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## The Exploration Analysis of Socio Economic Status of Homestay Guest in Langkawi and Marketing Recommendations

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### Abstract

Homestay business in Langkawi was operated in Malaysia since 1990s. At that time, the Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture (MOTAC) trained local people as the homestay business owner and provided licensed for homestay operation in Langkawi island area. Generally, this homestay promotes an experience living with homestay business owner and their family, learn the local lifestyle, art and culture. Generally, at that time the consumer segmentation for homestay program is focusing on foreigner and students. Nowadays, the homestay guest is not just get demand from foreigner travelers but mostly the demand from young domestic travelers. The data gathered from LADA shows that the number of domestic travelers to Langkawi Island is increasing year by year. Since the number of homestays are growing in Langkawi, domestic travelers have an opportunity to visit and staying in Langkawi. Therefore, local people in Langkawi should take parts in Langkawi economic development. One of the businesses they could participate is providing the accommodation to travelers, authentic food and nature activities. Furthermore, cooperating with others small business holder who are operating the boat business and island hoping, restaurant, theme parks and farm explorace are the added value in this kind of business. This study aims to analyse the socioeconomic status of homestay guest in Langkawi Island. This result is achieved by two research objectives (1) to identify the socioeconomic background of respondents and (2) to explore the demand of traveling and homestay selection. Thus, this research was conducted using quantitative approach and survey research. There are 364 homestay guests at Langkawi Island involved in this study. The researcher gets co-operations and approval with several homestay business owners. The data was selected by simple random sampling. The findings shows that, most of the homestay guest is a young age group in category 27 to 35 years old. The number of man staying in homestay is higher than women. The young man come with friends and have a nature activities such as fishing, snorkeling and island hoping. Just a little number of man come with family and have a family gathering in Langkawi. In average, the women age 35 and single have an opportunity come to Langkawi with friends. The younger woman may have under tight

family protection especially young Malay women. The age of 35 and the single Malay woman may have more freedom than the younger Malay women. They have work, some money and more independent to travel with friends. The little number of solo traveler in this study is a man, they come alone and stay in homestay. Mostly, the homestay guest in this study comes from B40 groups and they stay for one to two nights. The homestay give an opportunity for domestic traveler to come and overnight in Langkawi with payable price. This study is important to LADA and Ministry of Tourism, Act and Culture (MOTAC) to produce a training to local people in Langkawi about accommodation or homestay business. This is to generate the family economics of Langkawi local people. The finding is important for stakeholders and marketers for Langkawi homestay promotion to domestic and foreigner travelers.

**Keywords:** Homestay Guest, Marketing, Domestic Travelers, Socioeconomic Status, Tourism Industry

### Introduction

According to Malaysia Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture's (MOTAC) report (2020), a total of more than 3000 people throughout the country were trained and licensed to operate Homestays and Kampungstay. From that amount trainees, there are a numbers from Langkawi local people involve in that program and get training to operate the homestay business. In addition, some of the outsider who are retired, choose to stay in Langkawi as their retirement place and operate the homestay business. Report by Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) (2020), Langkawi Island has grown rapidly through tourism activities and has become one of the most famous island vacation in the world with a total of travelers 3,628,951 (2018) and increased to 3,924,326 (2019). Even in 2020 the data shows the decreasing number of travelers to Langkawi because of the Pandemic COVID19, but the tourism planning and management still work progressively to attract the domestic travelers. LADA and Langkawi business operator are ready to receive domestic tourist from 16 September 2021 with the Standard of Procedure (SOP) by Malaysia government. Homestay business owner whether under MOTAC supervision or Independent homestay business owner are ready to provide their services and contribute to economic activities.

Homestay tourism in Malaysia is a community based tourism (CBT) that is different from homestay tourism abroad (Bhuiyan, 2019). Homestay accommodation program in Malaysia is a unique tourism product that allows tourists to experience the culture and lifestyle of the locals. For consideration, homestay entrepreneurs will receive economic benefits in the form of money transfers from the products and services they provide. Homestay businesses can contribute a lot of income to locals and raise awareness about preserving Malaysian cultural heritage. Therefore, homestay programs in Malaysia have been viewed as an opportunity to generate additional income for homestay entrepreneurs from time to time (Kayat, 2007).

The networking of homestay business is broad which homestay entrepreneur attach to business community such as seafood small restaurant, boat and island hoping business, *gamat* oil production, food processing business, handicraft production and so forth. This explains the important of homestay business as business community based. They have an association such as Langkawi Homestay Association created by the Langkawi residents to activate the small business for living and contribute income to their family and community economics. Therefore, research about homestay in Island areas should be highlighted since the number of travelers are increasing and the sea activities have a great demand from youth group.

