

THE POTENTIAL OF TASIK GUBIR AS A POPULAR AGRO TOURISM DESTINATION IN KEDAH, MALAYSIA

**SALMAH OMAR ^{1*}, ZAWIYAH MOHD ZAIN ², NOR HANANI BINTI ISMAIL³,
ZULHILMI PAIDI ⁴ and MOHAMAD KHADAFI BIN HJ. ROFIE⁵**

^{1, 3, 4, 5} School of Language, Philosophy and Civilisation, Universiti Utara Malaysia.

² School of Government, Universiti Utara Malaysia.

*Corresponding Author Email: zulsusila@gmail.com, salmahomar@uum.edu.my

Abstract

Malaysia, especially the state of Kedah, has many natural areas that have potential as tourism areas. Although there are many beautiful and fascinating areas, such as Tasik Gubir (Lake Gubir) in Sik, not much research has been done to make the area a popular tourist attraction. This makes Tasik Gubir less popular and rarely visited by tourists, especially from outside of Kedah. Additionally, there is no comprehensive effort to promote Tasik Gubir as an agro-tourism destination. This study aims to identify the potential of Tasik Gubir, Sik, as a popular agro-tourism destination in Kedah. This study used the quantitative method to explore the potential of Tasik Gubir as a popular agro-tourism destination. Data was collected through questionnaires that were randomly distributed to 100 tourists who visited Tasik Gubir from 1 to 30 July 2022. The study revealed that Tasik Gubir has the potential as an agro-tourism attraction due to its charms. The results found that four main factors attract visitors to Tasik Gubir, namely its natural beauty, food, heritage, and culture. Therefore, it is recommended that the state government take the initiative to maintain the ecosystem and level of cleanliness, provide better basic amenities and highlight more activities and local food in the vicinity of Tasik Gubir. This study contributes to increasing tourism activities in Kedah and further helps the economic generation of the local community, namely Sik.

Keywords: Fishing activities, Agro-tourism, Tasik Gubir, Tourists

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism destinations are a vital source of wealth for a country because they can attract many tourists who, in turn, can bring positive changes to a country's economy. Further, it influences various things such as socio-politics, ecology, markets, tourism products, finance, and foreign exchange. According to World Tourism Organization (WTO) records, tourism has become the most important global economic sector since the mid-1990s. Among the earliest countries to make the largest profits in this sector are Portugal, Tunisia, Brazil, and Spain (Goeldner et.al 2000).

Tourism destinations are a vital source of wealth for a country because they can attract many tourists who, in turn, can bring positive changes to a country's economy. Further, it influences various things such as socio-politics, ecology, markets, tourism products, finance, and foreign exchange. According to World Tourism Organization (WTO) records, tourism has become the most important global economic sector since the mid-1990s. Some of the earliest countries to make huge profits in this sector are Portugal, Tunisia, Brazil, and Spain (Goeldner et al., 2000).

Tourism is one of the most popular leisure activities around the world. Like Malaysia, most countries are trying to make tourism the main activity that can bring good returns to the country. Malaysia's participation in the tourism industry dates back to the early 1980s. The tourism industry in Malaysia reached its peak following the formation of a new economic corridor region in 2007, the right strategy and approach to ensure the balance of Malaysia's economic development are more robust, especially in the tourism sector. The participation of developing countries such as Malaysia in the global tourism market proves the importance of this industry in the country's growth.

The effort to strengthen the tourism industry in Malaysia continues with the allocation made by the government. The allocation amount approved in the country's five-year development plan often increases over time. For example, the Third Malaysia Plan, (1976-1980) was approved at RM27.19 million, increased to RM40 million in the Fourth Malaysia Plan (1981-1985), and continued to increase to RM780 million in the Eighth Malaysia Plan and then to RM1847.9 million in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010) (Wan Suzita, 2015).

The tourism industry has various positive impacts, especially on local groups or residents in tourism areas. Thus, people are highly encouraged to develop areas or tourism destinations that have the potential to grow. Apart from having a positive socioeconomic impact, the tourism industry can also positively contribute to the local community from cultural, social, and environmental aspects.

Agro-tourism is a tourism activity that is based on agriculture, agro-based industries, livestock, and fishery. Besides providing side income and job opportunities for rural residents, Agro-tourism can also help environmental conservation, especially in rural areas (Li Yang, 2012). Agro-tourism experience can also change consumer spending patterns in food categories such as grains, vegetables, meat, and fish (Sumin Kim et al., 2019).

In Malaysia, the main agency responsible for the development of agro-tourism is the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry while the Ministry of Tourism assists in terms of domestic and foreign promotions. Agro-tourism is one of the programs under the Support Services and Industrial Development Division, Ministry of Agriculture, and Agro-Based Industry, under the Ninth Malaysia Plan (RMK-9). It is divided into three components, implemented by each agency or department under the Ministry, namely fishery agro-tourism, farming agro-tourism, and livestock agro-tourism.

Agro-tourism has various advantages and special features in attracting tourists. The importance of agro-tourism is to take advantage of the beauty of the scenery, peace of the countryside, and flora and fauna, which can continue to be developed commercially without affecting the environment for the benefit of people from all over the world (Rozniza Aznie Che Rose & et al., 2015).

