UNDERSTANDING THE ATTRIBUTES THAT MOTIVATES TOURISTS CHOICE TOWARDS AGRITOURISM - DESTINATION IN CAMERON HIGHLAND, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The main focus of this study is to obtain a better understanding of attributes that motivates tourist’s choice towards agri-tourism destination in Cameron Highland. This survey was conducted by using quantitative method and were targeted to the 200 residents in Malaysia that has a minimum age of 18 years and above. There were 200 respondents who had participated in this research. The study is mainly focusing on finding out on the resident’s push and pull factor of towards agri-tourism destination in Cameron Highland, Malaysia as their choice of holiday destination. The result of the study will also useful for the future agri-tourism development in Cameron Highland in Malaysia. This study will enable the agri-tourism sector in Malaysia to be improved and help to make on a clearer pathway for future development to attract more tourists to visit the destination and to boost up Malaysia economic.

Key words: Agri-Tourism, Resident’s Attributes, Push and Pull Factors, Cameron Highland, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Today, new economic opportunity for rural areas and nature based has been created due to tourism itself. The situation had expanded up to the relation between the development and tourism in rural areas. Therefore, here a nature based tourism known as rural tourism which had included on the developments of the rural regions through cultural, environmental
and the historical richness. In addition, agri-tourism is a new type of tourism which can be found in rural tourism here.

Agri-tourism is actually a type of a business venture located on a ranch, working farm or agricultural enterprise that provides an understanding for visitors while generating supplemental income for the owner. In this form of tourism, tourists will be able to experience the nature or agricultural based on the environment in a form of educational and entertainment discovery. Thus, agri-tourism can also be referred to as “agro-tourism” and “agri-entertainment’.

Beginning in the late 1800’s, where the history of agri-tourism begin to had started when people initiated leaving the town to escape from the city life with a purpose of visit relatives for short stays. When automobile was developed in the 1920’s it became easier for individuals to travel to the rural areas. During the 1930’s and 1940’s, the interest in rural recreation became significant after Great Depression and World War 2. Furthermore, farm petting zoos and horseback riding became widespread in the 1960’s and 1970’s. Next, in the 1980’s and 1990’s commercial farm tours became popular as the population began to be fond of farm vacations and overnight stays at bed and breakfasts.

The demand has grown tremendous for agri-tourism division until today. Not only grown in the developed countries but also in developing ones that this tourism had grown in below of the integration of principles of sustainability, tourism development and rural development.

According to Schilling et. al (2006), agri-tourism proposals the much needed moneys flow to plenty of the farms faced up to by decreasing profitability. It is also well known as an important product and market diversification strategy for farmers in the United States. An estimation of 52 million Americans aging around 16 or older had visited a farm between 2000 and 2001 stated by The United States Department of Agriculture. During this period, a likely of 20 million children under the age of 16 had also stayed in a farm at some time. In addition, between the year of 1997 and 2007 the nature and agricultural-based tourism will be the fastest
growing segment of the travel and tourism industry projected by The Purdue Tourism Hospitality Research Centre.

Besides, “Agri-tourism did also identify as an amount of ecotourism previously as both have alike principles to conduct nature attractions” (Rilla 1999). Both had remained recognized as the fastest tourism growth model in the world. Agri-tourism had been extensively developed in developing countries as a possible development models as natural resources and support of local society economically (OTA, 1992).

Nowadays, in Malaysia some recent developments are occurring related to the agri-tourism development in the political and practical. Malaysia is ideally rating to become one of the top tourist’s destinations spot for agri-tourism in the world. Malaysia is geographical located in southeast asia is known as one of the most developing countries. Malaysia is famous for its riches in cultural and heritage site in rural and urban site areas. Malaysia has total land areas of 329,847 kilometers square, covering an approximately population of 25 million of people which consisting races of Malays, Indians, Chinese and some various small ethnic group in Sabah and Sarawak. Besides that, Malaysia is made up of two regions which are West Malaysia (Peninsular Malaysia) and East Malaysia. West Malaysia consists of 11 states and West Malaysia only consists of 2 states.

