

Assessing Sustainable Tourism in Kuala Kubu Bharu: A Qualitative Approach

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Abstract

Background: Maintaining a small old town as a tourist destination is one of the Malaysian government steps to achieve sustainable tourism. Sustainability of a tourist destination depends on the town's strength, history, culture, and attractions.

Aim: This study set out to investigate Kuala Kubu Bharu (KKB) town's key strengths and characteristics for sustainable tourism development.

Method: Kuala Kubu Bharu is a small town located in Selangor, Malaysia. A qualitative approach was used to collect data through semi-structured interviews. The sample involved nine participants aged between 20 to 65 years old, who are familiar with KKB town.

Result: The four key strengths of KKB for sustainable tourism development are the town's features, neighbourhood, eco-activities, and historical architecture.

Discussion: KKB town has the potential to remain a tourist destination in Malaysia. The sustainable tourism developments in KKB town can be accomplished if all the current key strengths and town features and characteristics are well maintained by the local communities and the Malaysian government.

Keywords: Tourism Industry, Sustainable Tourism, Tourist Destination, Sustainable Tourism Development, Destination Development

Introduction

There are alarming signs that Malaysia's tourism industry is in its comfort zone, relying on the existing tourism products that have matured and lost their charm. This has urged the synergy between all stakeholders of private, public, and non-profit organizations to act in reinventing the tourism industry to remain competitive. The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) emphasized these needs in the newly formulated National Tourism Policy for the year 2020 to 2030 in its transformation agenda, to boost Malaysia's tourism industry's competitiveness in an increasingly competitive and uncertain world by generating income, obtaining partnerships and investments, empowering local communities, and safeguarding the industry's long-term viability and resilience.

On 1 January 2016, UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organisation) launched the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. Countries have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review of the progress made in implementing the goals, which will require quality, accessible and timely data collection (UNWTO, 2016). Tourism is the third biggest contributor to Malaysia's Gross Domestic Profit (GDP), after manufacturing and commodities (Hirschmann, 2021), accounting for 5.9% of the country's GDP and employing about a quarter of the country's entire workforce. There is a crucial need to develop innovative and attractive tourism products towards generating economic benefit for the country, gearing towards achieving the universal 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in the rural area, to minimize the urban and rural economic development gap in-line with meeting SDG goal the first and the tenth; no poverty and reduce inequalities.

Malaysia's intention towards sustainability was first established during the Third Malaysian Plan (1976- 1980). It focuses on the natural heritage preservation by being concerned about the impact of the growth of industrialization and population. Then, during the Fifth Malaysian Plan (1986-1990), the effort toward environmental protection has been part of the main factor in the national development plan.

These include minimizing deforestation, tourism, and urbanization, making preventive measures through conservation instead of curative, and incorporating environmental planning in project development. In June 1992, Local Agenda 21 has been introduced during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development which was held in Rio de Janeiro. There were 178 countries including Malaysia attended the conference, and it is a global action plan for sustainable development.

As a result, sustainable tourism development has then been emphasized in the Malaysian National Tourism Policy designed in 1992 (NTP). The Malaysian government has been serious in the effort of preserving the environment, and social and cultural heritage of the country; and different steps have been taken to preserve the natural environment and resources for the purpose of tourism development, by formulating several acts and policies to assure the best execution for sustainable tourism. Among these include the Protection of Wildlife Act 1972; the National Parks Act 1980; the National Forestry Act 1984; the Fisheries Act 1985; the Environmental Quality Order 1987; and the Marine Parks Malaysia Order 1994.

Although research on tourism as a practise is expanding, there is a dearth of studies on sustainable tourism destinations (Melo et al., 2022). To bridge this gap, this paper aims to explore rural areas in the Hulu Selangor district, and the focus of this paper is on Kuala Kubu Bharu town, as a potential sustainable tourism destination, that is align with local community interpretation that will then benefit them, as well as destination prosperity.

