

# Community assimilation: Exploring dimension of Melaka tourism product

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## Abstract

This paper empirically examines the attributes of community assimilation towards Melaka Tourism in which covering several ethnics in this state. This study employed the attributes of community assimilation to assess the tourism product of Melaka. More specifically, this paper explores the element of community assimilation in Melaka through custom, language as well as food and beverages. Furthermore, the study is also conducted to determine the most influential factors of community assimilation that contributes to the Melaka tourism product. Data were collected from first and secondary resources through administered questionnaire survey and based on 362 respondents. The result from the correlation analysis shows that custom, language as well as food and beverages variables possess the explanatory power of the variation in Melaka tourism product. The testing process also confirms that food and beverages contribute high influence in Melaka tourism product. Finally, limitations of present findings were discussed, and implications for future studies are suggested.

## Keywords:

Community assimilation, tourism product, culture, heritage, Melaka

## **1 Introduction**

Enjoying the declaration as Melaka Maju 2010, the Melaka state shows its maturity in tandem with rapid development and economic stability. It is due to its beautiful natural environment, rich with a mixture of cultures and lifestyles (Abdullah, Manan, Manan, & Abdullah, 2016). Back to the previous history, Melaka was colonized by three European powers. Starting from 1511 to 1957, the first was by the Portuguese for 130 years, then Dutch for 150 years, followed by the British who colonized the whole of Malaya for 162 years (Ooi and Lai, 2014). As history evolved, Melaka becomes one of the cities, which have a blended of culture from Malays, Chinese, Indians, Baba Nyonya, Chitty, and the Portuguese. To date, Melaka historical city was designated as UNESCO World Heritage Site since July 2008.

This combination has created the uniqueness of the culture diversity, ethnic language and also their special cuisine that becomes one of the tourism products in this state. In the last few years, there has been a growing interest in cultural tourism and seems to be “new” tourism phenomena. It was emerged as a potential form of alternative tourism among both international tourists as well as Malaysian domestic tourists. Moreover, cultural tourism includes tourism in urban areas, particularly historic or large cities and their cultural facilities such as museums and monuments. It also includes the rural areas who will display the traditions of indigenous cultural communities simultaneously with their value and lifestyle (Kastenholz, 2002).

Therefore, many types of researches were focused to combine several tourism areas in finding one perfect measurement for Melaka tourism product framework (Zainuddin, Chuah, Yu, Petra, & Kek, 2012; Omar, Shahrin, & Siti Nazirah, 2015). However, the combination of customs, languages, food, and beverages need further exploration through the examination of community assimilation attributes in Melaka and investigation of the most influential factor might affect the dependent variable. Therefore, the objectives of the study included; exploring the element of community assimilation in Melaka and determining the most influential factors of community assimilation that contributes to the Melaka tourism product. To strengthen the finding, the relationship among variables also determined through correlation. Eventually, data and findings were presented to support the tourism industry in Melaka specifically and in Malaysia heritage tourism resilience.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Culture assimilation, customs, languages and local cuisine**

For several years great effort has been devoted to the study on culture assimilation in Malaysia by several scholars in linking the attributes towards tourism product (Lee, 2009; Mohamad Hair, M., Zahari, Muhammad Izzat, & Zulfan, 2009; Hanita Hassan, 2009; Bloemraad, 2007). Melaka became the perfect example of

culture assimilation as the state acted as a “salad bowl” for Malays, Chinese, Indians, Baba and Nyonya, Chitty, Portuguese as well as Eurasians (Lee, 2009). Therefore, previous research has demonstrated that tourism activities and products are not only seen related to the physical attraction, yet goes beyond that including a local way of life (National Heritage Department, 2013; Zulaika, 2012; Mohamad Hairi et al., 2009; Lee, 2009; Kastenholz, 2002). In this work and related references it was observed that cultural distance or different food culture also has an influenced factor to become an impediment factor for tourists’ decision-making process; Cohen and Avieli (2004), and Kastenholz (2002) has also found that traditions of cultural communities include their value and lifestyle customs in rural areas.

Moreover, previous studies indicate that all the elements in community assimilation had already started since 500 years ago and several publications have appeared in recent years documenting on Melaka tourism heritage, culture, and planning. Nevertheless, to the authors’ best knowledge, very few publications can be found combining these three attributes (customers, languages, and cuisine) in a single framework. Therefore, In the literature, several theories have been proposed to explain on community assimilation in Melaka. However, there are still some interesting and relevant results were addressed to support the findings.