In addition, Malaysia, tourism is known as one of the main source of income for Malaysia economic. It did also play as one of the strong factor that changes Malaysia economic evaluation. According to Dr, Badaruddin Mohamed, University Sains Malaysia (2002), he did identified that tourism activity helps significantly in boosting up economy growth and helps to sustain the foreign exchange earnings.

Malaysia is a beautiful and diverse country full with many highlights. Here you can find many different regions, each of them have their own characteristic features, making this country the perfect destination for tourists to visits. Tourists can experience the features especially in Malaysia’s capital, Kuala Lumpur, you will see many modern buildings, a modern light rail transit system, and many luxurious shopping malls.
On the other hand, Malaysia is a tropical Holiday destination. Malaysia’s climate is considered as an equatorial climate. Therefore throughout the year especially in the major cities the weather is usually very hot and damp. Secondly Malaysia has the ‘highlands’ of Malaysia where here you can enjoy cooler temperatures that never exceed up to 25 degrees Celsius. With this perfect whether of Malaysia, agri-tourism is easily and well organize by the country with the locals. An interview had been carry out by THE STAR newspaper, Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (Matta) president Ngiam Foon, (2008), he detailed that the good news was there he saw plenty of room for growth and improvement. He did also mention on Government seen on the wisdom in inspiring the expansion of agri-tourism in Malaysia. Cameron Highland, Taman Pertanian Sabah, Parit Jawa Johor, and Mango Farm Kedah will be a few famous examples of agri-tourism that you can found in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

In the research, methodology is the most important part in completing the research. This is because methodology in research acts as practical acts to relate all statement with actual conditions (Sköldberg and Alvesson 2000:1-5). Cameron Highlands is located in Pahang, Malaysia. Cameron Highlands, a well-known famous agri-tourism destination in Malaysia has been chosen for collecting data throughout in this research. The destination is full and famous of its agri-tourism sites. You can find Strawberry Farm, Boh Tea Plantation, and Mushroom Farm in here. These farms are all operated by the villagers who had contributing in helping to attract plenty of Agri tourists who come in from all around the world just to visit Cameron Highland, Malaysia.

Research design is also important in completing on this research as it acts as a must to complete in every study. Relevant objectives and research questions of the suggested study should be relevant throughout the research design. Here, this method will be discussing throughout the research as it to make sure that all of the research questions would be based on the study objectives. On the other hand, one of the main points in conducting a research is based on the method that has been chosen in it. The method must be suitable and the survey questions created must
be suitable to the type of groups that have been aimed. To adding on in, some of the factors may be affecting on the research. The factors are such as comprising with the time consumed and as well as did also comprising some of the financial costing. In attempt to accomplish the main objective of the agri-tourism research, this study will implement method using the quantitative research method. This is because quantitative research is the best method way in attributes research questions so as to determine material from the tourist respondent of this research study. The quantitative method that I will be using is survey research. I will be planning to create a survey which consists of 22 questionnaire based on my objectives. The survey will be then distributed to 200 people in Malaysia to answer questions about tourist’s motivation toward agri-tourism destination in Cameron Highland.

In today’s world, with the help of the technology, internet was created to ease on our mobility. Nowadays in most area, Internet was broadly been use. Hence, internet survey will be absolutely global acceptable by most of the local communities in Malaysia. Internet makes life easier as it was very convenience to them to fill up the online survey .In addition to it, organizing the survey in internet will definitely help to consume up a lot of time and money. This survey method is good and beneficial to everyone as it is more eco-friendly way by not wasting a lot of printed papers. The internet survey was created by using Google Drive (http://goo.gl/forms/0nK1eIM1sj)

This research method was used to collect statistical data and information from the large population. Later on, the data and information that were collected from the respective respondents will be easily converted into statistical charts, tables and diagrams for further analysis purposes.

**ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

Here, under the finding and analysis section, characteristics of the respondents were describes in the first part of the survey result. Next, the survey will be describing on more about details on what are the factors
that actually motivates tourists to visit on an agri-tourism destination in the second part. All answer will be obtainable in a pie chart format.