Literature Review**Sustainable Tourism**

Sustainable tourism, according to the United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), sustainable tourism is "tourism that fully accounts for its current and future economic, social, and environmental implications, addressing the requirements of travellers, the industry, the environment, and host communities."

The previous few decades have shown that travel and tourism, with their advantageous ecosystems, are significant drivers of economic growth, providing more than 10% of the world's GDP and supporting one in ten jobs worldwide. The industry is still a positive force, giving developing and emerging nations exceptional chances to advance throughout the value chain (Gao et al., 2021).

Sustainable development is increasingly becoming part of various areas of life and development decisions made by man, where this trend is affecting areas of tourism due to its environmental, economic, social, and cultural impact. In general terms, the development of the tourism sector should focus on creating linkages to the principles of sustainable development by respecting the permanence of the natural environment, creating relationships with the local economy, and considering the good of the local community both in a social and ethical sense (Kapera, 2018). The concept of sustainable development concerns a future deficit in resources for it highlights the declining or loss of resources, resource destruction or disruption for short-term benefit and the imbalance of dynamic interrelationships between resources as it can be related to an environmental problem (Hall, 2019). Sarttata (2010) mentions the three values of sustainable tourism management which are: to protect heritage sites, to conserve cultural heritage assets and to permit responsible use of human and natural resources. In addition, sustainability is a concept that has two key features: intra and inter-generational equity and the three pillars (Taecharungroj et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, Ballantyne et al (2009) suggested that good tourism management practices require local stakeholders and tour operators to work together for the conservation of natural areas within the framework of sustainable development as sustainability in tourism can be achieved successfully when there is a great contribution from all stakeholders (parties who are involved in the business of tourism) towards social, environmental and economic areas (Ng et al., 2017). The different stakeholders' groups including domestic and foreign tourists, residents, business owners, and local government (D'Mello et al., 2016). Therefore, came the alternative development as an ideology that focuses on looking at development from the perspective of the local and grassroots level where it examines growth along a vertical axis, from a bottom-up point of view (Pieterse, 1998). It's adaptation towards tourism has led to the concept of improvements in the imbalances of economic, social, and political power, centred in people rather than economic growth where scholars active in the development debate agree that a "different development".

Therefore, the sustainability of the tourism sector depends on the idea of eco-efficiency, by reorienting tourism operations in a circular economy (CE) framework to consume fewer resources and have a smaller environmental impact (Erol et al., 2022). This has led to a "conservation-tourism alliance" through which nature-based forms of tourism have been promoted by conservation practitioners, and supported by policymakers and managers, as a way to advance conservation aims while simultaneously addressing the economic and social aspirations of local communities.

Visitor preferences towards locations outside of major cities where there are less tourists per square mile is seen as a chance for some rural areas to grow economically, performing activities such as second homes, cycling, hiking, nature excursions, water sports, and camping (Varolgüneş et al., 2022). In this context, ecotourism is a logical protective strategy in this situation for preserving culture and wildlife in protected regions.

Ecotourism is characterized by using the fewest resources while providing the highest satisfaction, it fulfils the need for unpolluted air and unpolluted water provides tourist the opportunity to immerse themselves in nature (Hasana et al., 2022). As there are many definitions of ecotourism, but they all place a strong emphasis on reducing negative environmental effects, generating, and fairly distributing financial benefits, and involving and empowering locals. This makes ecotourism a popular strategy among conservation and development practitioners, especially in developing nations (Thompson, 2022). Ecotourism is believed to raise awareness of the advantages of conserving and safeguarding the environment and natural resources that people are starting to adopt sustainable energy sources like solar and wind power and there is a sense of responsibility towards protecting their resources (Yorganci & Emin, 2022).

This will determine future sustainability in KKB especially the tourism on community aspect as it contributes much income and job opportunities for them (Ng et al., 2017) and affects their quality of life (Kapera, 2018). Referred by Liu et al (2017), historical functions of local communities become transformed and the analysis of the interaction between tourism and community life becomes increasingly important where local governments need to pay more attention to support for the emergence of a tourism industry that respects the quality of life needs of local communities.

