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BACKPACKER TOURISM CIRCUIT IN KOTA KINABALU, SABAH

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Abstract

Kota Kinabalu is a well-known tourist destination in the Malaysian state of Sabah. This city serves as the beginning point for the majority of the Sabah state's tourism circuits. This research is focused on the backpacker tourist circuit of Kota Kinabalu. Furthermore, this study involves an analysis of backpacker tourist locations that may be promoted into visiting the various destinations in Sabah via tourist circuits. The study design employed is a survey approach with quantitative approaches as research tools. In this study, a total of 228 backpackers in Kota Kinabalu responded to the questionnaire. The study only involved backpackers originating from countries in continental Europe, North and South America and Oceania. ArcMap 10.8 was used to map the circuit that was discovered during the data processing. The study's findings revealed that the backpackers' tourist circuit in Kota Kinabalu is limited and significantly impacted by prominent attractions visited by mass tourists. This research also shows that there are several acceptable tourist locations in Kota Kinabalu's backpacker tourist circuit that may be grouped according to certain themes like cuisine tourism, educational tourism, ecotourism, mountaineering or hill climbing tourism. Overall, Kota Kinabalu's tourist sector offers tremendous growth potential for backpacker tourism, which may become the mainstay of the industry. As a result, the government and other stakeholders must do more to boost backpacker tourism in Kota Kinabalu.

Keywords: Backpacker tourism, tourist circuit, alternative tourism, travel, GIS

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INTRODUCTION

Backpacker tourism developed in the early 1980s, perhaps as a result of previous overland “hippy” travel (Cohen, 1973; Hampton, 2013; Thieme et al., 2021). According to Cohen (2018), backpackers spend their money in far more geographical areas than typical mass tourism, resulting in less tourism growth. Backpacking is a type of low-cost, independent travel that involves the use of a backpack that can be easily carried over long distances or for extended periods of time, public transportation, inexpensive accommodation such as youth hostels, often a longer trip duration than traditional vacations, and an interest in meeting locals as well as local sightseeing (Pearce, 1990; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Jayasinghe & Boyagoda, 2020). As a result, in order to establish a backpacker tourism destination, a specialized tourist circuit that fits the essential criteria of a backpacker must be considered.

Deka (2018) emphasizes that tourist circuit design is concerned with the planner's or host agency's strategic planning and development of tourism skills. The preparation of a circuit is a comprehensive approach for molding a commerce or tourist destination into an industrial setup that includes all of the procedures necessary to fulfill the tourism business's goal (Deka, 2018). As a result, people, stakeholders, and tourists must all work together to safeguard nature and maintain the region's culture and legacy. Aside from their relevance in the tourism industry, strong human and environmental interactions are also critical for the sustainability of the locals who live in the region (Khalilah et al., 2017). According to the Department of Tourism India (2003), the development of the tourist circuit requires the development of proper support systems at various locations along the tourist route and at the same time provides opportunities for locals to be involved in the tourism development process. Local tourist destination managers must be aware of the essential variables that might improve a destination's competitive advantage, as well as the relationships between them (Nguthi et al., 2021).

Access and evaluation of the destination, master plan, land use and planning, ecological architecture, advertising tactics, marketing tourism skills, conservation, and viewing the attractions that assist to glorify tourism in any location are all part of the overall planning process (Deka, 2018). According to him, when these qualities are met, tourism development may be a valuable instrument for stimulating the economy, alleviating poverty, conserving nature, maintaining culture and ethnicity, and generating job opportunities for locals.

Malaysia, on the other hand, is a major part of Southeast Asia's backpacker tourist network. It is an important transit point for tourists because of its location between Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The state of Sabah, which benefits from Mount Kinabalu and Sipadan Island, is a major draw for tourists to this well-known natural wonder (Johan & Jabil, 2020). Furthermore, being the state's entrance point for tourism, Kota Kinabalu plays an

important role in providing facilities to visitors visiting Sabah. Therefore, research on the development of the tourist circuit in Kota Kinabalu needs to be done.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Who are backpackers?

Backpackers are defined by a number of criteria. Socio-demographics, travel motivation, travel characteristics, virtual communities, tourist circuit based on interests, self-identification, and economic factors were used to measure the criteria. Backpackers, according to Loker and Laurie (1993), are those between the ages of 18 and 30 or between the ages of 15 and 25 (Hunter et al., 2008) who travel to new places. Backpackers are people who travel in their leisure time (Adam, 2015). According to Zhang et al. (2018), backpackers are persons who travel alone while carrying a backpack. Backpackers typically travel for many months, a year, or more (O'Reilly, 2006; Elsrud, 2001). Members of backpacking groups on social media sites such as Facebook, however, can also be classified as backpackers (Paris, 2012). Because the definition of backpacking criterion is so broad, Table 1 was created specifically to make the concept of backpackers' criteria easier to grasp.

