

Tamil Language and Studies Tourism and Hospitality

Extended Abstract

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<<A Review of Malaysian Women's Perceptions towards Solo Travelling >>

<< Toh Jen Ying and *Khairil Wahidin Awang* >>

<< tjy90@hotmail.com / khairil@upm.edu.my >>

1. Abstract

In response to the rise in tourism in Asia, the female travel market has shown an increase in lei. Historically, global travel is meant to be the prerogative of men but women and travel phenomena have emerged slowly together. Within South East Asia, Malaysia is one of the countries that is expected to have growth in tourism. The intention here is to investigate the perception of Malaysian women towards solo travel. This study addresses the Western and Asian gaps in the tourism field and provides an alternative under women from an Asian perspective. This study employed a qualitative approach. It started with a review literature on Asian female travellers, specifically Malaysian women in order to comprehend the social attributes towards Malaysian women on solo travelling pattern. Data were collected from Malaysian women between 19 to 33 years. An in-depth interview was conducted to collect data to find out their perceptions. Findings indicate that social and cultural identities are not the contributing factors that discouraged women to travel. Yet, Malaysian women have shown their reluctance towards solo travelling. Tourism and travel marketers are able to comprehend Asian perspectives, particularly Malaysian women who form marketing strategies for different socio-demographics.

Keywords: Asian female travellers, Decision-making, Malaysian women, Perceptions, Solo travel

2. Introduction and research problem/issue

Tourism is a vehicle of economic development in many nations. International World Travel Monitor (2017) predicts the growth of tourism to be continuous and to remain as a significant income earner despite world wars and terrorism, natural disasters and health epidemics. Within the phenomena of the global tourism industry, Malaysia itself plays a significant role in tourism. The growing potential of the tourism market in Malaysia has shown an increase in leisure travel among youngsters. But, this does not indicate a denial to

the traditional culture. Young women are getting better treatment such as better pay, better working conditions, appropriate leave and good education. The National Council of Women Organisations (NCWO) is a platform that provides skills and employment for women in Malaysia. The phenomenon of women's participation in solo travel is growing and the recognition towards this phenomenon has resulted in more attention on leisure purposes, especially in Asian countries. Sources from Trip Advisor Women's Travel Survey 2017 indicate that 60% of the women in South East Asia travel alone. Depriving them from the market would mean a significant potential expenditure by this group. This study is to identify the solo travelling patterns within the perspective of women. The aim is to acknowledge the voice of women in a field where they are less heard. The strength of this study is the ability to identify Malaysian women's travel practices, the socio-cultural influences and the dominant gender discourse in Asian society. This paper applies a qualitative method to conduct an interview with prospective women under this category. The purpose is to get a holistic approach in understanding the phenomena, especially with regard to women in Asia and their views on solo travelling patterns.

3. Research Methodology

This research applies the interpretive social science paradigm. The rationale of the paradigm allows the researcher to understand women's voice towards solo travelling patterns. The desire is to discover deeper under women's experience in their lives, thus the in-depth interview is the best choice. A semi-structured technique was adopted in this study as the researchers have the flexibility of changing and probing during interview sessions. The questions and issues raised depended on the context of the discussions. Focus areas include the lives of Malaysian women and their cultural and religious backgrounds, travel history and travel experiences. Researchers used snowball sampling and purposive sampling to conduct interviews. The process continued until it reached a point where the data was considered saturated. Besides that, the interview was conducted at a time based on the participants' convenience and the language used for the interviews was Chinese or English depending on the respondents' preference. Confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were ethical concerns, so that they were dealt with a sensitive and ethical manner. Respondents were identified by alphabets like respondent A to Z. Hence, the data and details of respondents would be treated with privacy.

4. Results and findings

The findings show that women are able to access travel freely nowadays. The first theme based on the data is that women travel freely. This is supported by a notion from respondent K: *Women can travel wherever they want*. This indicates that social and cultural attributes do not prohibit much on travelling, yet an individual's religious belief is still a consideration. Likewise, respondent Z's notion shows that: *Even I go to a non-Muslim country, I still can do being a Muslim*. Hence, facilities that provide for the believers to fulfill their religious obligations during travel are the prime considerations to travel.

The overview of Malaysian women involved in leisure is positive. Further evidence of Asian female t different countries can provide diverse outcomes. Based on the three themes above, the findings confi and Khoo-Lattimore (2012) studies regard ing Asian and Westerner perceptions. Young women 's tra has increased as is supported by Du Cros (2014). Yet, certain core features of Asian values ar Additionally, the studies of Sharipour et al (2014) of travel risk shared similar aspects with Malaysian women's participation in solo travelling. This contribution can provide a platform

for Asian female travellers in future tourism marketing and management.

6. References (Selected)

The trend of solo travelling among women in South East Asia has grown. Another theme on the find Malaysian women have doubts when participating in solo travelling despite the positive responses of w travellers. A majority of Malaysian women prefers to travel in groups rather than travel solo. The main Malaysian women is fear when travelling to unfamiliar places. According to respondent M: *pe understand me and it's so hard to understand those people*. Local customs, languages, commun adaptations are part of the consideration. Therefore, travelling in groups, the women are able to help when exploring a destination.

Besides, women do have fear against travel tragedies no matter how active they are which is one of th the findings. Their concern of being victims is born of their awareness through sources of the sa destinations. The notion from Respondent S is concerned with the possibility of risk: *you are the stra place so... easier for them to take opportunity*. Thus, fear is the biggest hindrance for Malaysian wome

5. Conclusions, implications and significance

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*Corresponding Author, Tel: +6017-9002528, Fax: 0000-00-0000000

E-mail Address: tjy90@hotmail.com