However, in a study done by Rasoolimanesh et al (2016), the community or the residents of Lenggong Valley WHS (World Heritage Site) have a positive and negative perception of tourism development whereas on the positive side, they perceive an increase in infrastructure, public facilities, jobs, and others. Unfortunately, on the negative side, the residents who were economically in local tourism were more worried when the community started to reject tourism development due to the negative impact of tourism than they could cope with (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016) and withdrew their support from it (Sharples, 2014). Thus, local authorities need to look at this matter to promote both positive and negative impacts of tourism including their plans to mitigate the negative impact and make tourism development more sustainable (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016).

Meanwhile, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets a series of sustainable development goals (SDGs) “to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all” by 2030 “as part of a new sustainable development agenda” and thus, it has become something of tourism that sustainable development is a major focus of tourism policymakers, including industry and destination marketing organizations, and of tourism researchers (Hall, 2019).

Kuala Kubu Bharu, Selangor

Kuala Kubu (fort at the mouth of the river) was named during a turbulent period where the Malays in Ulu Selangor were involved in the Selangor Civil War in 1867-1874 (Lim, 2020). The history of Kuala Kubu Bharu that primes current development was after the huge flood hit Kuala Kubu Bharu. Historically, it all started when a white man, named Cecil Ranking shot and killed a white alligator, which happens to be in the local belief as the river guardian. The incident led on the dam went broke on 29th October 1883 and causing a huge flood in Kuala

Kubu. During the incident, the flood covered even the tall coconut trees and thus, affecting the close area, including the old pioneer school, Sekolah Kebangsaan Kuala Kubu that was built there. It was recorded that floodwaters rose as high as 10 feet; 38 houses were destroyed and 50 people perished, including Cecil Ranking and left only a few old buildings (Powe Kuala Kubu was once known as Jalan Kuala Kubu and Kuala Kubu Lama, among other names). The dam was in Ampang Pechah at the time, and due to rapid development in KKB, the local government converted it into a tourist attraction. Government offices that were formerly located around the dam region were relocated to higher ground in 1931 to avoid being impacted by any incident linked to low land issues, and it has since grown into a small town that serves as the hub for all offices and services.

KKB has been referred as Kiri Kanan Bukit (literally in English, it means hills on your left and right) by the locals to truly describe the view that a tourist would see upon arrival at the town. The greenery (nature) with big trees that have been preserved and cared for through few trimmings when needed for safety purposes and to maintain its beautiful landscape offered by KKB itself, peaceful surrounding, exquisite environment and slight cold weather compared to other place in Selangor, the architecture of the colonial buildings, a safe place, community friendliness and togetherness among the diverse local community who live harmoniously are the characteristics and strengths of KKB that attracted tourists to visit. Powe and Hart (2008) purported that, the tourists visit small towns because of closeness or convenience, friendly behaviour, and specialists / independent shops. Besides offering an ample facility, accessibilities (free bus, commuter, taxi, "taxi sapu" (individual taxi), and amenities like shops, restaurants, hospital, police, ATM, fire brigade, budget hotels, golf area, rest houses to rent by companies for team building activities, halls for events, extreme activities area, Padang Millennium for recreational activities, pit stop for international event, Le Tour de Langkawi, and even cheap rental offered for accommodation.

Strong characteristic such as a heritage town with many historical pre-war buildings dated from past colonial days where the architecture is still standing today are reminiscence of English architecture due to the colonization that feature English pattern to all the buildings with pillars and wall masonry in KKB especially the government building. The old mosque in the old dam area (the 'Ampangan Pechah'), an old house built next to the old mosque, and a cemetery in the mosque area where it was built in 1884, the church building, KKB's museum, old post office, ABIM building (previously was an old surau) and Tok Kaya house ("Rumah Tok Kaya") with classic features are the heritage buildings in KKB. The town area itself is the attraction as there are many heritage buildings there including the Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) building. Wahlberg (2016) added that for small town centres, building on the historical tradition of the town centre and by cooperation with designers and architects, a unique and attractive environment can be created for tourism purposes.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach to assess the perception on KKB town's strengths and characteristics as a sustainable tourist spot. KKB town is the contextual setting for the data collection. The target population is the people who have visited and are familiar with KKB. The respondents were selected based on purposive sampling. The respondents are experts who can provide the data required for this study. A sample of nine respondents participated in this study.

