A Study on Travel Patterns Among Students in Malaysian Public Universities

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Abstract

The trends of young travelers are growing in Malaysia involving students of public and private universities. These young travelers have the means and interest to visit both domestic and international tourism destinations. Notwithstanding the expanding trends, there are still limited studies that focus on travel pattern among students of public learning institutions in Malaysia. Therefore, it is useful to recognize the travel pattern of the young generation in order to anticipate their travel demand in Malaysia. Responding to these, a structured questionnaire was distributed to students with the objective to determine the travel pattern among public university students in Malaysia. The data was collected through online survey focusing on frequency of travel per year, types of destination visited and the number of people traveling. Results of this study can provide information on the travel demand among young travelers in Malaysia.

Keywords: Student, Travel Pattern, Public Universities, Young Generation

Introduction

The trends for youth travelers are relatively growing rapidly. According to UNWTO (2016), youth and student travelers are becoming a vital market for tourism industry. Travelers between the age of 15 to 29 years old approximately account for 23% of all international travelers in 2015. This implies that the travelling trends among the young generation have become more prevalent and many countries have realized the promising young travelers market segment to boost tourism industry. Meanwhile, the world population will reach 9.9 billion by 2050 and the young generation ages 25 to 64 years old will continue to cover 49% of total population (PRB, 2018). This is a further sign of the young travelers potential as active tourist worldwide.

According to Department of Statistics Malaysia, total Malaysian population by 2019 is 32.6 million with 70% represented by people between 15 to 64 years old. These largest proportions of age category make up by youth, the powerful tourism market aged 15 to 30 years old (Yunus & Landau, 2019). Recognized by many countries as important niche market (UNWTO, n.d), youth travelers

undeniable can help the country to achieve its target for year 2020. Malaysia target to receive 92.8 million local visitors throughout the year with the domestic tourists are expected to spend a total of RM76.9 billion (Malaymail, 2019).

The topic of travel behavior has been previously investigated by several researchers in studies of youth travel and student traveler (Dale & Ritchie,2020; Cavagnaro, Staffieri,Hughes,2015; Wang & Shu, 2015; Chiu, Ramli, Yusof & Ting, 2015; Ting, Chiu & Kayat, 2015; Faat, Nasir & Noor, 2017;   ). These studies have examined the travel pattern among the younger generation and domestic traveler. In addition, it should be noted that the youth traveler consists of students with their travel behavior may change over the year make it requires for further exploration. Due to this market segment have penetrated and played an important role in the tourism market (Chiu, Ramli, Yusof & Ting, 2015), it is very crucial to understand the young traveler market in order to maximize the benefits they can contribute to tourism stakeholders (UNWTO, n.d). Motivations and barriers to travel among youth travelers need to be identified in order to develop the promotional programme especially among tourism destinations in Malaysia as implemented by many other countries (UNWTO, 2008) that later can improve the sustainability of the tourism industry. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to recognize the travel pattern among students at public universities in Malaysia.

Methodology

The population used in this study was 6292 students who studied at Malaysia's public universities in the year 2017 (MOHE, 2018). According to Kjercie & Morgan (1970), a sample size of 364 is required based on the population. This study was focused on students of 20 public universities in all states in Malaysia. The current study was able to collect usable response of 385, and the instruments of the surveys were adopted from studies conducted by Richards & Wilson (2004) and Hughes, Wang & Shu (2015). The data was collected online, and according to Lefever, Dal & Matthíasdóttir (2007), online data collection carries the potential of accessing a large and geographically distributed population, in addition to being time and cost efficient. This highlight the choice of online distribution used in this study. In terms of the analysis of the results, SPSS 12 was employed for descriptive analysis of this study.

