



ASSESSMENT OF RURAL LANDSCAPE
CHARACTERS FOR TOURISM ROUTE IN KUALA
SELANGOR- SABAK BERNAM

BY

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ABSTRACT

Rural landscape characters are the characters that shape the setting and ambience of a place. The presence of landscape characters that give a scenic view and sensory along the driving routes have been acknowledged by numerous studies to be important in the planning of rural tourism. Tourism is the act of travel for the purposes of leisure, pleasure or business and the provision of services for this act. There are strategies for the tourism route planning that could increase tourism development opportunities, where the planning of resources and attractions can be better integrated to support infrastructural development of a region, conservation, and rejuvenation of cultural and natural resources. However, the urbanisation development in Malaysia has affected the land of the rural area to accommodate the high rise buildings and new residential areas. Besides that, the young generations that wants a better lifestyle start to move out from the rural areas to the urban areas, which make the local traditions and culture gradually forgotten. This research aims to determine the landscape characteristics of the rural area for the tourism routes to conserve and integrate the physical, cultural and environmental features of the rural landscape with tourism activities. The objectives of this study are, (i) to identify the landscape characteristics of the rural area and route for tourist attractions, (ii) to examine the needs of the tourists in rural tourism, and (iii) to determine the rural landscape characters and tourism-related attributes for tourism route planning in rural areas. This research has studied the Kuala Selangor to Sabak Bernam route in Selangor as it still has various characteristics of the rural landscape and rural tourism attractions. The data was collected through a method of inventory by observation and mapping along the study area. In addition, survey questionnaires were analyzed from 250 respondents among the local people and tourists to get the significant attributes of the rural landscape characters for tourism route planning. The semi-structured interviews were conducted on the Malaysia Tourist Guide Council and the homestay operator in order to obtain their views on the potentials and challenges of development rural tourism routes. This research found that the rural landscape characters are important in rural tourism, especially in terms of landscape features such as agriculture, fishing activities and physiographic character that cannot be reproduced since it is the natural setting of the area. In conclusion, the rural route can be promoted as a tourism route because it has the combinations of attractions, accommodations, amenities, activities and accessibility. Hence, the rural route needs to maintain its attractiveness and landscape character as part of rural tourism. These natural and cultural characters need to be integrated into the future plans of the rural areas, and activities can be created to allow tourists to experience the local environment.

خلاصة البحث

الرموز المناظر الطبيعية الريفية هو صفة التي تشكل الجو والبيئة المكان. قد وجد عديد من البحوث عن أهمية تخطيط السياحة القروية بأن وجود رموز المناظر الطبيعية التي تعطي منظرا مشهديا وحسيا. السياحة هي قانون السفر لكثير من الأغراض مثل الراحة والمتعة والأعمال التجارية وتقديم الخدمات لهذا القانون. هناك استراتيجيات التي تساعد في زيادة فرصة التنمية السياحية، حيث يفضل الموارد في تخطيط وتجذب، ودعم تطوير البنية التحتية من حيث المنطقة وحفاظ عليها، وتحديد الموارد الثقافية والطبيعية. لكن، أثرت التنمية التحضرية على أرض المنطقة القروية لأقرض العمارة الشاهقة والمساكن الجديد. بالإضافة إلى هذا، ينتقل الأجيال الشابة من منطقة القروية إلى مدينة لأنهم يريدون حياة ممتعة، وفي نفس الوقت، يخسر كل تقاليد المحلية والثقافية. وفي هذه الدراسة، تهدف في تحديد خصائص المناظر الطبيعية الريفية للمسار السياحة والحفظ على ميزات الفيزيائي والثقافي والبيئي مع الأنشطة السياحية. وهذا البحث له أهداف :

