

Homestay Re-visit Implementation Model Based on Spatial Perspective in Langkawi Island

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Abstract

Homestay program is actively promoted as a community based tourism product in Malaysia. Officially, in 1995 this program was launched by Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism Malaysia in Temerloh, Pahang. This study was undertaken with the aim of investigating a practicing model of homestay management in Langkawi Island. Various variables of the communities' participation and homestay management practices were identified, analysed and plotted. The field data survey was recorded in person and positioned by handheld GPS (Global Positioning System). Spatial and non-spatial data were processed through GIS (Geographic Information System). Various spatial integrations through GIS re-classing activities including neighbourhood, proximity and overlaying were carried out. The result displayed various perspectives of the existing homestay distribution in Langkawi. It is found that practicing model can be classified into three namely A, B and C. The paper also discusses the issue of participation, activities as well as distribution. The result could support the re-thinking of homestay location, management and program since it plays a very important role in the development of tourism in Langkawi Island that will ensure the economic sustainability among local communities.

Keyword: Homestay concept, GIS application, Tourism Langkawi

Introduction

Tourism has been identified as one of the industries which serve to contribute to the world's economy. Recognizing this, Malaysia and many other countries are striving to develop and show the individual greatness to attract tourists. The growth in tourism This program is placed under the rural tourism master plan and was intended to enhance the participation of rural communities in tourism sector. The popularity of homestay program was gained only in recent years (Yusnita et al., 2012).

The booming of tourism industry in Langkawi has increasingly resulted in the rise of land price. A piece of remote land was only about RM 20,000 per acre in year 2000, but the rate is multiple of more than 10 times now. The local people can easily sell and leave the island but the government wants them to stay and adopt the new way of life while maintaining the status quo. Homestay is seen as the right alternative. Currently there are more than 100 units of homestay are

industry has been identified as important factors to help in improving the less develop nation in line with the global economic progress (Kalsom K.,2009).

Homestay program is one of the Malaysian tourism products. It was introduced in 1988 by The Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism as one alternative accommodation offered to tourists. in practice in Langkawi Island alone and another 40 in Tuba island. However, there are problems of recognition and misconception. Their identities as well as the SOP (standard of practice) are not clearly clarified and the location probably is not right.

Hence this study is intended to investigate the homestay implementation practice among the locals in relation to the location and it's classification. Since the homestay is part of spatial issue, the latest technology of Geographic Information System (GIS) has been used to map and analyze its spatial relation and the integration together with non-spatial entity.

Background Of Study

Tourism in Langkawi

Langkawi Island has been rapidly developed since Dr Mahathir Mohammed was the Prime Minister beginning 1981. In 1987, tourism development in Langkawi Island posted growth after the Federal Government declared Langkawi as a duty free island. The previous studies show that there are about 106 tourism projects initiated by private companies with the value of more than 1 billion which had been approved by authorities until 1992 (Marzuki A., 2011). The population of Langkawi is about 150,000 in 2010 while the number of tourists in 2010 is 96,097 where by 26,429 are local tourists (Marzuki A.,2011).

Homestay Concept

The idea of the homestay program is to accommodate tourists in a village with a local family, allowing visitors to learn about the lifestyles, cultures and enjoy the natural beauty of the area. Official definition for a homestay program according to tourism is “where tourists staying with host families and experience the way of every day family life in both directly and indirectly”(Razzaq et al.,2011). The homestay concept in Malaysia is quite similar with the farm stay concept practiced in New Zealand and Germany (Oppermann, 1997) and vacation farm in Canada (Weaver et al., 1997).

The main component of homestay program in Malaysia which is different from other countries is where tourist stays together with host family or namely as adopted family. This content involves eating, cooking and doing activities together with host family (Yusnita Y., et al., 2012, Nor Azrin A, 2012). Therefore, tourists can experience the variety of customs and culture that will have its own uniqueness (Jabil et al., 2011, Annuar A.R.,2012).

Yusnita Y., et al. (2012) and Abdul Hadi C. M. (2012) quote that homestay program in Langkawi is very good and receive favourable responses from domestic and foreign tourists. Tourists will be exposed to the Malay community customs and tradition.

However, the concept of home to stay during vacation is another matter. Hotel will always be remembered during a vacation time but hotel is not like a home. Hence the basic idea of homestay program is now being incorporated with the idea of home to stay. As a result, homestay has emerged as another alternative to hotel but carrying some weightage of homestay’s original concept. This can be considered as an innovation towards maximizing the tourists demand and supply.

Information technologies (IT) and tourism are two of the most dynamic motivators of the emerging global economy. Both tourism and IT have increasingly provided strategic opportunities and powerful tools for economic growth, redistribution of wealth and development of equity around the globe.