Figure 1: Respondent’s Reasons of Travelling (n=200)

![Reason of Travelling](image)

Figure 1 was to identify on respondent’s reason of travelling. Figure 1 had shown that the top main reasons of travelling for every respondent were because of leisure purposes. It covered a majority number of 87% (174) out of 100% from the reading above. This means most of the respondents travel was because they want to have leisure time for relaxation. This was followed by meeting friends & family which only took up a number of 10% (20) of the reading and last but not least only 3% (6) of the readings where respondents thinks that their reason of travelling was for business purposes.

![Purpose of Travelling](image)

Figure 2: Respondent’s Purpose of Travelling (n=200)

In Figure 2, the question was to create to find out on respondent’s purpose of travelling. Based on the result, out of 200 respondents, 95 respondents
(47.5%) think that their purpose of travelling was escaping from the city. It was the highest among the others purpose of travelling.

This was then follow up by rest of relaxation purposes which had cover up to 38 numbers of respondents (19%). 27 respondents (13.5%) thinks that spending time with family was their main purpose of travelling while only 23 respondents (11.5%) thinks that their purpose of travelling was to have an adventure in it.

Lastly, the least number of respondents which consists only 17 numbers of respondents (8.5%) thinks that they can learn something new in travelling as their main purpose of travelling.

Figure 3: Respondent’s Main Interest in Selecting a Destination (n=200)

The above Figure 3 shown about respondent’s main interest in selecting a destination. The results had clearly shown that the highest reading was 51.5% (103 respondents) which was about half of the total numbers of respondents select nature as their main interest in selecting a travel destination. 20% (40 respondents) select relaxation as their main interest in selecting a travel destination and this was followed up by 11% (22 respondents) will visits places or destinations which seen on TV or movie as their main interest in selecting a destination.
On the other hand, Figure 3 did also shown that only 10.5% (21 respondents) selecting adventure as their main interest in selecting a destination while 2.5% (5 respondents) select destination was based on visiting friends or relatives. 2% (4 respondents) chooses culture, 1% (2 respondents) chooses health and sports respectively as their main interest in selecting a destination.

Finally, only a minor of 0.5% (1 respondent) chooses night life. However, none of the respondents chooses religion as their main interest in selecting a destination.

Figure 4: The recognition of Agri-tourism farms towards the respondents (n=200)

According to Figure 4, it was clearly stated that the majority of respondents had heard about agri-tourism farms before. The result of the findings consists of 92.5% (185 respondents) had heard about this type of tourism before.

Meanwhile on the other hand, there were only 7.5% (15 respondents) had not heard about agri-tourism farms before. This shows that agri-tourism farms are quite well known in tourism industry today. The results was in line with OTA (1992), as developing countries has been widely introduced to agri-tourism as a potential development models, as a support of local society economically and as natural resources. Therefore, it was not
awkward that respondent’s had come across hearing this tourism term before.

Figure 5: Experiences in an agri-tourism farm (n=200)

Figure 5 was to find out on how many respondents had actually experience on an agri-tourism farm stays before. Out of 200 respondents, the results from figure 11 had indicated that 155 respondents (77.5%) had experience in an agri-tourism farm before while there were only 45 numbers of respondents (22.5%) had not been experiencing in an agri-tourism farms before.

Figure 6: Sources on how agri-tourism farms are introduce to the respondents (n=200)
In Figure 6, the question indicates to find out about the sources on how agri-tourism farms was introduced to the respondents. We can conclude that the highest number of respondents indicates that, 95 respondents have learned about agri-tourism farms from their friends. It was then follow up by 47 respondents learned about agri-tourism farms from the internet. 31 respondents have learned it from social media such as TV, Radio, Newspaper and etc., while 14 respondents learned about these agri-tourism farms from their own. Only 8 respondents learned it from their teachers when in schooling and last but not least, the smallest number of respondents which is only 5 respondents learned about the farm from others source. These readings shown that, friends plays a great role in introduce agri-tourism farms to others. In others words, news spread through word of mouth.

Figure 7: Respondents preferably visitation on an agri-tourism farm (n=200)

The figure above, we wanted to find out on what tourists actually refer when participated on a visitation to an agri-tourism farm. Based on the pie chart above, we obtained 71.5% of respondents (143) do prefer an exclusive private when they visited the farm, either host-guided or self-guided during the visitation.