Results and Discussion

The current section that describes the results of this study is divided into two areas, namely the demographic profile of respondents and analysis of travel pattern by students.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The table 1 show the demographic profiles of respondents and the sample size of the respondents is 387.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Characteristics		Percentage
Gender	Female	78.6
	Male	21.4
Age	18-23	84
	24-29	10.3
	30-35	2.3
	36-41	2.1
	Others	1.4
Locality	East Coast	60.2
	Central	21.4
	North	8.3
	West	7.2
	South	2.8
Level of Education	Undergraduate	93.3
	Postgraduate	6.7
Field of education	Business and management	89.4
	Social science and humanities	6.5
	Science and technology	4.2

Out of 387 students who participated in the survey, 304 (78.6 per cent) were females and 83 males (21.4 per cent). 18-23 was the dominant age group of the respondents, making up 84 per cent (325). This age group was followed by 24-29 which represented 10.3 per cent (40) of the total sample, 30-35 (2.3 per cent), 36-41 (2.1 per cent), 45 (.3 percent), 47 (.3 percent), 55 (.5 percent) and above 56 (.3 percent). Almost two-thirds of the respondents (60.2 per cent) were from East Coast, respondents from Central made up (21.4 per cent), followed by North (8.3 per cent), West Malaysia (7.2 per cent), and South (2.8 per cent). A large proportion of the respondents were undergraduates (93.3 per cent), and the rest were postgraduate students which made up 6.7 per cent. The majority of students (89.4 per cent) indicated that they were in Business and Management cluster, 6.5 per cent were from Social Science and Humanities, and 4.2 per cent were from Science and Technology cluster.

Travel Pattern among Students at Public Universities in Malaysia

First, the question of travelling experience while studying will be discussed. Results revealed that almost two-thirds of the respondents (60.2 per cent) have recently travelled, while the rest of 39.8 per cent did not do any travelling recently. Furthermore, it was found that based on the responses from students who did not travel (n=154), cost posed the biggest challenge (82 per cent) that restrained them from travelling, followed by issues related to time (13.6 per cent), family (2.59 per cent), and health (1.29 per cent) .

**Figure 1: Factors Restricts Students to Travel**
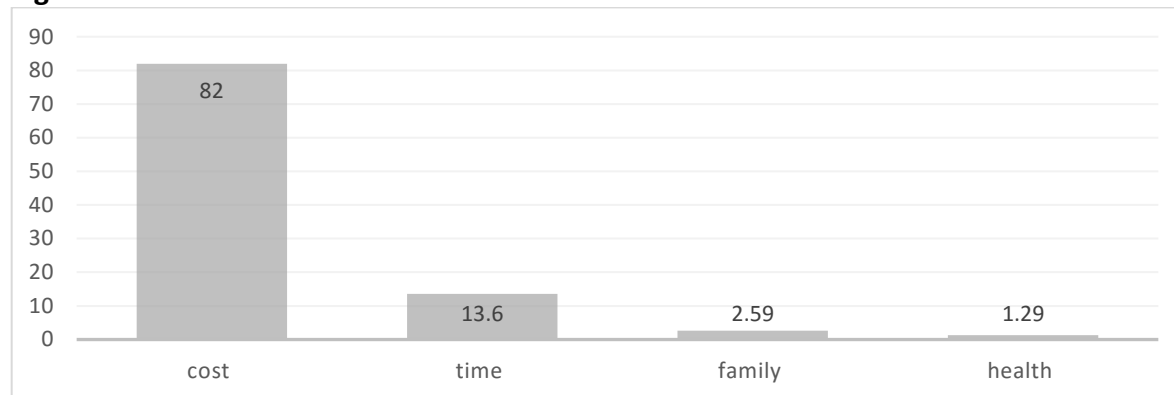
The next question to be reviewed is the travel patterns among students. With regard to the frequency of travelling, the majority of the respondents indicated that they have travelled 1-5 times in a year (89.9 per cent), followed by 6-10 times (5.4 per cent) and the rest (4.7 per cent) have travelled more than 10 times.

