



## RESIDENT'S PERCEPTION OF HERITAGE-BASED TOURIST ATTRACTIVE IN KUALA TERENGGANU

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### Abstract:

Terengganu is a unique state that has a diversity of arts and cultures, indirectly exploiting the uniqueness and beauty of its natural heritage to be commercialized. Therefore, developing heritage-based tourism activities is an idea that is seen as very relevant to promote economic growth in a heritage area such as Kuala Terengganu. This study used qualitative methods of interview. A total of four respondents and semi-structured interviews were guided by a set of core questions and designed for local's based on the perception of heritage-based tourist attractions in Kuala Terengganu. The findings of the study found that heritage-based tourism is a field that should be continued and developed in Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu. Therefore, the involvement of the locals plays an important role in developing and ensuring the survival of a heritage town. The findings also prove that the locals are involved and acknowledge the importance of developing heritage tourism in the town.

### Keywords:

Perception, Tourism Heritage, Attraction, Qualitative Study

### Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the activities that can provide a large return to a country. Among the countries that engage in heritage tourism activities that contribute to the country's main income are Egypt, Turkey, Monaco, and Indonesia. Data released by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) states that the activities of the tourism industry in 2022 are the highest income compared to other sectors which is to reach USD 1 Trillion and a 64% increase in international tourism arrivals at the pre-pandemic level of Covid-19. Malaysia, the rate of tourist arrivals also experienced a significant increase. In 2022, Malaysia's domestic

tourism rate records the highest achievement for the number of visitor arrivals and tourism expenditure. The performance of domestic tourism in Malaysia experienced a remarkable recovery in 2022 with a total expenditure of RM64.1 billion compared to RM18.4 billion in 2021, according to a report from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM). The (DOSM) report is also based on the Malaysian Domestic Tourism Survey (DTS) 2022 stating that the number of domestic visitors jumped 160.1 percent to record 171.6 million visitors compared to 66.0 million visitors the previous year.

As for the arrival of domestic visitors by state, Selangor emerged as the most visited state in 2022 receiving a total of 22 million, followed by the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Sarawak receiving 16.9 million and 15.5 million domestic visitors respectively. Meanwhile, the number of domestic tourists visiting the state of Pahang increased by 511.8 percent, recording 7.8 million compared to the previous year, 1.3 million tourists. This is because each of the stated states has heritage resources and beauty that can attract visitors to visit them. The tourism industry covers a wide range of services and diverse facilities and is capable of providing employment opportunities to all levels of the population. Tourism provides side benefits that are no less important to the residents of the state of Terengganu, especially the city of Kuala Terengganu. By accommodating a larger population base, shopping facilities, sharia concept entertainment, recreation, and more diverse culture can be accommodated.

Through tourism, the protection of this historic heritage can attract community interest, increase knowledge and create a sense of appreciation for the historical demographics of a heritage element. With the arrival of tourists to Malaysia, among the areas that are now the main focus is the city of Kuala Terengganu (Director of Terengganu State Tourism Department, 2022). However, the marketing promotion level of Kuala Terengganu is still low compared to other major tourist cities. In some international tourism destinations, there are city or regional tourism councils that regularly carry out promotions with the support of the experienced tourism industry, hoteliers, national and regional airlines, and business organizations. However, there are still many who do not know the buildings, or even the history of the city of Kuala Terengganu, especially the new generation. The existence of a variety of historical buildings found in Kuala Terengganu is generally not taken seriously by the community (Ab Ghani, Muhamad Nasir, Mohd Nor, Raja Yahya, Ramli, Muhammad & Karim, 2021), compounded by the lack of comprehensive and limited studies related to tourism assets (Harun, Jaffar & Mansor, 2021) is very influential in getting to know heritage tourism in Terengganu.