The tourism industry, including agro-tourism, plays an important role in the economic development of the country. Agro-tourism can provide several advantages in terms of economy. The average income from agro-tourism is estimated to be one-third of the total income of farmers. Food service is an important factor in the success of agro-tourism as a side

income for farmers (Jeczmyk, 2015). The experience of agro-tourism can effectively increase consumer intention to buy local food, which is food offered in agro-tourism areas (Brune et al., 2021).

Malaysia has various interesting areas throughout the country. However, many other areas, such as Tasik Gubir, have the potential as tourist spots but are still unknown to many. So far, no specific agro-tourism study focuses on Sik, especially Tasik Gubir. This study aims to identify the potential of Tasik Gubir in Sik, Kedah, as a popular freshwater fishery agro-tourism destination in Kedah.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Agro-tourism is a tourism activity based on the industry of agriculture, agro-based industries, livestock, and fishery. Agro-tourism offers tourists various rural activities such as visits to fruit orchards and livestock farms, research, recreation, and leisure. Tourists also have the opportunity to stay in a chalet or stay in the village and do the daily activities of the rural community. Agro-tourism is a form of tourism that utilizes rural culture as a tourist attraction.

Based on research in Poland, most domestic holidays are spent in agro-tourism areas, which is the best option after the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because Agro-tourism is a form of tourism in small groups (non-mass tourism), and tourists prefer to spend time in small natural areas, usually located far from community settlements. Respondents stated that other than offering basic features such as reasonable prices, peaceful and safe locations, tourism on a small scale, like agro-tourism areas, can also reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 (Wojcieszak-Zbierska, et al., 2020).

Razaei et al. (2021), in their study of Korean respondents, found that tourists who travel in agro-tourism areas can immediately improve their mood compared to individuals who are at home. Therefore, they suggest that agro-tourism has the potential to increase positive mood and thereby improve mental health.

In Malaysia, popular agro Tourism destinations are MAEPS Agro Tourism Park, Serdang, Selangor, Shah Alam National Botanical Garden (TBNSA), Nipah Kipli Farm, Kuala Sangklang Perlis, MARDI Agro Technology Park Langkawi, Kedah, Floating Chalet PPK Merbok, Kedah, FAMA Honey Bee Processing Center, Kuala Nerang, Kedah, Ladang Mempelam MOA Inc., Tobiar, Pendang, Kedah, MARDI Agro Technology Park Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Cherating Turtle Sanctuary and Information Center, Pahang, Setiu Farmers Agrotourism & Resort, Terengganu, and Sabah Agricultural Park, Sabah. Agro-tourism has great potential to attract tourists to Malaysia. According to sources from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, the number of tourists to agro-tourism destinations is projected to increase from 1.5 million in 2010 to 6 million in 2020.

Two of the largest natural lakes in Malaysia, namely Tasik Bera and Tasik Chini, are located in Pahang. These two lakes are not only rich in biological resources and plants as a source of food, water supply, medicine, fuel, construction, and handicrafts, but they are also important for the tourism economy. A study by Mustaffa Omar, Zanisah Man & Ishak Yussof (2011)

showed that Tasik Chini and the surrounding area offer a vital source of livelihood to the local population. In addition to food sources, fishing activities, and searching forest products, it creates a village area as a residence. However, the large-scale exploration of this area for commercial crops such as rubber and palm oil has caused the diversity of natural and biological treasures around the lake to decrease and suffer extinction. The development of the lake area for tourism has also greatly disturbed the lake ecosystem, especially with the construction of 251 water locks in Kuala Sg. Chini. This action not only disrupted the biological ecosystem of the lake, including the water quality and natural environment of the lake, but it also disrupted the sustainability of natural resources that are the source of livelihood for residents. In this context, the presence and involvement of the Jakun indigenous community in Tasik Chini cannot be dismissed. Their deep traditional knowledge and conservation measures have, for a long time, helped protect and conserve the natural resources around the lake area so that they do not become extinct. The authorities need to recognize the participation of the local community in the decision-making process and implementation of conservation measures.

A study of the participation of indigenous people in eco-tourism activities in Tasik Chini, Pahang, Malaysia, was conducted by Zanisah Man & Yeoh En Ne (2019). Apart from Tasik Bera, Tasik Chini is the second-largest natural lake in Malaysia. Tasik Chini is located in Mukim Penyor, Pekan, and Pahang. The study found that the Jakun community's participation in eco-tourism programs, including environmental care and conservation, is very positive. However, currently, the readiness of Tasik Chini as a destination for domestic and foreign tourists is hard to achieve due to the deterioration of the environment. Therefore, this study suggests that cooperation between the community and relevant authorities is vital in dealing with the environmental problems in Tasik Chini. Eco-tourism activities based on Orang Asli culture as well as homestay and *kampungstay* concepts should be introduced to bring back tourists to this area.