A series of interviews were carried out and the respondents provided their opinion on KKB town's strengths and characteristics for the development of sustainable tourism. Data

were collected by using semi-structured interviews consisting of three (3) main open-ended questions. All the respondents shared their knowledge, opinions, and experiences about the KKB town during 20 to 30 minutes interview sessions. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for further data analysis. The data collected from the nine participants seem saturated when the same key points were raised in two interviews (participants 4 and 5).

A thematic analysis was used to classify KKB town's strengths and characteristics. In this qualitative study, thematic analysis is the most suitable method to highlight the themes from the transcribed interview session. As mentioned by Lebar (2016), thematic analysis is an analysis for categorizing themes of phrases from the transcribed interview data.

Out of nine respondents, five of them are males, while the remaining four were females. All nine respondents live in Selangor. Eight of them are Malays while the remaining is of Indian ethnicity. Five respondents had visited KKB town more than 10 times. The socio-demographic profile of the respondents is summarized and presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic profiles of respondents

Variable	n	%
Gender:		
Male	5	55
Female	4	45
Age:		
21 to 35	4	45
36 to 45	1	11
46 to 55	2	22
56 to 65	2	22
Occupation:		
Wage earner	5	55
Others	4	45
Ethnic Group:		
Malay	8	89
Indian	1	11
Frequency of Visits to KKB:		
Less than 5	3	34
More than 5	1	11
More than 10	5	55

Results

This section presents the results based on the interviews.

Town Features

Based on the data collected, participants stated that KKB has its unique infrastructures and facilities and is being preserved well by the local community and authority. From the informant's points of view and knowledge, KKB town is full of unique infrastructures which are not found in other towns. Six (67%) respondents stated that the KKB town features special buildings and that the town's community want to preserve all the town characteristics. The unique buildings and facilities are the old British buildings of the colonial age and are unique

and full of historical stories. The environment at KKB is quiet, covered with the greenness and beauty of flora and fauna.

Respondent 1: *“All I can say is the peaceful surrounding area is the strength of KKB. Those people (tourists) who came from havoc area will feel relaxed when they come here. Another strength of KKB is the ample facilities available as mentioned previously, then, we have budget hotels, golf areas, rest houses to rent by companies for their team building activities, and there are also areas for extreme activities like associations and with family.”*

Respondent 2: *“KKB is a calm area and peaceful to be at. That is why people working in KL still prefer to live here as they feel relaxed staying in KKB. Even some people see KKB as “nothing to do place”, but KKB have halls for events like school halls, paragliding areas and Padang Millennium is available as one place for recreational activities too among the communities.”*

Respondent 3: *“KKB’s atmosphere is one of its main draws for visitors. The local governments and people in KKB continue to protect the environment even though there are developments there. Because of the surroundings, outsiders who moved here and decided to stay will do so. Aside from the affordable housing rentals and the availability of nearby amenities like ATMs and hospitals, another factor that draws visitors to KKB is the area's low cost of living.”*

Respondent 4: *“No doubt that the relaxed environment is the main strength apart from what my father said the facilities available around here like the shops are all nearby, hospital, police, ATM, secret recipe, fire brigade, and other places for recreational activities that can be done with family and friends.”*

Respondent 5: *“I would say that KKB's strength is its distinctive natural setting and the region's relatively mild climate in comparison to the metropolis. Visitors may be curious about the history of these structures and the purposes for which they were erected if the township stands alone because of the distinctive structure of the buildings from the English era.”*

