

Community- Based Mosque Tourism Model for Sustainable Socioeconomic Growth: A proposed Conceptual Study

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia's Islamic tourism sector has increasingly shown its credibility in the global Islamic trade and tourism industry as a tourist destination. Through this, mosques in Malaysia e.g; Seri Sendayan Mosque, Putra Mosque, Kristal mosque and many more were having a unique architecture of design and value to potentially attract the tourists' to come and visit this country. However, does the mosques able to enhance the socioeconomic activities of the local community "qariah"? Even they are receiving many tourists nowadays, the sustainable impact to local community is still require an action from this industry. It is a loss when the country has a valuable assets (mosques) with a unique structure and design that has successfully attract the tourist but no action is taken to enhance the socioeconomic of local community that contribute to realizing a few of the national SDGS that focuses on sustainable community's socioeconomic growth. In response to this issue, this study is done to provide detailed study on the background of Islamic tourism that focuses to mosque tourism and proposed a sustainable community based model within the mosque tourism activities. This study contributes the relevant conceptual evidence which establishing a model of sustainability for community to implement following to the three element of economic, society and environment.

Key Words: Local Community, Mosque Tourism, Sustainability, Socioeconomic Growth

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism if often referred to as the world's largest industry and regarded as a means of achieving community development (Sharpley, 2002). According to the world tourism organization (2009), tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industry and one of the global engines of development. This industry is also closely linked to religion which has acted as a powerful motive for traveling, religious buildings, rituals, festivals and religious events are important tourist attractions for those are the followers of the particular systems of belief represented (Henderson, 2003).

Islamic tourism is a new tourism destination in the world today. There are 54 Muslim countries in the world (figure 1). Most of the countries situated in an important nerve point of the world. Due to the geographical and economic importance of muslim countries, this tourism increases day by day. Same goes to the development of mosques as a tourist attraction in the tourism industry. Mosque has the potential to play a significant role in the economic development of the ummah. The prophet has given examples that the mosque does not only serve as the centre of worship, but mosque is also a centre of economic and other activities. during the time of the prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the mosques were represented as a place for communal gathering of Muslim society, as well as a centre for worship, education and training, social activities, society development centre, information centre, judicial centre, communication centre, society interaction centre, treatment and emergency, rehabilitation centre and art centre (Ariff, 2009). In the present time, mosques should be able to manage potential for the benefit of the Ummah.

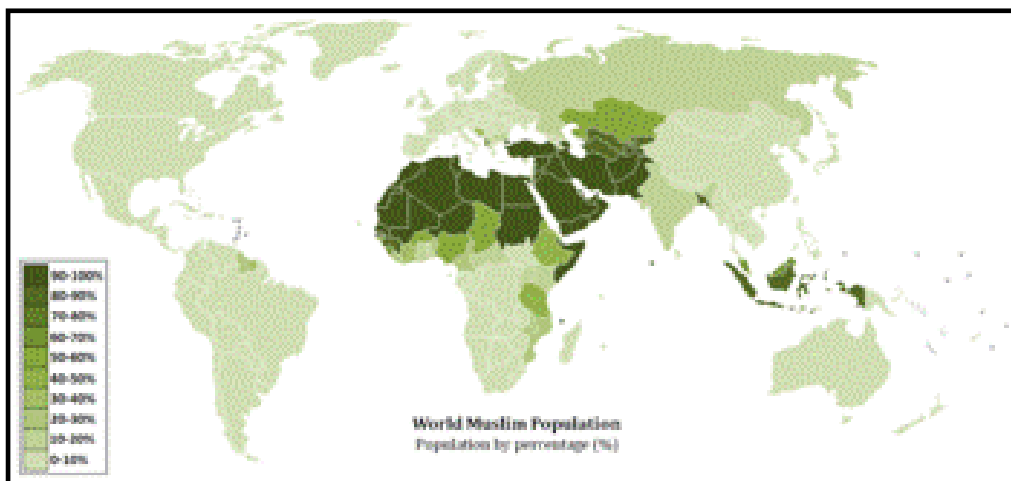


Figure 1: World Muslim Population

However, even they are receiving many tourists nowadays, the sustainable impact to local community is still require an action from this industry (Aref, Redzuan, & Gill, 2017). It is a loss when the country has a valuable assets (mosques) with a unique structure and design that has successfully attract the tourist but no action is taken to enhance the socioeconomic of local community that contribute to realizing a few of the national SDGS (Figure 2) that focuses on sustainable community’s socioeconomic growth. In addition to that, understanding and assessing tourism impacts in local communities is important in order to maintain sustainability and long-term success of the tourism industry (Diedrich & Garcí’a-Buades, 2008). To date, very little research has examined residents’ perceived impacts of tourism toward the local communities in developing countries (Zamani & Musa, 2018)