Table 1: Criteria for defining travel tourism from various scholars internationally

Criteria		Scholar
<i>Socio-demographic (age)</i>		
i.	18 - 30 years old	Loker & Laurie (1993)
ii.	15 – 25 years old	Hunter-Jones <i>et al.</i> (2008)
<i>Motivation to travel</i>		
i.	Travel based on leisure time	Adam (2015)
<i>Travel characteristics</i>		
i.	Preference for budget accommodation and young people's hostels	Pearce (1990), Dayour <i>et al.</i> (2016), Zhang <i>et al.</i> (2018)
ii.	Carry a backpack and travel independently	Zhang <i>et al.</i> (2018)
iii.	Longer than a regular vacation	Pearce (1990)
iv.	Traveling for several months up to a year or more	O'Reilly (2006), Elsrud (2001)
v.	Flexible itinerary	Pearce (1990)
vi.	Emphasis on meeting with other tourists and the local community	Pearce (1990)
<i>Virtual community</i>		
i.	Member to the backpackers group on Facebook	Paris (2012)
ii.	Users of the backpackers website	O'Reilly (2006)

<i>Interest-based backpackers enclaves</i>		
i.	Interest-based backpackers (backpackers enclaves)	Sorensen (2003)
<i>Self-identification</i>		
i.	i. Recognize themselves as backpackers or by invitation to join a trip in backpacker tourism	Uriely <i>et al.</i> (2002), Reichel <i>et al.</i> (2007), Cohen (2011)
<i>Economical factor</i>		
i.	Budget travelers	O'Reilly (2006)
ii.	Choose to use public transportation while traveling in the destination visited	Pearce (1990)

Source: Modified from Dayour et al. (2017).

In summary, according to Pearce (1990), there are four main aspects that distinguish backpackers from other tourists: (i) from the definition, a backpacker is a traveller who prioritises budget accommodation, meeting other tourists, longer trips, priority to relationships with local residents, and has a more flexible travel schedule, (ii) the primary purpose of travel is to explore the locations visited; (iii) the sorts of activities undertaken by backpackers are more diverse and limitless; and (iv) backpackers organise their journeys on their own with little or no institutional participation.

What is the tourist circuit?

Dam (2016) emphasised that the tourist circuit needs rigorous and comprehensive planning. Tourist circuits are frequently referred to by a variety of words and ideas, including tourist routes, tourist corridors, tourist clusters, and so on (Hannam & Diekmann, 2010; Dam, 2016). A tourist circuit can be built within a country (intra-border) or between two or more countries (cross-border) (Sisodia, 2011). Chowdhary (2014) stated that a sightseeing route includes vacations to more than one place throughout the journey away from home. According to Alivand et al. (2015), these circuits should have a variety of environmental elements that will encourage tourists to use them. The uniqueness and authenticity of the prospective tourism products available in an area influence the tourist circuit's diversity. Religious, historical, tribal culture, traditional and heritage, art and craft, nature-based tourism circuits, and so on are some examples of tourist circuits (Khalilah et al., 2017; Deka, 2018).

A tourist circuit is a group of tourist attractions designed to draw in more people and allow them to spend more time at the destination (Prasad & Sundari, 2012). Khalilah et al. (2017) explains that interesting routes between two locations play an important role for visitors to choose their tourist circuit. The element of relative distance through time measurement is essential, according to Hasuike et al. (2013), since it influences the duration of trip and the pleasure value for each activity done by visitors throughout their trip. The quickest route is

frequently selected since it allows travellers to get at their destination in less time, giving them more time to enjoy their holiday (Hashim et al., 2013). However, if the travel motivation is stimulated along the way before arriving at their target destination, a lengthier or remote route might be chosen till the route fits the tourists' demands (Johan & Jabil, 2020).

Many tourist destinations throughout the world have the potential to become profitable tourist circuits. Nguthi et al. (2021), for example, state that there are numerous opportunities for the development of various forms of tourism in his study area. However, the natural and cultural capital have not been optimally exploited for development, and the entire circuit is still lagging behind in various types of tourism. Research on the development of this tourist circuit is also widely discussed by scholars around the world (Ward-Perkins et al., 2019; Vakharia & Bhagat, 2020; Johan & Jabil, 2020; Nguthi et al., 2021). A proactive measure is required to guarantee that the development of the backpacker tourism circuit, particularly in the researcher's subject region, is thoroughly investigated. The selection of destination routes based on the target market, the importance of the destination, audit of tourism products, study of tourism assets, and unique sales features discovered in a destination are all phases in tourist circuit creation (Lourens, 2007). Furthermore, the growth of the tourist circuit necessitates product development, the creation of a defined strategy, and, lastly, the branding of the tourism destination. Therefore, the researcher utilised Hardy's Successful Tourism Route Model (2003) to discuss on how to develop a tourism circuit in the study region in further detail.

