



Challenges and opportunities in running a homestay program – Case study: Kota Aur, Penang, Malaysia

Roslan Talib¹, Mzailan Sulieman²

¹*School of Housing, Building & Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang, roslantalib@usm.my*

²*School of Housing, Building & Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang, mzailan@usm.my*

ABSTRACT

Home stay program is one of the branches of the tourism sector with great potential and can be developed. This study is to examine and analyse number of important factors and to identify as the key contributor factors in the successful inauguration of the program in home stay focusing at Kota Aur within the whole 2016 year. The main thing is that to indicate the issues and challenges faced in the implementation of this home stay program. Other aspects to include the attraction of foreign tourists to stay at the homestay Kota Aur, learning and enjoying its historical richness value and architectural elements of the Malay traditional timber houses as well as the analysis of local tourists contributing the economic value. Based on the findings of tourist's attendance throughout the year in 2016, a diagrammatic form data has been produced to show a clearer analysis and appropriate. This study is especially important to ensure the economic-sustainability of the implementation of the home stay Kota Aur program in addition to encourage more arrival of tourists to stay at homestay Kota Aur in the future.

Key words: homestay, Kota Aur, socio-economic, rural tourism, local knowledge

1. INTRODUCTION

The homestay program is one of the tourism industry with great potential to be developed. Homestay is one program that gives tourists a different experience as they will stay at home and far away from the bustle of the city and close to nature. The government has expanded the scale the implementation of the homestay program on a larger scale implementation of such as resort orientation programs, but the resort still retains elements of the homestay. The homestay program will open up wider employment opportunities for the local people and indirectly will improve their life quality (Md. Anwar Hossain Bhuiyan, 2013).

The homestay program is one of the strategies in rural tourism. It involves tourists stay, dine and be entertained with traditional events and activities with the villagers involved. Through this program, tourists can interact directly with the host family (host) (Norliza A. & Salamiah A. Jamal, 2006). Thus, homestay program is defined as an experience where tourists stay with selected families, interact and gain experience everyday life in a homestay family and learn the

culture of rural communities in Malaysia. The product is not classified as homestay accommodation facilities. It focuses more on lifestyle and experience, including cultural and economic activities (Ministry of Tourism Malaysia, 2017). The main concept of this product is emphasized more on tourism products oriented lifestyles or experience. The homestay program is a form of tourism products more emphasis on community-based tourism and ecotourism attractions (Hathaichanok Phonwiset, 2008).

In Malaysia, the homestay program was officially introduced on December 3, 1995 at Desa Murni, Kerdau, Temerloh in the state of Pahang. Starting then, the homestay program has been one of the main product of the tourism industry in the country. In fact, it can be seen that the rural communities or villages in the more developed and more developed striving to improve their standard of living so that they are not marginalized and out of poverty. Various efforts have been and are being taken by some government agencies through the relevant ministries to help rural communities enjoy the benefits of the activities and the development of tourism in their place.

Recently, the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development through "Rural New Economic Model" (2011) aims to build and expand the potential homestay in 500 villages as a rural tourism branding and mapping homestay as a national tourism icon. Measures and initiatives are expected to create more employment opportunities for the rural population and thus can reduce the outflow of employment 'youth village' to cities. Government measures provide a greater focus to develop homestay is also appropriate given the country's tourism industry is not only focused on big cities, islands, lakes and beaches alone. This is because the natural resources and cultural heritage which are in rural areas and also has a unique high value to be appreciated and potentially attract more tourists to get there. Through the development of Rural Tourism, the local community or rural communities are given the opportunity to be involved in organizing it. As a result, indirectly Rural Tourism has been able to generate economies of local communities and thus help the government in its fight against poverty and unemployment. Thus, in this context, homestay participants can play major role in helping the Government to achieve the aspirations and fulfill the socio-economic success.

