

A Descriptive Recreation Activity Pattern of International Tourists in Tunku Abdul Rahman Park

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The purpose of this descriptive research is to identify the recreation participation pattern of international tourists in Tunku Abdul Rahman Park (TARP). A total sample of 100 respondents was obtained using convenient sampling technique. The findings indicated that recreation patterns were divided into active and passive recreation activities. Therefore, the recreation patterns are varied depending on the demographic characteristics and preferences of activities which the tourists are interested to participate specifically in the study area. Most of the respondents were first-time visitors and traveling with family. Social media was used as a platform to attain information regarding the TARP. The key attractions of TARP were the ocean, the seaside, and active recreation activities. Understanding recreation participation patterns will help park managers to access the tourists' needs and demand of recreational activities in TARP.

Keywords: Descriptive analysis, international tourists, recreation patterns, active-passive recreation activity

I. INTRODUCTION

Leisure and recreation activities are diversifying worldwide, with protected areas become the key attractions for the tourist visit (Margaryan and Fredman, 2017). The term's recreation and leisure are often used interchangeably. According to Baud-Bovy and Lawson, (2002) leisure is regarded as free time that one is not devoted to work or other self-care obligations, while recreation is defined as a voluntary activity that occur in leisure time and, which has social benefits (Edginton *et al.*, 2006).

Over the past 60 years, recreation and leisure activities have influenced by environmental, demographic, social and economic trends in modern society (Floyd *et al.*, 2009; Godbey *et al.*, 2005; McLean and Hurd, 2012). Recognizing the importance of recreation and leisure participation patterns study will reflect the changing of preferences and behavior of recreationist that is driven by social changes and trend in improving a healthy lifestyle (Andkjær and Arvidsen, 2015).

Shaping on the leisure and recreation aspect, the challenge is to distinguish the participation of recreational patterns, especially in protected

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areas, which less research was conducted so far (Fredman *et al.*, 2012). Thus, this study aims to identify the recreational participation pattern among the international tourists in TARP. In this study, we quantify foreign tourists' recreational activities patterns according to their participation in passive and active activities using a descriptive analysis. An active recreation refers to structured activity that requires the use of special equipment and facilities, while passive recreation consists of activities that do not require a significant facility.

An overview of Sabah's tourism industry, it is among the states which often receive a high number of visitors. The current number of tourist arrivals hit 3.7 million, which bring about the RM7.76 billion to the country, with a growth of 9.4 percent in international arrivals (Olivia Miwil, 2018). This is because Sabah has successfully positioning the right destination image to the targeted market, whereby nature-based and coastal attractions were the most appealing images that tourists perceived towards Sabah (Abdul Rashid, 2012).

The image of coastal or island can create images of fantasy, an escapism from mundane routine and is a worldly paradise with exotic lifestyle (Baum, 1997). These images reflect the 3s attractions on the island "sun, sea and sand" (Lockart, 1997), and indeed most of the islands combine beach attractions with hills, mountains and the uniqueness of flora and fauna (Seetanah, 2011). These attractions are found in TARP.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

TARP is the second national park established in Sabah, which was gazetted in 1974 for protection and conservation of natural resources such as flora, fauna and marine ecosystems (Sabah Park, 2015). The journey to the TARP takes about 20 minutes on a boat ride from Jesselton jetty. As shown in Figure1, TARP comprises five small islands, namely Pulau Sapi, Pulau Manukan, Pulau Gaya, Pulau Mamutik, and Pulau Sulug. This area of TARP is 4,929 hectares and two-thirds of the area are sea and surrounded by coral reefs (Praveena, 2011). Activity that is related to the 3s "sand-sea-sun" that makes TARP highly attractive to international tourists. It attracts over 500,000 visitors throughout the year 2016, where 65% from the total visitors are international tourists.

This descriptive research describes the recreational patterns among international tourists at TARP. The instrument used for this study was a self-administered questionnaire with closed-ended questions, consisted of 2 sections that are related to the background of the respondents and recreation participation patterns at TARP. This instrument was adopted and modified from Jaafar & Maideen, (2012). The total of 100 respondents were sampled at Jesselton Point jetty using a convenient sampling technique. The target respondent is a foreign visitor who visited at least one out of five islands in TARP.



Figure 1. Tunku Abdul Rahman Park

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The distribution of respondents according to country of origin is shown in Figure 2. Majority of them were come from European countries, followed by Asia, North America and Oceania. In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, Table 1 indicates that majority of the respondents consist of female with average age of 34 years old and attained a bachelor degree level of education. The study also recorded that 40% of them were working in the private sector and earning not more than \$ 20,000 USD per annum.

The travel patterns of the respondents were summarized in Table 2. Most of them were first-time travelers, traveled with family, and purposely pay a visit for vacation and recreation, while spending time with loved ones. Rapid and widespread accessibility made

social media as the main source of information for the respondent to visit TARP. Overall, Pulau Sapi has been identified as the most visited island by the respondents when visiting TARP with the percentage of 46.2% (Table 2).

