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Tourists' Perceptions on Multilingualism use among Tourism Employees at Major Attractions in Kuala Selangor

Lim Seong Pek, Rita Wong Mee Mee, Na-Thinamalar Magiswary
Nadarajan, Ayu Rita Mohamad, Zalilah Alias, Md. Rosli bin Ismail
Faculty of Education and Social Sciences, Universiti Selangor (UNISEL), Malaysia

Abstract

The ability of being a multilingual is important in determining the success of an organisation especially in the tourism industry. In the focus of Smart Selangor towards 2025, being multilingual is among the top most priority and of highest importance. Hence, this study was carried out to examine tourists' perceptions towards the role of multilingualism in the tourism industry in the areas of Kuala Selangor where these employees have a greater opportunity in using more than one language in their daily communication with tourists. A survey was carried out on 30 tourists whom visited the major attractions in Kuala Selangor district. The data was analyzed and narrated descriptively. Findings had shown that tourism employees had used both native and English language to communicate with tourists visiting the attractions.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Tourism, Communication, Tourist, Attraction.

Introduction

The term multilingualism derives from two Latin words namely "multi" that means many and "lingua" that means language and; thus, multilingualism is referred to as the ability of a speaker to express himself or herself in several languages with equal and native like proficiency (Okal, 2014). Okal (2014) defines multilingualism as speaking in more than one language competently. Hence, it has been the utmost important for tourism service providers as well as the tourism employees to be able to speak more than one language while providing services. As mentioned by Lily (2015), multilingualism is crucial in ensuring a business survives disruptive innovations in a highly competitive industry thus being able to communicate and trade in multiple languages around the globe opens more doors to international travel ventures.

However, the mastery of multi-language abilities among tourism employees have become a major concern in attracting more foreign visitors to visit Malaysia, in this context Kuala Selangor district. According to Izzati and Hidayah (2017), language continues to be a barrier to international

tourists not only in Malaysia but also in many other countries. Moreover, they continue to state that tourists from non-English countries face a language barrier in Malaysia and this barrier affects their experiences in the country. Therefore, this study is carried out to examine tourists' perceptions towards the role of multilingualism in the tourism industry in the areas of Kuala Selangor.

Previous Studies on Multilingualism in Tourism

Researches on multilingualism in tourism had been carried out by various researches throughout the academic world. Sindik and Bozinovic (2013) had attempted to explore the differences among the third and fourth year American College of Management and Technology (ACMT) students' perceptions of the importance of the knowledge of various foreign languages for tourism industry. A key finding of this survey about the differences in the perception of students in different years of study of the importance of foreign language knowledge was that, as compared to younger students, fourth year students consistently attach greater importance to the knowledge of foreign languages. They had not found statistically significant difference and the conclusion cannot be accepted as an absolute rule.

On the other hand, Menike and Pathmalatha (2015) conducted a study 50 tourism industry oriented undergraduates from the University of Sabargamuwa, Sri Lanka. Both questionnaires and interviews were used as the data collection methods and key obstacles were determined through the factor analysis. Lack of materials such as text books and work books, less lecture hours and lower motivation for language learning were found as major obstacles to develop the foreign language competencies of tourism industry oriented undergraduates in Sri Lankan universities.

A study conducted by Izzati and Hidayah (2017) to ascertain whether or not multilingualism is practiced in Kuala Terengganu as well as to analyse the role of multilingualism in facilitating the tourist. A set of questionnaire had been designed and distributed to the shopkeepers at identified venues in Kuala Terengganu. Some tourists were also interviewed to shed light on the real challenges faced by the tourists and the local in tourism sector when they deal in business or shopping. This study revealed the significant role played by multilingualism in having a successful business, especially in tourism sector.

Methodology

A survey research was used as the research design in this study. A total of 30 respondents who had visited any of the five major attractions in the district of Kuala Selangor were used in this study. The administration of the questionnaire was carried out online through Google forms. An invitation to complete the online questionnaire was sent to the respective respondents in order to elicit their perceptions after visiting these major attractions in Kuala Selangor District. The responses were collected through Google forms. The information gathered was then analyzed through thematic analysis. For questionnaires, the data was analyzed by using Microsoft Excel software. Mean scores and percentages for each question were displayed by using table according to the sections. The result of this study revealed the perceptions of tourists toward the use of multilingualism among tourism employees in the major attractions in Kuala Selangor.