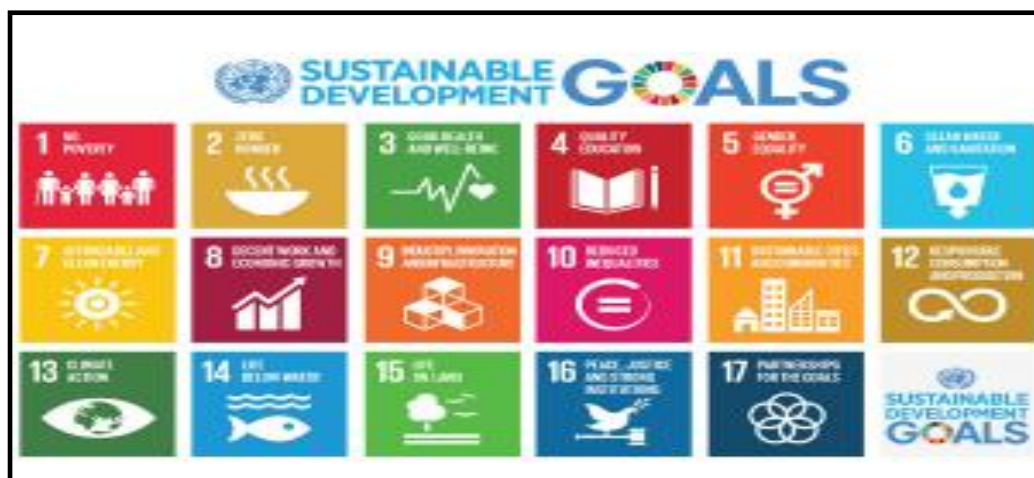


Figure 2: National SDGS 2030

Responding to this issue, it is important for a researcher to study on the perception and awareness of the local communities as well as the qariah within the mosque toward the potential impact of the mosques to enhance social and economic activities of the community for a sustainable socioeconomic growth despite the potential of those mosque in attracting a tourist for nation’s economic development. As there is limited understanding of residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts toward local communities and also very few research has been done here on the process of tourism in Malaysia. Hence the purpose of this study is to examine community perceptions toward social and economic impacts of mosque tourism to the local community socioeconomic growth.

Furthermore, in order to be an outstanding mosque, the institutions should be well managed and administered so that it can give a benefit to the local communities within the qariah (Alim & Abdullah, 2010). Thus, a comprehensive model of community based mosque tourism also need to be establish so that the implementation of this idea can be realize by the community and qariah of the mosque itself effectively and efficiently. However, to provide economic contribution to the people, it requires a commitment of takmir mosque and supported by the jamaah. In addition,

studies and da'wah in the field of Islamic economics are required, so that people understand that Islam teaching has the aspect of muamalah and commerce. After the people already have an understanding then they will have the awareness to participate in mosque-based economic activities (Riwajanti, Muwidha & Candrawati, 2018).

2. MOSQUE AND ITS INITIAL ROLE IN ISLAM

Malaysia is a moderate Muslim country of south-east Asia. There are a lot of Islamic infrastructures, mosques, Islamic heritage sites in Malaysia. This country also has attractive Muslim cultures and customs. So, the country may be an Islamic tourism destination in the world. Tourism Malaysia has sold the country as a safe destination with a familiar culture which is able to cater to Islamic travellers in the country (the straits times, 2002).

The word mosque or al-masjid (figure 3) is literally means a place of prostration. Al-masjid comes from the Arabic word sajada, yasjudu, sajdan or sujudan. It means devoted, loyal and with bowed heads with full respect and reverence (Wahab, 2008). In the early history of the Islamic development, mosque is the centre of Islamic civilization which has two functions. First, mosque has religious functions as a place of worship, prayer, dhikr and i'tikaf, and social functions as centres of education, education and teaching, central government administration. Second, it has socio-economic function with the establishment of baitul maal which manages zakat, infaq and alms giving to help the poor; a tradition continued by khulafaur rashidin and his successor caliph (Astari & Puji, 2014; Basid & Abdul. 2009; Dalmeri. 2014).



