

MUSEUMS AND TOURISM: REENGINEERING THE ROLE OF MUSEUMS IN MALAYSIA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Since 2013, cultural heritage tourism has been identified as a new segment to be developed by the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB). Today, the sector has undergone rapid growth and have a great impact on Malaysia's tourism industry, as well as bring prospects for developing museum tourism in Malaysia. In this paper, to respond on the research scholarly interest in cultural management. The researcher discusses the roles of the museum to sustainable cultural heritage tourism growth with a special focus on challenges faces by Malaysia's museum sector in developing museum tourism. Over the years, many researches have been done, and still researching by scholars on the need for cultural resource management placing focus on the role they take towards cultural economic development. The purpose of this research, among others, is to explore how museums in Malaysia could be more effectively utilized for museum tourism and to make suggestions for better utilization of the museum sector for cultural heritage tourism development. It is hoped that this paper will provide insights into an understanding of cultural heritage tourism in Malaysia with an emphasis on crisis and opportunity in developing museum tourism.

Keywords: *Cultural industries; Cultural heritage tourism; Museum tourism; Malaysia's museum; Museum management.*

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, the tourism industry has been identified as one of the key economic development contributors of Malaysia. Hence, in 1987, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was established to in charge of promoting tourism domestically and internationally ("History of MOTAC", 2019). Government agency which formerly responsible for the nation's tourism development, such as The Tourism Development Corporation of Malaysia (established in 1972) was strategically moved under this new ministry and renamed as Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) to boot Malaysia as an outstanding tourist destination. In 1992, the Ministry was renamed Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism (MOCAT). In 2018, this Ministry was restructured and become the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) to better serve the close connection between tourism and culture in efforts to promote Malaysia tourism ("History of MOTAC", 2019). Today, after years of tremendous effort, the World Economic Forum (WEF) placed Malaysia in the 26th spot (out of 136 countries) in 2017 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report (Francis Dass, 2017). In 2019, according to Datuk Seri Ismail bin Bakar (Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia), "*indisputably, Malaysia has proven its ability in the tourism industry by consistently being in the top 10 tourism destination and overall dominating ways to generate income for the nation. Tourism is now one of the major contributors to Malaysia's economic success*" (Janice Tan, 2019).

In 1990, with the theme "Fascinating Malaysia - Year of Festivals", the campaign was a huge success with Malaysia receiving 7.4 million in tourist arrivals compared to 4.8 million in 1989. In 1994, five years after the huge success, a new campaign with a theme, "Fascinating Malaysia - Naturally More" was launched to stimulate the nation's tourism industry. The second campaign was another great success with a total achieved 10.22 million in tourist arrivals (MTPB, 2014). Since 1999 to present, the slogan of "Malaysia Truly Asia" has been used as an official theme of Malaysia's tourism promotions worldwide. The campaign was considered largely successful in the past 20 years, as the nation charted a steady and tremendous growth in tourist arrivals and tourist receipts

each year. For instance, as reported by Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, in 2018, with a total of 25.8 million of international tourist arrivals, Malaysia was ranked 3rd in the most visited Asian country by World Tourism Consultancy IPK International (MTPB, 2019). Meanwhile, tourist receipts also growth by 2.4%, in a total of RM 84.1 billion (USD 20.7 billion) in 2018 (Bernama News, 2019). For domestic tourism performance in 2018, the number of domestic tourists showed a double-digital growth of 10.9%, recording a total of 78.2 million domestic tourists as compared to 70.5 million in 2018 (MTPB, 2019). In brief, throughout these years, contribution of tourism industry to GDP (Gross Domestic Product) for Malaysia was steady, for example, total GDP contributed by tourism industry was 14.3% in 2014, 13.5% in 2015, 13.9% in 2016, 13.6% in 2017 and 13.3% in 2018 (Malaysia Economy Report, 2018). With the positive growth in the tourism industry, hopefully, the upcoming “Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020” campaign will continue to be another success. As of today, the tourism industry has become one of the significant contributors to Malaysia’s economic development, job creation, and foreign exchange earnings.

1. Types of Tourism in Malaysia.

According to Tourism Malaysia.com (2019), with a rich blend of natural and cultural resources, the nation’s variety of attractions offers something to just about every visitor. In general, tourism in Malaysia can be classified into five categories. (1) Cultural Heritage Tourism, (2) Adventure Tourism, (3) Medical Tourism, (4) Beach Tourism, and (5) Agricultural Tourism.

a. Cultural Heritage Tourism.