There are many studies that have examined the will and interests of the arrival of the tourists involved in a home stay

program (Nor M.N.,2015). These studies have found that tourists are attracted to the culture and background of the people in this country are unique and diverse. This situation is a factor of their arrival and most of the tourists will be more likely to visit a second time. This situation shows that the culture and background of the people directly affected the successful inauguration of the home stay program. In addition, there is also contributing to the success of the home stay program. It covers the activities provided in a home stay program which allows travelers direct involvement, especially in the study of local culture. This situation also indirectly menunjukkan openness to foreign tourists who come from different backgrounds to learn about local culture and will be described in detail, including the background of the tourists in the next chapter.

2. DATA ANALYSIS

2.1 Issues and Challenges Running the Homestay Kota Aur in 2016

for 4 points. Other issues such as the El Nino weather causing overheating condition causing tourists and visitors do not feel comfortable at the homestay because they have been accustomed to the cold conditions in their home country, this situation contributed 3 points. Issues such as homestay members who are less active and cultural differences also contributed 3 points and both conditions are seen as relevant.

It seems that the lack of support from the village steering committee; JKKK(F) in promoting or even collaborating their program together with the homestay program leading to less promoting input for Kota Aur homestay. The less support from the community leaders and village committee to collaborate with the homestay program started early on before the program started. This is not good for the future development of the homestay incoming potential thus this people have their own political agenda.

Recently, the homestay lead coordinator even make her own initiative to travel to England in promoting the homestay by herself in Birmingham and London in 2017. Arrangement has been made with the selected travel agents in Birmingham