Findings

This study was carried out to examine tourists' perceptions towards the role of multilingualism among tourism employees in the areas of Kuala Selangor. Based on the research objectives, the results of data analysis were presented as follow. There were a total of 30 respondents from nine countries. Majority of the respondents are from Malaysia 18 respondents while China, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Singapore show two respondents each responded to the survey. There is one respondent each for countries like Kenya, Pakistan, Somaliland and South Africa.

Major Attractions

There were a total of six major attractions identified for this study. 'Other' is used to state other attraction found in Kuala Selangor District beside those stated in Figure 1. A total of 10 respondents visited Kampung Kuantan Fireflies Sanctuary and Selangor Fruit Valley respectively. As stated in Figure 1, four respondents have visited Bukit Melawati Lighthouse and two respondents each for Sasaran Sky Mirrow, Pasir Penambang Eagle Feeding and other attractions found around Kuala Selangor.

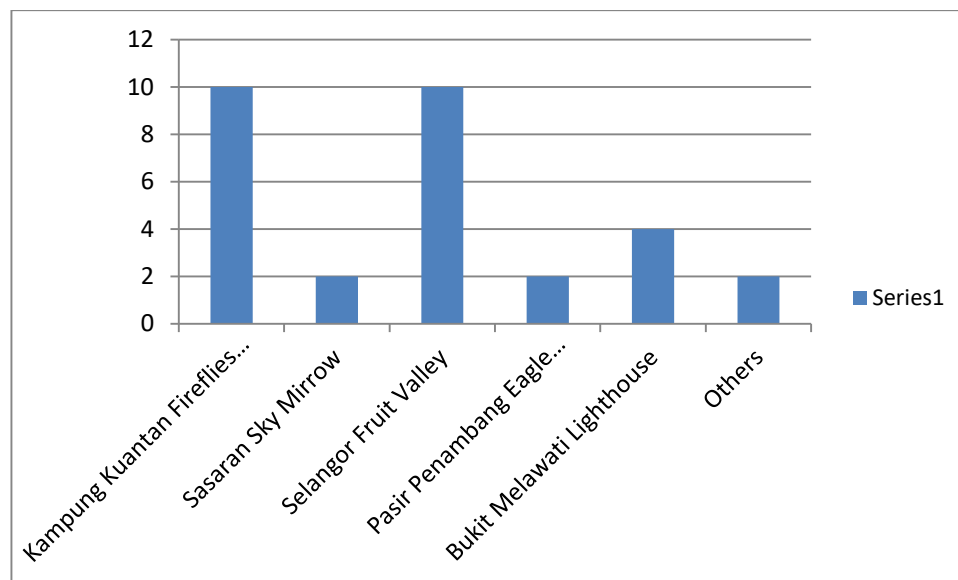


Figure 1. Major Attraction in Kuala Selangor

Ways of Communication

As stated in Figure 2, a total of 12 respondents have used Malay language while seven respondents use Mandarin during their visit. On the other hand, five respondents use English language and six respondents use signs or little English to communicate with the tourism employees. However, there is no data for the use of translator.