As the name suggests, cultural heritage tourism oriented toward attractions that offer tangible and intangible resources in Malaysia as tourism products. As a multicultural nation with an interesting past and present, everything from Malaysia reflects a colorful heritage and an amalgamated culture (Malaysia Travel, 2019). For instance, historical and cultural sites in George Town and Malacca (listed as UNESCO World heritage sites in 2008), Borneo Long-houses in East Malaysia, colonial and “Peranakan” architecture, museums and arts centers, traditional art forms and handicrafts, cultural festivals and local delicacies are typical tourism attractions and products under this category. According to Datuk Mohamaddin Ketapi (Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture), *“the cultural tourism sector has generated an average revenue of RM551 million (USD 130 million) for the past three years..... in 2018, more than 17 million visitors participated in the cultural tourism programs and it is the number is expected to rise further in 2019”* (Malaymail, 2019). cultural heritage tourism is now viewed as a social and economic development necessity for the sustainable growth of Malaysia’s tourism.

b. Adventure Tourism.

The adventure tourism is a very popular tourism product that develops based on rich ecosystem biodiversity in Malaysia. The nation’s wild jungles explorations and wildlife expeditions, volcanic peaks for rock-climbing and adventure, as well as marine biodiversity for discovery are adventurous activities that well-celebrated by both domestic and international tourists. According to Datuk Rashidi Hasbullah (Secretary-General, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture), *“adventure tourism opens the eyes of tourist to explore Malaysia in various ways..... with regional collaboration, it creates more creative, fresh and exciting ideas for more foreign tourists to visit Malaysia”* (Syed Danial Syed Azahar, 2019). Currently, the National Park (Taman Negara), Endau-Rompin National Park, and Tun Sakaran Marine Park are renowned adventure destinations for this type of tourism.

c. Medical Tourism.

Since the last decade, Malaysia has been making waves all over the world for its excellent quality and services in medical or healthcare tourism. With a high recognition from International Medical Travel Journal’s Award, the nation was awarded Medical Travel Destination of the Year (2015 – 2017), Best Country in the World for Healthcare (2015 - 2017and 2019) by International Living (Global Retirement Index), and Global Health and Travel Consumers Choice Awards in 2016, as well as many other achievements. According to Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC), Malaysia reportedly received 641,000 foreign patients in 2011, 728,800 in 2017, 881,000 in 2013, 882,000 in 2014, 859,000 in 2015, and 921,000 in 2016 (MHTC, 2017). In 2018, the medical tourism grew 14% to RM 1.5 billion (USD 0.35 billion) in receipts

from some 1.2 million medical tourists (Rahim Yunus, 2018). Currently, Malaysia ranks among the best providers of healthcare in all of Southeast Asia and the top 10 medical tourism destinations in the world (MHTC, 2019).

d. Beach Tourism.

Located in the equatorial region, with 48,000 km of coastline, Malaysia boasts some of the most beautiful islands and beaches in Asia (MATIC, 2019). Therefore, it is no surprise to see that beautiful beaches have emerged as one of the major resources of tourism in Malaysia. Long Beach at Prehentian Kecil Island in Terengganu, Paya Beach at Timon Island in Pahang, Sipadan Island Beach in Sabah and Rawa Island Beach in Johor are well-known destinations for beach tourism in Malaysia. In the Tourism Performance Report between January and March 2019, the tourism industry has seen a promising start in 2019. With positive growth in the first quarter, it stated that 48.7% of tourists have visited island beaches in Malaysia (Azura Absa, 2019).

e. Agricultural Tourism.

Agricultural tourism - also known as “Agrotourism” is a tourism concept that is rapidly gaining popularity in Malaysia (MOTAC, 2017). As a country with rich agricultural resources, various types of agricultural activities have been strategically designed for tourism development by both public and private sectors. Programs such as orchards and animal farms visit, organic farm-stay and retreat, homestays and cooking classes are well received by domestic and international tourists. Currently, Perak Agrotourism Resort (PATRO), Desa Cattle Dairy Farm at Kota Kinabalu, and UK Farm Agro Resort at Johor are well recognized as outstanding agricultural tourism destinations in Malaysia.

2. Cultural Heritage Tourism in Malaysia.

Since 2013, cultural heritage tourism has been reaffirmed by the Malaysia’s government as one of the major elements of international tourism consumption. As reported by Datuk Mohamaddin Ketapi (Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture), *“for the past three years, the cultural tourism sector has generated an average revenue of RM551 million (USD 130 million), 17.98 million visitors participated in the cultural tourism programs and it is the number is expected to rise further in 2019”* (Malaymail, 2019). Muhammad Bakhtiar Wan Chik (Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture) also points out that, *“cultural tourism was a lucrative option for the nation’s tourism development.....the cultural sector, besides ecotourism, will be among the main focus to increase the number of tourists to Malaysia.”* As the cultural tourism sector maintained positive momentum, the government will turn to cultural tourism to meet its target of 28.1 million tourist arrivals set for the year (The Star Malaysia, 2019).