### **3 Methodology**

This study considers the various determinants of Melaka tourism product based on literature reviews of the various scholars. As a result, the researchers analyzed the community assimilation of each ethnic from three perspectives that are custom, language, and food and beverages toward Melaka tourism product. The study identified the community assimilation attribute in Melaka and the most influential factors of community assimilation that contribute to Melaka tourism product. The investigation through correlation study was used as the researchers were interested in proving the three important variables or attributes of community assimilation in Melaka associated with the tourism product of this state.

In a sampling section, the study used unrestricted probability sampling, also known as simple random sampling. In the simple random sampling, all elements in the population are considered, and each element has an equal chance of being chosen as the subject. (Sekaran & Bougie, 2011). Therefore, in this study, the researchers considered the tourists whether inbound or outbound tourists who had experienced the tourism products of Melaka that come from the three aspects of community assimilation in this state to be chosen in giving information of the survey. They could reasonably be expected to know the Melaka tourism product by having gone through the experiences themselves, and might perhaps be able to provide good data or valuable information on their satisfaction. Tourist here is referring to the people who travel to a site to enjoy its attractions, special events or/and entertainment (Chon & Sparrowe, 2000). This study have chosen both inbound and outbound tourists as the

sample because Melaka is the state that had receives highest tourists every year from a vast country and the chance of the tourists to give an accurate response is high.

As the data collection method was carried out, the study used both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected by personally administered the questionnaire surveys to the tourists around Melaka that undoubtedly had experienced the Melaka tourism products. Other than that, the study also collected several sources of secondary data such as books, journals, articles, an authorized website on community assimilation and tourism product in Melaka. This study is based on quantitative methodologies to find out the community attribute in Melaka and to determine the most influential factors of community assimilation that contribute to Melaka tourism product.

Therefore, the descriptive statistics, frequency distribution, reliability test and Pearson correlation analysis were carried out. Specifically, 362 out of 384 questionnaires based on simple random sampling which targeting local and international tourist were successfully recorded into the SPSS Software. As a measurement, five Likert scales were used in an administered questionnaire survey and data were quantitatively analyzed.

## **4 Findings**

### **4.1 Demographic profiles**

The study started by investigating the mean score analysis. This present section states the results gained through the data collection process were started with a report on the respondents' profile data and continued by series of analysis related to the objective of the study in the later section. The objective of the analysis of primary data collected from the survey as presented in the previous chapter is to answer the research questions which include discovering the community assimilation attribute in Melaka and also finding out the most influential factors of community assimilation that contribute to the Melaka Tourism Product. From the data collected, it was analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) system. As been presented in Table 1, respondents' profile data was recorded for the study perusal.

Table 1 : Respondent profile data

No	Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender		
	Male	189	52.2
	Female	173	47.8
	Total	362	100.0
2.	Age		
	20 - 30	197	54.4
	31 - 40	107	29.6
	41 - 50	46	12.7
	51 and above	12	3.3
	Total	362	100.0
3.	Marital Status		
	Single	218	60.2
	Married	124	34.3
	Divorced	20	5.5
	Total	362	100.0
4.	Nationality		
	Malaysian	321	88.7
	Asian	34	9.4
	European	5	1.4
	Others	2	0.6
	Total	362	100.0
5.	Level of Education Qualification		
	Primary school	13	3.6
	Secondary school	73	20.2
	STPM / Matriculation / Diploma	120	33.1
	Bachelor Degree	136	37.6
	Master / PhD	20	5.5
	Other	0	0
	Total	362	100.0
6.	Occupation		
	Government sector	82	22.7
	Private sector	87	24.0
	Self - employed	57	15.7
	Unemployed	33	9.1
	Student	103	28.5
	Total	362	100.0
7.	Reason for travelling		
	Vacation	206	56.9
	Business trip	53	14.6
	Education	59	16.3
	Shopping	38	10.5
	Others	6	1.7
	Total	362	100.0

Majority of respondents were aged between 20-30 years old representing 54.4% of the sample population. There were 189 males with 52.2% and 173 female respondents with 47.8% involved in this study. Most of the respondents were Malaysian with 88.7% and followed by Asian (9.4%), European (1.4%) and others (0.6%). Respondents were representatives of tourists in Melaka.

#### 4.2 Reliability testing analysis

Reliability is the degree to which a measurement instrument is consistent in what it measures. The reliability of the measure is established by testing for both consistency and stability. Consistency indicated how well the item is measuring a concept being together as a net. Meanwhile, Cronbach's Alpha is a reliability coefficient that indicated how well the items in a set are positively correlated to one another. Thus, this study has done the reliability test to check whether the data gathered from the questionnaire is reliable for the study.