In addition, there is a weakness in promotional activities carried out for heritage tourism in Malaysia (Fauzi, Ghani, 2021) making this problem worse if there is no initiative. In 2008, Kuala Terengganu officially became a city in the country. The city is also known as the Water Coastal Heritage City due to its location on the coast of the river and the South China Sea. With the declaration, Kuala Terengganu became the first city on the East Coast and the 12th city in the country. The declaration was made by the Regent of Terengganu, KBDYMM Tengku Mohammad Ismail Al Wathiqu Billah Al-Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin in the ceremony of awarding the declaration certificate and the instrument of appointment of Datuk Bandar at Istana Maziah, Kuala Terengganu. The city of Kuala Terengganu is currently undergoing a major transformation under the Kuala Terengganu City Centre development project and has witnessed the state capital of Terengganu being developed as a Coastal

Heritage City and an international tourism gateway for the East Coast, (National Archives of Malaysia, 2008).

On 27th December 2018, the Terengganu State Government launched the Heritage Trail campaign using various unique mediums as an attraction in promoting tourism in Terengganu. Chairman of the state's Tourism, Culture and Information Technology Committee, Ustaz Ariffin Deraman, said that his party transformed this heritage into a tourism product that can uphold uniqueness and tradition by the rebranding of the Coastal Heritage City. About 10 historical sites and buildings around Kuala Terengganu for domestic and foreign tourists (Tourism Terengganu, 2023). Thus, to encourage efforts towards further developing the heritage tourism industry, this study was conducted to identify and gain insight into the Resident's Perceptions of Heritage-Based Tourism Attractions in Kuala Terengganu.

### Literature Review

The tourism industry is seen as a very important industry in generating income in a country nowadays. Tourism is one of the most important industries in the world as it can develop physical, social, cultural, economic, political, and technological aspects as well as being able to provide economic returns to the country. (Bunghez, 2016). Heritage is a legacy of the past that is still practiced today and passed down from the present generation to the next generation. Our cultural heritage and natural heritage are indeed an irreplaceable source and inspiration of life. According to Pendlebury (2013), heritage terms are also used in various contexts. It is used to refer to objects from the past or sites of relics without permanent physical structures associated with past events. Heritage is also used to refer to non-physical aspects of the past such as cultural and artistic productivity. In general, this tourism has a heritage element that can be used as a new tourism product for future generations. Although heritage tourism in Malaysia is still underserved, if viewed in the studies conducted by previous researchers subtly it has a clear heritage element. Ethnic differences among the Malaysian community have resulted in a variety of different local disciplines in terms of architecture, handicrafts, traditional dress, music, and dance that reflects a colourful mix of heritage and culture (Hatta & Ali, 2013).

Bessière (2013) defines heritage tourism as "heritage-based tourism where heritage itself is the mainstay of the products offered and heritage is the main motivating factor (booster) to visitors or tourists. This definition covers a wide scope of related activities from visiting a city or historical site to visiting a cultural art exhibition in a museum. Malaysia has taken the opportunity to enhance the tourist destination area in terms of nature and heritage. A total of three sites have been recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as world heritage sites of the cultural category, namely Melaka, George Town, and also the Lenggong Valley archaeological site in Perak.

Elements of cultural heritage are drawn from cultural tourism itself. This is because heritage tourism has the same factor which is the cultural factor. Thus, cultural tourism according to McKercher (2002) has several meanings and is viewed from two angles. The first angle is the tendency of tourists to go to a destination because it is driven by cultural factors and the activities they do in a destination are related to culture. The impetus is the desire to see cultural experiences among society in an area. Second, cultural tourism is a collection of products defined as culture offered in a destination. Apart from monetary value, the old building in a country is also a national heritage and it should be retained for future

generations. Just as Bandar Hilir which has a strong aspect in terms of unique historical buildings or monuments makes it famous as one of the tourism products in Melaka (Siti Salina & Zuliskandar, 2018), besides promoting the aesthetic value exhibited in every traditional shophouse (Casado-Arzuaga, Onaindia, Madariaga, & Verburg, 2014).