As a land of intriguing diversity, Malaysia’s culture has been significantly influenced by the Malay culture and its two most prominent trading partners, China and India, as well as many other ethnic cultures. Although each of these cultures has preserved their distinctive features and elements, they have also been harmonically blended to create a uniquely *Malaysian* cultural heritage. With its distinctive multi-cultural heritage, Malaysia no doubt is a “melting pot” that full of cultural resources and assets for developing *cultural heritage* tourism. However, the nation’s rich cultural resources and its potential seems not yet be fully discovered, and be strategically utilized for cultural economic development purposes. According to Sudipta, Sarat, & Babu (2010), Malaysia’s tourism industry is prospering at a fast pace and becoming one of the most important sectors of its economy. Beach and island tourism have become some of the major determinants of Malaysia’s phenomenal progress. Yet an area that seems to obtain less attention is its cultural resources. For instance, areas such as historical and archaeological attractions have not found enough attention as evident in Malaysia’s tourism promotional campaigns (Sudipta, Sarat, & Babu, 2010).

In fact, apart from historical and archaeological attractions, it seems that cultural spaces such as museums, art galleries and performing arts venues are also not pivotally utilized by Malaysia’s tourism agencies as catalysts for the *development* of the cultural *tourism*. As addressed by the Tourism Performance Report between January and March 2019, tourists’ consumption and participation of cultural goods are relatively low compared to other forms of tourism products. For instance, compared to touristic activities such as sightseeing in the cities (87%), shopping activities (87.4%), and visiting island and beaches (48.7%). Tourists engaged in museum activities at only 29%, visiting historical places (28.3%), and visiting villages (26.5%) (Azura Abas, 2019). Doubtlessly, for

the cultural tourism sector, there is still a significant amount of work to do in order to become one of the main facets of Malaysia's tourism industry. Particularly for the museum sector in the nation.

3. Museums and Cultural Heritage Tourism's Development.

In 1990, the concept of museums cluster as a strategic tool for domestic economic development was first introduced by the American academic - Michael Porter. The whole idea of museum clusters could be worked as a stimulant for the development of the cultural economy has then received much attention from politicians and academics across the world (Tien Chieh-Ching, 2009). As such, many museums are now becoming a highlight of a city and have a significant economic contribution to a country. For instance, opened in 1997, the legendary Bilbao Guggenheim museum becomes the Basque city's landmark and catalyst the whole city development. The Louvre museum, as one of the most popular *tourist* destinations not only in Paris but in the world, received more than 10 million visitors in 2018 (Jean-Louis De La Vaisiere & Fiachra Gibbons, 2019), the Louvre museum no doubt is a significant cultural factor in attracting tourists and boosting the city economic development. According to Laura Lott (President and CEO, American Alliance of Museums), Museums in the United States generate more than USD12 billion per year in tax revenue to federal, state, and local government, and supported 726,000 jobs, and directly employ 372,100 people, which is more than double that of the professional sports industry (American Alliance of Museums, 2018).

Meanwhile, in Asia, the National Museum of China in Beijing also achieved a new record of over 8 million visitors in 2018. At the same time, Shanghai Science and Technology Museum is another museum that received more than 6.4 million visitors in the same year (Nik Fes, 2018). These two museums are currently an important *contributor* to the *economic* and social development in China's museum tourism. For Taiwan, the National Palace Museum is one of the driving forces of Taiwan's cultural tourism Success. With a total visitor about 4.43 million, the museum was placed third in the Asia-Pacific region and ranked 13th most visited in the world (Taiwan Today, 2018). In South Korea, museums are also strategically tightened with the nation's cultural heritage tourism. Both National Museum of Korea and the National Folk Museum of Korea have received 3.3 million and 2.05 million respectively in 2018. In Japan, *as a country offers a rich culture and traditional heritage, the nation has* a large number of *museums* of different subjects can be found across the country. In 2018, the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, National Art Center, and the National Museum of Nature and Science together reached a total of over 7.8 million visitors. In brief, from generating GDP, creating jobs, foreign exchange earnings to taxes contribution, museum tourism are becoming an important *contributor* to the nation's cultural, social and *economic development*.

By and large, prior the arrival of the cultural economic era, museums' potential in a nation's overall tourism industry might be ignored. However, the trend is now reversing. Today, the social and economic impact of museums is not to be underestimated; great museums are magnets that able to attract a huge number of visitors. In the context of museum tourism, museums have become one of the main driving forces in today's travel and leisure industry (FMI, 2019).

a. Museums and Cultural Heritage Tourism in Southeast Asia.