Hardy's Successful Tourism Route Model (2003)

Hardy (2003) points out that one of the ways to manage tourist flows is through themed tourist routes, corridors or own tourist routes. The importance of themed tourist routes involves the connections made between points of interest and various interests and motivations. Therefore, management should strive to coordinate these factors. One of the advantages of the development of tourist routes is that tourists can choose to enter and exit the route. Thus, stakeholders in tourism are able to balance demand along the route itself and the surrounding area (Hardy, 2003). The National Center for Tourism (NCT), Australia has conducted a study on the development of successful tourism routes as shown in Figure 1.

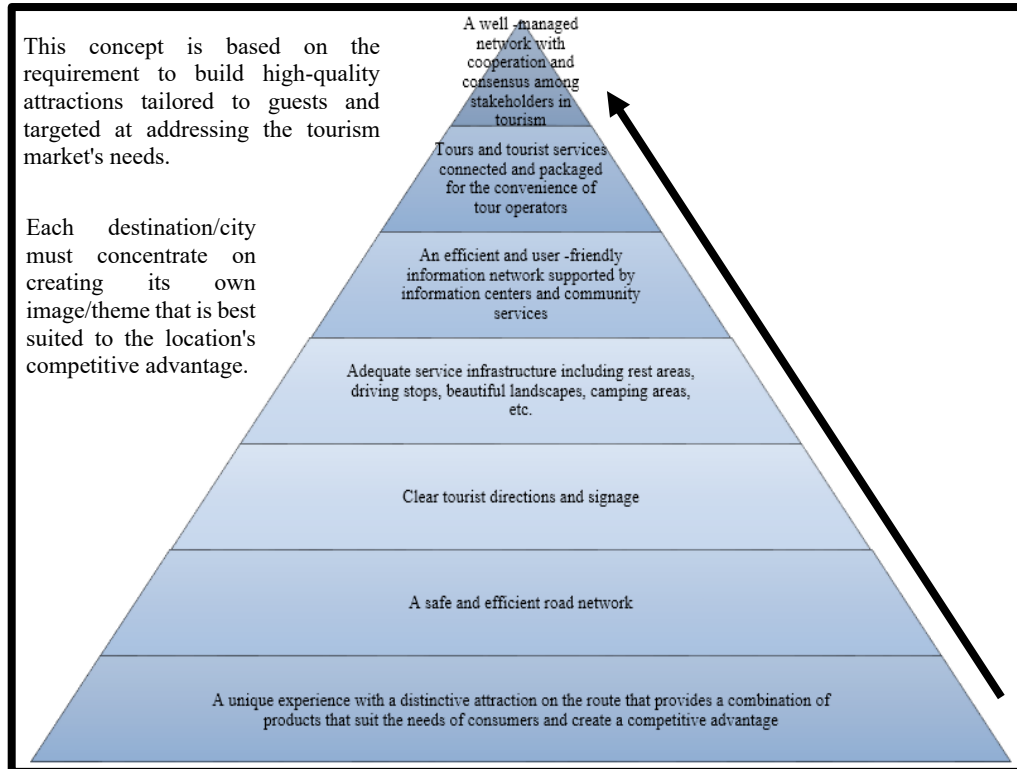


Figure 1: Successful Tourism Circuit Model
Source: Adapted from Hardy (2003).

Based on Figure 1, there are seven stages in a successful tourism route model. This model emphasises that the first and most fundamental thing in the formation of a successful tourism route is a unique experience with a distinctive attraction to the route that provides a combination of products that suit the needs of users and create a competitive advantage. Among the tourism products include beautiful landscapes, heritage features, sea views, mountains or inland views. Next, when a tourist route has its own attractions and has diversity, the second stage is the development of a safe and efficient road network. This includes providing a secure transportation network system for tourists to come to a place they want to visit.

Third, clear tourist directions and signage. A successful tourist route should have clear tourist directions and signage. This is important to prevent tourists from getting lost while travelling in private. The signboard provided must have complete information such as the distance, name of the destination and the distance of the destination from where the signboard is placed. Fourth, adequate service infrastructure. This is because tourist routes that provide a complete

service infrastructure tend to be visited by many tourists. The infrastructure includes rest areas, driving stops, beautiful landscapes, camping areas and so on. Fifth, an efficient and user-friendly information network supported by information centres and community services. Information on tourist routes such as tourist maps and tourist activities offered should have information channels that are easily understood by tourists. The availability of tourist destinations in integrating information centres and community services to provide the best information network, thereby increasing the potential of a tourist route to be successful. Sixth, tours and tourist services that are connected and packaged for the convenience of tour operators also influence the success of a tourist route. Finally, a successful tourism route must have a well-managed network with cooperation and agreement between tourism stakeholders. The government and other stakeholders in tourism should work together in developing successful tourism routes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study involves the study of phenomena related to the pattern of backpacker tourism in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The study design employed is a survey approach with quantitative approaches as research tools, which examines the tourist circuit of the backpackers in Kota Kinabalu. Purposeful sampling technique is used in this study. Specifically, this study was conducted around budget accommodation and tourist hotspots located around Kota Kinabalu, Sabah (Figure 2).