In Terengganu, cultural heritage is a uniqueness that requires the responsibility of each race or ethnicity in caring for and preserving their culture as it is present in various forms and has its cultural emblem. Among them, the Terengganu Government has introduced the Terengganu Cultural Village with the concept of a living museum at the State Museum to restore the glory of the Malay community's cultural heritage, while enabling the younger generation to know and appreciate the historical origins of the Malay civilization (Harun & Samsudin, 2019).

### **Methodology**

Kuala Terengganu is the state and city capital of Terengganu. Kuala Terengganu also has a land area of 605 km<sup>2</sup> and is occupied by 398,000 residents. Kuala Terengganu City was chosen as a study area as it is one of the main and well-known urban tourist destinations in Terengganu. Based on the Terengganu State Tourism Sustainability Strategic Plan 2021-2025, most of the tourist attractions and cultural heritage attractions are located at Bandaraya Kuala Terengganu. The study area is more focused on several major tourist destinations that are indeed the focus of tourists such as Pasar Kedai Payang, State Museum, Bukit Puteri, Craft Cultural Centre, Istana Maziah, Cultural Village, Kota Duyong Lama, and China Town.

The selection of the eight locations was because each destination has its own identity where the area is among the historical buildings and has historical values that can be used as a heritage attraction of Negeri. The uniqueness of the historical building architecture and the great history of the past has become a tourist attraction and thus a catalyst for the heritage tourism industry in Kuala Terengganu. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (Domestic Tourism Survey), a total of 3.7 million domestic visitors visited Terengganu in 2021.

This study used a qualitative method to describe the resident's perception of heritage-based tourism attractions in Kuala Terengganu. A total of 4 people was interviewed for this study and all of them were residents of Kuala Terengganu and the data was collected in June 2023. This semi-structured interview was guided by a set of core questions that took an approach to the perception. Questions have been designed for residents regarding understanding, awareness, importance & capability of heritage-based tourism attractions in Kuala Terengganu. On average, the interview lasted roughly 40 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded and completely transcribed to guarantee that the data was correct and accountable. Real names were removed from the data and replaced with pseudonyms to make it anonymous. After obtaining data, inductive thematic analysis using the Braun and Clarke approach was used before writing the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Result**

The analysis found four main findings that emerged from the data collection:

### ***How Can Your Level of Understanding of Tourism Based on Heritage Concepts Subsequently Translate to Tourists?***

Heritage is a symbol of the unity and effort of a society in defending the resources of its nation's treasures (Stokowski, Kuentzel, Derrien & Jakobcic, 2021). At the same time, heritage treasures also symbolize the civilization of a nation. This is because heritage is capable of being the identity of the nation. However, this effort is not easy to do if it does not receive the attention and integrated involvement of the local community in ensuring that their treasures continue to be preserved. In other words, the local community is a very important and influential group in defending their treasure resources thus developing it to the highest level (Chitrakar, Carr & Albrecht, 2020).

*"The development of a tourism activity depends on the number of tourists who come to a destination that can provide them with an attraction. Visits are due to attractions in a tourist destination like historical areas. As residents of Kuala Terengganu, we should be aware that tourism with the concept of heritage is very much a place". (Resident 1)*

*"We are very understanding of the historical buildings in Kuala Terengganu through our initiative, namely by visiting historical sites or historical buildings voluntarily. In addition, search for materials or study historical buildings to find out the history of the building or tourist sites that give priority to cultural heritage". (Resident 2)*

*"Introducing Terengganu State as a beautiful, peaceful, developed tourist destination that will never be forgotten by anyone who visits it. This is something that is not impossible because it has a variety of privileges that can attract and become the memory of visitors. The beauty of nature, its historical uniqueness, rapid development, diversity of customs and culture, and the warmth of its people are among the special features of this State". (Resident 3)*

Based on Wang, Jiang, Xu & Guo (2021), the local people are the backbone of efforts to lift the name of various tourist destinations. Local activities should support domestic tourism activities towards the culture that exists in the country and show a friendly and courteous attitude to ensure that tourists are comfortable and feel their presence is welcome.