Nor Salwani binti Mat Arsad (2017) conducted a study on the impact of tourism development on the local community in Pengkalan Gawi, Tasik Kenyir, and Terengganu. Pengkalan Gawi is the main entrance to visit Tasik Kenyir. Respondents of the study consisted of the local community and visitors who came to Pengkalan Gawi. The study showed that there is an economic change in the local community in terms of business opportunities and the boating transportation industry. In addition, residents also participate in the service sector, such as working in chalets, hotels, fish farmers, and others. The community has also become more competitive. For example, in the past, they were only involved in the agricultural sector, but now some have become boat operators and chalet owners. Apparently, the income of local community increases with the existence of the tourism industry.

Based on previous literature, no research has ever been done on Tasik Gubir. Previous studies regarding lakes were related to natural lakes such as Tasik Chini and Tasik Bera in Pahang and Tasik Kenyir in Terengganu. The main attraction for tourists to Tasik Gubir is its nature and local food. It is different from other lakes in Malaysia, where there are settlements and local activities.

3. METHODOLOGY

Location

This study was conducted in Tasik Gubir, a lake located in Sik. Sik is a district located in the state of Kedah, Malaysia. It is the largest district in Kedah. Sik is bordered by Thailand in the northeast and north, Baling in the east and south, Kuala Muda in the southwest, and Pendang and Padang Terap in the northwest. Sik covers an area of 166,793.67 hectares and consists of 4 mukims, namely Mukim Sik, Mukim Jeneri, Mukim Sok, and Mukim Teloi. The population of Sik was 80,350 in 2010.

The largest land use for Sik is forestry, covering an area of 123,619.61 hectares, 74.89% of Sik. Most of these forest areas are in the northwestern part of the district. Sik is a unique district with many well-preserved recreational and amenity forests. Sik is also an area rich in the beauty of flora and fauna. In addition, the second largest land use is agriculture, with an area of 31,259.83 hectares or 18.74% of Sik. On the whole, Sik is still an agricultural district (Sik District Council Website). Sik is full of agro-tourism elements and has the potential to thrive as an agro-tourism center in Kedah.

Map 1: Map of Malaysia



Source: <https://ms.maps-malaysia-my.com/img/0/malaysia-peta-lokasi.jpg>

Map 2: Map of Kedah



Source: <https://www.visitselangor.com/information/malaysia-maps/map-of-kedah-state/>

Map 3: Map of Sik



Source: <http://pekansik.pjk.com.my/index.php/warga-pi1m/maklumat-pi1m/sejarah/55-sejarah>

Research Design

This is a quantitative study that used questionnaires as the main instrument. Data was obtained by distributing questionnaires to 100 randomly selected respondents in Tasik Gubir from 1-30 July 2022. The collected data was analyzed through SPSS to produce a descriptive analysis. The questionnaire consists of four parts. First, the demographic information of the respondent, second, the attraction factor, third, the convenience factor and finally, the challenge factor.

Data analysis

In this study, the descriptive analysis consisted of the mean score and standard deviation. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), the mean is the average value of the data set. The mean aims to measure the central tendency by dividing all the total values together with the number of values found in the data set. The mean value will be evaluated based on three levels, namely high, medium, and low, according to the score for each variable in the questionnaire. The distribution of mean values is shown in Table 3.1.

The standard deviation is a measure of spread and dispersion given by the positive square root of the variance. In this study, the standard deviation will describe the variation of the spread of the sample distribution obtained from the mean. The most valuable index is when the estimate of the standard deviation is greater than one - it indicates that the respondents are very consistent with their opinions. On the other hand, if the estimated standard deviation is greater than three, it indicates a variation in the respondents' opinions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013).

Table 3.1: Interpretation of Mean Score

Mean Score Value	Interpretation of Mean Score
1.00 to 2.33	Low
2.34 to 3.67	Medium
3.68 to 5.00	High

Source: Londell (1977)

Table 3.2 shows the mean score and standard deviation for all dependent and independent variables. Overall, it was found that the mean scores for all seven dependent and independent variables ranged from 3.37 to 4.26, which is at a medium and high level. The tourism package factor recorded the lowest mean score of 3.37, with a standard deviation of .613, while the dining factor has the highest mean score of 4.26, with a standard deviation of .588. Next, for tourism activity, attraction, and connectivity/accessibility factors, each recorded a high mean score of 4.08 with a standard deviation of .526, 4.13 mean score with a standard deviation of .432, and 3.91 mean score with a standard deviation of .653, respectively. While for public amenities factor, the mean score is at a medium level, 3.43, with a standard deviation of .566, and the information factor is also at a medium level, with a mean score of 3.44 and a standard deviation of .609. Relatively speaking, all variables have a standard deviation score of less than one. This shows that the views given by the respondents have a small variation.

Table 3.2: Mean and Standard Deviation

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation of Mean Score
Attraction factor	4.13	.432	High
Connectivity/Accessibility factor	3.91	.653	High
Tourism Activity factor	4.08	.526	High
Tour Package factor	3.37	.613	Medium
Dining factor	4.26	.588	High
Public Amenities factor	3.43	.566	Medium
Information factor	3.44	.609	Medium

Respondent Demographics

Demographic profiles for 100 respondents were collected to give a clear overview of the distribution of respondents according to characteristics such as state, district in Kedah, gender, age, academic qualifications, marital status, occupation and monthly income. These characteristics were included to inform the demographic profile of the sample. In the frequency and percentage distribution data below, the valid data is 100, which represents 100 percent (%) and has no missing values.

