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Heritage Tourism at the Historical Town of Malacca: Examining Opportunities, Evaluating Challenges

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Abstract

Heritage tourism is one of the growing tourism products in Malaysia. Good marketing will increase the demand on heritage tourism and gives benefits to Malaysia tourism industry. This study seeks to explore the marketing strategies used by museums to market their product and examine the challenges faced in promoting and marketing the heritage tourism product. Data was collected using semi-structured interview method. Respondents consist of four museums including curators and operation assistant. Because of the respondent was selected at the location this study employs typical sampling. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis of Braun and Clark. Findings show that market segmentation, promotion and products/services were the marketing strategy employed by museums in this study. These museums faced several internal issues such as issues on employee and high operational cost as well as the external challenges includes changing environment. It is recommended that future research should be conducted at other state in Malaysia or other types of museum such as private museums so that knowledge on heritage tourism could be enriched.

Keywords: Heritage Tourism, Marketing Strategy, Museum, Promotional, Market Segmentation, Thematic Analysis.

Introduction

The statistic from Tourism Malaysia website indicates the total arrival in Malaysia during 2015 is estimated about 25,721,251 visitors and this in fact shows constant pattern from previous years (<http://www.tourism.gov.my/statistics>, 2015a). This lucrative growth signifies that Malaysia is one of the most popular and preferred destination amongst local and international tourist and

this trend would increase significantly in future. It is believed that this demand is due to various affecting factors that help to boost up the tourism industry to be at the same level with other developing countries around the world. Malaysia has first animation-themed park, fascinated with scenic and panoramic beaches, varieties of festival and celebration, a range of modern cities, enriched with heritage and varieties of unique cuisine from different culture (<http://www.malaysia.travel/en/my>, 2015b). Apart from that, there are several interesting Malaysia tourism product and activities being provided during Visit Malaysia Festival such as angling activities, yachting, bike tourism, and to name a few. Interestingly, these unique scenario experiences by Malaysia has remain preserved until today. Malacca is the best example of heritage city enriched with its own culture. Situated at the Peninsular of Malaysia, Malacca has been recognised by UNESCO's in World Heritage List in 8 July 2008 (Witt, 2010). Similarly, Pulau Pinang is another state that has also been listed as one of the world heritage site in Malaysia due to their religious pluralism, townscape and living heritage (Farahani et al., 2012).

Timothy and Boyd (2003) assert that heritage tourism is one of the tourism industry and often its product consists of either tangible immovable (sites and building), tangible movable resource (object and document), or intangible (customs and lifestyle). There are several types of museum such as art, sports, music, war/ armoury, industrial, stamp/coin/postcard, science and local historical (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Each museum has its own artefacts or products displayed to the visitors of the museums. As a result, it is believed that this heritage tourism attraction has become a valuable source for economic benefits especially to those communities living in the rural areas (Nuryanti, 1996). They will have an absolute autonomy in administration and management of this heritage which capable to generate economic income and offers job opportunities. Numerous studies have been conducted concentrating on the economic development derived from heritage tourism. However, lack of works has been done so far in exploring and illustrating the challenges of marketing heritage tourism with special attention given to the museum in Malaysia.

A study by Timothy and Boyd (2003) further highlight the weaknesses of heritage tourism using of SWOT analysis. This study reveals that low marketing profile, poor promotion and marketing campaigns, less advertising and exposure are amongst the key factors contributing to less visitors, causing to low revenue. In view of the above scenario, this study is conducted to shed light on the marketing efforts adopted at the museums in Malacca. The primary aims of this study is to examine the marketing practices in heritage tourism and further exploring the challenges in promoting and marketing the heritage tourism.

Literature Review

A study on the marketing environment are enormous. An insight towards its definition, it reveals that marketing environment consists of microenvironment (suppliers, competitors, and customers) and macro environment (demographic, economy, natural technology, cultural and social). At micro level, suppliers of heritage tourism include partnership between public and private sectors. There are two categories of supply side such as discovery of new site and enhance new facilities to the current site (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Competition between destinations is unavoidable due to the tremendous growing tourism destinations (Gayle &

Goorich, 1993). To consistently survive in this competitive marketplace, the products/services that being offered by the competitors should have its own uniqueness, identity or additional values (Bonn et al., 2007). Historically, in terms of heritage tourism, it was observed that, visitor to the heritage tourism were normally from upper class due to their easy access to the historic cultural, high art and antiquities (Timothy & Boyd, 2003; Brink, 1998).