Figure 3: Quba Mosque, Madinah (Oldest Mosque around the World)

Thus Razak, Hussin, Muhammad and Mahjom (2014) in their study has critically mentioned that mosque institutions must be administered and managed effectively on the spirit of sincerity and trust from Allah SWT. Most importantly, a good management must be translated into action so that the mosque would be fully functional as recommended by the prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Mosque is a place for establishing communication with the god and expressing servitude and nothingness before the divinity and magnificence of the creator of the universe (Hayati, Ra'ouf, & Karavani, 2019). It has been quoted from the great apostle of Islam (May Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of his regards) that "say prayers wherever it was time for praying, do it immediately because the earth is your mosque".

3. THE IDEAL ROLE OF MOSQUE IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The function of mosque as a centre for the development of the Ummah becomes an important thing, as stated by all informants. As a place of worship, the mosque is used in a variety of activities directly related to worship and spiritual development. In addition, the mosque also serves as a centre of civilization where all the problems of the Ummah are discussed, for example issues related to economics, education, politics, culture etc.

Some mosques already have a variety of economic activities in the form of mosque owned enterprises, but the number is very limited (Hamdani & Muhammad Ibrahim, 2016). Several studies related to the community empowerment through mosque have been done in several cities and all

found that the mosque has the potential to improve the welfare of the people who live around the mosque. In addition, mosque's function as a development and empowerment of Muslims as a whole should not be neglected (Dalmeri, 2014). As a place of worship, the mosque is used in a variety of activities directly related to worship and spiritual development. In addition, the mosque also serves as a centre of civilization where all the problems of the Ummah are discussed, for example issues related to economics, education, politics, culture etc. currently, the function of worship has been implemented well, unfortunately the function as civilization development still get less attention from the society.

Therefore, mosques need to be encouraged so that these two functions can run well by improving creativity of mosque board to serve the Ummah, to increase the welfare. Jemaah mosques need to be fostered to have a balance of religious ethos and strong work ethic. Thus creativity recognizing economic opportunities and opening up businesses to capture this opportunities is important (Riwajanti, Muwidha & Candrawati, 2018).

4. PROPOSED COMMUNITY BASED MOSQUE TOURISM MODEL FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Since the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) came into force on September 2015, all countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. Malaysia has taken one step further in realising these goals. As noble as the vision can be, realising these ambitions in achieving the SDGs and eliminating poverty will require mobilising the right scale and mix of financing, including incorporating all resources – public and private, domestic and international. As one of Muslim-populated country in the world, Malaysia has the upper hand in accessing and mobilising Islamic instruments.

“Sustainability” as defined in commerce is derived from the term “sustainable development” used in the “Triple Bottom Line” and the Social Sustainability Index (Elkington, 1997). Next Alhaddi (2015) and Joseph (2013) have all posited that sustainability exists within the structure of social, environmental, and economic pillars. This is also echoed by Elkington's triple bottom line of sustainability, the former of which has been discussed within the research on sustainability (Das & Rangarajan, 2017; Delai & Takahashi, 2011; Drennan, 2003; Elkington, 1997; Joseph, 2013).

Thus, in proposing a sustainable model of community based mosque tourism, an element of sustainability that derived from the theory of Elkington is being adapted. Figure 4 below has illustrated how the sustainability element is being integrated within the community in operatizing the mosque tourism so that it may sustainably enhance the socioeconomic growth of the industry as well as local community.



Figure 3: Sustainable model in Community Based Mosque Tourism

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Sustainable development is high potential for any community within economic, social, cultural, ecologic and physical constraints. Tourism can be sustainable if development meets the needs of tourists and local residents while protecting future opportunities. Tourism activity would give a huge impact on sustainable development. There is a higher chance for the development of sustainable tourism and the preservation of its competitiveness in the quality of the environment to preserve the natural heritage and fascinating culture and values of other goods and resources. The fundamental strategy to enhance the sustainability of tourism is fully utilized of taxes and subsidies to improve the facilities of economic, environmental and social infrastructure. Drumm and Moore (2005) highlighted a few key considerations for ecotourism development at the community level. The key considerations also called as a fundamental principle that should be considered in planning for community involvement in ecotourism activities comprised with creating a partnership, avoid putting all eggs in the ecotourism basket and link the ecotourism benefit to conservation. At the same time, society should be considered as value added for their participation leading to ecotourism products and the interests of the involvement for the development of sustainable communities as active community participation in ecotourism is good for business and environmental conservation. Thus an adaptation of sustainability model within the community based mosque tourism activities need to be considered. However, future study need to be done empirically so that the study may contribute to the facts on the proposed conceptual framework.

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