Besides that, the results did also stated that 14.5% of respondents (29) doesn’t not really mind if they joined along with the public during the
visitation and lastly, 14\% (28) of respondents doesn’t not really mind if the agri-tourism farm visitation is mainly targeting on the school tour.

![Pie chart showing duration of visitation to an agri-tourism field trip.]

**Figure 8: Types of Programs that influence on respondent’s decision**

According to the figure above, this question was aimed to find out about what was the type of program that actually influences respondent’s decision on choosing agri-tourism field trips. From the results above, we can see that most respondent’s preferred in choosing the agri-tourism field trips was because agri farms provide a structured visitation. There were such as guided package tour with was led by the locals or the tour company. The number of respondent chooses this was 112 respondents (56\%). On the other hand, the second most respondent’s preferred in choosing the agri-tourism field trips was due to the self-guided visit tour available in agri-farm. The result stated was 59 respondents (29.5\%) were choosing on it. Respondents may enjoy their own leisure time without following any guided tour which sometimes makes them tense. Furthermore, there were only 19 respondents (9.5\%) think that they choose agri-tourism field trips were because of the educational program that provided by the farm management is knowledgeable. By that, they can even gain educational experience when they were staying in an agri-farm. Lastly, only 10 respondents (5\%) choosing to schedule a trip to an agri-tourism field trip is because of the attractive farm entertainment theme such as cow boy theme, sheep theme, horse theme and many more.
Figure 9: Respondent’s Duration per Visitation (n=200)

In Figure 9, the question was designed to find out about respondent’s duration of visitation to an agri-tourism field trip. Based on the result above, we can see that 2-3 hours was the highest number of duration of visitation that 174 respondents (87%) had chosen out of 200 respondents. They thought that 2-3 hours was the best average time that every person should spend on a field trip per visitation. The result was then followed up by the duration of 4-5 hours that 19 (9.5%) respondents had chosen on it. Only a number of 5 respondents (2.5%) had chosen duration of less than 1 hour per visitation and last but not least, only 2 respondents (1%) had chosen on duration per visitation more than 5 hours.

Figure 10. Walking distance around the agri-tourism field trips (n=200)
According to the Figure 10, the question stated to find out on what respondent’s maximum walking distance around the agri-tourism filed trips. The result had shown a majority of respondents which was 178 respondents (89%) who would like to travel 1-3 km only within the farm. 14 respondents (7%) selected that they would like to travel more than 3 km within the farm area coverage and last but not least, only 8 respondents (4%) would only want to travel less than 1 km within the farm area.

![Chart showing expected from an agri-tourism farm](image)

**Figure 11 – Respondent’s expectation towards an agri-tourism farm (n=200)**

In Figure 11, the question was stated about respondent’s expectation towards an agri-tourism farm. Out of 200 respondents, the result from figure 17 indicates that 68.5% (137 respondents) expected that they will gain relaxation from an agri-tourism farm visitation. This was then follow up by 21% (42 respondents) expected that they will gain fun experience from this visitation. 10% (20 respondents) expected that they will gain some educational experience from an agri-tourism farm and only 0.5% (1 respondent) stated that they will expect others experience besides fun, relax and educational experience.
Based on Figure 12, the question stated was to find out whether Cameron Highland agri-tourism has been recognized by many people. There were two answers provided for respondents to choose. If the respondent chooses the Yes answer, the respondent was needed to proceed to the following Yes question while if the respondent chooses the No answer, the respondent was needed to proceed to the No questionnaire.

Out of 200 respondents, the above figure result shown that, 80.5% (161) of the respondents have heard about Cameron Highland agri-tourism before and most of them had even experienced it before. The result was in line with Pahang Tourism and Culture Committee chairman Datuk Seri Mohd Sharkar Shamsuddin (2014), reported by The Sun Daily, stated the number of tourist arrivals to Cameron Highlands recorded was 328,813 people were recorded to have visited the area in 2014.