*"This tourism has attracted tourists all over the world through a variety of cultural and heritage values, the benefits of which have developed a creative community, introduced the development of creative industries, and significantly improved the local economy from the income derived from tourism". (Resident 4)*

In addition, in planning for vacation and travel, locals need to make domestic tourist destinations the preferred choice and thus help the industry.

### ***What Is the Awareness of The Resident in The Implementation of Heritage-Based Tourism Development in Kuala Terengganu?***

The attraction of the tourist destination is not only dependent on nature, culture, and promotion but also depends on the willingness and awareness of the community to receive,

manage and serve the tourists who come. According to the study, Wang, Jiang, Xu & Guo (2021) explained that one of the main challenges in the development of cultural tourism is community participation. Some researchers point out that the population's support for this tourism is the basis for the successful involvement of the population in the development of heritage tourism.

*"Kuala Terengganu has a wide range of resources that have the potential to be used as an exciting new tourism product. The local's resident is aware of this and we need to give our full support to the development of tourism products implemented by the responsible parties". (Resident 1)*

Each country has its unique cultural heritage. The cultural heritage of the nation is the custom and way of life of a race or race practiced for generations (Kukathas,2022). This heritage and culture are often told by parents of their children from an early age to accustom the children to the culture of their nation. According to Kim, Whitford & Arcodia, (2021), the cultural heritage of the nation must be preserved and practiced and must be passed down from one generation to another so that the treasures will not become extinct. The customs of a nation should be implemented in a lively manner so that the younger generation at this age can know the culture of their respective races like a celebration.

*"This cultural heritage should be maintained because it has its own identity. Culture symbolizes the identity of a country and a state. Our traditional heritage and cultural practices symbolize the plural nature of our society. For example, traditional multiracial clothing is unique and colourful. This unique culture deserves to be appreciated because it is this culture that highlights race. Without this cultural heritage, a civilization would lose its identity for a long time". (Resident 2)*

*"Historic heritage buildings need to be restored and preserved as they are the country's priceless historical heritage. Furthermore, if the historical heritage building is transformed into a new building and has a function other than the original, it indirectly has the potential to be re-commercialized". (Resident 3)*

Conservation is a process of keeping and monitoring a heritage building from being destroyed or repaired without systematic planning and management (Moiseeva,2019). Conservation involves work that attempts to preserve the original condition of a building and heritage land site as it was originally and this effort is a process to extend the life of the building so that it can continue for generations to come.

Partial refurbishment involving the outside, interior, or any partial combination and used when only part of a structure is important in showing cultural value at the level of historical significance or contributing to the value for which the area is designated (Coombes & Viles,2021).

*"Some of the historic heritage buildings here are in poor condition, should practice systematic management by preparing schedules to carry out regular maintenance according to the schedule. If this is not practiced, these buildings will be easily damaged and become obsolete". (Resident 4)*

### ***What Is the Importance That the Community Has Always Needed from The Heritage Tourism Industry?***

Each country certainly has its historical sketch and we must recall the effects of omissions including storytelling that happened as a lesson or as a study of professional researchers. More interestingly, the tourism sector is also a research arm that can provide economic benefits and spill over to the local community especially (Cerisola & Panzera,2021).

*"The importance of the existence of historical heritage buildings can help researchers who wish to conduct their studies which are related to historical heritage buildings, that the existence of this building can be used as a study site and can be used as a reference to obtain the data and information needed by the researchers to complete the study". (Resident 1)*

Since time immemorial, the tourism sector has been the driving force of several countries' economies (Shang, Li & Zhang,2021). In today's era of globalization, many of the world's countries are racing to advance the tourism industry for lucrative foreign exchange. Based on Saner, Yiu & Filadoro, (2019) many countries encourage tourism in the country to generate economic growth around tourist destinations. To develop the industry, many areas with natural uniqueness are opened and developed for tourism purposes, either through evolution or deliberately opened by certain parties.

