

An Overview of Public Transportation Services as an Attraction of Tourism Industry in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This paper concerned with the public transportation services that offered in Malaysia which is it become one of the attractions for tourism industry. Based from the previous study, it can be said that understanding tourists' use of public transport at the destination is important for sustainable mobility, destination satisfaction, public transport management and destination management thus the development of transportation and growth of tourism are closely related to each other because it is one of the major factors that supports the economic activity and visitors' movement. Moreover, the suggestion from several past researchers regarding the service standard and quality to be offer for each transportation series in Malaysia make this topic relevant to be discussed further. Therefore, several past research related to this topic was reviewed in order to find out the potential of public transportation in order to attract more tourist come to visit Malaysia. Hopefully, the information provided by this paper will able to assist in the next action to support the growth and sustainability of public transportation business in Malaysia.

Keywords: Public Transport Management, Destination Management, Concept, Potential

INTRODUCTION

Transport activities remain necessary in tourism industry as they are responsible to enable tourists to travel or move from one place to another and thus allowing the successful development of new attractions (Rajamani & Rizal, 2013). It has been discussed in many

tourism literatures that transportation influences tourist experience and attractiveness of destination in terms of availability and appropriateness of the usage by tourists.

The influence of transportation is varied in countries where transportation in developed countries are assured while developing countries may be different because of diverse challenges (Vilakazi & Govender, 2014). An effective and accessible public transportation network in a tourist destination is likely to attract more tourists to visit because if the transportation service has limited routes to travel around the destination, the users such as tourists or visitors may not be able to reach their desired destination especially independent travellers or drifters as their mobility depends on it (Bajada & Titheridge, 2017).

The development of transportation and growth of tourism are closely related to each other because the development of transportation is one of the major factors that supports the economic activity and visitors' movement (Albalate & Bel, 2010). Usually, transportation such as city buses, train and taxi are commonly used by people and it affects their travel decisions such as travel routes, modes, times, destination choices, ease, cost of travel, and qualities of the destination opportunities available for a particular trip (Bhattacharya, Brown, Jaroszynski & Batuhan, 2014).

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

The importance of transportation to tourism industry has been strongly emphasized by many researchers in the past. The development of tourism industry would be never be achieved if there is no good transportation infrastructures and services (Khatri & Damodariya, 2015). In today tourism context, tourism products are usually made up from various goods and services where public transportation services is one of them (Mammadov, 2012 and Thompson & Schofield, 2007).

Transportation is considered as a segment of the tourism component where it is responsible to bring tourists to destinations, go around the places, and leave the place when the trip is over (Sorupia, 2005). However, transportation in tourism should be treated as one of the important features of the tourism experience rather as a tool or medium (Halsall, 2001). Furthermore, public transportation services with its own value, history, heritage and specialty such as Trishaw in Malaysia, Tut-tut in Thailand, Yellow Tram in Portugal and Yellow Cab in United States is said to contribute a significant impact to the growth of the tourism industry at each mentioned countries (Dubois & Aliaga, 2014).

Moreover, the connection of public transportation services and tourism destinations should be considered as a basic requirement in the tourism industry development (Le-Klähn & Hall, 2014). Referring to the research done by Su and Wall (2009) regarding Tibet as a tourism destination, the findings shows that most of the respondents answered they would not visited Tibet if there was no train service available. Meaning, it can be said that the public transportation services have a strong relationship with the tourism industry. Besides, Hall (1999) did mentioned that the tourism industry dedicate a good public transportation services to ensure the enjoyment and satisfaction of the tourist be at desirable level.

AN OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN MALAYSIA

Public transportation is one of the core components to support the growth and sustainability of a tourism destination. In Malaysia, public transportation has been growing steadily especially in Kuala Lumpur (Dahalan, Jaafar & Munira, 2015 and Rahim & Ghani, 2006).

There are many options of transportation services such as commuter trains, busses, minibuses, mass rapid transit, light rail transit and taxis available to travel within Malaysia (Nadiyah, Jalaluddin & Choyet, 2015 and Rozmi, Hesam, Rahim & Kamarudin, 2012).

However, congestion is one of the biggest concern that might cause the users not be able to reach their destination within the estimated time of arrival (Chong, 2016). Besides, complaints such as driver's attitude, cleanliness, safety, and comfortability are also being raised up frequently when it come to the studies related to the public transportation services in Malaysia (Handrinos, M.C., Folinas & Rotsios, 2015). In addition, the service quality becoming the most influential factors to the satisfaction level of the users who use the public transportation services (Ang, Mahat & Ahmad, 2006).

In the study related to the public transportation services in Malaysia, the previous researchers found that the level of user satisfaction towards service provided by the public transportation operators is just at average level. Moreover, some of the researcher also suggests that the operators of public transportation to improve their services by improving the waiting area, adding additional useable facilities in the terminal and improving the quality of the vehicles for more comfortable experience.

