

The safe city programme strategies and sustainability in urban tourism environment

Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts (JTHCA)
2020, Vol. 12 (1) pp 128-135
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UITM Press
Submit date: 30th June 2019
Accept date: 22nd August 2019
Publish date: 29th February 2020

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Proposed citation:

Eizamly, N. U. E. N., & Anuar, F. I. (2020). The safe city programme strategies and sustainability in urban tourism environment, *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts*, 12(1), 128-135.

Abstract

Safety and security issues have long been recognized as a major thread to sustainable cities. A higher concern on the safety and security issues have been placed among tourists in urban tourism environment. Hence, the study proposes to investigate the relationship between safe city programme strategies namely design initiatives, target hardening and public awareness and explore the mediating effect of visitors' satisfaction on the relationship of the safe city program strategies and the sustainability of the programme in the urban tourism environment. The proposed study will assist destination managers, local authorities and policy makers in gaining substantial insight and information to prevent crimes from rising, understand the visitors' level of satisfaction, and importantly, ensure the safety and security of local residents and tourists in urban tourism environment are always in check.

Keywords:

Safe City Programme, Safety, Urban tourism, Sustainability, Satisfaction.

1 Introduction

Safety and security issues had always been a crucial aspect to be considered in tourism and the success or failure of a tourism destination depends on being able to provide safe and secure environment for visitors (Amir, Ismail & Toh, 2015). In addition, in urban tourism environment, safety and security have been placed significantly higher

in the past decade (Anuar, Jaini, Kamarudin, & Nasir, 2011) due to the increase in the number of crime occurrence scenarios such as murder, snatch, kidnap, robbery, rape, vehicle stealing and others frequently happen towards a tourist in urban areas. These scenarios possess negatives impacts (Leh, 2017), which may cause a decrease in the tourist's numbers in a tourism destination (Lisowska, 2017). Further, safety and security are essential as it may influence the inflow of visitors to urban areas such as Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Crime prevention is the main concern to the public and there is yet an effective method to the combat crime as a whole. Despite the rising concern, several crimes preventions approaches have taken placed by destination to prevent crime and to increase safety and security precautions in urban tourism. Safe city programme is an example of crime prevention approach and as a part of liveable city's concept (Anuar, Jaini, Kamarudin & Nasir, 2011). Moreover, the programme have been used in tourism industry when urban tourism is introduced especially in urban areas in Malaysia. Importantly, the safe city programme addresses one of the basic aspects of urban life and critical components for sustainable of social and economic development which are the need to bring down the rate of crimes, prevent violence and provide the best safe environment to the people in a city.

As a step to surmount the rising number of crimes rates, the government of Malaysia launched the Safe City Programme in 2004. The aim of the programme is to enhance the population quality of life which is also to increase the level of safety among a tourist within city area. The program's goal is to work with police and other urban stakeholders to support, create and execute projects aimed at preventing crime against society and anti-social behaviour, as well as minimizing fear of urban crime (Lam, 2000). The programme is under the liability of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government Malaysia (KPKT) and the programme has been conducted at several cities in Malaysia. The programme recommends twenty-three (23) measures involving three strategies which are environmental design initiatives, target hardening and social activities/community and public awareness education.

After several years of implementing the Safe City Programme, Malaysia is on the right track in its attempt to reduce crimes (Anuar, Jaini, Kamarudin, & Nasir, 2011). However, studies evaluating the effectiveness of the safe city programme is still scarce. The crime rate at tourism destination areas in Malaysia is relatively high. For example, Pulau Pinang recorded 1702 crime cases in the first quarter of 2019—a slight increase (1.2%) was also reported when compared to 2018 where there were 1616 cases of crimes (Basyir, 2019). The above statistics further challenges the effectiveness of the Safe City programme. With Pulau Pinang being ranked second in top tourist destinations for 2017 by CNN (Dermawan, 2017), it is important to measure the level of visitor satisfaction of the Safe City Programme to enhance the success of the programme.

The main purpose of the study is, therefore, to investigate the mediating effect of visitor satisfaction on the relationship of safe city programme strategies and the sustainability of the programme in the urban tourism environment. This study aims to

explore the relationship between safe city programme strategies and visitors' satisfaction of safe city programme in urban tourism environment. In addition, the study will measure the relationship between the safe city programme strategies and the sustainability of the programme in urban tourism environment and further determine the mediating effect of visitor's satisfaction towards the relationship of safe city programme strategies and the sustainability of the programme in urban tourism environment.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Urban Tourism

Urban tourism can attract various ranges of visitor groups with different types of voyager and the intentions to visit a destination (Page & Hall, 2002). Urban areas and activities related to them such as city walks, shopping, dining and more can be included as a main part for tourists to experience the city (Barker & Page, 2002). With the presence of large numbers of visitors in a city at one time, the environment is created that summarizes the attention of tourism and opportunities for crimes to take place (Barker & Page, 2002). Nowadays, there are many countries that have urban areas, including to those that have developed or are developing along with small island economies and can be promoted to be as tourist destinations (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010).