Meanwhile, 4 elements have been incorporated in macro environment namely; demographic, technological change, economic and cultural. Review of literature demonstrates that customer profile could be categorised based on demographic factors. For example, a study conducted by Nuryanti (1996) divides the visitors into five dominant groups; Education visitors, professionals, families and group, student and nostalgia-seekers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). Another equally concerned is the economic development generates from heritage tourism in which, Brink (1998) postulates that heritage site refers to the identity of history of the country and thus, to generate profit from it, it is indispensable important for that country to render full endeavour to the site and community surrounding that area by taking effective measures to preserved the heritage site. This is pertinent as during tourists' vacation, major expenses would normally spend for food, lodging and to these tourist's attraction and places. On the same issue, Gilmore et al. (2007) further identify the significance of the heritage attractions which include; it could encourage more visitors and contribute in economic growth. Also, it could offer employment opportunities, increase revenues and creates networking with tourists. This would then accelerate the GNP (gross national product) significantly due to large scale of tourists from abroad. Following this, Sheng and Lo (2009) in their study claim that the usage of technology was also amongst the contributing factor to sustain heritage tourism. This is evident where in the province of China, the information about the museum, its historical development, structure, components and artefacts have been delivered using hi-tech audio facilities as this effective and viable method is believed to encourage visitors to engage and/or entertain more valuable and authentic experience. However, despite of this effort, there are certain limitation and constraints to preserve the heritage tourism. Among of those hindrance normally related to the community and society issues within the heritage area such as rising crime, limited resources and exceeded infrastructure capacity (Jeon et. al., 2014).

An Insight Towards the Attributes of Successful Heritage Tourism

As have been previously discussed, the sustainability of heritage tourism would very much depend on several successful attributes. Different cultural practices in each countries and region across the globe is amongst the main factor contributing to the heritage tourism. This could be seen where each country has its own unique cultural traditions at local, regional and international level. Hence, this uniqueness provides different degrees of emotional connection with visitors (Sheng & Lo, 2010). In addition, having complete facilities coupled with an effective and efficient public transport are another essential element that might attracts visitors. Easy accessible, providing an ample parking space and good signage would assist visitors. As a result, this will make them to revisit the heritage sites for the next tour (Sheng & Lo, 2010). Another equal concerned is that the experiential element that the visitors gain while visiting the heritage sites such as museum. Often, this type of visit seems to become popular amongst visitors as they feel extremely excited due to their ability to expose to the real situation which give them priceless

memories. Similarly, to ensure the sustainability of the heritage sites, marketing strategy which include the ability to identify the target market, create additional values to the new visitors out of their experience obtained from visiting heritage sites are essentially important too (McKercher et al., 2004). On top of that, the roles of the authoritative bodies in tourism industry is indispensable important to preserve the heritage sites. Their target, aims and mission in maintaining heritage site should be clearly understood. Rather, as the key players in the industry, they must persistently cultivate the perception that the heritage sites are beneficial product rather than the assets since this factor could influence the active or passive approach in encouraging tourist visits (Sheng & Lo, 2010).