GIS is spatial information based which support IT industry. GIS provides digital map base for data sharing and information analysis supporting decision making. This technology integrates database operations like query with the unique visualization and geographic analysis benefits offered by maps (Bhaire et al.,1999). GIS operates on two data elements: spatial and attribute data. Spatial or geographic data refers to a particular entity which has a form and known location on the Earth’s surface. Usually, this location is expressed as a grid coordinate or in degree of latitude and longitude. Most organizations make use of implicit geographical references as place name, address, postcodes, road code and so on as the attribute. Implicit spatial references can usually be coded into explicit spatial references.

The application of GIS in tourism sector has many advantages to both tourists and for the tourism development authority’s (Jovanovic et al., 2008). Tourists can easily visualize various sites through digital images and select the best information for route planning, accommodation, cultural, special attraction etc. The advantages to development authorities include management planning, monitoring and maintaining

Methodology

Literature research was carried out and later classified the homestay into three groups; A, B and C. Group A refers to homestay that fully practices of homestay concept where tourists stay with the host family in the same roof. For group B, it refers to homestay that practices minimum change where they are treated as guests but staying in a different house in that similar compound. Group C was refers to homestay that practices with change. This homestay is actually a normal home which is equipped with some basic necessities as a home. The group A comprises about 50% out of the total, while group B is about 2% and 48% is in group C.

Records from Kedah Tourism Department Kedah and it’s local representative in Langkawi have been used to locate some of the earlier homestays in Langkawi. Direct interview has been carried out with most of the operators to gauge their eagerness in handling the homestay and also to state authority concern particularly with the officers of tourism Kedah, Perlis and Langkawi Island to understand some of their handling mechanism and planning.

In addition, the internet has also been used to locate the advertisement and location of homestays. A field work has been carried out to map those locations using hand held GPS (Global Positioning System) and make a direct interview based on some standard set of questions (Appendix1). The interview is basically to define its classification and the operating standard as well as to understand about the owner’s background.

Base maps were collected through secondary information and integrated into GIS system of ArcGIS Version 9.1. Spatial analysis tool has been used to manipulate data and form specific information supporting knowledge building according to the objective.

Result And Discussion

There are six regions in Langkawi Island. The survey results show that most homestays are located in Kuah region of about 46% and the rest are 6% in Kedawang, 7% in Ulu Melaka, 17% in Ayer Hangat, 5% in Padang Matsirat, 3% in Kuala Keriang, 2% in Bohor and 14% in Tuba Island (Figure 1). Kuah is the only town in Langkawi Island and is located near to the main entry point of Kuah Jetty.

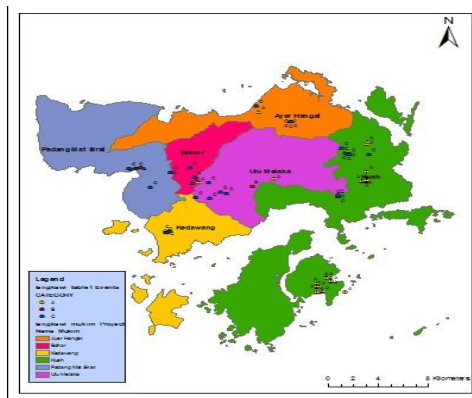


Figure 1: Homestay distribution

There are two entry points in Langkawi Island which is at Jetty in Kuah and airport in Padang Matsirat (Figure 2). From the survey, it was found that there are only 5% of the homestays are situated in Padang Matsirat. The location of homestay is also located at some attractive points such as 17% in Ayer Hangat, 7% in Ulu Melaka and 6% in Kedawang. There only 38% of homestays which are located within a distance of 500 meters from the main road and only 1% is located in higher altitude of more than 200 meters above MSL. There are about 14% of homestays are located near the beach where 14% are in Pulau Tuba, 4% in the Padang Matsirat, 2% in Tanjung Rhu and 4% in Kedawang.

It has been observed that, the existence of homestay in Langkawi is mainly due to the eagerness of the local to increase household income (Annuar A.R.,2012, Abdul Hadi C.M.,2012). As a result the homestay was developed near to owner’s home or within owner’s asset. Even the one in category B, the owner original intention is to build home for family members but

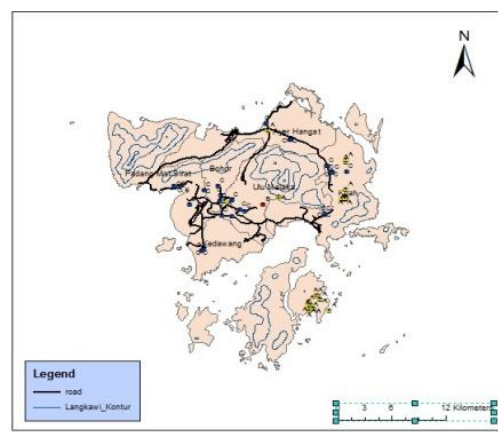


Figure 2: Road and contour

evolve being a set of homestay. Until recently, the owner set to vacant the whole unit of homestay during month of Idul Fitri each year mainly for family gathering.