Commonly, tourists visit to the urban area comes with a main purpose which is leisure, business, conferences, shopping and more. This is because the tourists are easy to access to the urban areas. Also, local residents can be the users of the attractions and infrastructure even though the infrastructure generally been constructed for non-tourism purpose. According to Edwards, Griffin and Hayllar (2008), in the context of urban destinations, variety and scale of attractions are large. There are many developers that focus to the urban areas to have new attraction places to be visited. The tourism industry needs to compete with other industries for resources such as land and labour to be in urban areas. This has shown how packed the urban areas are as many industries compete to be there for many purposes. The safety of urban areas needs to be considered to ensure the tourists and also local residents to be safe wherever they go. In relation to the urban tourism concept, urban tourism brings together tourist and local, destination, variety of cultures, expectations (before travel) and experiences (after travel) and values.

2.2 Safety Issues

Safety can be defined as peaceful and prosperous (Anuar, Bookhairi, & Aziz, 2012). The successful act of perception is an act of integrations which is accompanied by definite feelings of safety. It is a feeling some of us take for granted in our everyday experiences and as quoted by Sandler (1960), 'the feeling of safety is more than a simple lack of anxiety but a very definite feeling quality within ego that the researchers can

further regard much of ordinary everyday behaviour as being a means of maintaining a minimum level of safety-feeling'. The nature feeling of the physical act or environment such as climbing a mountain or swimming can also be related to safety. Hence, the chance or possibility of those activities to involve with criminal activities or visitor being attacked would be arise (Tan, Chong, & Ho, 2017).

The process of urbanization usually comes with the increasing crimes in urban areas that may cause numbers of problems in city area (Shamsuddin & Hussin, 2013). Because of that, safety has become the main concern that is recently being discussed greatly as it is affecting the quality of life of people living in the area (Anuar et al., 2011). Hence, safety has become one of the measurements to achieve the quality of life. While the number of crimes keep on increasing, it will contribute towards the anxiety feelings among the community and tourists (Anuar et al., 2011). This clearly shown that the increasing on crime rates will affect the safety of the tourists' and also local residents.

2.3 Visitor Satisfaction

Safety and security are crucial aspects for the development of all tourism destinations (Amir, Ismail & Toh, 2015). It is natural to have anxiety when travelling typically with regards to safety and security. Many tourists are very concerned that they might be in the risks of getting physically injuries due to any possible harm. The image of the destination that held by the visitors might give an impact to the process of choosing an attraction/destination that influence the perceived quality and satisfaction (Chi & Qu, 2008). If the destinations are not safe to be visited which means the destination had bad image, thus, it will influence the tourists not to visit the destination. Even though the destination has good structure of building, but the destination is not safe to be visited, still the tourist will not come as safety is the priority of all individuals.

The crime rate of the area where a destination is located contribute to how tourists perceived the safety and security of the destination (Pizam & Ellis, 1999). At the highest level, safety and security comprised issues from a broad range that includes change in the environment, political, international crime and many more. This will ensure the visitor's satisfaction in visiting the destination. If the visitors noticed this kind of crime, they might delay or just simply cancel their plan to travel when they know there is a potential risk that might occur.

2.4 Sustainability of Safe City Programme in Urban Tourism Environment

Shamsudin (2008) suggested that the Safe City Programme dictates some forms of auditing to measure the effectiveness of the programme. He further stated that public perception survey needs to be conducted on a regular basis to ensure the sustainability of the programme to be continued in order to keep and prevent crimes occurrences. Based on this basis, Anuar et al (2011) later measured the effectiveness of safe city programmes and highlighted that the Ministry has taken many initiatives to ensure the safety level of tourist through the clearly of definition of the concepts, objectives and goals through three strategies and 23 crime prevention steps under Safe City

Programme. Importantly, they found that from the concepts or policy, the initiative is successful. However, in terms of effectiveness, it is not. Their study indicated that the sustainability of the programme could be further challenged whereby the programme have failed to reduce crimes with several cities continuing to be hotbeds for crime occurrences.