The purpose of this paper is focusing on consumer perspective. The exploration analysis about the homestay guest demand and socioeconomic characteristic are valuable to the marketers and homestay business owners.

### Methodology

The location of this study is Langkawi Island. Langkawi, officially known as the Kedah Jewel is a district and archipelago of 99 islands in the Andaman Sea approximately 30 km from the mainland coast of north-western Malaysia. The islands are a part of Kedah state, adjacent to the Thai border. Langkawi is also an administrative district, with the town of Kuah as its largest town. Pantai Cenang is the most popular beach and tourist area in Langkawi, with tens of thousands travelers each year. There are many interesting places to visit in Langkawi Island. Due to Langkawi being a tourist attraction either from within or outside the country, many facilities are available. One of the important facilities is accommodation such as hotels, motels and homestays. This allows tourists to overnight in Langkawi and have a good rest, experience the local activities, food and culture.

The target population of this study is homestay guest at Langkawi Island. In total, 364 sets of questionnaires were successfully collected, which showed a 91 percent response rate for the 400 questionnaires distributed to homestay at Langkawi Island. There are 258 of male respondents and 106 of female respondents.

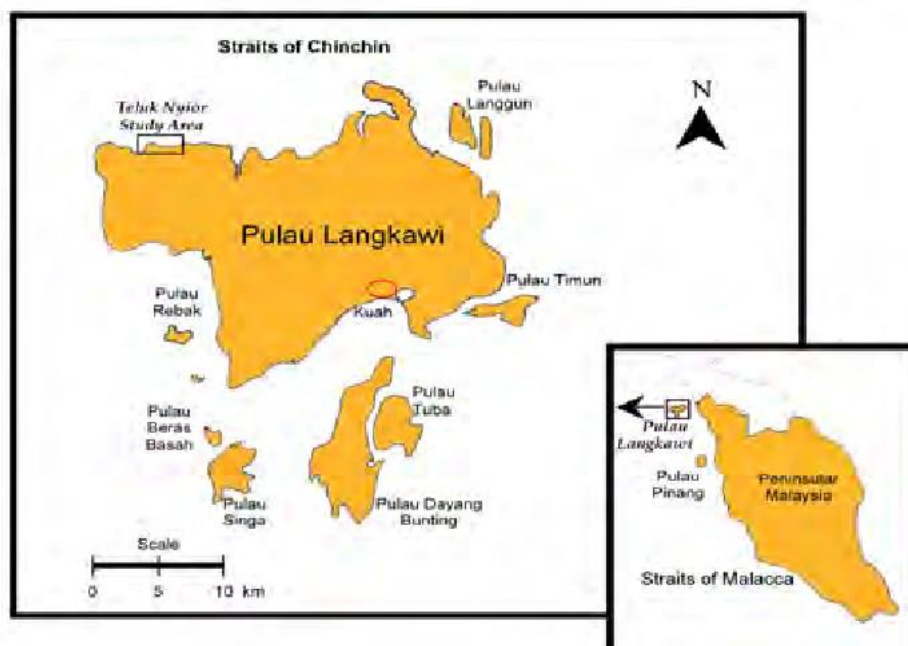


Figure 1: Langkawi Map

This study using secondary data and well-structured questionnaire. Based on the statement from the homestay business owner, usually in August to December there will be a number visitors staying at the homestay. There are 364 complete that show 91% response and can still be used for the analysis of this study. The collected samples were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software which is to obtain frequency and descriptive analysis.

### Research Findings

The socioeconomic background of the respondent in this study is explain in this section. The total number of respondents in this study is 364 respondents. The average age of respondent in this study is 30 years old, and 71% (258) male and 29% (106) female. Almost 34% of the respondent is a married couple and 66% still single. Majority of the respondent has monthly income RM2000 and household income RM3000. Some of them has finished secondary education level, some has degree certificate and so little has lower education. Based on analysis, the female respondent has higher education than male. Moreover, 205 males not married yet or can be explained that mostly male in this study is still single.

According Heimtun (2013), in Western culture, typical male characteristics seen as power, bravery, independence, leadership, aggression, and assertiveness. Murray also claims that the male would typically be seen as a courageous, powerful and independent individual in the sense of travelling. If men fly alone, society will not worry because they believe that males can take care of themselves. According to Hardill and Wheatley (2009), female combine complex work routines with household responsibilities. Therefore, female have less time to travel and busy manage household matters. In addition, working parents feel a time squeeze, particularly mothers, since they believe they can spend more time with children, while mothers spend as much time talking with children as they did 40 years ago (Weathley, 2011).