Moreover, results showed that more than half of the respondents preferred to travel with family which made up 58.9 per cent, while 36.7 per cent of participants preferred to travel with friends, and those who did solo travel made up 4.4 per cent.

In terms of the type of destination, it was discovered that the majority (87.9 per cent) have travelled to domestic destinations, while the remaining 12.1 per cent has travelled to international destinations.

Figure 2: Type of Destination Chosen
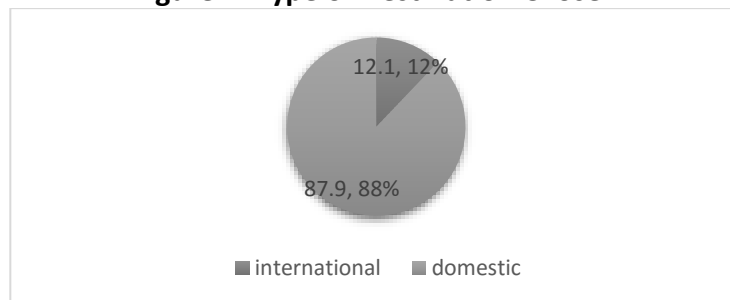
The questions regarding motivation factors to travel comprised of 20 factors. Based on the results, the main motivation to travel (50-60 per cent) was to relax mentally, explore cultures, as well as for knowledge purposes. Meanwhile, on average (20-49 per cent), many of the respondents would travel for the ambience, VFR, to build friendship, interact with local people, develop a close relationship, change abilities, search for their identity, and contribute something to the places visited. A small proportion of the respondents (between 1- 19 per cent) travelled to escape the hustle and bustle of the city life, challenge their physical abilities or skills, develop a sense of belonging, use imagination, connect with other travelers, and travel for other purposes such as attending an academic conference

Figure 3: Factors Influencing Choice to Travel Among Students
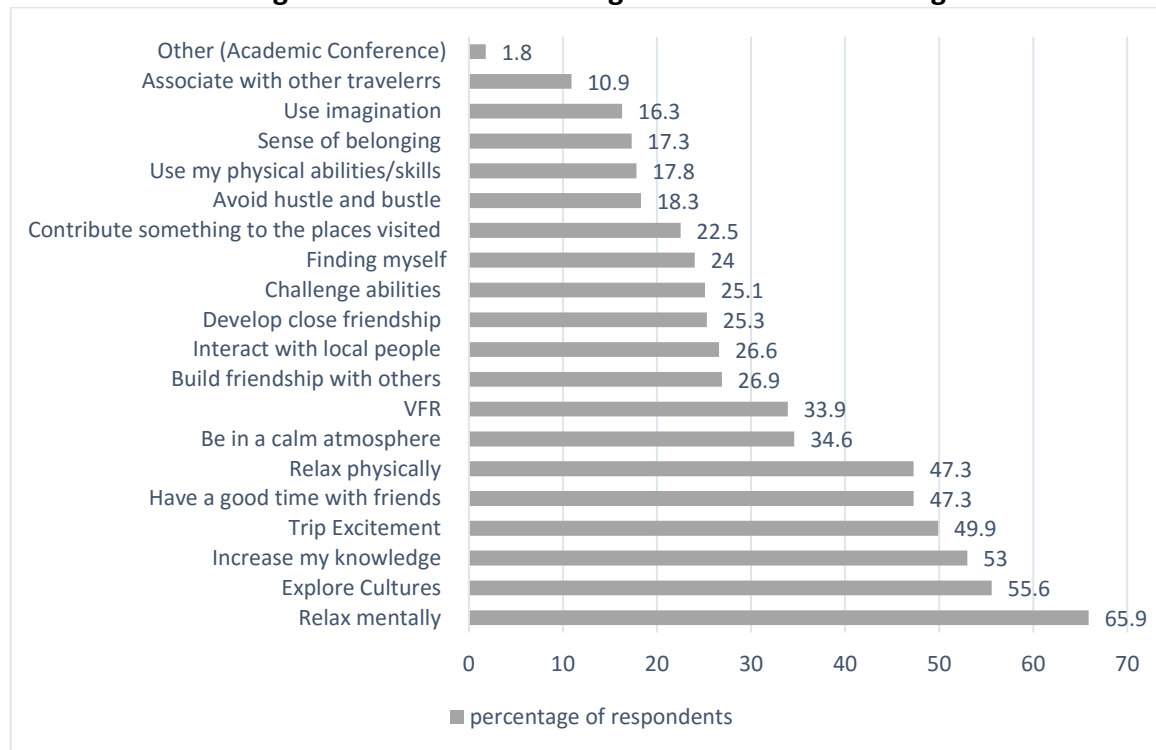
Findings also suggest that most respondents would try out new or local cuisines during their travel, followed by doing leisure activities at the beach. Meanwhile, on average (between 20- 60 per cent), activities that were typically chosen by respondents included shopping, walking/trekking, visiting historical sites/ monuments, observing wildlife/ nature, sitting in cafes/ restaurant, attending cultural events, visiting museums, learning the language, and doing extreme sport. Meanwhile, the smallest percentage of activities (5-20 per cent) was represented by studying, earning money, working as volunteers, watching sports, and night clubbing.