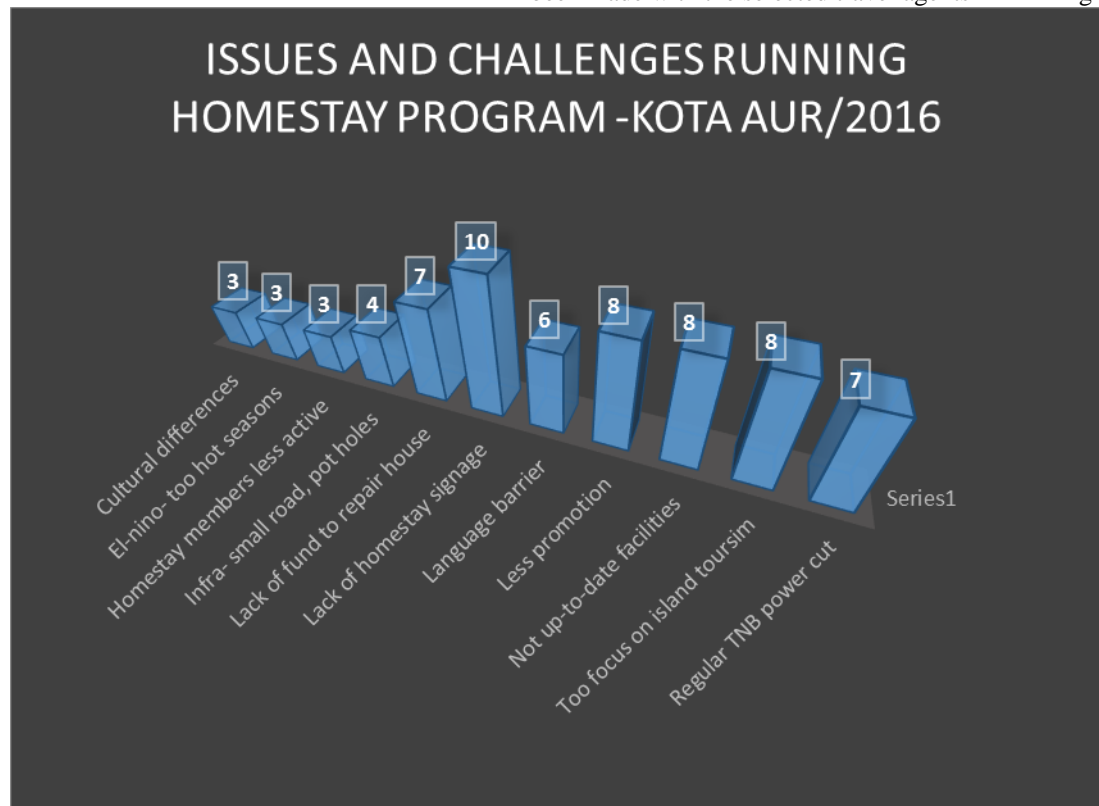


Figure 1: Issues and challenges running the homestay Kota Aur in 2016

There are quite a number of issues and challenges in implementing the programs provided by Homestay Kota Aur particularly in the year 2016. The issue is based on the observation that the highest fewer signs show the way to a homestay which is rank 10 points as the highest factor. This lead to a situation would cause difficulty for the visitor to know the location of the Homestay Kota Aur. In addition, the road problem is also an issue of concern, and this accounted

including the Islamic Tourism offices in Birmingham (Conventry Road, Birmingham) and the Malaysian Tourism office near Trafalgar Square in London (Nurul, I.M-Berita Harian, 2017).