Respondent 7: *“The environment, which was quiet, covered with the greenness of flora fauna in the surrounding area. The town density is not very high and does not leave severe damage due to development. The structure of the building seems very old, I bet it must be full of history.”*



Figure 1: World Heritage Signboard



Figure 2: District and Land Office Hulu Selangor

Town's Neighbourhood

Fifty-six per cent of the respondents (n=5), linked KKB with its local people and their daily activities. Some of the local community ventures in food and beverage business as their main incomes and eventually become KKB main attraction and part of the town characteristic. According to the respondents there are famous eateries that has becomes a must stop for motorists:

Respondent 1: *"If we are talking about foods, KKB had nothing much to offer except the cendol Pak Samad and curry mee Kak Kiah. The rest i would like to suggest more towards recreational and physical activities like those extreme activities."*

Respondent 2: *"KKB famous with their Cendol Pak Samad and Kedai Kak Kiah which are located under the big tree in the town and selling curry mee. Kedai Kak Kiah and Cendol Pak Samad are actually located on the route to Fraser's hills. That's why they are famous because of their strategic location. And through this too KKB are more well-known, and some people come over just for that."*

Respondent 3: *"Apart from the community selling foods in the town area, companies like INTAN also come over here for workshop / training/ activities and this contributes to the income of the community as they will stay at the resort and others. This is another side of income."*

Respondent 4: *"Every year, as part of the festivities, we have a carnival where cars are not permitted in some places. A lot of people come over to attend. This carnival generates revenue for the neighbourhood and can be enjoyed by families as a recreational activity. The activities to increase income always take place at the end of the month on the weekends in the Tapak Pasar Malam neighbourhood. Unfortunately, Covid-19 modifies everything.."*

"There are various resorts near KKB that are active, where travellers frequently stopped to eat at well-liked restaurants and shop at neighbourhood stores. Some of the things to do included riding to Fraser Hill."

Respondent 9:

Most of the respondents (78%) stated that KKB town's facilities are easily accessible, and the traffic is not heavy. The local community feel contented and are satisfied with KKB town. One of the reasons on why local people keeps increasing in KKB town is due to KKB's vicinity and town housing plan. KKB town's facilities are nearby in the town, and together with its smooth traffic makes KKB one of its kind. Additionally, with current town developments, there are many affordable new housing areas located in the KKB, thus increasing the number of residents in KKB. Respondent 3 and 4, stated that KKB town is not hectic, and the atmosphere is relaxing although the number of local people keep increasing.

Respondent 1: *"What we have here in KKB for facilities is more towards transportations where we have free buses here, so it is easy for people to commute from one place to one place and they can save their budget too. Besides, taxis and "teksi sapu" are also available ."*

Respondent 2: *"We have good public transportations here in KKB. We have commuter, bus, taxis including "taxi sapu"*

Respondent 3: *"Before this, there was no housing area, it was all forest. Mostly people live in quarters because they work with the government. But now, there are many developments and facilities available. That is why many outsiders came over to KKB"*

Respondent 4: *"No doubt that the relaxed environment is the main strength apart from what my father said the facilities available around here like the shops are all nearby, hospital, police, ATM, secret recipe, fire brigade, and other places for recreational activities that can be done with family and friends."*

Respondent 5: *"It is arguable that all existing from its needs of its necessity, as I noticed, a variety of food stores also existed, police offices, post offices, 24-hour ATM services machine, public steering facilities where there was a terminal bus. Complete as a necessity, rather than for shopping it is for sure"*

"I think as Tourist, enough and adequate for a small town. There are ATMs, Ade Bus Stations, Ade Station Completed KTM, Ade Hotel, Post Office, Police Station."

Respondent 7: *"Complete, oil stations, adequate dining, bus stations, post office, police station. Accessible Through Public Transport (KTM and Bus). Paved road"*

Respondent 8:



Figure 3: Kak Kiah Shop

Eco-activities

KKB town is undoubtedly one of the greenest towns in Selangor, notably in Malaysia as well. More than half of the respondents, (67%) claimed that KKB town is the best place to eco-tourist activities. Most of the tourists come to the KKB due to its breath-taking natural green environment. There are several tourism activities that promote the natural green environment in KKB. With all the activities in town, KKB town greenery can be maintained with the efforts of the KKB Town Council. According to the respondents, KKB town is the best for green recreational & tourism activities that can be main attraction and KKB main characteristic.