3 Safe City Programme

The concept of Safe City Programme known as a 'free crime city' comes from the Safe City Programme itself which was launched at the international level in 1996 by UN-Habitat. Meanwhile in Malaysia, the Crime Prevention Foundation Malaysia (YPM) in early 1998 has proposed the concept of safe city (Anuar et al., 2011). However, the implementation of safe city programme in Malaysia was launched in August 2010 under the Ministry of Housing and Local Authority (Anuar et al., 2011). As the programme has been conducted at several cities in Malaysia, broader understanding needs to be considered. Thus, Safe City Programme guideline has been proposed by Department of Town and Country Planning (JPBD) which consists of 23 prevention steps stated under three main strategies.

3.1.1 Environmental Design Initiatives

According to Robinson (1999), crime prevention involves psychobiological aspects of human nature and the role of the external physical environment in human behaviour. Phipps and Horrobin (2014) suggested that modern crime prevention can be done by taking into consideration the external physical environmental design, namely territoriality, natural surveillance, activity support and access control, or commonly known as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

CPTED is "the proper design and effective use of the built environment, that can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime and an improvement in the quality of life" (Crowe, 2000, p. 46). The goal of CPTED is to reduce opportunities for crime that may be inherent in the design of structures or in the design of neighborhoods. To reduce the opportunities for crime and deviant behavior, CPTED promotes active, mixed-use developments and works best when active community participation is recruited. The concept of CPTED is related to the idea of the Safe City Programme, in which both initiatives encourage the use of public space and its design to plan a sustainable living environment that are safe and secure for the community (Cozens & Love, 2015). Based on the principles of CPTED, the physical environment is more important than the social aspects (Sakip & Abdullah, 2012) as the physical design elements can be modified and altered according to the needs of a certain environment.

3.1.2 Target Hardening

The concept of target hardening is an antidote to victimization (Hummer & Preston, 2006). Target hardening is aimed at ensuring more challenging or dangerous physical entry that can prevent burglars. The practice of target hardening may include additional

safety measures such as improvements to windows and fencing, and alarms and safety lightings. In distinct systems, target hardening varies. It is sometimes provided to victims at enhanced danger of re-burgling. Priorities are given to vulnerable people such as elderly or single parents or to high risk areas or to all of the neighbourhood. As stated by Department of Town and Country Planning (JPBD), target hardening is one of the main strategies towards the Safe City Programme implementation. In addition, the facilities which are required or the elements that might enhance the safety aspect of a park are in line with the target hardening (Maruthaveeran, 2010). Through many cases, the park facilities are provided enough but publics do not use it. This might be due to lack of safety aspects.

3.1.3 Public Awareness

To increase the cyber security awareness, the public needs to be first made aware about the issue (Hoggard, 2014). Besides, awareness is crucial in the attempt to encourage the locals and tourists to support the safe city programme. Awareness, in this context, acts as the public's understanding about the programme. The awareness can enhance the public's perception on the importance of the programme. Raising awareness does not only involve explaining the issues and distributing the information about the programme but it also emphasizes the importance of the programme for the city and the public. Hence, public awareness is a strategy for the Safe City Programme. This strategy plays an essential role in making the public to be aware of the safety programme (Maruthaveeran, 2010). One way to raise awareness is by distributing programme brochures and conducting safety and security campaigns. These initiatives are expected to prevent crimes.

4 Conclusion

The safe city programme addresses one of the basic aspects of urban life and critical components for sustainable of social and economic development which are the need to bring down the rate of crimes, prevent violence and provide the best safe environment to the people in a city. From practical perspective, this study will benefit urban tourism marketers as well as destination managers and increases destination managers and operators' awareness about the importance of safe city programmes and how the programme increases the level of safety and security in urban tourism environment. Other than that, the government and local authorities could improve different aspect of the safe city programme strategies.

From the academic perspective, the study on the safe city programme in Malaysia especially Penang is still limited. There are still limited researches that have included visitors' satisfaction, safety and security as the factors that are important to consider in order to prevent crimes from happenings. Therefore, this study calls for further investigation to expand new knowledge about the safety and security issues, which have received less attention in the tourism research.

A deeper look and investigation of visitor's satisfaction and how it could mediate the relationship of safe city programme strategies and the sustainability of the programme will provide a better understanding on crime prevention programmes in urban tourism environment. It is hoped that through effective safe city program, crimes in urban tourism destination may be prevented and could lead to increasing tourist arrival, may attract more investors, provide job opportunities and importantly, develop a good image of the country.

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