Next is the marital status difference between male and female traveling. The marital status of single male is more than the married male. There are 21% (53) married male and 79% (205) single male as a homestay guest in this study. On the other hand, the female case is different. There is 66% (70) married female and 34% (36) single female as a homestay guest. They result may seem support that single male is more independent and courage (Heimtun, 2013), and during the data collection there are several youth rider groups visited Langkawi.

There are also socioeconomic differences in income per month between male and female. A total of 62% (160) male and 78% (83) female has an income less than RM2000 per month. For respondents who have an income between RM2001-RM4000 per month is 35% males and 21% females. This shows that respondents who have an income per month less than RM4000 are the most likely is a homestay guest in Langkawi Island. This may be related to the findings of Wheatley (2011), usually those with high incomes are often busy in managing jobs and less time to travel, and have a concepts "job rich, time poor, and 'job poor, time rich". Therefore, those that earn more money have less time to travel and spend time for vacation. Whereas for those with less income and due to less participation in work force may have more time to travel. Moreover, the higher income traveler may choose comfortable and luxury hotel and resorts for their accommodations.

### Marketing Recommendations

The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) has a vision to develop Malaysia as a world-class tourism and cultural destination, as well as, to preserve the national identity based on the country's art, culture and heritage. Moreover, the MOTAC ensure the facilities and infrastructure of tourism and culture are improve year by year. This is to provide the competitive, safety and responsible tourism. Especially in the historical island like Langkawi and several Malaysia's island such as Redang, Tioman and Perhentian. All of these islands are the top world destination and the local people should contribute as a homestay business



owner or tourist service provider. By MOTAC and several agencies such as Institute for Rural Advancement (INFRA), the number of proactive and qualified homestay operators could be increasing in island areas.

Proactive and qualified homestay operator is important to ensure the services provided are manageable. The youth group with tertiary education should be given opportunities to have a license to operate the homestay business. Some of the Langkawi youth group has tertiary education and work outside Langkawi for a job. However, some of them struggling to have a job. If they have an opportunity to operate the homestay and learn about how to do their own homestay marketing and management, it is an advantage to them. As a small business operator, they must proactive and committed with the business.

The Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) has a vision to make Langkawi a world-class tourist destination and to achieve that vision, LADA has implemented the tourism industry development in Langkawi which benefits the community, travelers and business operators. LADA has intensified tourism promotion efforts in country and abroad. Because the title “the world class tourist destination”, the domestic travelers are worried about the high cost to visiting and staying for more than two nights in Langkawi. Generally, the accommodation cost is the highest cost paid by the travelers. Therefore, the homestay is the best solution to the domestic travelers especially for the youth group travelers, family trips and open wide opportunities for the B40 group to have a vacation in Langkawi.

Homestay is the solution for staying more than one night and affordable prices for travelers. MOTAC and LADA should advertise Langkawi Island on television, and also on the social media such as Instagram, Tik Tok and Facebook. These kinds of social media are popular among young group and generation Y. Moreover, the proactive homestay business owners have their own website and do their attractive promotion. They are brave and communicate with potential traveler through email, whatsapp and facebook. However, there are still a little number of the homestay business owners are utilized Internet to make more business. Digital marketing and e-commerce are the smart technology that should applied by the homestay business owner in Langkawi.

Increased attention should be paid to support the role of women in traveling decision-making. Single or married women is more secure if they travel with family or in groups. However, in this millennium era, some of the women is more independent and braver to travel alone. Moreover, they have several gadgets assist them to travel alone such as handphone, google map, and sufficient facilities provided by LADA and communities, and the homestay owners provide a better the service. However, the number of domestic women travelers is still lower, whereas the number of domestic men traveler is double times to women.

## **Conclusions**

In conclusion, socioeconomic characteristic of homestay guest is important for the marketer in tourism industry and homestay business owners. From this study, there are a number of male homestay guest compared to women homestay guest. Men with unmarried status prefer to choose the homestay for accommodation during traveling. Mostly, they are traveling to Langkawi for sea and nature activities, and some of them come as a group rider. This gives them a pleasure and time for recreational. In average their age is 30 years old and

categories as a young youth group. After several years of studying and working, they should spend time for traveling and this could improve their life wellbeing.

In this study, mostly the homestay guest comes from B40 group which their family income is less than RM4000. It does not mean that the T20 and M40 are not choosing the homestay as a tourist accommodation. There are a little number of M40 as a respondent in this research, may be because of the month (in April to August) for data collection. During that time, there have a short break school holiday. If the data collection is in October to January, may be the types of respondents are different. Since, for future research the time for data collection is important to take in consideration. The improvement of socioeconomic instrument should be more details and types of activities they do in the Langkawi should be included for future research.

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