The distribution of respondents by state (Table 3.3) shows that the number of respondents from Kedah is more than respondents from other states, which is 89 (89%). Then followed by 6 (6%) respondents from Penang. While Perak and Perlis only have a small number of respondents, namely 3 (3%) and 2 (2%), respectively.

Table 3.3: Respondent by State

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Kedah	89	89.0
Pulau Pinang	6	6.0
Perak	3	3.0
Perlis	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 3.4 shows the distribution of respondents by district, according to the state of Kedah. Based on the survey of the respondent's district in Kedah, the number of respondents in Kulim, 21 (21%), was more than in other districts. Then, followed by respondents from Sik, 17 (17%), Baling 11 (11%), and Kuala Nerang, 10 (10%). In addition, there were 8 (8%) respondents from Sungai Petani, 7 (7%) from Alor Setar, and 4 (4%) from Pokok Sena. While respondents from Pendang and Jitra, each have the same number, 3 (3%). Kuala Kedah and Gurun also obtained the same number of respondents, 2 (2%) respondents each. Kuala Muda offered only one (1%) respondent.

Table 3.4: Respondent by District of Kedah

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Kulim	21	21.0
Sik	17	17.0
Baling	11	11.0
Kuala Nerang	10	10.0
Sungai Petani	8	8.0
Alor Setar	7	7.0
Pokok Sena	4	4.0
Pendang	3	3.0
Jitra	3	3.0
Kuala Kedah	2	2.0
Gurun	2	2.0
Kuala Kedah	1	1.0
Total	89	89.0

In terms of gender, there are more male compared to female respondents, 25 (25%) females and 75 (75%) males (table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Gender of Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	75	75.0
Female	25	25.0
Total	100	100.0

In terms of age, Table 3.6 shows that the age range of 36 to 40 years recorded the highest number of respondents, 21 (21%). Then, followed by the age range of 31 to 35 years, which recorded 16 (16%) respondents. For respondents aged 25 years and below and 26 to 30 years, each obtained the same number of respondents, 14 (14%). While the age range of 41 to 45 years and the age range of 51 years and above only recorded 13 (13%) respondents each. The aged 46 to 50 years category has the least respondents, 9 (9%).

Table 3.6: Respondent by Age

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
25 years and below	14	14.0
26 – 30 years	14	14.0
31 – 35 years	16	16.0
36 – 40 years	21	21.0
41 – 45 years	13	13.0
46 – 50 years	9	9.0
51 years and above	13	13.0
Total	100	100.0

The distribution of the highest academic qualifications of the respondents is shown in Table 3.7. This table shows that the majority of respondents involved in this study have SPM qualifications, with number of respondents being 52 (52%), followed by respondents with Diploma qualifications, which is 23 (23%). Then, followed by respondents who have a

Bachelor's degree, 12 (12%), an SRP/PMR qualification, 3 (3%), and a Master's degree, 1 (1%). While 9 (9%) respondents have other academic qualifications.

Table 3.7: Respondent by Level of Academic Qualification

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SRP/PMR	3	3.0
SPM	52	52.0
Diploma	23	23.0
Bachelor degree	12	12.0
Master degree	1	1.0
Others	9	9.0
Total	100	100

The majority of respondents in this study are married couples, 79 (79%) (Table 3.8), followed by single respondents, 20 (20%), and one (1%) respondent representing the status of a widower or widow.

Table 3.8: Respondent by Marriage Status

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	20	20.0
Married	79	79.0
Widowed	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0

The distribution of respondents by employment is shown in Table 3.9. The majority of respondents in this study are self-employed, 42 (42%). Then, followed by respondents who are government servants, 32 (32%) and those who work in the private sector, 26 (26%) people.

Table 3.9: Respondent by Employment

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Government servant	32	32.0
Private	26	26.0
Self-employed	42	42.0
Total	100	100.0

The monthly income distribution of respondents is shown in Table 3.10. The majority of respondents in this study are among those with a monthly income between RM1001 to RM4000, 63 (63%). Then, followed by respondents with a monthly income between RM1000 and below, 16 (16%). 14 (14%) respondents have a monthly income between RM4001 to RM8000. While respondents with income between RM8001 to RM10000 are 5 (5%) and respondents with monthly income between RM12001 to RM14000 are 2 (2%).

Table 3.10: Respondent by Monthly Income

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
RM1,000 and below	16	16.0
RM1001 – RM4000	63	63.0
RM4001 – RM8000	14	14.0
RM8001 – RM10000	5	5.0
RM12001 – RM14000	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0

4. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Muda Dam or Gubir Dam is located in Kota Aur, Sik. Its distance is approximately 37 KM from Sik town. It is a large dam and the main source of clean water in Kedah. Tasik Gubir is located in this dam. Tasik Gubir is an artificial lake, not a natural one. This lake is the main attraction to the Muda Dam and another aspect of agro-tourism that has the potential to grow in Sik.