According to a well-known journalist and travel consultant, Luc Citrinot (2010), "*for a long time, museums in Southeast Asia did not see as interesting attractions to international visitors. Thusly, a museum visit is generally not the factor to motivate their visit this part of the world*". However, over the last decade, with a dynamic change of the museum industry in the region, *the situation is completely different from the past. Today, museums* are playing a significant role in the city branding and cultural tourism *sector of many countries in Southeast Asia*. For instance, within a span of almost two decades, Singapore has achieved many museum's related milestones. Currently, there are more than 50 museums in Singapore, and several museums have become a highlight for Singapore tourism industry (Gayathiri Chandramohan, 2019). In 2015, numbers of museum visitor in Singapore hit a record of 3.7 million (Today Online, 2016). In 2016, the National Gallery Singapore was awarded the breakthrough award by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) to recognize its contribution as an attraction for Singapore's tourism landscape (STB, 2016). Meanwhile, in 2017, visitor numbers to national museums and heritage institutions reached a new record of 5.4 million, up from 5.1 million compared to the year 2016 (Olivia Ho, 2019). In sum, museums and the impact of museum tourism have on the Singapore cultural tourism industry is momentous.

In Indonesia, museum tourism is also being seen as an important element to boost cultural tourism in Jakarta. As 2019 is the 492nd anniversary of Jakarta, the Jakarta Tourism and Culture Agency launched two

days museums' free-entry program, and successfully welcomed the arrival of 150,483 tourists. According to Eddy Junaedi (Head of Jakarta Tourism and Culture Agency), tourists visited six museums and eight destinations that were included in the program from June 22 to 23, and the National Museum attracted the most visitors with 100,341 local and international tourists (The Jakarta Post, 2019). In addition to the state's efforts to promote museums as part of the *tourism* development, private sectors also actively involved in museum businesses in Indonesia. As said by Deborah Iskandar (Founder of ISA Art Advisory), in recent years, private art museums are opening in cities all over Indonesia, and these museums have become popular tourist attractions. With the rise of private museums, they will play a more central role in Indonesia's arts and *tourism market* (Deborah Iskandar, 2018). In brief, follow the development of the society and cultural development policy, the role of museums as cultural infrastructure, as well as tourist attractions and destinations are closely related to cultural tourism industry development in Indonesia.

In Thailand, in recent years, a growing number of museums is one of the major driving factors for the growth of creative and cultural industries. According to Kengkij Kitirianglarp (2015), in 2004, Thaksin Shinawatra's government initiated the creative economic blueprint by establishing the Thailand Creative & Design Center (TCDC) to boost the nation's creative economy. Currently, as the second economy in Southeast Asia and the creative industry hub of Asean, museum developments in Thailand have been taken to a new horizon. From 2000 to present, many new museums are opening rapidly under diverse partnerships model to foster the growth of the cultural sector in supporting cultural heritage tourism. For instance, these "new generation museums" such as Museum Siam (2007), Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (2008), Rattanakosin Exhibition Hall (2010), National Science Museum's Science Square (2010), and Asean Cultural Centre (2015) are nowadays becoming key cultural attractions of Bangkok. Presently, the Rama IX Museum (expected to be opened in 2019) is another museum on its way to becoming a new cultural destination of Thailand. As said by Rawin Raviwongse (National Science Museum's President), *"as the largest museum in Southeast Asia, he expected the Rama IX Museum to attract at least one million visitors annually"* (Royal Thai Embassy, Washington D.C., 2019). By and large, over the past two decades, museums have created a unique place in Thailand's tourism industry and made a significant social and economic impact on the sustainable development of cultural heritage tourism in Thailand.

In the Philippines, in just a few years, the opening of more museums in the country is seen to influence both international and domestic tourists to explore more destinations nationwide (Catherine Talavera, 2018). As Jeremy Barns (Director of National Museum of the Philippines) mentioned that *"when tourists visit a country, especially for the first time visitors, they are really interested to learn more about the place, especially the youth..... museums are therefore, a first places they go (to) because in a short visit, they are able to get a good glimpse of the history, culture and the arts."* (Catherine Talavera, 2018). For this reason, in the Philippines, museums are often tagged as destinations for school field trips, and as attractions for tourists. In short, *museums* were considered by the authority in the Philippines as an important factor of the nation's tourism development.

According to the Hanoi Times (2014), three museums in Vietnam were listed as top 25 the most attractive museums in Asia by TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Attraction Awards in 2014. These three museums, which are Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, Vietnamese Women's Museum, and War Remnants Museum are respectively ranked the fourth, the sixth, and the eleventh position in the list. As reported by Nguyen Quy (2018), Saigon's War Crimes Museum was named among world's top ten destinations by TripAdvisor in 2018. Meanwhile, the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, Vietnamese Women's Museum and the Robert Taylor Museum of Worldwide Arms in the southern province of Vung Tau were also made it to the top 25 list in Asia. With all these honors and recognition, it is obvious to see that museums in Vietnams are playing important aspects of the nation's cultural tourism.