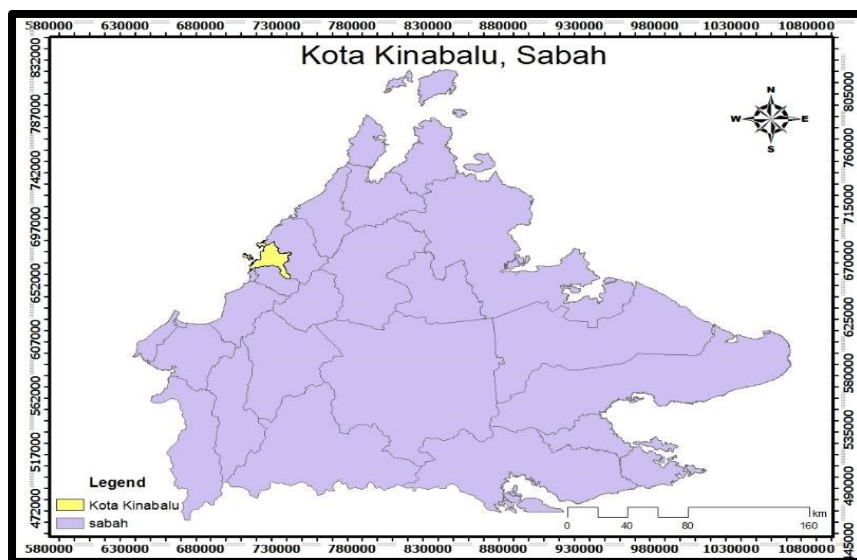


Figure 2: Map of the study area
Source: Researcher (2020).

The number of international tourist arrivals to Sabah obtained from Sabah Tourism Board sources in 2018 was 1,361,567 people. Of that number, 113,043 were foreign tourists from Europe, North and South America and Oceania. Therefore, the selected sample size is a total of 383 people from countries on the continent. The determination of this total sample size was based on the formula proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). However, the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO) which began on 18 March 2020 in Malaysia has resulted in restrictions on the entry of international tourists which in turn limits the number of respondents that can be obtained in this study. For that, the sample size was set to 228 backpackers. ArcMap 10.8 was used to map the circuit identified after data processing as well as to map the recommendation of various tourism circuits that may be offered in Kota Kinabalu.

FINDING & DISCUSSIONS

The respondents' tourist circuit in Kota Kinabalu is relatively limited. The respondents' declared destinations only included nine places, yet there were visitors who stayed in cheap accommodations till they continued their journey to other destinations. Figure 3 shows the backpacker tourist circuit in Kota Kinabalu.

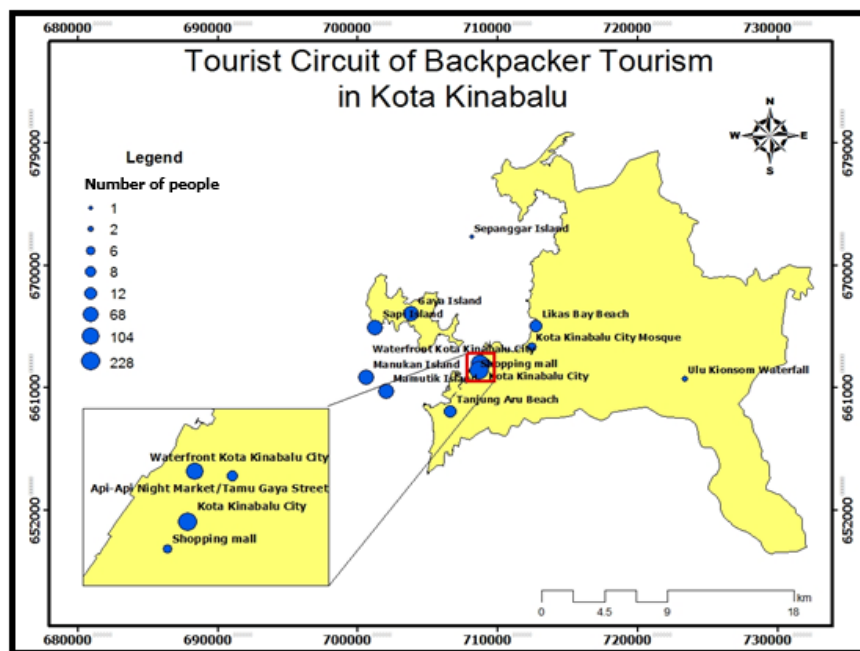


Figure 3: Tourist circuit of Backpacker Tourism in Kota Kinabalu
Source: Field study (2020).