Tasik Gubir is the main economic source for freshwater fishermen to earn a living and proceed with daily life. Tasik Gubir has the largest freshwater fish collection and distribution center in Sik. The center is under the supervision of the Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia (LKIM) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry. The freshwater fish collection and distribution center is managed by the locals. Visitors can still visit this area to witness the beautiful scenery and buy various freshwater fish. Visitors can get patrol boat services around the lake and fishing boats for fishing. However, reservations are required.

In addition, Tasik Gubir is the main entrance to Ulu Muda Eco Park. Ulu Muda Eco Park is a popular destination among foreign tourists. This 160,000-hectare well-preserved forest is rich in various natural treasures. It became one of the WWF-Malaysia research locations. Various types of wild animals, flora and fauna, insects, freshwater fish, and birds can be found here. In addition to being the main water catchment area for the residents of Kedah, the uniqueness of Ulu Muda Eco Park has become a tourist attraction and a priceless treasure. Tourists who want to visit Ulu Muda Eco Park will usually stay a few days in the forest. This is because activities such as walking through the forest, observing wild animals, and so on require certain timings. Visitors can stay at the Earth Lodge, Ulu Muda, or camp in the area provided. Facilities for clean water, electricity, parking, restaurants, a prayer hall, and toilets are available.

According to the Chairman of the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA), Ustaz Ahmad Tarmizi Sulaiman, the Ulu Muda area will continue to be defended and conserved for its natural sustainability as a source of water for agricultural irrigation and water supply in the Northern Region of the Peninsula. The area that covers the Muda Dam and Tasik Gubir will continue to be protected from developmental exploration. He explained that the commitment to the preservation is further supported by other agencies that together take care of the interests of this area to retain its naturalness. The list of these agencies includes the Kedah State Forestry Department (JPNK), the Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM), the Wildlife Protection and National Parks Department (PERHILITAN), the Irrigation and Drainage Department (JPS), the Kedah

State Water Resources Board (LSANK), the Department Fisheries, Local Authorities (PBT) and Land and Mines Office (PTG).

In this study, seven factors were used as variables to identify the potential of Tasik Gubir as an agro-tourism destination. Among the factors measured were the attraction, connectivity/accessibility, tourism activity, tourism package, dining, public amenities, and information factors.

4.1 Attraction Factor

The attraction factor is a variable to assess the main attraction for tourists to come to Tasik Gubir even though they have many other tourism options. Table 4.1 shows the mean and standard deviation scores for the attraction factor. In this study, the attraction factor was measured by five items. In summary, four of the five items have a high mean level, while one item is at a medium mean level. The results of the descriptive analysis test show that the highest mean value is 4.67, which is the "nature" item. While the lowest mean value of 3.43 represents the "entertainment" item. Overall, the total average mean shows a value of 4.13, which puts the attraction factor in the second position compared to other variables with a high mean level.

Table 4.1: Attraction Factor

Attraction factor (5 Items)				
Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Position	Mean Level
Nature	4.67	.513	1	High
Culture	3.94	.678	4	High
Entertainment	3.43	.700	5	Medium
Heritage	4.09	.766	3	High
Food	4.55	.557	2	High
Total Average Mean	4.13	.432	2	High

4.2 Connectivity/Accessibility Factor

Table 4.2 shows the mean and standard deviation scores for the connectivity/accessibility factor. In this study, the connectivity/accessibility factor was measured by four items. In summary, three of the four items have a high mean level, while one item is at a medium mean level. The results of the descriptive analysis test show that the highest mean value is 4.34, which is the item "traveling smoothness". While the lowest mean value of 3.32 represents the item "transportation provided". Overall, the total average mean shows a value of 3.91, which means that the connectivity/accessibility factor is in the fourth position compared to other variables with a high mean level.

Table 4.2: Connectivity/Accessibility Factor

Connectivity/Accessibility Factor (4 Items)				
Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Position	Mean Level
Ease of access	4.20	.778	2	High
Sign board	3.82	1.02	3	High
Traveling smoothness	4.34	.768	1	High
Transportation provided	3.32	.973	4	Medium
Total Average Mean	3.91	.653	4	High

4.3 Tourism Activity Factor

Table 4.3 shows the mean and standard deviation scores for the tourism activity factor. In this study, tourism activity factor was measured by six items. In summary, five of the six items have a high mean level, while one item is at a medium mean level. The results of the descriptive analysis test show that the highest mean value is 4.61, which is the item "sightseeing". While the lowest mean value of 3.54 represents the "hiking" item. Overall, the total average mean shows a value of 4.08, which means that the tourism activity factor is in third position compared to other variables with a high mean level.

Table 4.3: Tourism Activity Factor

Tourism Activity Factor (6 Items)				
Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Position	Mean Level
Unique Experience	4.27	.814	3	High
Hiking	3.54	.783	6	Medium
Sightseeing	4.61	.633	1	High
Knowledge/Education	3.94	.801	4	High
Fishing	4.42	.793	2	High
Kayaking	3.72	.829	5	High
Total Average Mean	4.08	.526	3	High

4.4 Tour Package Factor

Table 4.4 shows the mean and standard deviation scores for the tourism package factor. In this study, the tourism package factor was only measured by 1 item. The results of the descriptive analysis test show that the mean value is at 3.37, which is the "package" item. Overall, the total average mean shows a value of 3.37, which means that the tourism package factor is in the seventh or last position compared to other variables with a medium mean level.