Since the arrival of the concept of cultural heritage tourism, nations in Asean region such as Brunei, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos are also given much attention in developing their cultural resources for tourism industry respectively. As such, *roles of museums* have *extended* from educational and cultural institutions, an added a new mission and function of serving the cultural economic development. Although museum tourism has yet become a prominent cultural tourism program in these countries, developed a list of the "Must-visit-Museums" in attracting tourists and helping boost the tourism industry has become a conventional practice. By and large, as a determining factor of successful city branding and cultural heritage tourism initiatives, museums are becoming important actors in the cultural tourism in Southeast Asia.

METHODS

Museums and Cultural Heritage Tourism in Malaysia.

With its uniquely successful tagline, “Malaysia, Truly Asia” to the upcoming “Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020”, Malaysia is emerging as one of the key destinations in the global tourism industry. Over the past two decades, the Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB), has taken the nation’s tourism industry’s performance to a commendable height. In the report of Trading Economics (2019), tourist arrivals in Malaysia averaged 1691021.19 from 1999 to 2019, reaching an all-time high of 2806565 in December of 2013 and a record low of 459374 in April of 2003. Meanwhile, at the most recent in June of 2019, tourist arrivals in Malaysia have also increased to 2400561 (Trading Economics, 2019).

In 2019, cultural heritage tourism has been identified as a crucial factor by Malaysia’s government to meet its target of 28.1 million tourist arrivals set for the year (The Star Malaysia, 2019). Muhammad Bakhtiar Wan Chik (Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture) pointed out that, *“Cultural tourists want to see the way of life of locals. They want to visit villages, go to museums and watch traditional performances. Hence, we want to showcase our culture, performing arts and local crafts for tourists. The cultural sector, besides ecotourism, will be among the main focus to increase the number of tourists to Malaysia”* (The Star Malaysia, 2019). Datuk Mohamaddin Ketapi (Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture) also mentioned that, *“cultural tourism sector has created an average revenue of RM551 million (USD 130 million) for the past three years..... practices and way of life, performing arts and handicraft products have their own attraction, which can be promoted as well as able to generate income for the country”* (Malaymail, 2019). During recent years, cultural sector has been seen as one of the key resources in Malaysia’s international tourism market.

Although the cultural heritage tourism achieved exceptional growth, and become a promising component of Malaysia’s tourism. Still, there are many areas and issues that needed to be improved, particularly on challenges related to managing and promotion of museums in Malaysia. Sudipta, Sarat, & Babu (2010) pointed out that, except for Georgetown in Penang and the historic city of Malacca (declared as UNESCO *World Heritage sites in 2008*), other historical destinations have not been strategically promoted to position Malaysia as a destination for cultural heritage attractions. Therefore, it is no surprise to learn about in the recent Tourism Performance Report, only 28.3% of tourists have visited historical places from January to March 2019. Meanwhile, museums and their high potential as cultural tourism resources are also not be thoroughly utilized by the tourism authority of Malaysia. Only 29% of tourists engaged in museum activities in the 2019 (Azura Abas, 2019). Undoubtedly, *there is still a lot of work to be done.*

Challenges of Museum Sector in Malaysia.

The Malaysia’s museum sector faces many challenges in today’s ultra-competitive creative industries. The following lists some of the major issues face by the sector as include (1) Financial constraint and poor maintenance, (2) Static and traditional exhibition methods, (3) The absence of masterpieces/must-see-collections, (4) Low visitor numbers, and (5) Lack of effective marketing and promotional strategies.

a. Financial Constraint and Poor Maintenance.

In recent years, *Malaysia’s economic growth* was slow down due to the political crisis caused by debt problems of 1 Malaysia Development Bhd. (1MDB), the fall in global oil prices, and the US-China trade war. As said by Dr. Mohd Radzi Md Jidin (Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs), *“in 2019, the nation’s economy is continued to experience moderate growth due to challenging external factors”* (The Star Malaysia, 2019). The nation’s economic slowdown and uncertainty are hurting the growth of the cultural sector and government budget allocations for cultural development. Therefore, in times of *financial constraint*, museums of all types and sizes are struggling disproportionately. With very limited budgets, no significant changes and development have been seen in the museum sector. As such, most of the museums are having difficulties to further expand and improve their management (Siti Isa, Siti Salwa Isa, 2012). For instance, in 2018, the news of visitors filed a complaint toward the Sabah Museum poorly maintained exhibitions and environment have received much attention from the museum sector and the tourism authority (New Straits News, 2019). With increasing pressure on the budget and limitation of funding sources, “budget cuts” has become a long-term challenge that the nation’s museum sector needs to be overcome.

b. Static and Traditional Exhibition Methods.