In order to verify the validity of the attributes, reliability testing was carried out as a result recorded as follow; to provide evidence that the three constructs; custom, language as well as food and beverages. All values were greater than 0.70 which indicates that the scales were highly reliable. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability test output

Measures	$\alpha$	No. of items
Custom	0.745	10
Language	0.788	8
Food and Beverages	0.732	10

According to the table above, all the questions consist in each variable are reliable to be used in the questionnaire. The value of Cronbach's Alpha for custom is 0.745 which means the data obtained from the research is considered good. Next, the value of other elements, which are language and Food and beverage, are also considered as good which is recorded as 0.788 and 0.732. Hence, based on the test conducted, it can be concluded that the data obtained from this study are reliable. As a result, this study can proceed to the next step.

#### 4.3 Descriptive analysis

Custom is the first attributes in community assimilation dimension that link to the Melaka tourism product. Among the item tested were religious, belief and culture, which represented 4.64 (M). Next, Lion Dance performance during Chinese New Year was recorded as 4.51 followed by the traditional Malay costumes recorded as for 4.51. Furthermore, traditional Malay eating manner also contributed for 4.43 in the mean scores and continued with Baba Nyonya and Chittys' appearance that recorded the

mean for 3.82. Eating manners by using a chopstick for Chinese was also recorded and obtain the mean score for 3.05. Finally, the Buddhist celebration of Wesak Day recorded 2.82 in mean score analysis.

As for the next dimension been tested in mean score analysis, language showed significant findings such as language for every ethnic recorded 4.49 in mean score reading. Next, Malay language empowerment by Baba Nyonya ethnic shown 3.66 mean score level and followed by Portuguese adapt the Malay language in their daily conversation was recorded the mean score for 3.46.

As for the analysis for the third dimension which is food and beverages attributes, the top-ranking item that recorded 4.56 mean score was the acceptance of Melaka offers great food and beverages. Next, different style of different ethnics' eating manners represents the uniqueness of Melaka food culture significantly shown 4.44 in mean score reading followed by the least mean score reading that recorded as much as 2.99 in mean score reading, experience in preparing traditional cuisine of Melaka.

As all the items been analyzed, the mean score for dependent variable was also recorded as Melaka Tourism Product. According to the data analysis, the respondent agreed that language of the community attribute has become part of the attraction for the tourist as it shows the blended culture of various ethnics (4.40M). Furthermore, the custom of the Melaka people has an impact in Melaka Tourism Product as it contributes for 4.41 in mean score reading. Next, food and beverages recorded 4.33 in mean score reading as it contributes to Melaka Tourism Product. The unique custom of different culture and community assimilation recorded 4.48M and 4.55M in molding the tourism Melaka element.

Table 2 provides means and standard deviation distribution of all variables. Based on the table, the score of acceptance for Melaka tourism product is high (M = 4.43). Among the independent variables; Food and beverages scored the highest mean with M = 3.95. Meanwhile, language scored a mean of 3.78 and custom scored a mean of 3.71. Table 3 report the descriptive analysis result.

Table 3: Descriptive analysis result

Measures	Mean	SD
Custom	3.71	1.01
Language	3.78	0.85
Food and Beverages	3.95	0.89
Melaka tourism Product	4.43	0.62

#### 4.4 Correlation

Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis can describe the strength and direction of the linear relationship between variables. As a result, Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationship between independent variables and Melaka tourism product (Custom, Language and Food and Beverage). All independent variables have significant and positive relationships towards dependent variable as scored below. Table 4 shows the Pearson correlation analysis.

Table 4: Pearson correlation analysis

	Custom	Language	F&B
Melaka Tourism Product	.20**	.116*	.294**

Most of the relationship between community assimilation and Melaka tourism product is ranking from positive to least, and the analysis recorded the attribute has partially positive element even it was a bit weak. The Pearson's correlation analysis between food and beverage and factor contribute to Melaka tourism product was positive which is 0.294 and followed by the custom attributes as it recorded for 0.20. Finally, the lowest correlation was language element that recorded 0.116, and as a sum, these three elements have relationship towards Melaka tourism product. Furthermore, among dimension analyzed, food and beverages element contributes to the highest relationship in the tested framework followed by custom and language.

### 5 Discussion

The discussion aimed to address the objectives of the study include exploring the element of community assimilation in Melaka and determining the most influential factors of community assimilation that contributes to the Melaka tourism product. In line with it, this study intended to identify the Melaka tourism product through three different attributes that are custom, language as well as food and beverage in Melaka.