- 1) تعين خصائص المناظر الطبيعية في منطقة القروية ومسار الجذب للسياح, (2) اكتشاف احتياجات عند السياح في السياحة الريفية, (3) تحديد خصائص المناظر الطبيعية في مناطق الريفية. يقوم هذا البحث في مسار كوالا سلاجور إلى سابك برنم لأن لديه خصائص متنوعة خاصة في المناظر الطبيعية الريفية. تم جمع البيانات من خلال طريقة الجردة بجانب المشاهدة ورسم الخرائط طول منطقة الدراسة. وبالإضافة، تم تحليل 250 استبيانات من السكان المحليين والسياح لحصول على السمات الهامة في خصائص المناظر الطبيعية الريفية لتخطيط مسار السياحة. أجريت الباحثة شبه المقابلات مع المجلس الإرشاد السياحي الماليزيا والعمال الإقامة لحصول على وجهات نظرهم بشأن إمكانات وتحديات في تنمية المسار السياحية. قد وجد هذا البحث أن هذه الخصائص مهمة في مجال السياحة الريفية، لا سيما من حيث خصائص المناظر الطبيعية التي لا يمكن تعد إنتاجها لأنها أصلية. والخلاصة، يمكن يرقى المسار القروية كالمسار السياحة لأنه يحتوي على مجموعة من الجذب السياحي والإقامات والأنشطة والتسهيلات. وبالتالي، يحتاج المسار الريفي للحفاظ على جاذبيتها وطابعها لإعطاء الفرصة الذهبية للسياح لتجارب البيئة المحلية في المستقبل.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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DPF	Dasar Perancangan Fizikal
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HO	Homestay Owner
IKS	Industri Kecil Sederhana
KSSB	Kuala Selangor- Sabak Bsernam
LATAR	KL- Kuala Selangor Expressway
MFYP	Malaysia Five Year Plan
MTGC	Malaysian Tourist Guide Council
R&R	Rehat dan Rawat
RLC	Rural Landscape Character
SMIDEC	Small and Medium Industries Development
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TG	Tourist Guide
TRP	Tourism Route Planning
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
WEF	World Economy Forum

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Rural landscapes have long stimulated nostalgia for a simpler time and place. In current tourism trends, the attractions of the countryside and rural areas gain the attention from local or international visitors (Mcmorran, 2008). However, in current situation people are busy with their daily lifestyle, especially people living in the urban area. Most people living in the urban area are always busy with works, traffic and surrounded with the built setting that could affect their perceptions and experiences of their environment (Jaal & Abdullah, 2012; Mizukami et al., 2012).

Landscapes are considerably more than just what could be seen by our vision and interpreted by our minds. It is the scenery that changes as we walk from place to place that will give different experience and feeling to people. Hence, rural landscape needs to be preserved and conserved for the next generations as for them to understand the heritage, culture and historical values of their hometown. Therefore the characteristics of the rural landscape are one of the important things to be studied. The landscape assessment was done to emphasize the identity of an area, conserve the existing natural setting, and contribute to the local and national identity that are important sources of knowledge for sustainable development (Jaal & Abdullah, 2012; Hussain, 2012). Based on the landscape character assessment produced, the authorities, developers, landscape architects and planners should know the things that need to be protected and the area that could be further developed.

In Malaysia, rural tourism is one of the government's agenda to increase job opportunities and eliminate poverty of the communities especially the rural

communities involved (Pusiran & Xiao, 2013). As been stated in *Rancangan Malaysia ke-11* (RMKe-11), rural area will be the area that needs to increase their greenery area and increase the community involvement to promote the rural tourism. Rural tourism is one of the good products to promote the country as well as getting the community to be involved in the tourism industry. Besides, rural tourism is one of the solutions to overcome the negative effects of uncontrolled development in the developing countries (Amir, 2014). The relationship between sustainable environment and human beings could promote a better tourist experience (DPF Desa Negara, 2017). It is shown that the relationship between man and nature could produce tourism products such as homestay, food and beverages from local places.

Tourism routes are the connections between the tourists and their destinations, which make it becomes one of the key elements in tourism sectors (Swarbrooke, 1999). In order for tourists to arrive at the intended destinations by land, they need to travel on the road. Thus, tourists have the options to choose the varieties of routes available. However, some countries do not consider the existing natural landscape or the already developed landscape. Countries will develop more settlements which will increase more roads and will clear the natural area (Jaal & Abdullah, 2012; Amir et al., 2015). The natural elements are important in sustainable tourism planning, as it could reduce the global warming and climate change albeit the demand for more land for human activities.