Respondent 1: *“All I can say is that KKB's strength lies in the tranquilly of its surroundings. Visitors that came from the turmoil area will feel at ease when they visit. Another advantage of KKB is the abundance of facilities available. In addition to the previously mentioned budget hotels, golf courses, and rest houses that businesses can rent for team-building exercises, there are also locations.”*

Respondent 2: *“The best way to describe KKB is as a tourist destination because there are so many leisurely and touristic activities taking place here. Extreme activities like paragliding are available for travellers to partake in when visiting KKB, and even international events, like as the Le Tour De Langkawi, take place there. This will increase the popularity of KKB as a tourist destination”.*

Respondent 3: *“Therefore, because of the atmosphere, people from outside will continue to reside here. The affordable housing in KKB is another factor that draws visitors. This explains why all of the facilities are nearby and close to one another”*

Respondent 4: *“Well, if you are talking about KKB as a tourism destination, I would say yes because there are many activities that can be done here like paragliding and other extreme activities like flying foxes. And not to forget in KKB also there are the aboriginal people’s villages that have become part of tourism. This is more towards tourism related to culture as not many tourists will come over for extreme activities, right? So, this is another thing KKB can offer to the tourists.”*

Respondent 8: *“Kuala Kubu Bharu, Enjoy the greenery while exploring small Pekan full of protected history, and socializing with friendly locals”*



Figure 4: Selangor River

Historical Architecture

Few respondents (n=3) mentioned that KKB town has a great number of historical architectures and buildings. With intervention from local authority, the value of historical building and architectures can be preserved. KKB town can then maintains its image as a historical town. As noted by the respondents, KKB town have ample historic and heritage building, architecture, and nice environment. Informant 4, Informant 6 and Informant 9 declared that KKB have great green environment with its own history and cultural, because of that characteristic, KKB town becomes a good spot for recreational activities.

Respondent 4: *“To have a small gallery or museum and an interactive restaurant that explores KKB’s history from ancient times to the present, touching on historical events related to the British colonial era and how life was back then. And the stores in this area can be standardised to create notice boards or sign boards describing the history of the shop owner from the 1920s, what the shop is used for, and how it has been passed down to numerous owners until the present. Using this, cyclists can read the notice boards or signboards at each store during their cycling event to learn more about the city of KKB.”*

Respondent 6: *yes, it can be said that KKB is rich in its history and greenery where the magnificent building with its English -era structure is still avoided as well as the greenery as usual. You can hear the waterfall’s sound nearby, right?”*

Respondent 9 *“As a local council perception, KKB is surrounded by greenery all around and the town itself projected heritage image and historical pre-war building. Sometimes, the town will be part of the route for as a sporting event, like Le tour de Langkawi. In 2020, KKB was been chosen as a starting point for the 5th stage from KKB to Bandar Meru Jaya.”*