Challenges in Marketing Heritage Tourism: An Outlook

The manifestation to successfully preserved the heritage tourism has always been followed by several challenges and limitations. Though the attributes of successful heritage tourism are very well defined, in practical realms, it encounters with certain challenges particularly in implementing the effective marketing strategy to preserve heritage tourism. These challenges have been carefully evaluated by previous work and possible solution have been proposed. Amongst those challenges include; i) The ability to realize the potential of heritage tourism. Though the existence of museum would capable to provide employment opportunities and thus increase economic income but its limitation hinders to its physical operation. It is not possible to build an environmental friendly museum which offers an authentic experience. Due respect should be paid towards the community host culture and its sustainability should be well maintained (Gayle & Goorich, 1993) and thus, for that reason it is difficult to develop such heritage tourism. ii) Coordination; This crucial part is an important element in heritage tourism. To have systematic coordination, it shall be properly drafted via policies and enforced through action. Hence, to develop such comprehensive policies, it requires the involvement of many agencies and authoritative body (refers to government). Discussion and resolution shall take place before such comprehensive coordination related to heritage tourism industry is designed. Furthermore, the scholars further add other additional services must also be provided and enhanced from time to time so it can spark the tourism strategies with systematic plan development iii) Collaboration: The most challenging part is to collaborate between local sites, businesses and tourism management regarding heritage tourism. The strong collaboration is strongly needed in which it should be involved from various agencies respectively. Through this collaborative works, they would be able to examine thoroughly the planning, management, marketing and funding system. More precisely, collaboration between local financial institution and local business fund for develop a new business is strongly encouraged (Gayle & Goorich, 1993). Given to its importance in developing successful heritage tourism, it has been categorised into four types 1) cooperation with government agencies to make sure that the operation is smoothly and in a country in which most of the government agencies will compete for scarce operating funds, 2) cooperation between levels of administration, 3) cooperation between same level politics is important especially tourism resources that share with one or more autonomous country, and 4) the private and public sector cooperation is essential. Public sector is usually depending on private sector to provide services, financial support and construction of tourist facilities (Timothy, 1998), iv) Education and training: Normally, this education and training is provided by the government agency for business and local people. However, lack of resources to

conduct education programmes and training between academic institutions and the societies has been observed (Gayle & Goorich, 1993). Admittedly, the education and training is very essential because it can enhance local expertise to work as a tourism staff. On the same issue, having regular education and training would give a positive impact towards tourism destination that being offered (Qin et. al., 2011), v) Marketing and promotion: The varieties of products and services could influence the success of marketing and promotion (Gayle & Goorich, 1993). Aspects associate with products and services ranging from seasonality, marketing, visitor pattern and site management. Special focus on these aspects of marketing and promotion of heritage tourism should be rendered since it involves both local and international visitors. Despite of this, local visitors are more attracted and interested to it due to their attachment with the historical cultural at the heritage site (Nuryanti, 1996). More precisely, there are three marketing strategies associated to the heritage tourism such as promotion, price and product. The promotion is the specific methods used to promote, introduce, persuade and communicate with customer or to build customer relationship. This could be done via advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relation and direct marketing (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). Kotler and Armstrong (2008) further adds that price is a certain value in amount of money that customer had to pay from the received of the benefit of having or using the product or service. In heritage tourism, prices are important to generate income for historical sites to keep operational run smoothly. Due to this, site manager has to make a decision to offer suitable price in order to generate income but at the same time capable to attract visitor to visit. For example, make a commercialisation and at the same time waives the fees entrance to those unaffordable visitors (Timothy, 1998). Timothy (1998) notes that product is referred to the experiences gain by visiting heritage sites which include the feeling of authentic and genuine experience.

Methodology

In this study, typical sampling has been used because of the respondents were selected at the heritage sites. Interview with museum curator or operation assistance were done by focusing on the marketing activities and challenges being faces by the museum. Semi-structured interviews were used so that researcher can control a situation in hand and can explore new ideas on the topic (Merriam, 1998). The questions were prepared before the interview and the interviews were recorded so that facilitate the transcribe process. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. One of the benefits using this method is it was flexible and can provide a rich data being needed. Braun and Clarke (2006) divided thematic analysis into six steps including getting familiar with the data, coding, develop theme base on coding, review the selected theme, define and name the theme and lastly, prepare a report. The profile of the respondents have been illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

| Respondents | Name | Background |
|-------------|---------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Samudera Museum | Also known as Flora de Lamar, The main focus of this museum is the maritime history of Melaka and golden ages of Melaka sultanate. |
| 2 | People's Museum | It have numbers of mini museum under one roof; ground floor (ethic groups, traditional musical instruments and etc.), first floor (kite museum), and second floor (beauty museum). |
| 3 | Palace Museum | A replica museum that based on Melaka sultanate palace. It's also known as a cultural museum which display a Malay side of Melaka history. |
| 4 | Historical & Ethnography Museum | This museum is portrays a lifestyle of different community and sub community in Melaka. |

Following are the themes developed including marketing strategies (Table 2) and challenges (Table 3) for heritage tourism.