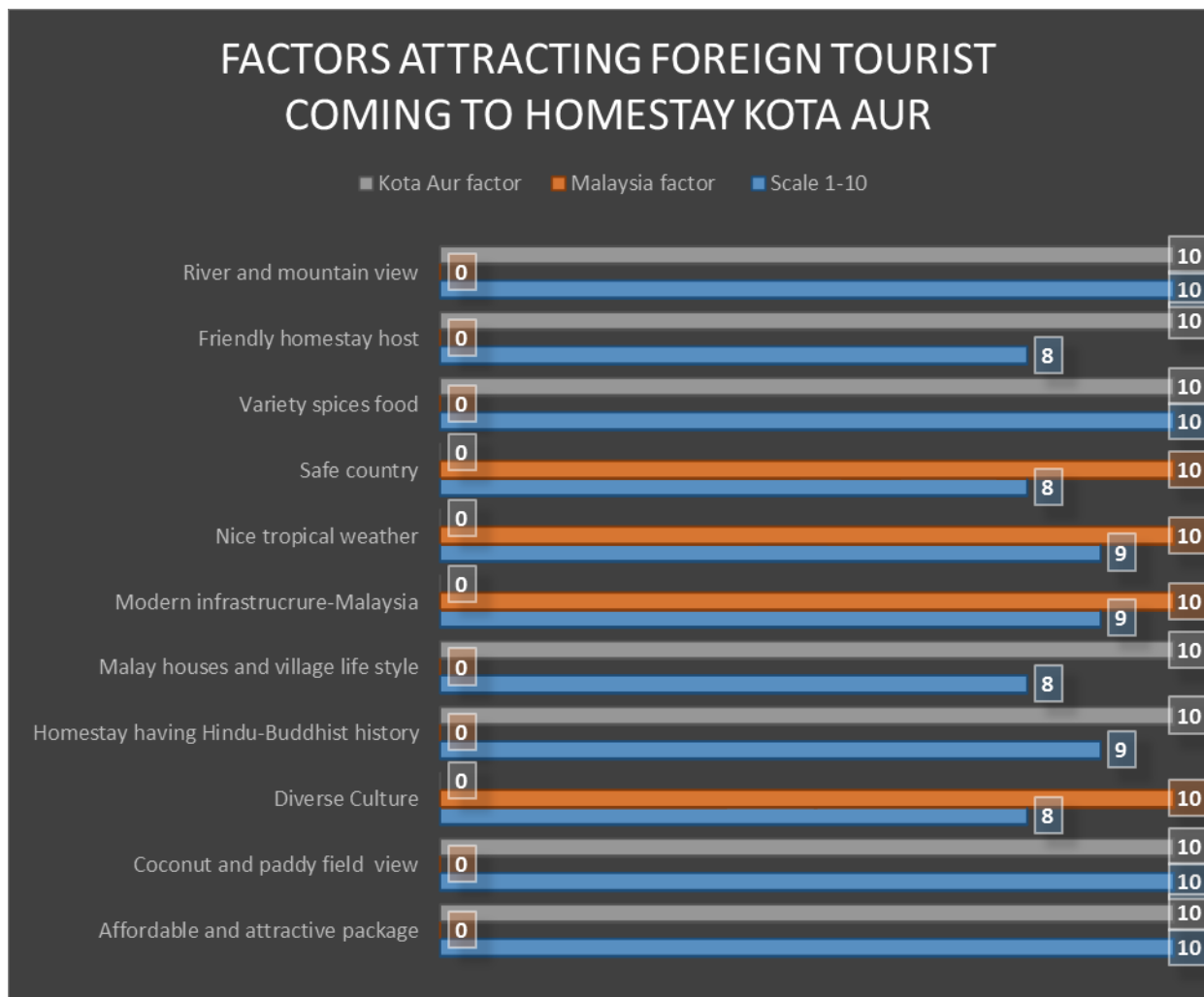


Figure 2: Factors affecting foreign tourists coming to homestay Kota Aur in 2016

2.2 Factors Attracting Foreign Tourist Coming To Homestay Kota Aur in 2016

Based on the diagram above (Fig. 2), there are several factors that attract foreign tourists to the Kota Aur homestay and was distinguished by few common factor found in other homestays in Malaysia. For this analysis, the major factor given the highest ranking (10 marks) is the existence of the natural environment such as rivers and mountain views at the natural setting of this homestay and it also includes some aspects of the food and an attractive price package. While the factors that are in the lower ranking with simply 8 points are in terms of self security/peaceful and the way of life of the local community alongside with the houses condition and cultural diversity of local communities. However, all the factors above contributing i a positive ways for attracting the foreign visitors coming to homestay Kota Aur including having traditional Malay house. Malay timber house with sustainable features are a good asset to the local village (R Talib et. al, 2015).

2.3 Historical Aspect that related to Homestay Kota Aur

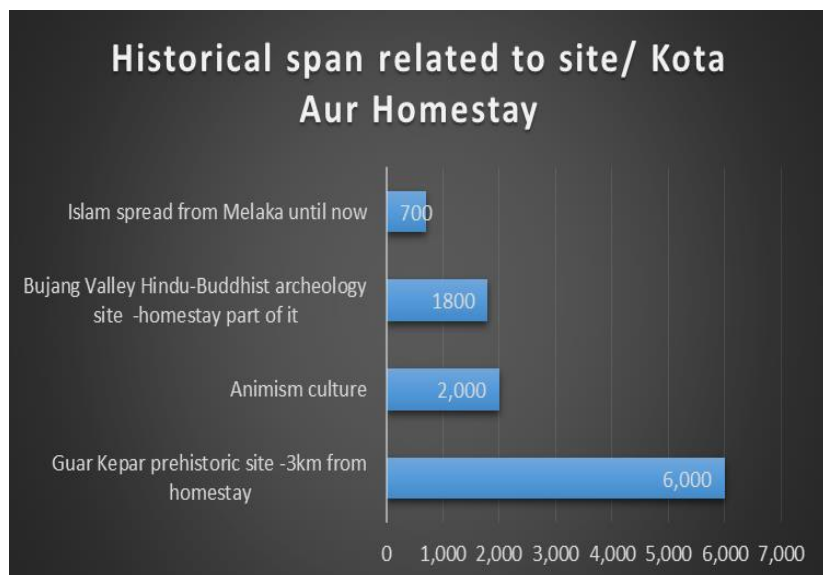


Figure 3: Historical aspect that related to homestay Kota Aur.