In Malaysia, the rural landscape routes have their own characteristics based on the locations and culture. Most of the routes promote different identities and characters of the area. For example, as written by Danon (2016), when travelling from Kuala Kedah to Merbok, tourists will pass along the old seaside fort that had withstood attacks from many invaders, while at the end of Lembah Bujang, an ancient

valley that was once a vibrant port and center of Hinduism and Buddhism in Southeast Asia can be found. In a different place, travel from Kuala Kubu Bharu to Fraser's Hill will provide a different experience where visitors will pass by the huge Selangor dam and turn-offs to Bukit Kutu, a hike mountain and Sungai Chilling, a popular waterfall. When travelling from Kuala Kangsar to Pulau Banding, the travelers will experience visiting the unique Istana Kenangan and Ubudiah Mosque, then arrive at a lush valley to Lenggong where they could see the Perak man, which is about 11 000 years old oldest human skeleton found in Malaysia. The travelers could enjoy the green sceneries when passing through Kedah, a state famous for the paddy fields at the both sides of the road. When driving through the east-coast area, the visitors could then experience the sightseeing of the seaside scenery (Malaysia Truly Asia website). It is proved that the description made by Danon (2016) on the rural route illustrates the rich landscape characters of different places available in Malaysia.

Although numerous rural routes have been maintained due to the natural, heritage and historical values, sadly some of it has been demolished for the purpose of development as what we can see at Kampung Baru area in Kuala Lumpur. Currently, there are not many studies that identify the characteristics of the rural landscape and the relationship between tourism and route planning. The question of how do tourists perceive the attractiveness of the rural landscape corridor is important to help researchers and tourism planners understand how to integrate and sustain the rural landscape as part of tourism route. Thus, this study believes it is important for Rural Landscape Characters to be evaluated in order to answer whether establishing the characteristic of rural landscape is significant or not in tourism route planning. Furthermore, this shows that it is necessary for planners and designers to conserve and

integrate physical, cultural and environmental features of the rural landscape to further enhance the rural tourism activities in Malaysia.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Malaysia is one of the countries which rich with the flora and fauna and a diversity of landscapes. Most of these unique landscape settings are located in the rural regions. Throughout the years, the demand for land has increased to cater for human activities which contribute to the global warming and climate change (Jaal & Abdullah, 2011). The rapid development of the urban area also affects the environment as mentioned by Hussain et. al., (2012), where Malaysia's rapid development increased from 62% of urban land in 2000 to 71% of urban land in 2010. Increase of land transformation also make unpredictable weather change which could affect the daily activities, spatial planning and usage, resources and materials (Hussain et. al., 2012; Amir et. al., 2014).

The development of the rural landscape corridor is essential in conserving the natural and cultural features of a country. The loss of the rural character is the main issue that has been found in the studies as mentioned by Jaal & Abdullah (2011), Hussain et. al., (2012) and Amir et. al., (2014), Carneiro, Lima & Silva (2015). The identity of an area will be loss once the culture is not preserved, such as cultural activities, daily living lifestyle and local settings. Besides, according to Tely (2014) the numbers of young generations that are moving out from the rural area had increased over the years as the products of agriculture in rural area had decreased from 25% in 1996 to 11.1% in 2012. On top of that, it was found that cultural activities have started to diminish. Simple activities such as children playing in front of the house, has been replaced with a lot of indoor activities. In certain areas, high rise buildings started to develop up covering the rural areas with hotels, offices, schools, apartments and buildings that has slowly changed the rural landscape character.

Although the replacement landscapes are proposed in every new development, yet without any specific characteristics the identity of rural area will be jeopardized.

The rural characters are important to attract tourist to use the rural landscape routes. The rural landscape characteristics are required to derive at a framework to guide the improvements of rural routes tourism in Malaysia. Besides, the rural tourism attractions and destinations are not well planned. The attractions at the rural area are always fragmentation with certain distance that makes it difficult for tourists to reach the location and difficult to find the location for them to visit.