| Major Theme | Theme | Second Coding |
|----------------------|-----------------|---|
| Marketing Strategies | Segmentation | School Student as a target market |
| | | Participating event to attract visitors |
| | Promotion | Website and social media to promote museum |
| | | Joint venture among tourism suppliers in promoting museum |
| | Product/Service | Various product/ service offered by museum |
| | | Product/ service innovative that implement by museum using technology |
| | | Experience gain from museum heritage site |

Table 2: Theme Development for Marketing Strategies

| Major Theme | Theme | Second Coding |
|-------------|----------------------|---|
| Challenges | Issue on employee | Limited staff in museum operation |
| | | Uncooperative staff towards marketing plans |
| | External environment | Entertainment attraction that compete with museum to attract visitors |
| | | Demand on museum sectors |
| | Operational Cost | Unpredictable visitor interest |
| | | Government Agency assists in Manage Museum Cost |

Table 3: Theme Development (Challenges)

Findings and Discussions

Marketing Strategies

a) Market Segmentation

This study found that museums will normally chose school student as their target market. This result has been supported by the Netherlands Museums Association which had conducted a survey on the factors that influence students' interest visiting museum. Several factors were found to be the pull factors to visit museums including the content of the museum, enjoyable environment and suitability between museum information and their curriculum. Additionally, Blattberg and Broderick (1991), further propose two targeted types of audiences in museum; a potential donors and general public group who seek for entertainment This education and training is provided by the government agency for business and local people and education from the visitation. To attract more visitors, the International Art Museum Division (IAMD) has implemented some effective strategies to achieve this target. One of them is to have collaboration with selected tour operators, schools and the students to enable them to conduct more group visit in one time (Audience building: Marketing Art Museums, 2001).

b) Promotional Tools

Museums uses promotional tools such as participating in events. This promotional tool has been successfully conducted by Smithsonian Institution, in their popular exhibitions which become 'blockbusters' leading to increase audience demands. In fact, there are some museum that regularly conducted exhibition to attract more visitors. To achieve this target and attract target audience interest, International Art Museum Division (IAMD) again has further stress that as far as museum is concerned, focus should predominantly give to the content, design and marketing of the museum exhibition. On the same vein, with the advancement of technology, promotional activities could also be done via website and social media such as Facebook, Instagram and so on. Flyers and pamphlets to advertise such exhibition could be disseminated. Previously, museum is an authoritative place to gain knowledge on culture. With the involvement by social media, museum's function is thus expanded in which it has become authoritative and authentic knowledge provider allowing many-to-many communication model rather than one-to-one and one-to-many communication only (Russo et al., 2006). On the same note, the demand and the environment keep changing, the key player in the museum management must keep abreast with such emergence and modification. Thus, better information should be provided in accordance with the needs and demand.

Other than the above, joint venture among tourism suppliers in promoting museum is another viable strategy for non-profits organization to earn profits (Weisbrod, 2004). In some cases, museum will make a collaboration with few hotels for certain reason; due to economic of scale, brand extension, revenue and period of the visitor visits. Some museums have provided an accommodation in their tour package. So that it may convince the visitor to extend their vacation which in turns enable them to have an ample time to explore the museum and thus creates new experience.

c) Products/Services

A study conducted by Blattberg and Broderick (1991) reveal that products or services offered would depend on the target market especially general public visitors in which it can be categorised into several group; 1) families with children, these visitor is want to educated their children so museum has to include facilitate using variety of technology such as video, 2) senior citizen, do not bother about time and location but require many facilities, 3) lower income, they will normally joint with the school visit. Some event will be conducted for this group as a social responsibility.

Secondly, there are innovative products or services being showcase using technology. This has been supported by Blattberg and Broderick (1991) claiming that the used of modern technology such as video and computer for the exhibition can enhance visitor visual experience. Therefore, the used of the technology in the museum is encouraged as it could give quality experiences, to familiarise with the role of the local people, and to enhance museum image (McCarthy & Wright, 2005).