According to Siti Isa and Siti Salwa Isa (2012), the development of Malaysia's museums is far behind the growth of the nation's cultural heritage tourism is the result of inefficiency of management. Any changes concerning the museum sector in Malaysia have to went through several complicated and time-consuming stages and process. They also pointed out that, due to budget constraint and the absence of creative management and administration, the museum sector in Malaysia is left far behind almost 3 decades compared to other developed countries. Although in recent years, several key museums are transforming to become a more interesting "space" in term of exhibition and programming by adopting innovative ideas and digital technology, for example, Bank Negara Malaysia Museum and Art Gallery and Petrosains - The Discovery Centre. Many museums are still employing traditional exhibition methods. In the *digital era*, museum visitors have different expectations and demands toward museum visiting. Traditional show-and-tell exhibitions are no longer able to attract and satisfy today's audiences, especially the youth. Therefore, *to ensure the nation's museum development is staying relevant, competitive, and marketable* is a very challenging issue faced by Malaysia's museum sector.

c. The Absence of Masterpieces/Must-See-Collections.

Rennie Tang Siew Kuen (2018), *"for years, most of the artifacts on display in the National Museum Malaysia are the same, the museum's curators should be proactive in rotating the artifacts on display more regularly, as is done in most museums overseas"*. **In fact, the National Museum is not the only museum that faced such challenge, many museums are trapped in a similar situation. In addition to this issue, lacking of outstanding masterpieces/must-see-collections** is another challenge that confronted by museums in Malaysia. Therefore, **to improve the overall image of Malaysia's museums and encourage the public to visit and participate in museums activities more frequently.** Museums must reorganize their collections and develop series of masterpieces or must-see-collections as their highlight and USP (unique-selling-point) for their branding and market positioning improvement.

d. Low Visitor Numbers.

The Department of Museum Malaysia (JMM - Jabatan Muzium Malaysia) reported that, in 2018, 21 museums under the management of JMM have received a total number of 2,972,445 visitors. Compared to the projected number of 3,214,398 visitors, the visitor numbers are 241,953 behind the target (JMM Annual Report, 2018). Meanwhile, the total number of domestic visitors and students are 1,368,422 and 261,979, and the number of foreign tourists is merely 395,839. For domestic tourists, the top 5 most visited museums are, (1) the National Museum located in Kuala Lumpur (249,660), (2) the Kota Kuala Kedah Museum (157,099), (3) Lembah Bujang Archaeological Museum (143,243), (4) the Labuan Marine Museum (121,894), and (5) the Perak Museum (82,645). Compared with the steady growth of domestic tourists' number in 2018, 78.2 million (a double-digit growth of 10.9%). There is *still a large room for improvement for domestic museums tourism*. Meanwhile, for international visitors, the top 5 most visited museums are, (1) the National Museum (146,025), (2) the Royal Museum (55,052), (3) National Textile Museum (46,606), (4) National Automobile Museum (32,696), and (5) Malay World Ethnology Museum (31,147). Compared with the total number of 25.83 million international tourists (Syahirah Syed Jaafar, 2019). **Seemingly, there is still a lot of work need to be done by the museum sector and the tourism authority in making museums as a significant component of the nation's cultural heritage tourism.**

e. Lack of Effective Marketing and Promotional Strategies.

Shafinza Ahmad Shaharir (2017) pointed out that, although the National Museum has implemented a variety of marketing communication strategies to disseminate information, visitors are still not fully aware of it. Furthermore, the museum should view marketing strategy beyond merely promotional activities, yet need to understand that the success of marketing communication strategies depends on the perception of its visitors. As listed above, 21 museums under the JMM are suffering from low attendance across the year 2018. Undoubtedly, this is where an effective museum marketing strategy needs to come in, to helps museums to enhance their marketing communication efforts. It is important for museums that suffer from low visitor numbers to seriously focus on the question of "what marketing strategies will get me there"? Rather than focus on what promotional tools need to be utilized.

Autumn Sullivan (2019), *“many museums are missing out on repeat visitors and new visitors who did not know about their upcoming exhibits and events. In the digital era, traditional marketing and promotional strategies are no longer in style and effective to catch up with the change”*. Museums need to reconnect with their communities in more effective ways. In brief, for Malaysia’s museum sector, the marketing communication strategies need to be addressed as social, cultural and technological changes are making museum communications become a very complex and challenging subject.

By and large, the major challenges faced by the museum sector in Malaysia include, yet not limited to what has been listed above. Most importantly, the challenge to adapt new developments in museum management, museological practices, as well as effective marketing strategies in museum communication is three main aspects that the museum sector needs to be reviewed prior embark to any future development plan.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Suggestions for the consideration of Museum Sector and Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board.

For the above-mentioned challenges, the following suggestions might be able to trigger some ideas for the museum sector and Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) to facilitate their management review or future blueprint development.

a. Diversify Funding Sources.