According to Figure 3, 104 respondents visited the Kota Kinabalu Waterfront to appreciate the beauty and seafood available in the region. 68 people visited the islands around the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, including Manukan Island, Mamutik Island, Sapi Island, and Gaya Island. In addition, 12 responders visited Teluk Likas and Tanjung Aru beaches to watch the sunset. Some responders also visited Tamu Gaya Street, Sepanggar Island, and Ulu Kionsom Waterfall. According to Paris (2010), although backpackers visit the same popular locations as mass tourists, they also participate in activities that are distinct from them. Backpacker tourism frequently focuses on keeping travel costs low (Riley, 1988; Shaffer, 2004; Teas, 1988). However, a huge percentage of backpackers engage in more expensive, once-in-a-lifetime adventures or adrenaline-fueled sporting activities (Richards & Wilson, 2004).

Diversification of activities available to backpackers in a given region not only allows them to stay longer, but also encourages the establishment of downstream industries in the form of small businesses run by local people to suit the requirements of visitors (Martins & Costa, 2017). According to Hampton (1998), Rogesson (2011), and Scheyvens (2002), backpackers contribute to the growth of businesses that do not require large investments and provide additional income to many families in the destination because they travel in a wider geographical area, sometimes in remote regions, and use local goods. The local community may be involved in serving the requirements of backpackers by selling food, assisting them in their everyday activities, and displaying their culture and customs to tourists (Sailesh & Jingade, 2019; Barroso, 2021; Barroso & Moreira Silva, 2020). This indirectly adds to the location's future development as a backpacker tourist destination.

Based on the successful tourist circuit model by Hardy (2003), what is set as the foundation to the success of a tourist circuit is a unique experience with distinctive attractions on the route that provide a combination of products that suit consumer needs and create a competitive advantage. For example, in a study by Hampton and Hamzah (2016), the tourist circuit of backpackers in Southeast Asia shows that the routes start from Thailand, entering Peninsular Malaysia and continuing their journey to Singapore, Bali before going to Australia. Backpackers like this tourism circuit because of the region's low-cost transit options, which include railways and Air Asia's low-cost airline flights (Hampton & Hamzah, 2016). As a result, in order to enhance backpacker tourism in Kota Kinabalu, tourist circuit demands must be met.

In addition, a backpacker's extended stay in Kota Kinabalu has an impact on the backpacker tourist circuit. The longer backpackers stay in Kota Kinabalu, the more probable it is that they will visit a variety of places. This is confirmed by the findings of a study conducted by Barros and Machado (2010), who discovered that backpackers who stay longer in a place visit more attractions than those who stay for a shorter period of time. The element of flexibility that

defines a backpacker's approach to planning a trip makes them a particularly adaptable group of visitors when it comes to deciding how long to spend in one location before moving on to the next (Elsrud, 2001).

Backpackers try to set themselves apart from mass tourists by visiting different places and participating in different activities, but they face obstacles such as organising their own journey and having little information about the other places they visit (Adam et al., 2021; Laingsingh, 2020; Sailesh & Jingade, 2019). Backpackers who make it to Kota Kinabalu typically travel alone or in small groups and get their knowledge about the places they wish to see from locals or local communities, rather than from tour providers. The attractive sites visited by backpackers in this district are primarily focused in the city centre region, but other attractions located outside of the city centre, such as shown in Figure 4, are less visited.

