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LEVERAGING ON VISITOR'S HERITAGE TOURISM MOTIVATION

Khairul Azfar Adzahar
azfar938@uitm.edu.my

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

Mohd Fazil Jamaludin
m.fazil@uitm.edu.my

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

Mohd Shafiz Saharan
shafizsaharan@uitm.edu.my

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

Heritage tourism is a key component in improving the tourism industry in a country and it contributes to local and national economies. It can be defined as an aspect of tourism where an individual visits historical places and sees historical treasures. With the diversity of heritage tourism resources available in Malaysia, both because of the local culture and because of colonization that took place in the past, proves that Malaysia has great potential in the heritage tourism sector. From famous and UNESCO-recognized heritage sites, the historic cities of Melaka and Georgetown to the historical places that receive less attention from tourists both within the country and abroad like significant historical sites of Lembah Bujang located in the northern part of the country; proves that the country has many and diverse heritage tourism products and has not yet been optimally exploited to increase the country's rating in the global tourism arena. However, careful study and planning must be implemented before Malaysia is able to market heritage tourism products on a large scale because it involves economic costs such as infrastructure construction costs that must be borne by the government to better facilitate heritage tourism in the country (Stynes, 1997); and it is not cheap. Among the studies that must be carried out to finalize the decision to promote the country's heritage tourism products on a large scale is to identify visitor's heritage tourism motivation. By understanding the visitor's heritage tourism motivation in depth, the country can plan appropriate heritage tourism products and plan promotional activities to historical places in Malaysia effectively. This article seeks to identify the key motivational and decision-making drivers of visitor's heritage tourism visitation choice.

There are several main factors that motivate an individual to do heritage tourism that have been identified through past studies among them are, the desire to worship, because such historical places have nostalgic value and are part of one's origins (Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2004). Arguably, one's desire to visit historical places is not only driven by cultural factors, but also due to other driving factors such as attractive and beautiful locations to visit, relaxation and recreational experiences (Menor-Campos, Pérez-Gálvez, Hidalgo-Fernández, & López-Guzmán, 2020). The main factor that motivates tourists to do heritage tourism is due to the culture and cultural image that is being portrayed in the tourist area (Fernández, Pérez-Gálvez, & López-Guzmán, 2016). In search of self-identity and the origin of the descendants and race, one is driven to do cultural tourism. There are several historical artifacts and places in Malaysia that prove the existence of a culture that was no less great a long time ago. This indirectly increases the confidence of one's society towards their own culture that oozes emotional involvement and pride. Another prevailing factors that influence visitor's heritage tourism visitation choice to historical sites are beautiful location to visit that could also provide relaxational and recreational experiences to visitors. Thus, a combination of attraction's settings and tourist experience expectations like relaxation, enjoyment stimulations, recreation (Lafe, Primm, & McGrath, 2017) and aesthetics experience (Trinh & Ryan, 2016) is a key to sustainable heritage tourism sector in Malaysia. This article serves to provide an insight for heritage tourism operators, government, educators, and researchers to strategically leverage on the interplay of relationships between heritage tourism site- specific dimension and resources and visitor's mindset.

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