The diagram (Fig.3) shows the time frame sequence element that has to do with the rich history of the Kota Aur homestay. It can be said that this village is the oldest village existed in South-East Asia starting with the prehistoric cave twill and cultural animism existed nearly 3,000 years ago as well as Hindu-Buddhist influences nearly 2,000 years ago and the arrival of Islam spread from Malacca in the 1400 AD. Please note that there was a Neolithic river people live nearby Kota Aur some 6,000 year ago.

2.4 Attendance Pattern of Foreign Tourist of Homestay Kota Aur in 2016

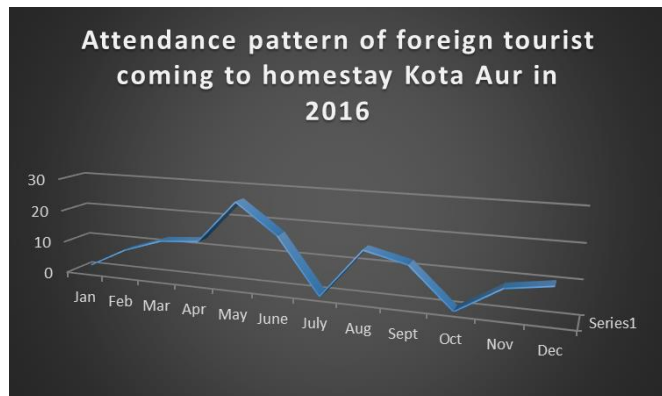


Figure 4: Attendance pattern of foreign tourists of homestay Kota Aur in 2016

The diagram (Fig. 4) shows the distribution of foreign tourists who come to the Home Stay Kota Aur throughout 2016. The highest number of arrivals recorded in May, which is a total of 26 people. This amount is then followed in June that as many as 17 people, but there is a reduction in total of 8 people in July. In August, there were 15 foreign tourists who come to visit the Homestay Kota Aur. The next number is the total of 13 people registered in April. While visitors at the same value, namely a total of 12 people were recorded in March and September. At the end of 2016, only 10 people registered visitors in December. Subsequently in November and February recorded the same number of tourists as many as 8 people (R, Talib, www.homestaykotaaur.blogspot.com).



Figure 5: The typical of a group of foreign visitor coming to homestay Kota Aur as this one in the Month of April in 2016.

2.5 Architectural Features Found Around Homestay Kota Aur

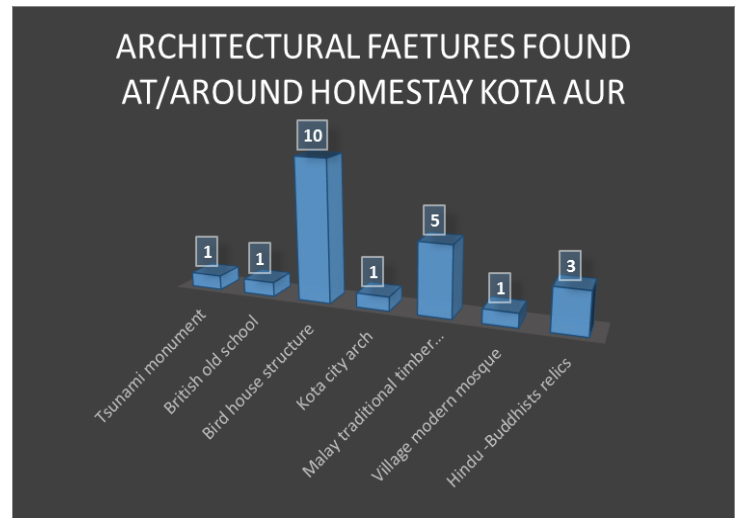


Figure 6: Architectural features found around homestay Kota Aur

The above diagram (Fig.6) showing the architectural elements found near or around Homestay Kota Aur. The structure of the most abundant element is a bird house of 10 points/elements, followed by a traditional Malay house elements of the 5 elements. Only 3 elements related to Hinduism and Buddhism relics found in or around the homestay village. Next, the elements of architecture such as the Tsunami monument, old school built by the British, the city’s gateway and village’s modern mosque elements each with a volume of only one element.