Figure 4: Activities Involved while Travelling
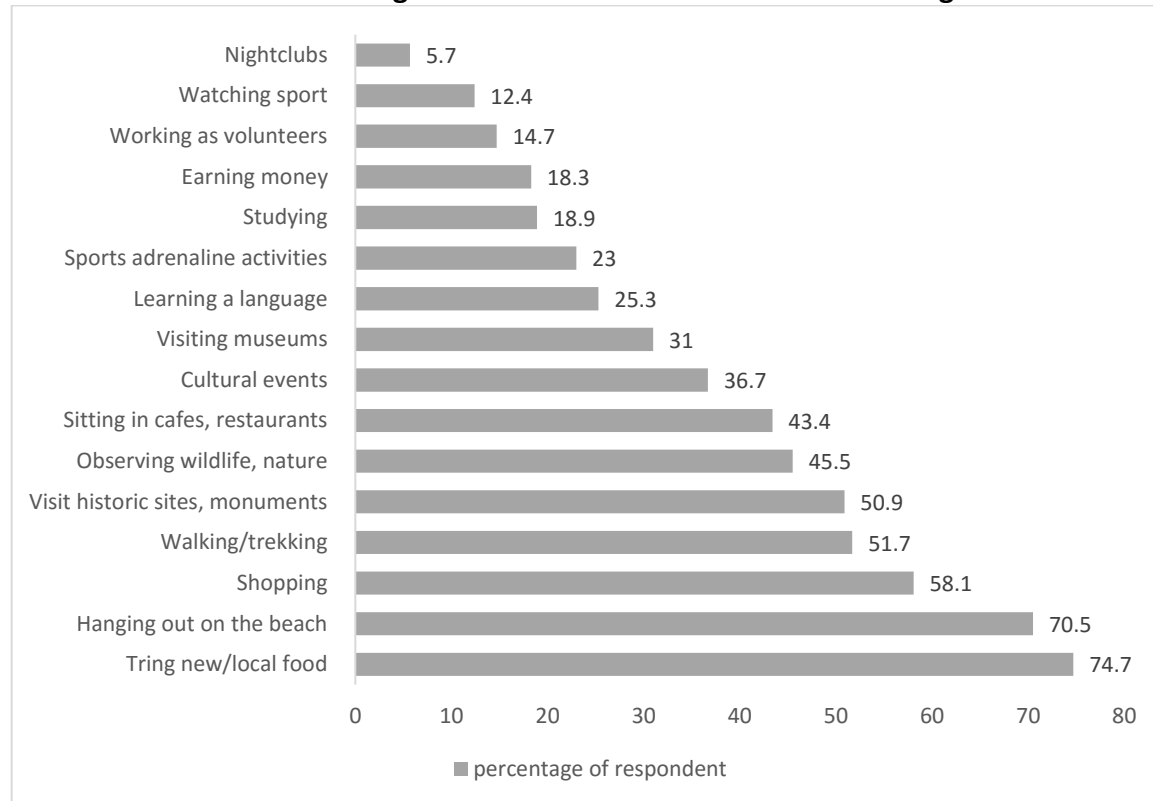
Discussion

