities has played a role in supporting livelihoods while facilitating the preservation of traditional crafts and skills. However, there are concerns regarding the commercialization of indigenous culture that need to be addressed proactively [11].

Sometimes when it comes to tourists, traditional ceremonies and dances might undergo changes or simplifications which could result in them losing their authenticity and cultural significance [26]. As tourism brings in influences, younger generations within communities may become more attracted to modern ways of life, potentially causing certain cultural practices to gradually fade away over time [16].

5.2 Terengganu case study

Terengganu is situated on the coast of Peninsular Malaysia and is renowned for its unspoiled beaches, traditional Malay architecture and vibrant cultural legacy. When visiting Terengganu, tourists have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the Malay way of life. Exploring fishing villages and engaging with fishing communities are common activities for visitors in rural Terengganu [29]. They can learn about fishing techniques first-hand and savor the taste of freshly caught seafood. Alongside these experiences, cultural festivals like the Terengganu International Squid Jigging Festival attract tourists seeking a glimpse into Malay celebrations and captivating cultural performances [1].

The impact of tourism on the population in Terengganu presents both positive and negative aspects. Tourism has opened up opportunities for fishing communities in Terengganu. Visitors' interest in fishing practices and coastal experiences has become a source of income for fishermen and their families. The preservation and promotion of Malay festivals and events have also been bolstered by tourism [30]. Local communities take pride in showcasing their heritage to visitors, ensuring that cherished customs continue to thrive. However, it is important to note that tourism can disrupt fishing practices and the local way of life. In areas where over-tourism occurs, there may be degradation as well as strain on local resources [29]. Additionally, there is a risk of some tourism offerings presenting portrayals of culture purely for commercial gain, hence potentially diluting the true essence of local customs [2].

5.3 Johor case study

Johor is a state that is situated in the part of Peninsular Malaysia and it offers a blend of rural and urban tourism opportunities. The rural areas of Johor are especially appealing to visitors seeking experiences and cultural encounters [31]. Agricultural tourism has gained popularity in the countryside of Johor, where tourists can explore farms and plantations, while learning about farming practices and even engage in fruit-picking activities. Additionally, Johor is rich in heritage tourism with tourists immersing themselves in the sites and cultural landmarks it has to offer. A few notable places include the Johor Bahru Old Chinese Temple and the Royal Abu Bakar Museum [28].

The impact of tourism on the population in Johor carries both positive and negative aspects from a cultural standpoint. On one hand, agricultural tourism has provided farmers and plantation owners with income sources by opening their doors to tourists. This diversification has proven beneficial for locals who appreciate revenue streams [20]. On another note, heritage tourism plays a role in preserving sites and cultural landmarks as tourist interest encourages their conservation efforts [28]. However, it is important to note that there are instances where over-commercialization of tourism can raise concerns regarding resource exploitation and environmental sustainability. Managing visitor influxes and preserving structures pose challenges for heritage sites, amidst increased tourist arrivals [31].

6. Other relevant topics

Rural tourism in Malaysia is an ever-changing industry that covers a range of subjects and factors. In addition to the mentioned themes above, there are important topics that play a role in the expansion and progress of rural tourism in the country.

Rural regions in Malaysia are known for their heritage comprising of ancient temples, traditional villages and colonial-era structures scattered across the landscape. Preserving these landmarks is important to ensure they can be enjoyed by tourists and local communities alike. To achieve the conservation efforts, it encompasses restoration, maintenance and educational initiatives aimed at safeguarding the country's legacy [20].

Rural areas thrive with entrepreneurship and the flourishing of businesses because of rural tourism. Numerous communities in regions have initiated home-based enterprises, artisanal crafts and Agro-Tourism initiatives. These endeavors have contributed to diversification and also empowered the locals [2]. Improving the abilities and knowledge of communities engaged in tourism is essential to ensure visitors have a great experience. It is important to offer training programs that focus on hospitality, customer service, language skills and cultural understanding. This will enhance the quality of tourism experiences [5].

Given the growing urgency of climate change, it is crucial to prioritize practices in rural tourism. By embracing eco methods, minimizing the carbon footprint and endorsing energy projects, it is possible to play a significant role in minimizing the negative effects of tourism on the environment [6].


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