Museums had their budget cut as authorities look to make savings. Hence, museums in cash crisis due to the shortening of funding is no longer “a news” to the museum sector worldwide. Accordingly, instead of *waiting for the storm to pass and feeling of helplessness, to plan for the surviving over the hit is certainly more necessary*. As said by Shuhang He (2017), *“diversification of revenue sources was the main factor that helped museums survive the cutbacks of government funding”*. In sum, seeking and securing *funding* opportunities for *museums* to be survived need to be prioritized by the museum management. Rachael Cristine Woody (2018), funding is forever needed for museum operation, and grants are often a popular way to secure funding, particularly for museum projects that involve communities. Thusly, to seek or initiate “museum plus community” development projects that concerning CSR development with relevant granting agencies, foundations or private donors is a strategic idea that worth to be considered by museum sector in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, to initiate social enterprises project under the museum sector could be another strategy of funding diversification. For non-profit organizations, products and services provided by a social enterprise often serve to further their mission as well as generate an income (Priti Thapa, 2019). In this context, a *public-private partnership* social enterprises project that involved museum merchandises development, festival of museums, and museum tourism packages might be another startup idea that needs to seriously consider by Malaysia’s museum professionals.

b. Exploring New Exhibition Methods.

For national museums, their exhibitions standard and artifacts quality reflects the nation’s image and competitiveness in the market. Thusly, museums that are still employing traditional methods in their exhibitions need to be improved to stay relevant in the digital era. Over recent years, with the arrival of digital media and technology, interactive museum and exhibition have become a trend in the museum sector. Today’s “new generation museums” mostly focus on employing interactive and innovative exhibitions to engage and connect with their audiences. This is a trend and change that no museum can be avoided. Although in the reality of financial shortage, museums in Malaysia will need to allocate their budget wisely to catching up with such change. Meanwhile, to make a change in exhibition methods did not mean to swift completely into interactive exhibitions. To adjust along with nature and subject matters, as well as audiences’ responses are still a primary concern in making such changes. Furthermore, instead of having a fully makeover, a step by step adaptation into new exhibition methods might be an ideal solution to gradually improve museum exhibition according to each museum’s strategic need.

With the emergence of new technologies, museums have been attempting to further develop the

form and content of their exhibits and installations to meet the visitor's ever more demanding requirements (Su Zheng et al., 2005). Many museums in overseas are therefore employing new interactive exhibitions approach such as interactive museum display case, multi-touch scanner table, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technology, flexible context-management-system (CMS) and digital installations in their exhibitions to remain interesting and relevant, particularly for youth and young audiences. Although there are pieces of evidence to show that Malaysia's museums are improving their exhibition methods, there are still lots of works need to be done. In brief, a trend of transforming the static exhibition into an interactive installation has become a global phenomenon. Immersive and interactive exhibitions with a touch of the latest digital technology have become a very important feature of museography in the 21st century. Exhibition methods of museums in Malaysia, of course, will need to evolve accordingly.

c. Develop and Showcase Masterpieces/Must-See-Collections.

As one of the most multicultural nations in the world, Malaysia has a rich cultural resource to be discovered and share with the world. In term of the museum collection, there are magnificent collections that yet be strategically showcasing to the public. For instance, as said by Mohd Razaimi Hamat (Registrar of the Department of Registration in the National Museum), under the national museums, there are 415,081 artifacts, 322,631 archaeological remnants, 64,344 animal and plant specimens and 28,106 ethnological objects (Louisa Lim, 2010). Museums in Malaysia have tremendous collections that awaiting to be appreciated by the public.

In the creative industry era, museum collections need to be presented in a creative way to provide a "good experience" for its audiences. Mostly, an unforgettable visit is the result of an effective combination of the following four factors, (1) unique objects, (2) fascinating theme (3) interesting stories, and (4) appealing museography. Therefore, museums need to develop must-see-collections under a distinctive theme(s), stories and presentation in order to establish a strong brand positioning in the market, as well as for museum tourism development. For instance, with a collection of over 8 million objects across 2 million years, the British Museum have developed a diverse series of must-see-collections and selected masterpieces (such as **the Parthenon Sculptures**, a fine collection of Egyptian Mummy and etc.) to make its one of the most visited museums in the world. In sum, to develop a must-see-collection with an outstanding masterpiece as a highlight is very necessary for Malaysia's museums to remains relevant and interesting in the region *highly competitive cultural heritage tourism*.

d. Museums Cluster and Museum Pass for Audiences Development.

