

## **Knowledge On Lenggong Place Attractions: Perspectives From Local Communities**

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*Level of knowledge on place attractions by local community is crucial in transforming and promoting a destination as tourist attractions. The purpose of this study is to find out the level of knowledge and perceptions on Lenggong Valleys' place attributes and attractions from local communities. Lenggong Valley which has unique and outstanding archeogeological and heritage products, has been declared as a world heritage site on 30th June 2012 by UNESCO, a worldwide organization for educational, scientific, and culture. Unfortunately, the finding of a survey on 500 residences in Lenggong Valley area shows that, the knowledge of the locals on Lenggong place attractions is low. About 67.8% did not know the Toba volcanic ash in Bukit Sapi and 65.6% never knew the existing of Bukit Bunuh, an area with exposed impactites since Middle-Early Pleistocene. Since their understanding is less inclusive, this paper will suggest several activities such as heritage fair, site tour and mobile exhibition for further actions by destination manager. It is the intention of this paper to bring to discussion these issues as part of strategies to develop and improve Lenggong's competitive advantages as one of the world's popular tourism destinations in the future.*

**Key words:** local community, place attraction, place attribute, competitive advantages

### **Introduction**

Knowledge plays an important role in all spheres of human life and activity. According to Oxford Dictionary, knowledge can be thought of as the use of skills and experience to add intelligence to information in order to make decisions or provide reliable grounds for action. It is stated that the use of knowledge is central to informed decisions and policymaking in a post-industrial society (Xiao and Smith, 2007) and as an essential component of community capacity building (Bopp et al., 2002). So, the level of knowledge plays an important role in the progress of human activities and development. Thus, the role of knowledge is also crucial for the development in tourism sector.

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Knowledge has influencing local community responses to tourism thus become an important source and is regarded as a tool to assist in tourism development in local communities (Aref and Ma'rof, 2008; Aref et al. 2009). This is because knowledge is needed to effectively implement the community development process in tourism destination such as in context of awareness and understanding of key topics relevant to the tourism development issue, in getting organized for or involved in tourism activity and in obtaining and the information that is available on policy, government programs and services tourism related issues. Thus, having inadequate knowledge negatively impacts a community's ability to effectively influence and develop tourism policy (Atkisson, et al., 2003). According to Moscardo (2008), the lack of tourism knowledge is a critical barrier that not only directly limits the ability of local people to participate in tourism development but also contribute to the lack of local tourism leadership.

Finding of several studies such as by Hunt (2005) McGinty (2003), Taylor (2003) Cronin (2003) and Hunt (2005) also referred to lack of knowledge in addition to lack of skill as main barriers in local communities for development and community capacity building in tourism. Limited in knowledge also has been used in many developing countries to justify the exclusion of local residents and other community stakeholders from involvement in marketing decisions in tourism markets (Moscardo, 2008). Accordingly Hall, et al. (2005), added that limited skill and knowledge of tourism can contribute to false expectations about the benefits of tourism and a lack of preparedness for the change associated with tourism, and limits opportunities for locals to benefits from tourism business opportunities.

Thus, synthesis from the above discussion show that lack of knowledge especially among the local community can lead to negatives outcomes to tourism development planning in their area. There should be a high correlation between the lack of knowledge and the negative outcomes of tourism development in the local community perspectives. It is imperatives to note that level of knowledge is central to the development of tourism industry, not only because tourism has a close connection with the local communities, particularly as hosts and guides, but also because it contributes to sense of place and to increase competitive advantages of a place and in transforming and promoting a destination as tourist attractions. Cole (2006) agreed with remarks because any different layers and sources of knowledge relating to tourism may serve to stimulate individual and group attitudes regarding tourism, thus influencing local community responses and involvement in tourism activities that leads to getting local community support for the industry and also acts as a crucial component to achieving sustainable development of the industry.