Furthermore, the factors such as the reliability, safety, and customer service of public transportation services should also be taken into consideration to drive the industry of public transportation services in Malaysia to the desirable direction. Meantime, the discussion on public confidence towards public transport services are quiet challenging because public transport services are always disturbed by technical incidents due to misconduct by the transport operator (Dahalan et al., 2015).

ISSUES OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN MALAYSIA

The main reason behind the poor public transportation usage and over-dependency on private cars is that most travellers prefer cars that are more cost and time-effective than an unplanned public transport system (Almselati, Rahmat & Jaafaret, 2011). Research done by Abd Rahim and Nor Ghani (2006) at the Federal Administrative Centre at Putrajaya on the empowering public transport for urban environmental management found that the quality of the bus and train services was not very much dissimilar to the situations in other countries in terms of availability, punctuality and comfort.

The study revealed that bus stop or train station, punctuality, public transport availability and information on route system were among the items that the passengers did not satisfy with. Research conducted by Rozmi et.al, (2012) shown that the satisfaction level of user are lower than a preference levels. This indicates that the quality of Malaysian public transportation network is under the travellers' expectation of the service.

Meanwhile, Khairul and Kamariah (2013) stated that some respondents from the interview indicated that they were dissatisfied with the CSAs' (customer service assistant) attitude that does not have eye contact and lack of courtesy during communicating. One respondent noticed that some staff may be very helpful during morning hours but due to long working hours, they seemed to be not 'helpful' or 'friendly' in the late afternoon due to fatigue. They found that in overall rating for facilities at bus hub received lower scores than train hubs. This is because such facilities measured at the selected terminals were old and not under the transport service providers' care.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TOWARDS PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

The Malaysian Government Transformation Plan 2010 – 2012 (GTP 1.0) roadmap under the National Key Result Area – Improving Urban Public Transportation (NKRA-UPT) identifies some issues of public transportation service which contributes to the decreasing in demand for public transportation in Malaysia. GTP 1.0 NKRA-UPT recorded at least four big success points (Malaysia Government, 2013). Firstly, the government successfully increase the capacity of inter and intra city train. GTP 1.0 solved some of this problem by introducing 35 set of four coaches for LRT Kelana Jaya Line in 2011, thus increased daily passengers capacity to 258,156 passengers from 254,745 passengers in 2010. In terms of the KTM commuter service, four sets of six coach trains began operating in March 2012, thus helping to ease busy morning with an increasing number of passengers to 32,000. Each six-car train sets have a seating capacity of 1,100.

The second achievement of GTP 1.0 NKRA-UPT is in improving bus journey. Proper condition and maintenance of bus stops are very important in promoting public transportation, 1,102 bus stops in Sepang, Subang Jaya, Ampang Jaya, Selayang, Shah Alam and others places were upgraded in 2011. This upgraded is one of the GTP 1.0 objective, meanwhile design and planning for new 306 bus stops is ongoing. To complement the bus stops aesthetic improvement, 470 RapidKL busses has been introduced to increases the frequency of the buses in all areas especially in attractive area of tourist.

The third achievement is in upgrading and re-branding the Pudu Central terminal. This iconic 35 year old landmark of Puduraya Terminal has undergone massive restoration and been given new face-lift as an intra-city bus terminal. It has the characteristics of modern amenities and offers greater convenience and travel experiences that are free from inconvenience to passengers. Renamed as Pudu Central, this bus terminal is now fully air conditioned with 50 ticket counter was officially opened on 16 April 2011.

Finally, the launch of Terminal Bersepadu Selatan, Bandar Tasik Selatan (ITT BTS). Terminal Bersepadu Selatan (ITT BTS) was fully operational on March 2011. This terminal is equipped with variety of facilities such as 55 bus platform, 150 taxi waiting areas, 1,000 parking bays and seating area for 1800 passengers, all in a cold and comfy waiting hall. This integrated transportation terminal is also equipped with computerized ticketing system, restaurant and sales outlets. In addition, electronic schedule that display the buses' arrival and departure time updated in real-time for the passengers and users.

CONCLUSION

The development of public transportation, infrastructure and using new technologies in this sector speed up the development of tourism. As we can see from the statistics of World Tourism Organization, it stated that the tourism dynamics has changed and increased rapidly between 2005 and 2015. In 2010, international tourist arrivals rose to 940 million. This in turn brought the economies \$980 billion. This trend can be explained with different factors. But the main important factor is the rapid development of public transportation sector and application of technological innovations which enable the tourists to reach many destinations of the world. All the stated issues prove the importance of transportation in tourism industry. As mentioned above the tourist's travel experience starts and ends with transportation. In this sense, if the countries want to gain sustainable development of tourism sector, they must pay attention to transportation sector in order to attract more tourist to visit Malaysia in future.

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