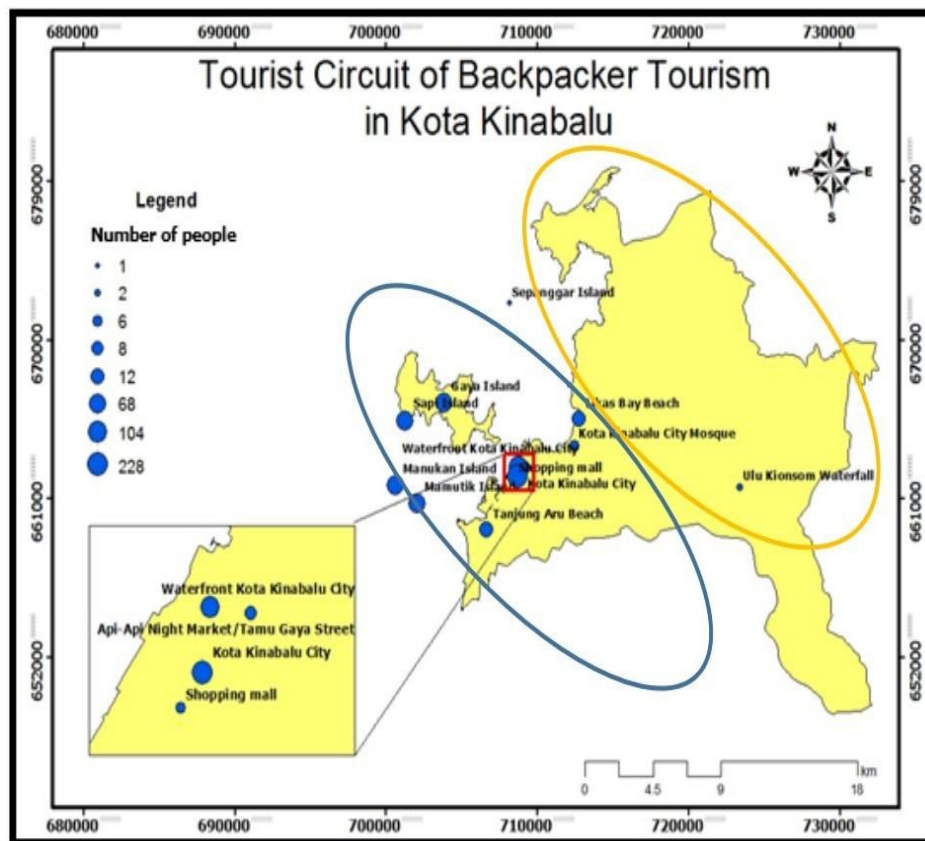


Figure 4: Pattern of backpacker tourist circuits in Kota Kinabalu
Source: Field study (2020).

Figure 4 shows that there is a distinct difference between the backpacker tourist circuits accessible in Kota Kinabalu. The blue circle indicates a popular tourist circuit for backpackers in Kota Kinabalu. Meanwhile, the orange circle depicts places in Kota Kinabalu that are less visited or cannot be accessed by backpackers. Due to a lack of integration on the part of the players in the district's backpacker tourism, the budget accommodation providers have no contact with tour operators situated in places remote from the city centre. The lack of information about interesting tourist sites in the orange circle area of Figure 4 also has an impact on the arrival of backpackers. In fact, the potential of tourism products in the orange circle is higher due to the attraction of the highlands that display the beauty of Sabah's unique scenery. For example, around the Bukit Kokol area, the beautiful view of Mount Kinabalu and Kota Kinabalu City can be clearly seen in this place.

Furthermore, although backpackers know about interesting places in the orange area, information about how to get there is not easy to obtain. This area is mostly accessed by local tourists or mass tourists who have a package to go to the place. For some of the backpackers, riding a motorcycle or renting a car is the best way to explore Kota Kinabalu. This is because the public transport facilities that operate to the place are limited and less friendly to backpackers. As a result, backpackers who come to Kota Kinabalu travel only around the city area or spend more of their time relaxing in backpacker hostels before undertaking famous tourist activities in Sabah such as climbing The Mount Kinabalu or diving in the islands in Semporna district.

RECOMMENDATION

Providing a comprehensive tourist destination information network system among Kota Kinabalu's backpacker tourism stakeholders

In light of the circumstances highlighted in Figure 4, a review on the distribution of tourist destination places in Kota Kinabalu was undertaken to examine the likelihood of backpacker's tourist circuits in Kota Kinabalu if Hardy's (2003) notion of Successful tourism routes is enhanced. Figure 5 and Table 2 provide a list of tourist attractions in Kota Kinabalu.