This article can assist destination marketers and tourism organizers to gain useful information on the travel behavior among students at higher education in Malaysia. The primary objective of this study is to recognize the travel pattern among students at public universities in Malaysia. the travel patterns that highlighted in this study was on types of destination choose by students while travelling, factors that restricts student to travels, factors influence the choice of travel and the activities choose while travelling. This study focusing at Malaysian students that study at higher education in Malaysia. This sample is chosen because it can show the trends among students towards inbound and outbound tourism in Malaysia.

The first finding of this study revealed that the majority of students travelled while studying (60.2%) while others are not travelling and the reasons of not traveling during their studies were due to cost and time constraint. This highlight the issues of price of tourism products and time management among students at higher education in Malaysia.

The second finding that highlight in this study is the factors that influence choice of travel or the push motivation to travel among students. Students chose to travel during their studies in order to relax their mind, explore different cultures, and increase their knowledge. Similarly, in the study by Marques, Mohsin and Lengler (2018) that highlight travel motivations and touristic trends among few countries found that, motivation among Malaysian to travel more centered on relaxing, challenging and enjoying the place and social connections.

The third finding that highlight in this study is the activities taken by students while travelling. The findings from this study differ from the study conducted by Richards and Wilson (2004) which

focused on students of 42 nationalities worldwide. They found that the highest motivation factors included visiting historic sites, walking or trekking, sitting in cafés, and shopping, while, the most popular activities done by Malaysia's youth travelers were trying new food and going to the beach. Hence, a major difference has been found in terms of the types of activities engaged in by youth travelers in Malaysia compared to the ones discovered by Richards and Wilson (2004).

Additionally, the majority of student travelers were more inclined to visiting domestic destinations compared to international destinations is resulted from financial restriction. However, in study by Cheah, Lim & Kayat (2015), in study related to travel lifestyle for outbound tour among young generation highlight that young Malaysians' intentions to travel overseas was high. Therefore, this indicate the gap that need to fill by the travel marketing in promoting inbound and outbound destination to the young generations.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In relation to the travel pattern among students in Malaysia's public universities, the major finding of the research discovered that the majority of respondents travelled while studying with the focus of domestic destination as their main destination to explore. Responding to the purpose of travel, they mainly travel for relaxation purposes, as well as to explore different cultures and gain new knowledge. Additionally, trying new food and going to the beach were popular activities among student travelers. However, as found by many previous research, the main restriction of traveling activities are related to cost and time constraints of the students. According to the findings, destination providers or other tourism stakeholders can create a suitable niche package for youth that majority of them still studying with the above stated restriction in mind. Youths are said to be the powerful market that can attract others to visit after theirs due to the experience shared through various social media during or right after their trip. Moreover, travel now becoming a lifestyle of many youth regardless the domestic or international destination. Providing travel experience that suits their hunger for lifestyle can make the travel destinations are possible to stay longer in the industry.

Nevertheless, it must be highlighted that sampling was a major limitation of this study as questionnaires were randomly shared via online platforms. The control of respondents is required in order to collect more accurate data. Nonetheless, due to time constraints, this study only provides general highlights on travel patterns among students. Since the limitation of instruments has also occurred, future studies are recommended to explore other aspects that may act as motivation factors or restrict students from travel. In terms of the practical contribution, this study can provide insights for tourism marketing purposes in attracting student travelers to visit domestic and international tourism destinations.

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