*"The development of modern cities has brought rapid changes to the lifestyle of the urban population. The economic development based in those cities has attracted many workers from the countryside. These people need a supply of cultural elements to fill their free time and higher needs. Their lifestyle, which is different from the lifestyle of the urban elite, provides an opportunity to offer elements of today's culture to fill their needs". (Resident 2)*

In terms of economics, the tourism sector can improve the country's economy in terms of the flow of foreign money into the country. This exchange and flow process can be carried out either in local banks or in foreign exchange centres. This foreign currency is then stored for use when financing the expense of importing goods from abroad (Jenkins,2020).

*"Active heritage tourism activities make it easier for the government to attract more foreign investors to grow capital in the state. Related to tourism activities such as hoteliers, recreational park operators, mall operators, can even attract foreign investors in areas that have nothing to do with tourism such as transportation and construction". (Resident 3)*

The multi-racial, cultural, and religious community is a challenge to most countries, especially in managing social plurality. The challenge exists, especially in the aspect of creating harmony, peace, and positive interaction between races, religions, and cultures, thus requiring a prudent and respectful approach (Aina, Zawawi & Aman Daima Md Zain,2022).

*"In the context of heritage and culture involving society as a whole, it is very beneficial and important in the growth of interracial relations. Through these arts and cultural activities, community involvement in impacting physical fitness, racial cohesion, and economic growth". (Resident 4)*

### ***What Capability Does the Residents Expect of This Heritage Tourism?***

Tourism is an open system that has a wide range of environments, human elements such as tourists, elements of the area which is an area of origin, stopover area, and selected destination area, economic element example tourism industry, and dynamic elements which consists of individuals who travel to rest away from their place of origin. A clear understanding of tourism and the elements involved in the tourism industry in particular (Du Cros & McKercher,2020).

*"As a society that wants to see the heritage tourism sector continue to be strong, have high confidence and expect the ability of the management to play a key role to uphold and uphold the arts, culture, and heritage of the country by not marginalizing any party in line with the country's socio-economic development agenda". (Resident 1)*

The most importance of historical buildings or monuments is that they can serve as solid proof of the historical events that have occurred to future generations (Gillespie, Bandyopadhyay, Jenkins & Hutchinson,2021). This will create a society that is sensitive to any effort to demolish or destroy historic buildings. Indeed, the government must gazette historic buildings that need to be maintained. Therefore, any party that demolishes and destroys historic buildings, should be subject to legal action (Gyurkovich & Gyurkovich,2021).

*"Among the most important things to be given, especially monuments and historical buildings and heritage is its contribution to the history of the country. The ability of this monument to evoke memories of past events will partly instil a love of taste for the country in addition to being able to make the events of the past a guide in the future". (Resident 2)*

Historic gifts are very important in shaping the minds of generations of people in a country, especially in the appreciation of national heritage and treasures (Corbisiero, Monaco & Ruspini,2022). Historic buildings and monuments are assets that should be preserved and inherited from one generation to another. According to Carmona, (2021) in the presence of historical buildings, the new generation will be more appreciative and sensitive to the historical development of the country. This will form a society that is sensitive to any demolition and destruction of historic buildings.

*"Heritage tourism is a great benefit, especially in the effort to preserve the history, culture, and natural resources of a society. If it can be seen from the point of view of the ability of the locals to be allowed to participate in tourism development, then the heritage resources can be better protected". (Resident 3)*

*"The ability to include love for a place (heritage area) as an emotional affinity to a place that arises through experiences that connect people with the environment. This interweaving of feelings exists when society can build a close interaction with space and atmosphere". (Resident 4)*

## Conclusion

The development of heritage tourism is a potential study to be highlighted as it can have an impact on the development of tourism in Malaysia. The findings of this study can contribute and provide input to stakeholders in preparing the implementation of strategies for the preservation and conservation of heritage tourism products in Kuala Terengganu. The demand factor from the perspective of local farmers can also be studied continuously to improve the heritage tourism industry so that the current demand is available. The cooperation between the government and the private sector is highly encouraged to advance the development of heritage tourism in Kuala Terengganu especially to be known internationally.

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