This means, Cameron Highland was actually well known for its agri-tourism farm and people tend to go up for a visitation. Meanwhile on the other hand, there are only 19.5% (39) of the respondents had not heard anything about Cameron Highland agri-tourism farm before.
Figure 13: Respondent’s satisfaction towards Cameron Highland Agri-tourism tour (n=161)

Figure 13 shown about respondent’s satisfaction towards Cameron Highland agri-tourism tour. The total numbers of respondents were 161 respondents which were adapted based on the results in Figure 12 on choosing on the Yes answer column.

Here, the results shown out of 161 respondents, 151 respondents (75.5%) were happy and satisfied with Cameron Highland agri-tourism tour while only 10 respondents (5%) were not happy with Cameron Highland agri-tourism tour.

Figure 14: Respondent’s interest’s in joining the tour (n=39)
The above Figure 14 shown about respondent’s satisfaction towards Cameron Highland agri-tourism farm tour. The total numbers of respondents were 39 respondents which were adapted based on the results in figure 18 on choosing on the No answer column.

According to Figure 14, the result shown that, there were 37 respondents (18.5%) who would like to try on experience Cameron Highland agri-tourism farm tour even though they had not heard about it.

On the other hand, there were a few respondents were not really interest in joining into Cameron Highland agri-tourism farm tour. The result stated was only 2 respondents (1%).

![Figure 14: Respondent's Satisfaction Towards Cameron Highland Agri-tourism Farm Tour](image)

Figure 15: Length of Stay in Cameron Highland (n=198)

The above Figure 15 shown about the length of stay of respondent would prefer to stay in Cameron Highland. Based on the result above, we can conclude that there were 169 respondents among 200 which stated as the highest percentage (84.5%) would like to stay in Cameron Highland for only 2 days stay.

Meanwhile on the other hand, the second highest percentage respondent’s that would like to stay in Cameron Highland for 3 days’ stay was 8% (16 respondents). 6.5% (13 respondents) would like to stay in Cameron Highland for less than 1 day and none of any respondent would like to stay in Cameron Highland for more than 3 days stay that might be causing them boringness.
According to Figure 16, the question stated on what respondent thinks about Cameron Highland Agri-tourism tour price range. There were 3 selectable answer that respondent’s were available for choosing. The choices of selectable answer were cheap, acceptable and expensive. The result above had shown that only 3 respondents (1.5%) thinks that Cameron Highland tour price range were actually overly expensive compare to other tour. On the other hand, the result shown that, 28 respondents (14%) thinks that Cameron Highland tour price range were surprisingly cheap. Lastly, the majority of the respondents which were 167 respondents (83.5%) thinks that Cameron Highland tour price range were actually acceptable and affordable which mostly everyone can afford to buy and tour around Cameron Highland itself.

Figure 17: Acceptable Price Range (n=198)
Based on Figure 17 above, the question was create to find out on what were respondents ideal acceptable price range per person per admission in Cameron Highland. In other word, it was to find out what is the acceptable price range that respondent willing to pay for a person per admission.

The result had shown that 68% (136 respondents) of the majority thinks that it was acceptable to pay RM5-RM10 per person per admission for the price range while on the other hand, 30.5% (61 respondents) thinks that it was acceptable to pay RM11-RM15 only per person per admission for the price range.

Furthermore, 0.5% (1 respondent) only thinks that it was acceptable to pay less than RM5 per person per admission and lastly none of any respondent chooses that the admission fees for a person should pay more than RM15 per entry.

Figure 18: Types of Cameron Highland attractions that attracts respondents (n=198)

According to Figure 18, the above question was to find out what type of Cameron Highland attractions that attracts respondents to come and visit on this destination.

The finding of the results indicates that, the majority of respondents which was 130 respondents (65%) chosen to visit Cameron Highland agri-
tourism farm is because they were attracted to want to be closer to the nature in Cameron Highland. Greenies scenery appears in front of your doorstep once you open the window where you hardly can find it in the city area.

Besides that, there were 25 respondents (12.5%) chooses to visit Cameron Highland Agri-tourism farm was because they were attracted by the U Pick (Strawberry Plucking) activities in Cameron Highland. Here respondents can try on their hand on activities by plucking the ripe strawberries where not every agri-farm has this activity.