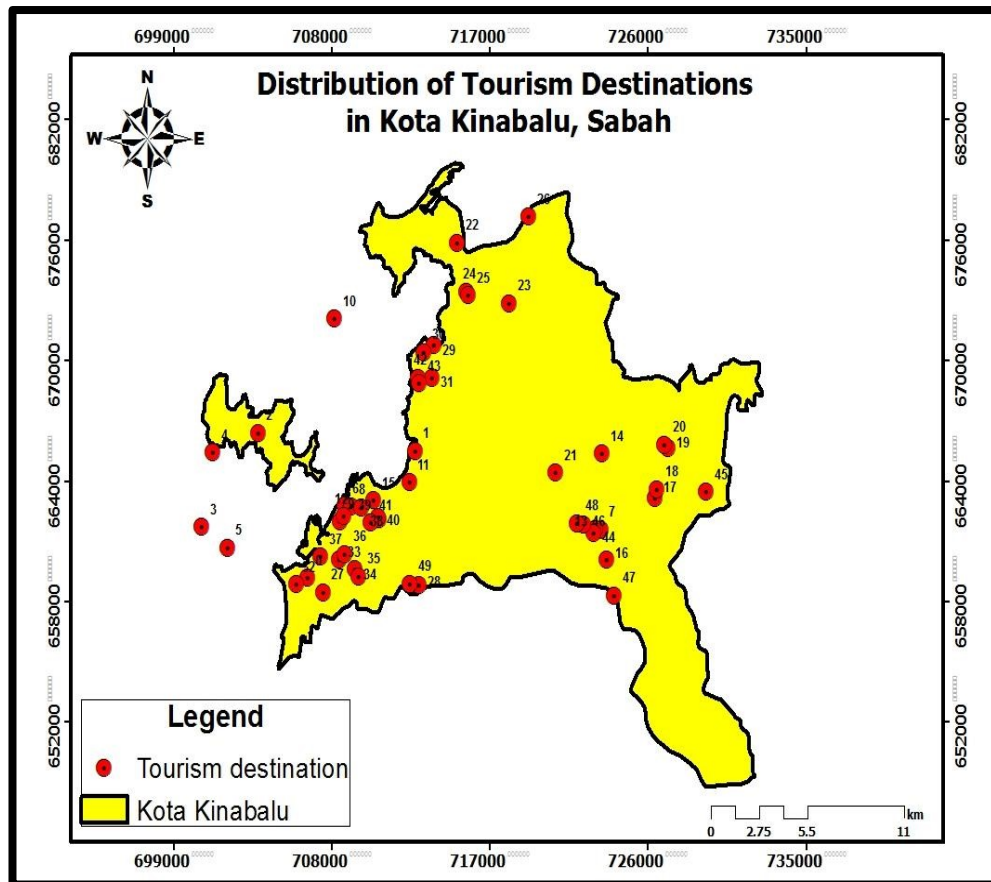


Figure 5: Distribution of tourist destinations in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah
Source: Researcher's analysis (2020)

Table 2: Names of Tourist Destinations in Kota Kinabalu

No.	Touristic destination	No.	Touristic destination	No.	Touristic destination	No.	Touristic destination
0.	Tanjung Aru Beach	14.	Kokol Hill	28.	Bukit Padang Hiking Trail	42.	UMS ODEC Beach
1.	Likas Bay Beach	15.	Kota Kinabalu Ramsar Site	29.	Bukit Tuah	43.	Aquarium & Marine Museum UMS
2.	Gaya Island	16.	VV Land	30.	Bukit Helang	44.	Nuluhon Garden Retreat House Inanam

3.	Manukan Island	17.	Papas Eco Camp Marahang	31.	UMS Peak	45.	D'Bakie Eco Camp
4.	Sapi Island	18.	CL Rindu Farmstay	32.	Taman Tasik Perdana	46.	Homestay Desa Cinta Kobuni
5.	Mamutik Island	19.	Natai Adventure & Cultural Centre	33.	Sabah State Museum	47.	Eco-Tourism Kg. Kolosunan
6.	Kota Kinabalu Waterfront	20.	Tamaza Acv	34.	Kota Kinabalu Heroes Monument	48.	Shallom Valley Park
7.	Ulu Kionsom Waterfall	21.	Pulutan Happy Farm	35.	Sabah Art Gallery	49.	Kampung Nelayan Floating Restaurant
8.	"Tamu" Gaya Sreet	22.	Bukit Merah	36.	Sabah Museum of Islamic Civilization		
9.	Shopping centre	23.	Bukit Janggut	37.	Double Six Memorial		
10.	Sepanggar Island	24.	Bukit Gentisan	38.	Signal Hill Eco Farm		
11.	Kota Kinabalu City Mosque	25.	Bukit Botak	39.	Sabah Indoor Climbing Centre		
12.	Kota Kinabalu City Centre	26.	Bukit Tirig	40.	The Jungle Skate park		
13.	Mari-Mari Cultural village	27.	Bukit Kopungit	41.	Green Connection, Aquatica Aquarium & Discovery Centre		

Source: Researcher's (2020).

Based on Figure 5 and Table 2, the distribution of tourist destinations available in Kota Kinabalu is many and not only concentrated in the city area. Many tourist attractions are yet unexplored by the respondents in this study. One of the reasons is due to a lack of good promotion for the tourist attraction in Kota Kinabalu, which serves as an accommodation centre for backpackers that visit

this area. Budget accommodation operators in Kota Kinabalu lack information on how to travel to the destination; in fact, there is less information network between tourism destination operators and budget accommodation operators in this region. Looking at this situation, the promotion or provision of information about tourist destinations available in Kota Kinabalu needs to be expanded further in order to penetrate the international tourism market, especially backpackers. This is so because it will help in further diversifying the tourist circuit that can be explored by them while traveling in Kota Kinabalu. As a response, all stakeholders involved in backpacker tourism should focus their marketing and promotion strategy on internet information sources, with a particular emphasis on search engines (Martin et al., 2022).

According to Hardy (2003), there are three stages of tourist circuit development that may be explored in order to highlight the importance of interrelationships between parties participating in the tourism industry. First, there is a need for an effective and user-friendly information network, which is backed by information centres and community services. The integrated tourist information is capable of facilitating the search and exchange of information about tourism locations, regardless of whether the operators in the tourism sector, workers in the tourism sector, or for the public's convenience. He also emphasised that for the comfort of tour operators, a successful tourism circuit should include a package of tour activities and tourist services. It is difficult to promote a tourist location if it moves on its own without the assistance of local tour companies. For example, Romania's efforts to develop and promote tourism in rural regions have been completed with help from European Union (EU) subsidies since 2000 (Sima, 2016). The top step of a successful tourist circuit concept is a well-managed network with collaboration and agreement among tourism stakeholders (Hardy, 2003). A well-managed tourism destination by all tourism stakeholders is not only capable of developing a destination but also of contributing to the success of tourism circuits that incorporate many tourist sites at the same time.