Based on the issues that have been discussed above, it is crucial to know the level of tourism knowledge among the local community when developing tourism destination products such as in Lenggong Valley. Lenggong Valley is located in Hulu Perak district, about 50 km north of Kuala Kangsar and 90km from Ipoh and 52 km from Gerik . Lenggong Valley, has been declared as the world heritage site on 30th June 2012 by UNESCO, a specialized agency in United Nations (UN) that promote the exchange of culture, ideas, and information. The award is timely because Lenggong Valley is a famous centre for the development of human civilization since the Paleolithic time.

According to Archeological Heritage of the Lenggong Valley (AHLV) Nomination Dossier (Department of National Heritage, 2011), there are four outstanding universal values which made Lenggong Valley a Unesco heritage site. The first reason is because Lenggong Valley has one of the Longest Culture Sequence

in a Single Locality in the World. Evidence for continued hominid presence in Lenggong Valley is found in a long chronological series of in-situ open-air stone tool workshop sites extending from Bukit Jawa (200,000 - 100,000 years), to Kota Tampan (70,000 years), and to a later Bukit Bunuh BBH 2001 (40,000 years). The second reason is because of the numerous undisturbed *In-Situ* stone tool workshops found in Lenggong Valley. In other words, the evidence in the area is still authentic because it is in permanent place of origin, on-site open and undisturbed by interference and modernizing current time. Thirdly, the discovery of Perak Man, a unique Palaeolithic Skeleton with *Brachymesophalangia* type A2 at Gua Gunung Runtuh is the most complete skeletons found in Southeast Asia that represent life 10,000 years ago. Finally, the fourth reason, all of the archeological resources derived from indirect evidence such as the preserved Palaeolithic stone tools i.e. hand axe, the chopper and the flake tools in the melted suevite formed by the meteorite impact at Bukit Bunuh which strike 1.83 million years ago proved the very early hominid presence outside Africa (Department of National Heritage, 2011).

Based on the strength of the place, Lenggong Valley yearning to become a major tourist destination should be materializing easily. Hence the importance of local community knowledge towards tourism should be researched more widely, so that the significance of the knowledge and its benefit to the local community is understandable. This issue is also in line with the government's objective to make the local communities in the Lenggong Valley having some awareness, sensitivity and participation in any development especially tourism development in the area. For the State of Perak, this is a valuable destination to attract more visitors to Perak this year, in conjunction with the Visit Perak Year 2012 and many years ahead.

### **Research Objective**

It can be seen that, knowledge is needed to effectively implement the community development process in tourism destination. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out the level of knowledge and perceptions on Lenggong Valleys' place attributes and attractions from local communities perspectives. The objective of this study is to examine and explore the local respondents' knowledge of unique attractions in Lenggong Valley. Subsequently we will know the profile of local respondents in Lenggong Valley. Lastly the study will suggest several activities as part of strategies to improve the local tourism knowledge so that it will help to develop and improve Lenggong's competitive advantages as one of the world's popular tourism destinations in the future.

### **Research Method**

For this study, a total of 500 residents were selected from a total of 18,990 local populations through a simple random sampling method. Lenggong Municipal District consists of three sub-districts. Sub-district Lenggong consist of 9 villages, sub-district Durian Pipit has 5 villages and sub-district Temelong consists of 5 villages. Therefore, about 30 respondents were selected randomly from each of these villages in the district. Survey questions are used as research instrument that has been established based on preliminary observations and research needs. Question of the survey consists of 4 parts as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Division of Survey Questions

<b>Part</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Total Questions</b>
Part A	Respondent Background	12
Part B	Destination Branding	30
Part C	Knowledge on Destination Attraction	24

The selected respondents were visited by a research assistant to answer the survey questions between March and April 2012, about 3 months before the heritage site declaration was announced. The researcher read each question to the respondents and they are given enough time to choose an answer. In average about 25 minutes was consumed by each respondent to answer all questionnaires. Of the 500 people contacted, only 489 respondents were able to answer fully all questions asked. For incomplete and those not fully answered it was filled with '999' and is referred as missing value.