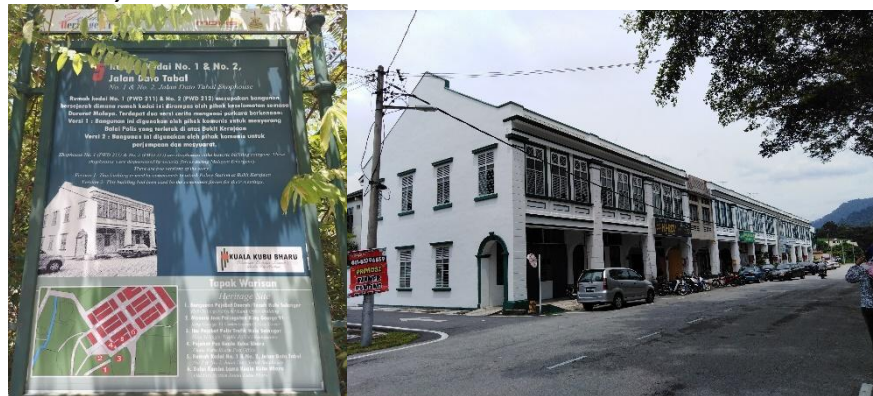


Figure 5: Shop Lots No 1 and No 2 Jalan Dato Tabal



Figure 6: Old Fire Station KKB



Figure 7: Historical Gallery Kuala Kubu Bharu

Discussion

Town's Features

KKB is being recognized as a peaceful place as it is surrounded by green environment. Perhaps, this is one of the greatest strengths of KKB. From the community's perspective, most of the tourists who come to KKB are mainly just to have a relaxing or a peaceful weekend getaway. Some of them visit KKB for activities, however, there are some who just enjoyed the peaceful environment just to relax their mind, body, and soul. The peaceful environment in KKB not only attracted the tourists for a short stay, but there are others who came and purchased properties and moved from the big city to KKB. Thus, the local authority must preserve the peaceful and relaxing environment and ensure the sustainability of the town. The local authority develops places for recreational and tourism activities, not only for the communities, but for the tourists as well. Li et al (2017) reported that characteristics of destinations vary and tourism motivation largely dependent on what is available at the tourist destination.

Based on the information gathered, the respondents mentioned that good facilities, amenities, and services provided by KKB's local authority are the strengths that KKB can offer to tourists. This includes the transportation services such as free bus rides, commuter trains, and taxis. Overall, the public transport is good in KKB where tourists will not have any issue or difficulty moving around this small town. Additionally, there are many shops or market to

purchase necessities such as SEGI market and DIY shops. Benur and Bramwell (2015) reported that the attractiveness, accessibility, and amenities of a small town have a significant influence on the tourist's satisfaction. The respondents of this study mentioned that they feel safe living in this small town as the crime rate is very low. Safety is also an important factor for tourists. Birdir (2015) highlighted local's friendliness, accommodations, low local crime rate, and natural beauty and scenery as significant factors in attracting tourists. KKB town can contribute to tourism development where tourists feel safe when they are in town and will recommend KKB to their family and friends.

Town's Neighbourhood

Food and beverages business have been one of the local community's sources of income. Many tourists will visit famous eateries in KKB. Cendol Pak Samad and Kedai Kak Kiah which are located under a big tree are famous for 'cendol' and 'curry mee'. Kedai Kak Kiah and Cendol Pak Samad are located on the route to Fraser's hills. The pit stop for motorists is always Cendol Pak Samad and at the same time they viral it and so more people are coming to eat 'cendol'- a sweet local dessert. The respondents also mentioned that residents take the opportunity to sell food for gaining some income by operating food trucks or just a pushcart at the recreational area as there are many tourists during weekends when people come for cycling, hiking, bird races, and rent the required gears (like bicycle, safety knee pad, and others) for recreational activities. Besides, 'tapak pasar malam', the night market area is open during weekends and also boosts the locals' income. Lee (2013) established that tourism industries in local communities must place importance on creating community employment opportunities and recognize the perceived benefits from tourism development. Moreover, Gnanapala and Karunathilaka (2016) concurred that the local community aspire and positive views about the development of sustainable tourism, as it will help to create more business and employment opportunities.

Furthermore, besides the tourism sector which contributes to the main income of the local community, there are two other sources of income for the local communities of KKB, which are agriculture and small businesses KKB is an administrative town for Hulu Selangor since 1975. In 1994, the Administrative Office of Hulu Selangor District Council moved to its present site at Jalan Bukit Kerajaan where there are many government offices were relocated there such as Majlis Bandaraya Kuala Kubu Baru, District Land office of Hulu Selangor, and Kuala Kubu Bharu Courthouse.