Table 4.4: Tour Package Factor

Tour Package Factor (1 Item)				
Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Position	Mean Level
Package	3.37	.613	1	Medium
Total Average Mean	3.37	.613	7	Medium

4.5 Dining Factor

Table 4.5 shows the mean and standard deviation scores for the dining factor. In this study, the dining factor was measured by 5 items. In summary, all five items have a high mean level. The results of the descriptive analysis test show that the highest mean value is 4.46, which is the "taste" item. While the lowest mean value of 4.12 represents the item "variety". Overall, the total average mean shows a value of 4.26, which means that the dining factor is in the first position compared to other variables with a high mean level.

Table 4.5: Dining Factor

Dining Factor (5 Item)				
Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Position	Mean Level
Taste	4.46	.673	1	High
Variety	4.12	.782	5	High
Price	4.16	.787	4	High
Handling of food	4.22	.704	3	High
Uniqueness of food	4.36	.718	2	High
Total Average Mean	4.26	.588	1	High

4.6 Public Amenities Factor

Table 4.6 shows the mean and standard deviation scores for the public amenities factor. In this study, the factor of public amenities was measured by 11 items. In summary, seven of the eleven items have a high mean level, while four items are at a medium mean level. The results of the descriptive analysis test show that the highest mean value is 4.15, which is the "food stalls" item. While the lowest mean value of 2.57 represents the item "communication network (internet and telephone line)". Overall, the total average mean shows a value of 3.43, which means that the public amenities factor is in the sixth position compared to other variables with a medium mean level.

Table 4.6: Public Amenities Factor

Public Amenities Factor (11 Items)				
Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Position	Mean Level
Public Toilets	3.82	1.122	4	High
Food Stalls	4.15	.701	1	High
Surau/musolla	4.04	.973	2	High
Parking space	3.39	1.081	6	Medium
Boats/sampan	3.88	.844	3	High
Souvenir shop	2.98	.681	9	Medium
Rest area	3.68	.993	5	High
Rubbish bins	2.69	1.134	10	Medium
Accommodation	3.33	.697	7	High
Communication network (internet dan telephone line)	2.57	1.056	11	Medium
Tourist information	3.29	.977	8	High
Total Average Mean	3.43	.566	6	Medium

4.7 Information Factor

Table 4.7 shows the mean and standard deviation scores for the information factor. In this study, the information factor was measured by 5 items. In summary, three of the five items have a high mean level, while two items are at a medium mean level. The results of the descriptive analysis test show that the highest mean value is 4.07, which is the "friends" item. While the lowest mean value of 2.88 represents the items "television" and "radio". Overall, the total average mean shows a value of 3.44, which means that the information factor is in the fifth position compared to other variables with a medium mean level.

Table 4.7: Information Factor

Information Factor (5 Items)				
Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Position	Mean Level
Television	2.88	.856	5	Medium
Radio	2.88	.844	4	Medium
Media sosial	3.68	1.043	3	High
Friends	4.07	.819	1	High
Family/Relatives	3.76	.954	2	High
Total Average Mean	3.44	.609	5	Medium

4.8 Frequency Analysis

Frequency analysis was used to briefly explain the frequency distribution and percentage of views related to tourism at Muda Gubir Dam. For the obstacle/challenge factor, 14 items have been given by the respondents in this study. However, there are 8 (8%) respondents who did not provide an answer to this obstacles/challenges question. As for the question related to view/recommendation factor, there are also 14 answer items given and only one (1%) respondent did not give an answer.

4.8.1 Obstacles/Challenges

Chart 4.8.1 shows the answer items given by the respondents in this study. As for the obstacle/challenge factor, the most answers given by the respondents are related to "internet coverage problem", 23 (23%). Then, followed by the answer "limited parking space", 21 (21%). As for the third highest answer regarding obstacles/challenges, "narrow and far away parking area" and "no nearby petrol station ", each recorded the same number of 13 (13%) respondents.

Table 4.8.1: Obstacles/Challenges

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Wild animals.	2	2.0
Unsatisfactory road.	2	2.0
Far from accommodation.	2	2.0
Far from city.	4	4.0
Unsatisfactory basic amenities.	4	4.0
Internet coverage problem.	23	23.0
Signboards.	2	2.0
Narrow and far away parking area.	13	13.0
Limited parking space.	21	21.0
No electricity in surau.	2	2.0
No detailed information.	1	1.0
No public transport.	2	2.0
No nearby petrol station.	13	13.0
No accommodation near the lake.	1	1.0
Total	92	92.0

4.8.2 Views/Suggestions

Chart 4.8.2 shows the answer items related to the views/suggestions given by the respondents in this study. For this views/suggestion questions, the most answers given by the respondents are related to "provide water-sports activities", 19 (19%). Then followed by the answer "improve the internet and telecommunication network", 18 (18%). The third highest answer regarding views/suggestions is "increase the number of food stalls", 13 (13%).