Furthermore, 24 respondents (12%) choose to visit Cameron Highland Agri-tourism farm was because they were attracted by the display garden tea at there. Display garden tea such as the BOH Tea plantation had attracted many tourists to visit Cameron Highland over the past few years. The amazing layout of the tea garden was arranging systematically.

The result from the figure above did also show that there were 12 respondents (6%) choose to visit Cameron Highland Agri-tourism farm was due to the bed and breakfast accommodation in Cameron Highland.

Finally, only 7 respondents (3.5%) choose to visit Cameron Highland Agri-tourism farm is because of the festival that is held on Cameron Highland itself. Festivals such as flower festival, Highlands Harmonica Festivals and Diwali Festival are celebrated with great pomp and fanfare at there every year.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Agri-tourism is a type of tourism which is based of nature that has recently become popular. In Malaysia, tourism had been developed for many years and it is currently the second largest earning industry besides the manufacturing industry. Therefore, agri-tourism wouldn’t be missed out as Malaysia has a very popular destination for agri-tourism which is located in Pahang. It is known as Cameron Highland.
Cameron Highland is one of tourism destination in Malaysia. Tourism activities are said to have attracts many tourists to come and visit Cameron Highland. Thus, in this research, the study helps to find in a better understanding about what is the push and pull factor that motivates tourists to visit agri-tourism destination, Cameron Highland.

One of the key factors that play an important role in success of tourism industry today was due to tourist satisfaction. Their high level of satisfaction plays an important role in determining the probability of future revisits the destination. By that, this also increases the tendency for tourists to make recommendation for others to visit on the tourism destination.

Based on the research, overall we found out that there were many factors that help to motivate tourist to choose on agri-tourism as their holiday destination. The highest factor that motivates tourists to choose on this tourism was because of their most similarity of interest which is interest towards the nature. Besides, they also chooses on this tourism is because they wanted to escape from the city life. They wanted to have a few days break which is free from noise and air pollution to relax on their mind and to refreshment up themselves.

The findings was in line with Desmond (2005), that he stated that tourists have interest towards vacation in agri-tourism was because they wants to build and strengthen their relationship together as family, seek for social interaction on trips and tourism can help to act as stress reliever. Therefore, agri-tourism opportunities did really offer them a great time to leisure and bonding time with their families.

In addition, the average age group in this research was 25 to 34 years old and majority of the respondent were employed. This means, they have spending power in choosing their types of holiday destination are strong. Types of program will also influence on choosing agri-tourism field trips. Tourists prefer to have a guided tour visits when staying in the farm. They wanted to have a deeper understanding about how actually foods were produce. They wanted a hand on activities.
Distance and duration of the farm field trips did also help to motivates tourist in selecting the destination. Here, they would like an average of 2-3 hours visitation on a field trip and an average distance of 1 to 3 km only.

Based on the results of the research, many of the tourists are happy with Cameron highland agri-tourism tour and this will eventually make them wants to revisit the destination again. The readings did also show that the majority of them did get to known about agri-tourism farms from their friends. Positive word of mouth will be spreaded among each other and this shown that positive word of mouth is important for a destinations or attractions to gain tourists to revisit the destination many times. To support on this, in Cameron Highland, one of the factors that motivate tourists to revisit the place is because of acceptable price range of admission with an average of RM 5 to RM 10. For today, the price range was considered cheap as a tourist’s destination.

IMPLICATION

Regarding to the contribution and limitation of this research, this research has indirectly show a contribute direction of further development and improvement in tourism aspect development in Malaysia. This research has helped Cameron Highland to find out what motivates tourists to come and visit Cameron Highland as their chosen destination for agri-tourism farm field trips.

LIMITATION OF THIS RESEARCH

However, since this research is conducted under quantitative methodology, it is limited to know in depth about the feelings and experience that tourist’s undergo when visiting agri-tourism in Cameron Highland. Therefore, in the future research, the methods of research should be applied on both methods which are quantitative and qualitative. This is to ensure a deeper depth of understanding regarding to the tourists development in Cameron Highland, Malaysia.
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