1.3 RESEARCH AIM

The aim of this research is to identify the landscape characteristics of the rural area for the tourism routes to conserve and integrate the physical, cultural and environmental features of the rural landscape with tourism activities.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the rural landscape for tourism?
2. What are the needs of tourists and locals when they visit the rural routes and rural attractions?
3. How can the rural landscape characters be integrated in tourism route planning?
4. How do tourists perceive the attractiveness at the rural area?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives are:

1. To identify the landscape characteristics of the rural area and route for tourist attractions.
2. To examine the needs of the tourists and locals in rural tourism.
3. To recommend the rural landscape characters and tourism-related attributes for tourism route planning in rural areas.

1.6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

The key terms used in this study are ‘landscape character’, ‘rural landscape’, ‘rural tourism’ and ‘tourism route’. The operational definitions derived from literature review as elaborated in Chapter 2.

1. **Landscape character:** landscape characters are based on how the landscape is perceived by people that give the sense of place because different area will have different landscape surrounding.
2. **Rural landscape:** rural landscape is the combination of the natural environment, agricultural activities, settlement patterns and the traditional way of life that will bring the nostalgia of a place with natural, cultural, socio economic and vernacular architecture that are different from the suburban and urban area.
3. **Rural tourism:** rural tourism provides the relationship between the visitors and local people that will create more opportunity for the visitors to appreciate the culture and tradition of a village.
4. **Tourism route:** tourism route means the route that has its own attractions in term of culture, attractive area, sightseeing and lifestyle that present the rural identity.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is a significant endeavor in outlining the process of strengthening the rural corridor, while improving the tourism experience of visitors. The findings from this thesis is beneficial to the decision makers who are interested in identifying the rural landscape corridor for tourism planning projects through establishing the strategies with the availability, connectivity quality of the attractions, accommodations, amenities, activities and accessibility that could contribute to a better tourist experience.

The rural landscape corridor for tourism planning is the process that covers from the planning, designing, implementing, programming and evaluating public perception. Professionals such as Planners, Landscape Architects, Architects, and the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) can gain lot of information from this study by understanding and implementing the characteristics of rural landscape for tourism route planning process. Rural landscape corridor can be integrated for other projects that aim to determine the landscape characteristics of the rural area for the tourism routes to conserve, integrate the physical, cultural and environmental features of the rural landscape with tourism activities. Recommendations suggested in this study reflect the concerns and needs from the perspectives of the public and operators.

1.8 SCOPE OF STUDY

The scope of this study only focuses on three main domains of the research, which are landscape characteristics, rural landscape areas and tourism route planning. However, this study does not cover other aspects such as history and economics, as it may related to rural landscape corridor for tourism route planning in general. In addition, it only focuses on the existing rural landscape routes at the selected case study area.

1.9 RESEARCH STRUCTURE

In conducting the research, five main stages have been structured in order to acquire information and data for this study. The stages are:

Stage 1: Preliminary Work

Preliminary works involved the identification of the research issues and formulation of the research aim, research questions and objectives. The issues and research problems were identified earlier, prior to the literature review phase.

Stage 2: Literature Review

As part of the process of defining the scope of the study, the research began with an extensive literature review, drawing on a variety of secondary sources including books and journals. The literature review discussed the definition and concepts of the main key words that related in this study, which landscape characteristics, rural landscape areas and tourism route are planning. The literature review forms the basis in understanding the relation, information and reference studies of the main research subtopics. This stage of the work enabled the development of a theoretical framework for the study, which provided the basis for the research aims and objectives.

Stage 3: Data Collection

The first phase of the data collection involved a site inventory of the case study area. In the second phase, the survey questionnaire was carried out to the targeted respondents which are tourists' and locals. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted on tourist guides and homestay operator.

Stage 4: Data Analysis & Findings

The analysis of the inventory was done through a characteristics of rural landscape assessments descriptive analysis, while the interviews of the tourist' guides and