Table 4.8.2: Views/Suggestions

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Repair electrical supply in the surau	2	2.0
Attractive landscape.	1	1.0
Ensure the cleanliness of the toilet.	2	2.0
Diversify recreational activities.	6	6.0
Increase promotion.	11	11.0
Offer water-sport activities.	19	19.0
Provide convenience store, souvenir shops and stools/sheds for resting.	2	2.0
Provide petrol stations.	5	5.0
Provide children's playground.	3	3.0
Provide parking areas.	9	9.0
Provide nearby accommodation.	6	6.0
Offer more food stalls.	13	13.0
Improve cleanliness and comfort.	2	2.0
Improve internet and telecommunication networks.	18	18.0
Total	99	99.0

5. DISCUSSION

This study aims to examine the potential of Tasik Gubir as a popular agro-tourism destination. Research findings through surveys and observations showed that Tasir Gubir has a very high potential to be used as one of the popular agro-tourism destinations in Kedah due to its natural beauty. This was agreed by respondents who stated that the main attraction to this lake is because of the natural factors, followed by food, heritage, and culture. The natural attractions here include the serene and beautiful view of the lake and the unexplored beauty of the forest that can be seen clearly from afar. (Pictures 1-3). In terms of food, there is a stall that prepares freshwater dishes from Tasik Gubir that are served fresh with a variety of local cuisine. A set of dishes is usually served with white rice and syrup drinks, *baung* fish cooked in chili and coconut milk, tilapia fish cooked in three flavors, crispy fried white fish, fried *pekasam* fish with dry chili, soy sauce sambal, *ulam-ulam* (fresh local vegetables) and *sambal belacan*. This meal set can be eaten by six people for RM90 (Picture 4-5). However, this is the only restaurant that serves the dish. While in terms of heritage and culture, it is more about the activities of the locals, especially involving freshwater fishing activities in Tasik Gubir. There are two categories of fishing activities here, those who have a license and catch fish for commercial reasons, and tourists and the general public who come to fish for leisure. Fishing activity is the main attraction for anglers because of the large number of fish due to the unpolluted lake. According to the Fourth Edition of the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Dictionary (2007), heritage

is something that is passed down from generation to generation by a person with a community group from previous generations. The definition presented is in line with the meaning of the Antiquities Act, 1976 and the National Heritage Act, 2005. The combination of these three definitions explains that heritage is a legacy left by previous generations to the present generation through the results of handiwork, thought, philosophy, and creativity. It describes that heritage is the way of life of the community to continue life and modify it according to the situation and challenges of life. Further, cultural heritage can generally be defined as tangible heritage, intangible property, structure, or cultural artifacts which can include things, objects, details, artifacts, formation structures, performances, dances, songs, and heritage museums that are important to the way of life of Malaysians, in terms of historical or current, on or in the ground or underwater cultural heritage of tangible form but does not include natural heritage (Gerard Corsane, 2005; Yazid Saleh, 2010 and Yuszaidy Mohd Yusoff et al, 2011).

In terms of connectivity or accessibility, the majority of respondents are satisfied with the ease of travel and getting to Tasik Gubir, which is connected by good roads from the capital of Kedah, namely Alor Setar, and also from other cities, including Sungai Petani and Kulim. The signboards provided also make it easy for tourists to reach Tasik Gubir. Nevertheless, tourists who come here mostly use their vehicles because, currently, public transport or specific packages that include transportation are not available for tourists.

Regarding the tourism activity factor, most respondents think they can view picturesque scenery in Tasik Gubir, followed by fishing activities, experience the uniqueness, and gain more knowledge of the lake. This coincides with the status of agro-tourism in Tasik Gubir, where tourists who come can learn about various activities in the area.

Among the important things that must be focused on in a tourist area are the public amenities and information factors. Norudin Mansor et.al (2015) showed that basic amenities are one of the important elements to promote the potential of a place as an agro-tourism destination. According to the study, Tasik Gubir provides basic amenities for tourists, such as toilets, prayer rooms, food stalls, and parking spaces. However, the basic amenities provided are very unsatisfactory in terms of cleanliness and maintenance. This may be because the parties responsible for developing and managing public amenities in Tasik Gubir are often changed.

Other problems challenging Tasik Gubir as a major tourist destination are unsatisfactory internet access and inadequate parking areas. Basic internet facilities are significant for a tourism area, let alone for agro-tourism, which offers an educational element to tourism. Therefore, the state government, the district council, and those responsible for developing and providing basic facilities in Tasik Gubir must strive to deal with problems and improve basic facilities at the most optimal level.

To make Tasik Gubir a popular destination in Kedah, the relevant authorities need to consider the feedback given by tourists to improve its facilities. This study shows that among the recommendations expressed by tourists include providing water sports activities, improving internet and communication network facilities, offering more food stalls, increasing promotions, and providing more parking spaces in Tasik Gubir.