The recreation activities in TARP can be divided into two types of activity; passive and active as shown in Figure 3(a) and 3(b) respectively. The most frequent active recreational activity carried out by the respondents is snorkeling, while passive recreational activity is sightseeing. The result also discovered that respondents from the temperate countries were mostly participated into both types of recreational activities, and they were attracted by 3s attraction of 'sun, sea, sand'. Asian respondents, on the other hand, were into less physical involvement in the recreation activities such as sightseeing and picnicking and camping.

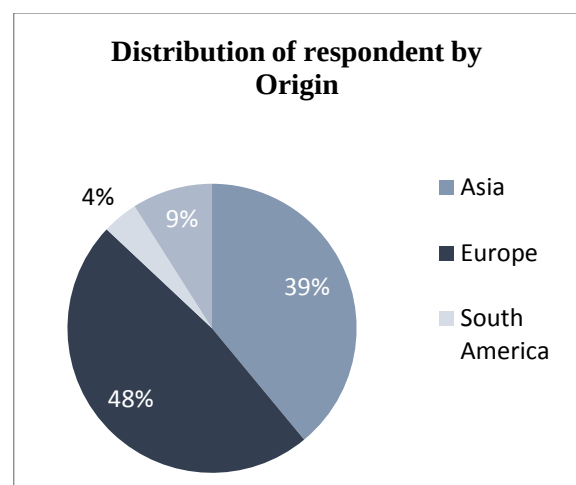


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents by origin

Table 1. Respondents' socio-demographic characteristics

Item	Percentage (%) (n=100)
Gender	
Male	47.0
Female	53.0
Age (mean = 34.38)	
<20	48.0
21-30	20.0
31-40	16.0
>41	11.0
Education level	
Primary school	1.0
Secondary school	5.0
Diploma	12.0
Bachelor	40.0
Masters/	34.0
PhD	8.0
Occupation	
Unemployed	6.0
Government sector	19.0
Private sector	40.0
Self-employed	5.0
Retired	20.0
Student	
Annual income (USD)	
<\$20,000	26.0
\$20,001-\$40,000	20.0
\$40,001-\$60,000	20.0
\$60,001-\$80,000	13.0
>\$80,001	13.0

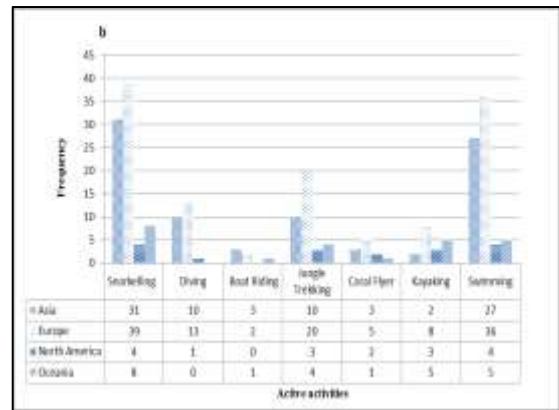
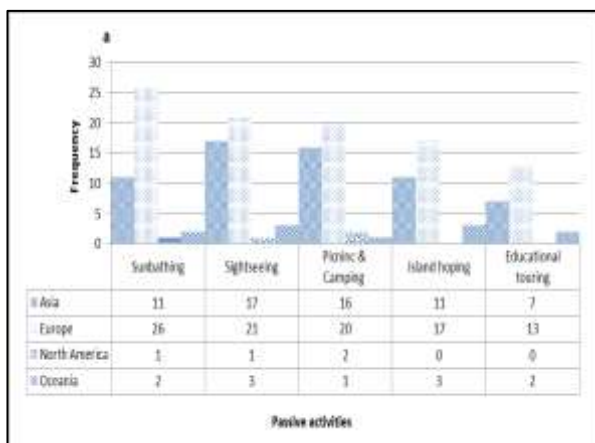


Figure 3. (a) Frequency of passive recreation activity and (b) frequency of active recreation activity

Table 2. Respondents' travel patterns

Item	Percentage (%) (n=100)
Type of visitors	
First timer	77.0
repeater	23.0
Purpose of visit	
Vacation	68.5
Recreation	23.6
Visit friends and relatives	4.8
Business	1.6
Educational visit	1.6
Travel companion	
Alone	4.0
Spouse	30.0
Family	33.0
Friends	33.0
Source of information	
Social media	29.5
Brochures	12.1
Tourist guide book	23.1
Travel agencies	8.9
Tourist information center	4.5
Mouth-to-mouth	21.8
Most visited islands	
Pulau Gaya	13.6
Pulau Mamutik	10.3
Pulau Manukan	29.3
Pulau Sapi	46.2
Pulau Sulug	0.5

IV. CONCLUSION

To conclude, TARP is a popular tourist destination that focuses on the sun-sea-sand

activities. The preference of active or passive recreational activities among the respondents explain the needs of leisure and recreation in the context of social benefits, and natural settings are crucial to stimulate the participation patterns in the respective activities (Andkjær & Arvidsen, 2015).

For future study, a broader perspective and other methods may be carried out to seek in-depth understanding of the leisure and recreation participation patterns, especially in other natural settings, e.g. forest or inland areas. In contrast to the descriptive research, it

is suggested that explanatory research may obtain evidence regarding cause and effect relationships among the variables to pave a clearer picture of the current trends in leisure and recreation field of study.

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