Increase the number of tourist circuits available in Kota Kinabalu

Because of the diversity of attractions accessible in this area, the backpacker tourist circuits in Kota Kinabalu have a lot of potential to expand. The growth of tourism destinations in Kota Kinabalu may be split into many tourist circuits. Table 3 highlights the various tourist circuits that may be established in Kota Kinabalu.

Table 3: The various types of tourist circuits that may be found in Kota Kinabalu

<p>Island tourism circuits:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gaya Island 2. Manukan Island 3. Sapi Island 4. Mamutik Island 5. Sepanggar Island 	<p>Eco-tourism circuits:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nuluhon Garden Retreat House Inanam 2. D'Bakie Eco Camp 3. Eko-Pelancongan Kg. Kolosunan 4. Tamaza Acv 5. Shallom Valley Park 6. Air Terjun Ulu Kionsom 7. Pulutan Happy Farm 8. Kota Kinabalu Ramsar Site 9. Papas Eco Camp Marahang 10. CL Rindu Farmstay
<p>Food tourism circuits:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kota Kinabalu Waterfront 2. "Tamu" Gaya Street 3. Signal Hill Eco Farm 4. Kampung Nelayan Floating Restaurant 	<p>Culture tourism circuits:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mari-Mari Cultural village 2. "Tamu" Gaya Street 3. Sabah State Museum 4. Sabah Art Gallery
<p>Hill climbing tourism circuits:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bukit Merah 2. Bukit Janggut 3. Bukit Gentisan 4. Bukit Botak 5. Bukit Tirig 6. Bukit Kopungit 7. Bukit Padang Hiking Trail 8. Bukit Tuah 9. Bukit Helang 10. UMS Peak 	<p>Educational tourism circuits:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Universiti Malaysia Sabah 2. Aquarium & Marine Museum UMS 3. Sabah State Museum 4. Sabah Museum of Islamic CivilizationGreen 5. Connection, Aquatica Aquarium & Discovery Centre
<p>Religious tourism circuits:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kota Kinabalu City Mosque 2. Sabah Museum of Islamic Civilization 3. Sabah State Mosque 	

Source: Researcher's (2020)

Based on Table 3, it is clear that the plan to diversify tourist circuits in Kota Kinabalu is essential to enhancing the quality of tourism products available in this area. According to Fratu (2020), the tourist inclination toward some locations highlights the need for contemporary methods and marketing tactics that apply to tourist destinations on a conceptual level. As a result, in Kota Kinabalu, the notion of establishing these tourist circuits is required. This is due to the fact that specialisation of tourist circuits based on visitor interests would allow the

locations involved to gain a target market that matches the context of tourism products supplied by them. A circuit system is being developed to allow for the diversification and expansion of experience alternatives for tourists and residents, as well as the establishment of service and product chains to ensure that the tourism benefit is shared (Ángeles et al., 2020).

Because specific planners have been created based on the requests or interests of backpackers who visit Kota Kinabalu, it will be easier for stakeholders in the tourism sector in Kota Kinabalu to develop public facilities such as bus transport routes, tourism information systems such as tourism maps, and so on. According to Martin et al. (2022), stakeholders in backpacker tourism must invest in order to improve the adventure experience while travelling and help to spread good information among travellers. This is because the information offered by other travellers is the most useful to them on the day of the adventure journey. As a result, the specialisation of the tourist circuit, as shown in Table 3, has a high potential for improving the quality of tourism products in a tourism destination such as Kota Kinabalu. Finally, the specialisation of this tourist circuit will not only benefit the development of backpacker tourism in Kota Kinabalu but may even become a model in the development of tourism in Sabah.

CONCLUDING REMARK

This study on the tourist circuit of backpacker tourism in Kota Kinabalu bears important findings and contributes towards the development prospects of the tourism industry in the future. First, this study has successfully described the initial planning of the purposes of backpackers who travel in Kota Kinabalu. Secondly, this study also discussed the tourist circuit patterns of the backpacker inside and outside Kota Kinabalu in particular. To sum up, backpacker tourism has a great deal of potential to develop and become one of the types of tourism that defines Kota Kinabalu's tourism industry. Despite the travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 outbreak that has gripped the world today, research on backpacker tourism is critical in order to improve the future quality of tourism in our country. As a result, the government and related parties should step up their efforts to promote backpacker tourism in Kota Kinabalu on a global scale.

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Jabil Mapiabil, Johan Johnes, Normah Abdul Latip
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