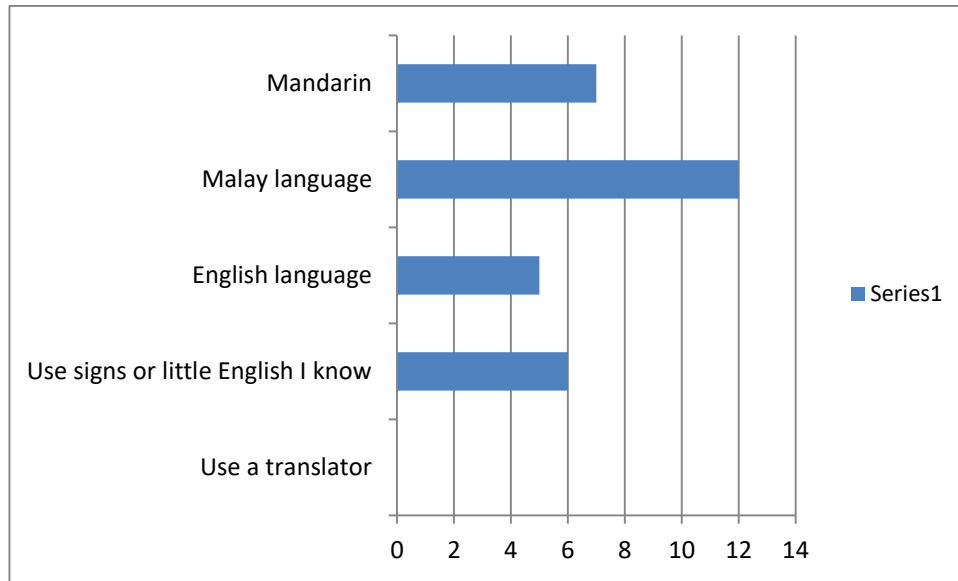


Figure 2. Ways of Communications

Experiencing Barriers in Communication

In Figure 3, respondents were asked whether they may have faced language barrier during their visit to major attractions around Kuala Selangor (Series 1). Data shown seven respondents agreed (YES) and stated 'MAYBE' respectively. While 16 respondents stated 'NO'. In Series 2, respondents were asked if language barrier spoil their experience in visiting Kuala Selangor. A total of eight respondents answered 'YES' and 'NO' respectively. While a total of 14 respondents stated 'MAYBE' as their choice.

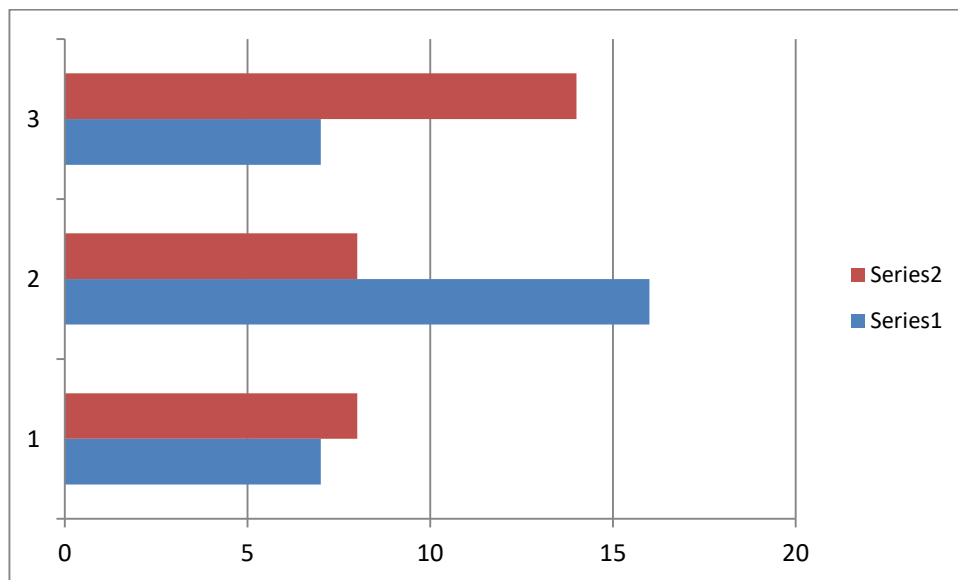


Figure 3. Barriers in Communication

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that in general, the complications encountered by the tourists during their visit to major attractions in Kuala Selangor District are the incompetence of tourism employees in using more than one language efficiently. The results of this study showed more than half of the respondents do not face language barrier when communicating with tourism employees as majority of the respondents are from Malaysia while 14 respondents feel that language barrier during their visit may spoil their experience. This study revealed tourists' perceptions towards the role of multilingualism among tourism employees in the areas of Kuala Selangor.

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Corresponding Author

Lim Seong Pek

Email: limsp@unisel.edu.my

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