2.6 Local Guest Attendance Pattern Coming to Homes Kota Aur in 2016

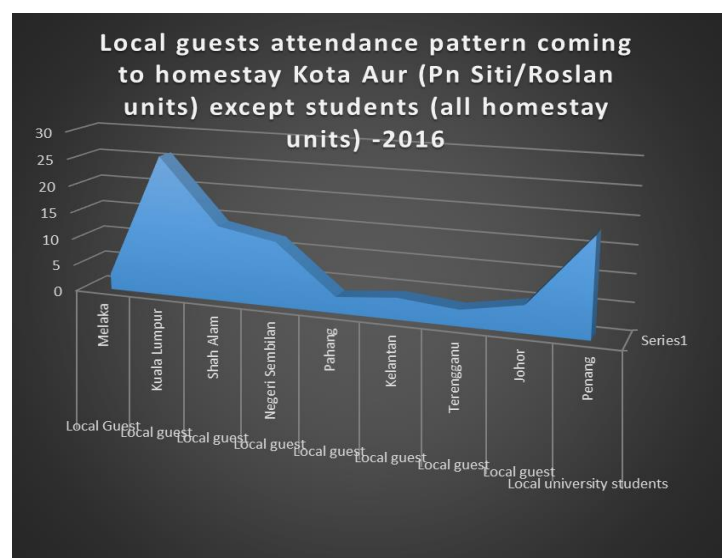


Figure 7: Local guest attendance pattern coming to homestay Kota Aur in 2016

The diagram above (Fig. 7) shows the number of local tourists who come to the Homestay Kota Aur throughout 2016 stayed ONLY in units owned by Mrs. Siti and Mr. Roslan. The amount of the public are recorded by visitors from Kuala Lumpur, namely a total of 26 people. It's because they want to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city and feel the atmosphere of the village for a while and found Homestay Kota Aur is very suitable for the purpose. Visitors who come from Penang itself is also a bit more in numbers, namely a total of 18 people. All of them is the students who want to do some research. Customers of the state of Kelantan recorded a total of 4 people. While visitors from Malacca, Terengganu and Pahang each registered as the least number with only a total of 3 visitors.

3. CONCLUSION

It's undeniable that there are various factors that determine the successful inauguration of a homestay program implementation. The homestay program is indeed of a program that has the most potential and offer broad market possibilities to enhance rural Malaysia economic scale. The attention and efforts by the homestay participants must be intensified, especially in attracting specifically the foreign tourists to intensify activities that highlight and exposing local culture that is different from the culture of the country of origin of the tourists. Therefore, all parties should and must work with each other regardless on their personal interests in order to achieve this goal. The current situation in the village however seems like the leaders in the village development committee (JKKK/F) which is a saperate entity to the homestay choose not to support with this homestay idea. Thus these people had use their influence to ensure some people in the village not involve with the homestay activities. This is very bad attitude and need to stop. A good homestay organization must be able to get the homestay participants and the village steering development committee working together to ensure the homestay having the best infrastructure with well organized homestay activities. These will benefits the people of the village as well as the people involved lived vicinity and indirectly raise-up the village's name to the eyes of the world.

Penang is one of the states in Malaysia, which is rich in cultures and attract big percentage of foreign tourist (PERDA brochure, 2015). However, in view of the current situation today, the focus of tourism in Penang sort of confined to island tourism. Therefore, for the sake of the tourist industry involving local communities and rural areas particularly on the peninsular side; focusing to Seberang Perai area specificaly Seberang Perai Utara; -Penang tourism marketing sector should also giving a fair attention to the mainland side. This is because the economic impression encountered by the tourist exposing high level islander socio-economic gain in general, but when involve the local peninsular side population; more economic gain on rural tourism can be improved as these people who some how can help their living standard by undertaking the concerned homestay program of the Kota Aur experience for example.

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