Creating a positive and authentic experience using multiple senses will give positive emotional impact towards visitors. As a result, it is highly possibility that the visitors will revisit and come again on the next vacation. Only by travelling the will really get indulge with the place they visited (Bonn et al., 2007) Hence, providing good products and outstanding services are therefore essential. To give this positive feedback, it is the role of the museum management to effectively plan variety of ways to exhibit their collection. Seemingly, this plan with successfully implemented with full cooperation from each agencies and authoritative bodies associates with museum (Wallace, 2000).

Challenges Faced by Museum

a) Issues on Employee

Essentially, there are two challenges facing associates with the employee issue. Inadequacies of staff, lack of manpower and uncooperative staff towards marketing plans are identified to be a major constraint. Many activities introduced by the museum requires a large number of staff to conduct such activities. Somehow or rather, where there is insufficient of staff to handle and conduct such big activities, the administration has to rearrange a new position in hiring staff (Wallace, 2000). Also, it requires very high professional commitment that can give affect towards their job enlargement and enrichment. Nonetheless, based on the interview conducted, most of the museum staffs claim, 'that's not part of my job' or 'I was not hired to do that' which can give negative impact towards their job enrichment (Moore, 1994).

The inability of 'product designer' and 'purchasing agents' to create products that matches customer wants to worsen this situation. Primary focus only been given to the exhibition which they think visitor should see instead of convince visitor that they must see this exhibition. To provide products/services that fulfil customer demand, strong cooperation and integration from all departments in the museums are thus required (Blattberg & Broderick, 1991).

b) External Environment

Entertainment attractions have posed direct competition to museum to attract visitors. Museums realized that they need to create attractive activities than other museums and leisure attractions. To overcome this challenge, museum create event and joint venture with their competitors (McLean, 1993).

According to Moore (1994) there are two challenges that involving demand; first, demand pattern that growing slowly because of many attractions and the museum attraction is not convincing that make the museum suffer from the decline number of visitors, second, changes in demand because of the public have high expectation and demand towards museums. According to Blattberg and Broderick (1991), there are two groups of visitors; public and potential donor. Potential donor can be describing as well-educated, high income corporate executive and professionals' visitors. For museums, this group interest is important because there are many choices available for these groups, so museum has to make special efforts for these groups because they can contribute large profits for museums.

c) Operational cost

This study found that the government agency has assists museum cost in many ways and one of the ways is by providing funds for museums operation. Based on the analysis conducted by Blattberg and Broderick (1991), the scholars highlight that the government subsidies is important to the museum this is because 22 percent of the operation revenue is come from government subsidies and this aid can help museum to covered its cost expenses. It shows that without these subsidies museum will have difficulties. From these, its prove that many museums depend directly or indirectly from these funding, so when the government change their policies such as introduce poll tax and emphasize on the efficiency in management, its create competition among public services and lead them to collaborating with private companies (Moore, 1994). Figure 1 illustrates a proposed conceptual framework depicting the major themes found and provide related academic literature supporting the themes.