#### 5.1 Custom

The first variable of community assimilation is custom, which defines as the usual behavior of humans regarding the act, traditional garment, decorating themselves and others. The result obtained through the previous analysis shows that custom rank as second important factors that contribute to the Melaka tourism product. As the Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted for reliability, the result was 0.745 and considerably valid enough for further testing. Meanwhile, in the descriptive study, a wide range of religious belief and culture recorded the highest mean score, and this can be concluded that most of the tourists who visit Melaka have awareness about the diversity of the community in Melaka. Furthermore, the unity and harmony embrace by the community in Melaka also provides the tourist to a safe environment and attract more to come.



In contrast, Christmas celebration held in Ujong Pasir, Melaka received a low mean score in this study, this celebration was greeted by the Portuguese, and as a minority in the states, the tourists feel less aware on the celebration. As in technological advancement era, it is deemed necessary for the Melaka Tourism Department to aggressively support and promote the Portuguese community in Melaka through a various channel in conjunction with Industrial Revolution 4.0, people becoming more advanced and the promotion strategy by the authorize departments are also need to be more diverse. This might be implemented through M.I.C.E, Travel application and diplomatic agreement to host more partnership in international events.

## **5.2 Language**

In molding the framework of the study, language dimension is tested to figure out whether the diversity of languages available from every ethnic in Melaka has a significant impact in Melaka tourism product. The findings were quite unexpected where language element recorded 0.788 in mean score analysis. The element of Melaka has a wide range of language from every ethnic recorded higher rank in this analysis and it is suggested that the cultural diversity of Melaka has already well known by the tourist before they came to the state. However, be mentioned in the previous section too, Portuguese community who is practicing the Malay language in their daily routine received a lower mean score. Therefore, particular attention is paid to the promotional strategy of Melaka state as it may improve the awareness towards visitors on the Portuguese ethnic in this UNESCO world heritage site.

The originality of our solution lies in the fact that the Melaka Tourism department should promote the language or dialect in a bigger medium. For instance, TV program of the workshop for the tourist to learn about Melaka traditional dialect would give positive impact in placing language as a Melaka attraction.

## **5.3 Food and beverages**

Food and beverages variable is tested to analyze the desire of both international and domestic tourist towards their enjoyment on traditional cuisine from each ethnic in Melaka. The data obtained was broadly consistent with another dimension as it recorded 0.732 in mean score. An important implication of these findings is that Melaka offers great choices of food and beverage were one of the elements of the tourist to come to Melaka is about the cuisine. After Penang, Melaka also has bigger potential to be promoted as a culinary or gastronomy tourism attraction as it becomes the place where east and western met. Nevertheless, most of the tourists have less contact in food preparation as it may increase the travel experience in Melaka. To our knowledge, the same approach might be implemented as Batik preparation where the tourist can feel the actual experience in drawing the Batik. Therefore, a good facility may be developed for the tourist to have a chance to be part of Melaka food cuisine preparation. Besides, more festival specifically for food and beverage should be held to encourage travel experience among visitors. Also, special tourism package dedicated

for gastronomy element can be introduced by the local travel agency as it may give proper guidelines for the tourist to get more experience in Melaka traditional cuisines.

#### **5.4 Melaka tourism product**

As the data presented in the previous section, three items were tested and draw a positive relationship towards Melaka tourism product. Therefore, community assimilation through the diversity of language, custom and food and beverages successfully contribute the Melaka tourism product. As a recapitulation, data analysis was presented in a prior session where all variables scored moderate positive relationship towards dependent variable. It indicates that all variables contribute to the element of Melaka tourism product where the attraction of one place is not only determined by the physical characteristic (Zulaika, 2012; Hairi et al., 2009; Lee, 2009; Kastenholz, 2002). The results also strengthen the previous findings stated by (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). By using the framework, this study can be better understood by the government, academia, and student about the community assimilation that might influence the Melaka tourism product.

### **6 Conclusion**

This paper is a modest contribution to the ongoing discussions about new Melaka tourism product framework that might help the industry to grow further in providing better tourist experience and also to contribute towards a better life for the community. As the state achieves more tourist arrival every year, new formulation to sustain the travel industry in Melaka is encouraged to support its resilience in a year to come. However, this study is also not without limitation where the data only provide the snapshot of the situation. Perhaps the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) might provide a different added value into the body of knowledge. This study helps the tourism key player in providing dynamic product and service accordingly to the visitors' preferences.

### **7 About the authors**

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