The data obtained were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20. Part A, B, and C were using descriptive statistics where frequency distribution and percentage is used to determine the profile of the respondents. In addition, reliability test of the instruments used is tested by Cronbach Alpha procedure. Results of the analysis are shown in Table 2. All parts of the question are classified according to their characteristic. For example the characteristic of the Lenggong branding is classified into the environmental, historical, cultural, industrial village and world heritage status. Fortunately, all of these elements got alpha value of more than 0.9. However, the knowledge on Lenggong attraction is divided into places of interest and historical values with alpha value of 0.8 and 0.6 respectively. According to Mohd Salleh and Zaidatun (2001) and Mohd Najib (2003), if the value of reliability (Cronbach Alpha) is less than 0.6, then the instruments used in the study are considered to have low reliability status, while the reliability value of more than 0.8, shows that the item is acceptable and reliable.

Table 2: Cronbach Alpha Value Test

<b>Elements</b>	<b>Total Items</b>	<b>Alpha Value</b>
Lenggong Branding	14	0.97
Environmental,	3	0.95
Historical,	3	0.96
Cultural,	3	0.93
Industrial Village	3	0.97
World Heritage Status	2	0.95
Knowledge on Lenggong attraction	10	0.83
Place of interest	7	0.81
Historical values	3	0.56
Total	24	0.89

## **Results And Discussion**

### ***Respondent Background***

Table 3 show the complete profile of the respondents of this study. Of the 500 respondents, 47.8% (239) are male and 52.2% (261) are female. Majority of the

respondents are self-employed (54.8%) and only 16.2% are with government sector. A total of 47.0% of the population has a regular job status and respondents mostly (49.0%) had one year until 5 years of working experience. About 59.4% of the respondents are married, and the Malay ethnic is the majority in the Lenggong area with 59.4% compared to the Chinese (24.4%), India (16.0%) and other races (0.2%). Almost all of the respondents (90.4%) are the origin population of Lenggong with majority of them are antecedent of Pattani people from Thailand. However, only 3.4% of respondents have at least bachelor's degree and about 34.4% of the respondents have completed their SPM level. It is interesting to note that almost 52.2% of the respondents have their monthly household income of less than RM1000. Only 2.8% of respondents earning is more than RM3001. This statistic indicates that majority of local residents are in lower income category and surely their economic status has some significant effect on the finding of this study.

Table 3: Profile of Respondent

<b>Profile</b>	<b>Classification (n = 500)</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>	<b>Percentages (%)</b>
Sex	Male	239	47.8
	Female	261	52.2
Age	<19	74	14.8
	20-29	88	17.6
	30-39	86	17.2
	40-49	68	13.6
	50-59	90	18.0
	>60	94	18.8
Employment Sector	Government Sector	81	16.2
	Private Sector	145	29.0
	Self-employment	274	54.8
Employment Status	Permanent job	235	47.0
	Part time job	112	22.4
	Without job	153	30.6
Employment Experience	1-5 years	245	49.0
	6-10 years	114	22.8
	11-15 years	72	14.4
	16-20 years	24	4.8
	>21 years	45	9.0
Marriage Status	Married	297	59.4
	Single	162	32.4
	Divorcees	39	7.8
	999	2	0.4
Ethnic Group	Malay	297	59.4
	Chinese	122	24.4
	Indian	80	16.0
	Others	1	0.2
Local Origin	Yes	452	90.4
	No	48	9.6
Education level	Primary School	164	32.8
	Secondary School SPM	108	21.6
	Certificate	172	34.4
	Diploma	39	7.8
	Degree/Master/ PhD	17	3.4

Monthly Household Income	<RM1000	261	52.2
	RM1001-RM2000	185	37.0
	RM2001-RM3000	40	8.0
	>RM3001	14	2.8

### ***Knowledge on Lenggong Attractions***

Lenggong Valley has its own attraction especially as archeotourism attractions. The six most important archeological sites are Bukit Bunuh, Bukit Jawa, Kota Tampan, Gua Gunung Runtuh, Gua Teluk Kelawar dan Gua Harimau. Bukit Bunuh covers about more than 4 square km of palm oil areas located at the longitude of 10° 058.5 East and latitude of 5° 4.5 North. Bukit Bunuh is also declared as one of the National Archaeological Heritage 2012 (Buku Perisytiharan Warisan Kebangsaan (2012). However, when the local respondents were ask about this National Heritage, the finding was astonishing. The result shows that about 65.6% of respondents do not know about Bukit Bunuh. While only 21.0% of respondent knew and 11.2% of respondents could not care less about the existent of Bukit Bunuh.