According to Nurul Hamiruddin Salleh (2015), the concept and the establishment of a museum arrived in Malaya in the 19th century. Opened in 1883, the Perak Museum in Taiping is the first and oldest museum in Malaysia. Up to the present, there are about 132 museums in Malaysia, and the top 5 states with the highest number of museums are: (1). Kuala Lumpur – the capital city has the highest number of 25 museums, followed by Malacca (23 museums), the state Sarawak (13 museums), the state of Kedah (12 museums), and the state of Perak and Selangor each with 11 museums respectively. Three states with the smallest number of museums are the state of Sabah with 2 museums, the state of Perlis (2 museums), and the state of Terengganu with only 1 museum. Although the total number of museums in Malaysia did not consider to be huge compared to its neighboring countries such as Singapore (around 50 museums in 2019), Thailand (1520 museums in 2019) and Indonesia (435 museums in 2017). The 25 museums located in Kuala Lumpur have a high potential to be designed as a museums cluster for the sake of museum tourism development. For instance, the distance to walk through the following museums is only within 2.5 kilometers. From the National Museum of Malaysia, Orang Asli Crafts Museum, Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, National Textile Museum, Illusion 3D Art Museum, and the Telekom Museum. The development of "Kuala Lumpur Museums Cluster" (KLMC), is definitely worth to be explored by the tourism authority of Malaysia.

Meanwhile, up to the present, there is no package or service such as "Malaysia Museums Pass" or "Kuala Lumpur Museums Pass" to encourage local visitors and international tourists to explore museums in Malaysia. Although the current "KL Pass" (launched in 2015) provided a special offer for some of the museums mentioned above. The "Pass" is generally a prepaid card for international tourists to enjoy their

sightseeing in Kuala Lumpur with a special ticket price. Therefore, to boost the museum tourism as an important component of the cultural tourism, it is worth to consider of the launching of “Museums Pass” to promote museum tourism, and make museums cluster in Kuala Lumpur as an interesting cultural attraction. Currently as the 5th world’s most-visited city (Reuters, 2019), and the second friendliest city in the world (Bernard Cheah, 2019), Kuala Lumpur has become one of the top tourist destinations of global tourism. With the availability of “Kuala Lumpur Museums Cluster” and “Kuala Lumpur Museums Pass”, hopefully, the capital city will become one of Asia’s most *interesting* destinations for museum tourism.

CONCLUSION

Driven by the advancement of technology, the world is changing at a rapid pace. Roles of a museum in times of expeditious change have evolved from merely a cultural and educational institution. In the context of the cultural economy, the economic role of museums has gained much attention from most museum professionals and policy makers. According to Chieh-Ching Tien (2009), more and more museums are aware of their potential to add value to their community by involving in cultural heritage tourism. As the demand for cultural heritage tourism has increased, museums have become one of the key components in cultural economic development, and greater importance is now being focused on their leisure function. Thusly, museum tourism have become, and will continue to a unique place in 21st century tourism industry.

Back to 2013, Datuk Seri Dr. Ng Yen Yen (Minister of Tourism from 2009 to 2013) have made an official announcement to boost cultural heritage tourism as a new segment of Malaysian tourism, and to promote Malaysia as one of the outstanding destinations for culture heritage tourism (Malaymail, 2013). Today, as stated by Datuk Mohamaddin Ketapi (Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture), *“from 2016 to 2018, the cultural tourism sector has generated an average revenue of RM551 million (USD 130 million), and more than 17 million visitors have participated in the cultural tourism programs”* (Malaymail, 2019). In sum, cultural heritage tourism has become a very important component of Malaysia’s tourism industry for a various reason, briefly, it helps to preserve cultural heritage with culture as an instrument, promote cultural awareness, reinforces national identity, generate positive social and economic impacts, and supports the nation’s tourism development. As of today, the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) have done a good job in making cultural heritage tourism a well-established phenomenon in Malaysia’s tourism. Nevertheless, when come about areas needing improvement, there is still a lot of work to be done. Particularly for the museum sector and its position in museum tourism’s development.

As reported by the Tourism Performance Report (first quarter in 2019), only 29% of tourists engaged in museum activities (Azura Abas, 2019). Meanwhile, the Department of Museum Malaysia (Jabatan Muzium Malaysia) also reported that, in 2018, 21 with a total number of 2,972,445 visitors, museums in Malaysia did not meet the targeted visitors of 3,214,398. In the meantime, the total number of foreign visitors was as little as 395,839. Along with the total number of 25.83 million international tourists’ arrival in 2018, there is still have much room for improvement. By and large, compared with the neighboring countries such as Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Malaysia museums’ potential in boosting the national cultural heritage tourism has not been yet fully discovered and developed. To keep up with the competition, reengineering Malaysia’s museum sector and unleash its full potential in museum tourism is an urgent matter that needs to be addressed. To conclude, diversified the roles of museums, and fully utilized its capacity as a key partner of cultural heritage tourism is a crucial factor to ensure Malaysia’s success, and sustainable development in cultural heritage tourism.

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