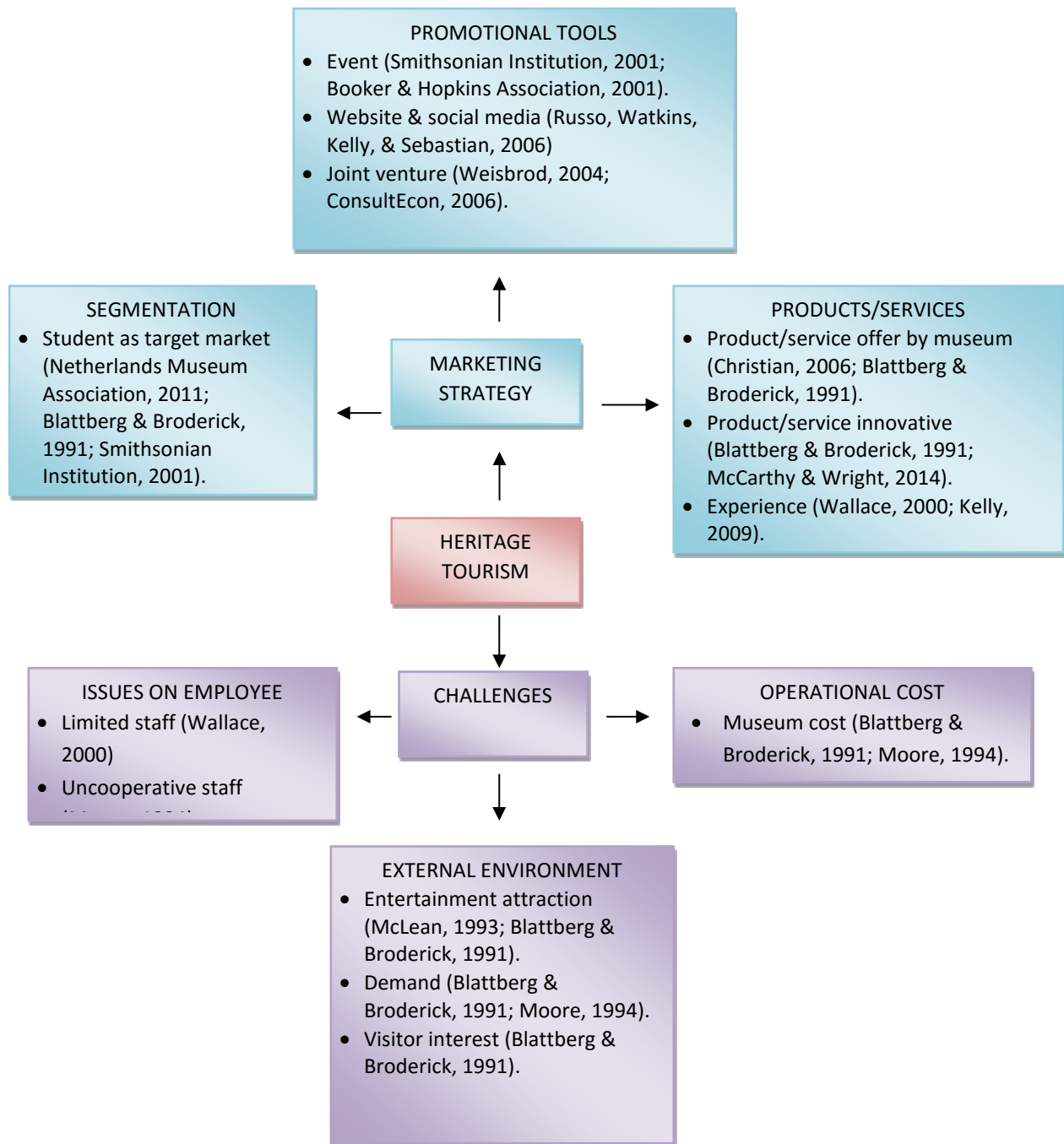


Figure 1: A Proposed Conceptual Model of Marketing Heritage Tourism in Malacca

Conclusions

In view of the above discussion, this study concludes that heritage tourism is getting popular in Malaysia due to the changing interest on tourism among local and international tourists. The manifestation to successfully preserved the heritage tourism has always been followed by several challenges and limitations. Though the attributes of successful heritage tourism are very well

defined, in practical realms, it encounters with certain challenges particularly in implementing the effective marketing strategy to preserve heritage tourism. In reality, the limitations and hindrance surrounded museums in Malacca include; inadequacies and insufficient employees, increased operating costs, coping with visitor's demand and stiff competition among tourist attractions. To overcome with these limitations, the marketing strategies currently adopted and implemented by museums in Malacca are then carefully examined. This study further submits that few effective viable methods have been implemented. Right target audience, using various promotional tools via social media and utilizing high technology to showcase products and services at museums were amongst the marketing strategies currently enforced by the museum key players. Above all, a model of heritage tourism with special attention given to Malacca state has then proposed depicting the major themes derived from marketing strategy and challenges. Review of various literatures based on content analysis approach has further reaffirmed these major segments surrounded by heritage tourism industry. However, given that this study administers qualitative approach which involves merely a small and located samples, this has caused lack of variation in terms of marketing activities (all respondents were selected from PERZIM members). Owing to this lacuna, this study further recommends that a similar research has to be conducted in other state in Malaysia. Different types of museums could be selected as a sample to gather and accumulate a vast information regarding the marketing strategy used to promote the museum and how does it being preserved. It is indispensable important that the findings reveal from this study and other future research could inevitably propose for future agenda reform to ensure the sustainability of the heritage tourism in Malaysia.

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