In addition to Bukit Bunuh, the presence of ash from the last catastrophic Toba volcanic eruption in Sumatera Indonesia around 74,000 to 70,000 years ago in the area, particularly Bukit Sapi, also contributes to comprehensive anecdote of Lenggong Valley. In Bukit Sapi, a small area with the ash along the main road has been designated as tourist attraction. The result of the study indicates that about 67.8% of respondents do not know about the ash in Bukit Sapi. Only 19.4% of respondent knew and 11.2% of respondents could not care less about the significant of the Toba ash in the area.

Table 4 shows the other place attractions available in Lenggong Valley area with percentage of respondent acknowledgement of their existent. The findings show that 51.2% (256) of respondents knew that Lenggong Valley has more than 13 famous, unique and significant caves scattered in the northern part of the area. However, when asked to name the most popular cave, the answer list is embarrassing. The most mentioned cave is Gua Puteri (106 respondents), followed by Gua Kelawar (78 respondents) and the third on the list is Gua Harimau which was mentioned by 40 respondents. Unfortunately, Gua Gunung Runtuh, in Bukit Kepala Gajah, the famous cave where Perak Man was found is only mentioned by 34 respondents.

On the other hand, it was found that, the knowledge of respondent on place element which relate to their immediate, surrounding and daily activities were relatively high. About 67.8% of respondents acknowledged the existing of Orang Asli, 81.4% identify the “Teh Lenggong” brand and 68.2% established that deer are bred in Lenggong area. The finding also show that, 63.6% of them noticed that Lenggong Valley area are regularly used as a background scenery for films, popular advertisements and drama series. They are confident in mentioning the film titles such Sifu and Tonga, Anna and The King, Sesudah Subuh and Penanggal and also the popular Petronas Raya Advertisement which was filmed at Pengkalan Jeti Kampung Beng, near Tasik Raban few year back.

Based on the findings, we can argue that only a small number of respondents had some knowledge about Bukit Bunuh, Bukit Sapi and Gua Gunung Runtuh. Majority or most of them do not know and do not care about the existence of such sites. The result indicated that the local people do not have knowledge or couldn't care less to find out about interesting places in their area which could be tourist attractions. There are various factors that lead to their limited knowledge. After some

basic analysis and observation, we can argue that the limited knowledge of the respondents on place attraction could be the effect of three major reasons. The first reason is related to the popularity of the site with the prehistoric periods, open air sites and artefactual evidence that need scientific explanation and higher level of education to grasp the beneficial and to become the pride of their local heritage. Since they don't understand the fact the places become unpopular to them. The second reason is because of their daily routine, lifestyles and economic activities that are occupying the majority of their time and restricted them from being involved in surrounding issues and matters. In other words, majority of them were in lower income categories, hence they have to work hard for their monthly earning and don't have enough time to be involved in other unimportant matters. The final reason of their limited knowledge is due to the fact that they do not get enough exposure to information and do not get the right information from the local leaders' or the authorities. In other words, the publicity or the marketing of the place is very low. However, the reasoning is not concrete because it is known that there is a monthly meeting by all local community leaders at Majlis Daerah Lenggong to discuss these matters and several programmes being implemented such as Road to World Heritage Carnival in May 2011 to increase public awareness on the importance of these matters.