Eco-Activities

Next, based on ecotourism.org (2021), KKB town would be perfect as a destination for eco-tourism activities in natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of the local people. Conforming to one of Sustainable Development Goal 2030, saving life on the land is what the local communities have been doing up until now. Activities such as cycling around town while enjoying the natural scenic view, taking a heritage walk to learn about the historical value in each of the buildings preserved from the colonial era, while understanding the surrounding community's cultural and social values, with an emphasis on enriching personal experiences and environmental awareness. As highlighted in most interviews, KKB town is recommended as a tourist destination to enjoy the natural beauty of its greenery while enjoying eco-activities such as visiting the nearby waterfall, 'Lada Medang' in Kampung Pertak, a residential area for the Aborigines. In addition, the annual international event that promotes eco-tourism take place in KKB town which is the Le tour De Langkawi

cycling race. The cyclist will pass through KKB as part of its cycling route due to its hilly geographical features, making the race quite a challenge for the participants and adding value to the whole sporting experience with its green environment that are well preserved leading the area to have a slightly lower in temperature compared to being in other Selangor main cities. Thus, indirectly this event will improve the tourism sectors and offer opportunities to boost economic expansion for the future throughout the coexistence of tourism development and environmental quality (Lee, 2013).

Historical Architecture

The study found that that half of the respondents suggested local authority intervention to strengthen KKB's historical architecture and values. There is a need for a more systematic way in preserving the old buildings to conserve the historical architectures' original material and its form. By implementing this systematic way, the building's future usage can be prolonged by the local authority by imposing a guideline on how these historical buildings can be utilized without damaging their original features and forms.

Also, in KKB town, places of interest and inspiration for historical buildings that celebrate the festivities and famous individuals, galleries and museums that hold and show cultural values, iconic architecture can be easily recognised. The building design should accommodate areas, shaded walls and other features that can enrich the building area and make it a comfortable place and a vital part of the community (Scerri et al., 2016). Each of the historical buildings has its story, and these stories should be made accessible for tourists to discover. Placing an information board in front of each of the shop lots that are currently entrepreneurs to provide knowledge about the history of the building will be a good move by the local authorities. The information such as, what was it utilized for, the year it was built, and the previous owners. Hence, this would make it interesting for the tourists to walk around the town, interacting with the shopkeepers who are currently using the historic building for businesses, getting to know about the local people and the town history while the tourists are exploring the shops in the town. This would encourage the local community to play their role by providing a pleasant experience towards the tourists who came to interact with them and ask for more stories about the history of their shops, at the same time, being able to preserve the historical architecture buildings.

Conclusion

The characteristics and strengths of KKB town are quite unique and such a hidden gem in comparison with other districts in Selangor. KKB is such a peaceful area with a natural and green environment that contribute to various tourism activities. KKB town has historic value with many historical buildings that are still being preserved. The locals and the local authorities apply the sustainability concept in KKB by offering all necessities and yet preserving and maintaining nature and historical value while providing employability through tourism activities. The safety, warm, and friendly neighbourhoods attract tourists to KKB. Policymakers and local authorities need to ensure that KKB preserves its unique characteristics and heritage buildings to achieve sustainable tourism. This study presents the push factor for future directions on studies of sustainable tourism development in small towns and the importance of diversifying tourism activities and local products as well. Future studies could utilize the mix-method research design to gather more quantitative information from locals and tourists on important factors for sustainable tourism in Malaysia.

In addition, maintaining such a small town for sustainable tourism is crucial. Based on this study, KKB small town is recognized as having a unique feature that reflects on historical architecture, greenery areas that leads to peaceful life and yet providing excellent eco-activities where it does contribute on job opportunities to the community. This whole experience will not be achievable without the great contribution from the local authorities and community where the alternative development theory should start from “below” that referring to both NGOs / local authorities and community as mentioned by Pieterse, (1998) in González (2008). Meanwhile, Korten (1992) in González (2008) claims that people-centred approach can achieve better results when there is a central point from which ‘people’ does influence growth. For example, the use of local resources and produces that the locals sell in the market to generate income while sustaining the environment.

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