Summary

In conclusion, Tasik Gubir is proven to have great potential to be developed as an agro-tourism place in Kedah. The four potentials identified as unique in Tasik Gubir from other agro-tourism are natural beauty, food dishes, heritage, and culture. These unique characteristics make Tasik Gubir special compared to other lakes in Malaysia. However, several aspects need to be improved, especially concerning the cleanliness and internet network coverage in the area.

Acknowledgement

This article is part of a research project titled 'Islamic Agro-tourism Framework: Towards Developing the Potential of Local Agro-tourism in Kedah' funded by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education under the FRGS Grant (Fundamental Research Grant Scheme). (FRGS/1/2020/WAB08/UUM/02/1)

References

- 1) Brune, S., Knollenberg, W., Stevenson, K. T., Barbieri, C., & Schroeder-Moreno, M. (2021). The Influence of Agritourism Experiences on Consumer Behavior toward Local Food. *Journal of Travel Research*, 60(6), 1318–1332.
- 2) Goeldner, C.R., Ritchie, J.R.B., & MacIntosh, R.W. (2000). *Tourism: Principles, Practices, Philosophies*, 8th ed. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.: New York.
- 3) Corsane, Gerard. ed. (2005). *Heritage, museums and galleries: An Introductory Reader*. London: Routledge.
- 4) Jęczyk, A., Uglis, J., Graja-Zwolińska, S., Maćkowiak, M., Sychała, A., & Sikora, J. (2015). Research Note: Economic Benefits of Agritourism Development in Poland — An Empirical Study. *Tourism Economics*, 21(5), 1120–1126.
- 5) Laman Web Majlis Daerah Sik.
- 6) Landell, K. (1997). *Management by menu*. London: Wiley and Sons Inc.
- 7) Li Yang (2012). Impacts and Challenges in Agritourism Development in Yunnan, China. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 9 (4): 369-381.
- 8) Kamus Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Edisi Keempat (2007).
- 9) Mohd Azmeer Abu Bakar, Asyirah Abdul Rahim & Mohammad Izzamil Mohd Nasir (2020). Pengetahuan terhadap Perkhidmatan Ekosistem dan Sumbangannya kepada Kehidupan Komuniti di Kuala Sepetang, Perak *GEOGRAFIA Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 16 (1) :139-154.
- 10) Mustaffa Omar, Zanisah Man & Ishak Yussof (2011). The Jakun Traditional Strategy in Managing Natural Resource Sustainably Surrounding Tasik Chini Basin, Pahang. *Jurnal e-Bangi*, 6 (2): 239-254.
- 11) Nor Salwani binti Mat Arsad. (2017).
https://www.academia.edu/24644895/Impak_Pembangunan_Pelancongan_kepada_Masyarakat_Setempat_di_Pengkalan_Gawi_Tasik_Kenyir.
- 12) Norudin Mansor, Kartini Mat Rashid, Zuraida Mohamad, Zalinawati Abdullah (2015). Agro Tourism Potential in Malaysia. *International Academic Research Journal of Business and Technology* 1(2): 37-44
- 13) Rezaei, M., Kim, D., Alizadeh, A., & Rokni, L. (2021). Evaluating the Mental-Health Positive Impacts of Agritourism; A Case Study from South Korea. *Sustainability*, 13(16), 8712
- 14) Rosniza Aznie Che Rose, Nurul Fatimah Jusoh, Rosmiza MZ, Lyndon N. & Mokhtar J. (2015). *Perkembangan dan cabaran sektor perniagaan sebagai pemangkin pembangunan bandar kecil: Kajian*

- empirikal di Daerah Besut, Terengganu. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia: Pusat Pengajian Sosial, Pembangunan dan Persekitaran, Fakulti Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan, 8, 1-12.*
- 15) Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2013). *Research Methods for Business: A Skill-Building Approach*. 6th Edition, Wiley: New York.
 - 16) Sumin Kim, Seul KiLee, Dongmin Lee, Jaeseok Jeong & Jungjoon Moon (2019) The effect of agritourism experience on consumers' future food purchase patterns. *Tourism Management*, 70;144-152
 - 17) Wan Suzita Wan Ibrahim et.al (2015). Pelancongan dan pembangunan setempat di Malaysia: Satu analisis SWOT Royal Belum sebagai produk ekopelancongan. *GEOGRAFIA OnlineTM Malaysian Journal of Society and Space* 11 issue 13 (115 - 130) 115.
 - 18) Wojcieszak-Zbierska M.M., Jeczmyk, A., Zawadka, j. & Ugills, J. (2020). Agritourism in the Era of the Coronavirus (COVID-19): A Rapid Assessment from Poland, *Agriculture* **2020**, 10(9), 397-416.
 - 19) Yazid Saleh. 2010. *Pengenalan Pemuliharaan Bandar*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
 - 20) Yuszaidy Mohd Yusoff, Hanapi Dollah dan Ab Samad Kechot. 2011. *Akta Warisan Kebangsaan, 2005: Tinjauan Sepintas Lalu* Jurnal Melayu (8) 2011: 173 - 188
 - 21) Zanisah Man & Yeoh En Ne (2019). Penyertaan orang Asli dalam aktiviti eko-pelancongan di Tasik Chini, Pahang, Malaysia. *GEOGRAFIA Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 15 (4): 50-63.