Table 4: Knowledge of Respondents on Lenggong Attraction

Place Elements	Local Knowledge on Lenggong Attractions (%)				
	Yes	No	Don't care	999	Total
Did you know that Lenggong has more than 13 caves as tourist attraction?	51.2	34.6	12.6	1.6	100
Did you know that Bukit Bunuh is a national treasure?	21.0	65.6	11.2	2.2	100
Did you know that Bukit Sapi has Volcanic Toba ash?	19.4	67.8	11.2	1.6	100
Did you know that Lenggong once owned tea plantations with the brand 'Lenggong Tea'?	81.4	16.0	1.2	1.4	100
Did you know that deer are bred in Lenggong area?	68.2	26.2	4.0	1.6	100
Did you know that Lenggong is also inhabited by the indigenous people?	67.8	25.0	5.6	1.6	100
Did you know that Lenggong has a communist memorial monument?	17.2	75.0	6.2	1.6	100
Did you know that Lenggong has several historical tombs?	30.6	59.8	8.0	1.6	100
Did you know that Lenggong was used to be the location of some adventure movies / dramas / advertisements?	63.6	28.2	6.8	1.4	100
Did you know that Lenggong is surrounded by highlands?	25.2	64.8	8.4	1.6	100

## **Recommendation And Conclusion**

The finding of a survey on 500 residences in Lenggong Valley area shows that, the knowledge in local communities on Lenggong place attractions is low. Since the study was done before the declaration date announced by UNESCO on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012, hopefully the level of knowledge among the locals is getting better. It is very detrimental to the development of local tourism if the problem continues. Since knowledge is a significant and critical tool to assist in tourism development in local communities, the lack of it will be a great barrier. As discussed before, limited knowledge would restrict the locals from acquiring information, awareness that is available on tourism related issues and thus could not effectively involve in the tourism development process. This result would surely affect the community capacity building in general. Furthermore, it could be apprehensive when used by certain parties as a reason to exclude the locals from involvement in decisions in tourism development. Thus, it would also limit opportunities for locals to benefit from tourism business activities and opportunities.

Since the understanding of the locals toward place attraction in Lenggong is less inclusive, several actions or activities must be planned and executed immediately. Hopefully such actions will enhance their knowledge and understanding on the matters. As recommendations, two major agendas are suggested. The first is to prepare special and resource for distribution among the locals and visitors of Lenggong Valley. Such resources could comprise of reading materials such as pamphlets, brochures, flyers, local bulletins, regional newspapers, local magazines or books. Additional materials could include short documentaries in CD forms, posters, banners and other promotional material that could be used to raise awareness, knowledge and appreciation of local communities toward their local valueless heritage. The second recommendation is to organize several heritage fairs in selected villages, organizing site tours and implementing mobile exhibitions for the locals and tourists by any destination manager either Majlis Daerah Lenggong or Jabatan Warisan Negara. Activities such as exhibitions, storytellings, drawing competitions, poem readings or treasures hunting could indirectly lead to additional knowledge among the locals. These recommendations are not exclusive, thus additional suggestions are most welcome as the intention of this paper is to bring to discussion these issues as part of strategies to develop and improve Lenggong's image as established tourism destination.

As a conclusion, the above discussion shows that lack of knowledge especially among the local communities can lead to negatives outcomes to tourism development planning in their area. Hopefully the finding indicates by this study will make the Lenggong Valley destination manager and local community leaders be alert and prepare some strategies to tackle these issues. Knowledge of local communities on Lenggong Valley place attractions is certainly crucial. Without knowledge of tourism, they will consider the insignificant of tourism relevance within their daily lives or their communities. It is most disadvantageous when limited knowledge lead to a negative perception from the local residents that tourism could not deliver benefits such as jobs or the opportunities for entrepreneur developments. In additional to economic benefits, tourism development could also contribute to sense of place and increase public pride in this local heritage. As a result it could also increased competitive advantages of a place, especially for Lenggong Valley competitive advantages. Lenggong Valley could be one of the world's popular tourism destinations in the future because Lenggong is a fascinating place with tremendous



archaeological, prehistorical, historical and cultural heritage that is yet to be discovered.

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