Homestay is currently seen as one the most promising economic activity for the local people (Zakaria M. et al., 2012, Johari B.,2012). Homestay is a parcel based business and increasingly required by tourists. Homestay has its own unique definition but the definition has evolved. Conventionally, the homestay of group A offer an inclusive accommodation type where the home owner and the visitors are staying together in the same roof. The visitors are their guests. This concept however is evolving. Fox Hill Homestay of group B initiates the one compound rather than a single roof but maintain the status of guest. The business trend seems to be encouraging where the occupancy rate (OR) is more than 20 days per month and the visitors are particularly foreigner.

However, the traditional homestay is still widely in practice particularly under a specific agency. KEDA (Lembaga Kemajuan Wilayah Kedah) and LKIM (Lembaga Kemajuan Ikan Malaysia) are the two active organizations involve with such activity. LKIM is based in Pulau Tuba and KEDA in Langkawi Island itself. There are about 24 individuals who operate these 30 units of homestay in Pulau Tuba and about 35 individuals who operate under KEDA, particularly in

the area of Padang Lalang, near Kuah town of Langkawi main island.

However the traditional idea of homestay is again modified. A living house with a minimal facilitation is offered as a temporary home to stay. This idea is widely spread to practice in Langkawi. Cikgu Johari's homestay, of group C believes that the visitors prefer a privacy life and their traveling activities have been set and what they need is a homely like place to stay, particularly to the local visitors. His number of homestays have proven that the concept is practical to invest where the OR is minimum at 8 days to 27 days per month (Johari B.,2012).

As we know, a business is individual's right and practice. Caring and nurturing is the key to success in any business (Intan et al.,2008). The homestay operators have to get this feeling well. Hence, the input, operation and output factors are the serious matter in business. The type A group is too much lacking in the business operation matter. They seemed to be too dependent on the third party to assist and guide, as well as to promote. These could probably be their main challenge to success. The B and C types are almost well established and are quite independent. They are mostly private initiative. However, their main challenge is probably onto the understanding of the target market, the right grooming needed and the tourist monsoon.

The location also plays a great role in setting the type. The "norm" is almost applied regardless of a place. Local tourists prefer a homestay which is like a home and near the town centre, while individual foreign tourist prefers a place which is far away from town, but easily accessible, explore and exit. The group tourists are in the middle where the space and facilities are in demand to accommodate program and crowd.

Langkawi as a whole is an island of tourism. Attractive places are distributed in every corner of the island. Hence, location of the best homestay is very difficult to define although there are some exceptional preferences to the local or foreigner. Management issues seem to be the vital and the best practice should be adopted.

Conclusion

Tourists comprise with a range of interest. Observation shows that local tourists generally expect a homely type of accommodation while foreign tourists are looking for a trusted accommodation while exploring and enjoying or escaping the local nature.

The A, B, C types have their roles to play in the tourism industry. However, the A needs to be more independent in the business environment where risk and return are the main issue. B and C are stable but need to be more sensitive to the target client's needs and

demand. It is also suggested that their target market should be expanded.

With the advancement of technology, promotions via web sites are strongly encouraged. Majority of the tourist interviewed used internet to search for the potential place to stay. It can be utilised through own web site. Although the technology is proven worth for some successful operators, but less than of the operator half is using this ready technology for the purpose. The current implementation concept is found to be about right with some innovations in practice. However, the exclusiveness is uncertain. The operators should be able to clarify and cluster themselves into any of the group and develop a relevant SOP.

The operating location is another point to ponder. Our observation found that the existing operation has to be realigned according to the location. It has to be suitable and apply the right SOP.

We can see that the tourism industry in Langkawi is growing and the authority's future planning should consider the home to stay. Hence, the future of homestay is seen promising. However, the existing practice needs to be enhanced and the operators should think of sustainability.

Acknowledgements

We wish to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to Mr Annuar Abd Razak, Director Ministry of Tourism Malaysia, Kedah, Nor Azrin Abdullah, Assistant Director of Tourism Malaysia, Perlis and Mr Abdul Hadi b. Che Man, Manager of Tourism in Langkawi Island who help and guidance us about the nature of tourism and tourism in Langkawi. A special gratitude is also to University Sains Malaysia for the funding in Tourism Decision Support System and GIS Laboratory UiTM Perlis.

Our warmest appreciation is also extended to friends: Sufian Ali, Azizul Ahmad, Nurehan Che Ani, Nurul Ashikin Noordin, Faudziah Awang and Rafizah Abd Razak for their cooperation in completing this research.

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Appendix 1

The guiding questions:

Homestay of Langkawi:
GIS data survey

1. Name :.....
2. Address :.....
3. Telephone number
4. Gender : Male Female
5. Marital : Single Married Divorced
6. Age group : 18-25 26-35 36-45
 46-55 55+
7. Owner : Local Other
8. Customer : Local people Abroad
9. Operation year (starting)
10. Price per day :.....
11. Booking period
12. No of unit owned
13. Occupancy rate (day/month)
14. Average rate per year:.....
15. Category : A B C
16. What are the advertisement method used ?
.....
17. Location :

| Coordinate | Mukim | Neighborhood entity |
|------------|-------|---------------------|
| | | |