

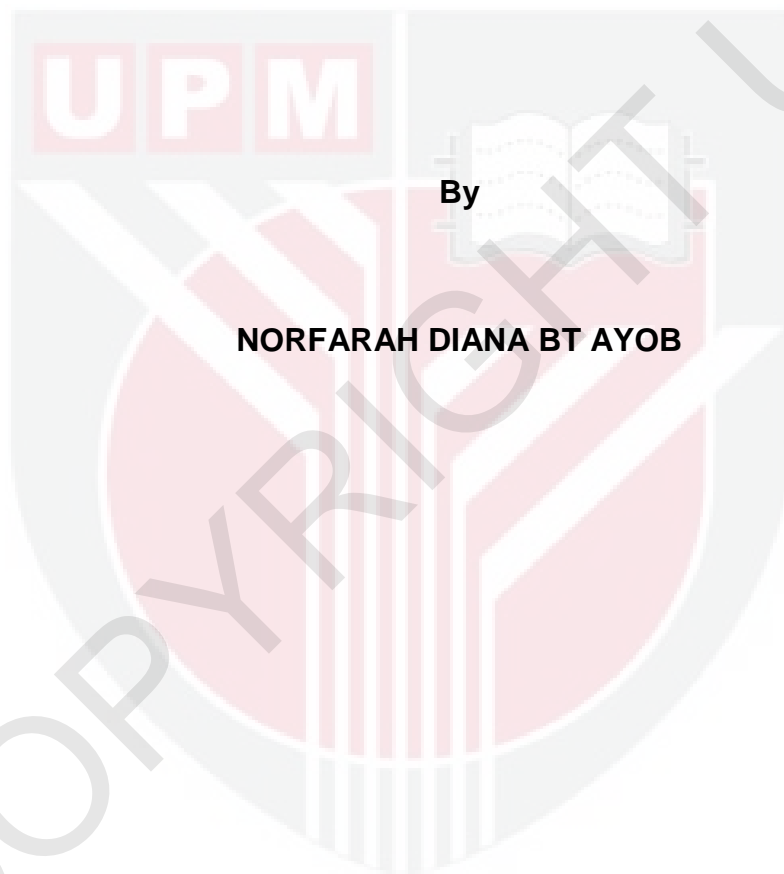


***MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCE OF HIKERS  
AT GUNUNG BALING, KEDAH***

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**FH 2018 108**

**MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCE OF HIKERS  
AT GUNUNG BALING, KEDAH**



**A Project Report Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Bachelor of Parks and Recreation Science in the  
Faculty of Forestry  
Universiti Putra Malaysia**

**2018**

## DEDICATION

Specially dedicated to:

My beloved Father,  
Ayob Bin Yahya

My beloved Mother,  
Zaiton Binti Saman

My beloved sister and brothers,  
Nornadia Aizat, Muhammad Norfarhan & Muhammad Noramsyar Danish

My beloved classmate,  
***Batch Merapoh***

Thank you so much for all of you & may Allah bless all of us.

## ABSTRACT

In the highly competitive tourism marketplace, the importance of achieving success is by providing visitors with Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTE). Gunung Baling became one of the attractions to hike after becoming viral in social media in 2015. Several hikers re-hiked Gunung Baling more than once. Thus, this study is to examine the eight dimensions of MTE scale items and factors influencing hikers' MTE during hiking at Gunung Baling. A total of 162 hikers who had completed hiking at Gunung Baling were purposively sampled for the study. The data was analyzed using descriptive and multiple regression analysis. Hedonism has shown the highest mean value among all MTE scale items. Hikers' accompaniment, sources of information (WOM), recommendation to other hikers, and hikers' re-hike interest are significant factors that influence hikers' MTE at Gunung Baling, Kedah. The management of Gunung Baling should continuously provide a variety of activities to ensure greater memorable experiences among the hikers.

## ABSTRAK

Di dalam pasaran pelancongan yang sangat kompetitif, adalah penting untuk mencapai kejayaan dengan menyediakan pengunjung dengan pengalaman kenangan pelancongan (MTE). Gunung Baling menjadi salah satu daya tarikan untuk mendaki setelah menjadi viral di media sosial pada tahun 2015. Beberapa pendaki mendaki semula Gunung Baling lebih daripada satu kali. Oleh itu, kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji lapan dimensi item skala MTE dan faktor yang mempengaruhi MTE pendaki semasa mendaki di Gunung Baling. Seramai 162 orang pendaki dipilih menggunakan kaedah pendekatan persampelan bertujuan tertentu selepas mendaki di Gunung Baling. Data dianalisis menggunakan kaedah kuantitatif dan analisis regresi berganda. Hedonisme telah menunjukkan nilai min tertinggi di kalangan semua item skala pengalaman kenangan pelancongan. Peneman pendaki, sumber maklumat (melalui perbualan), cadangan kepada pendaki yang lain, dan minat pendaki untuk mendaki semula adalah faktor penting yang mempengaruhi pengalaman kenangan pelancongan pendaki di Gunung Baling, Kedah. Pihak pengurusan Gunung Baling perlu terus menyediakan pelbagai kegiatan aktiviti untuk memastikan pengalaman kenangan yang lebih tinggi di kalangan pendaki.

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## APPROVAL SHEET

I certify that this research project report entitled “**Memorable Tourism Experience of Hikers at Gunung Baling, Kedah**” by Norfarah Diana Binti Ayob has been examined and approved as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Parks and Recreation Science in the Faculty of Forestry, Universiti Putra Malaysia.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MTE Memorable Tourism Experience

WOM Word of Mouth



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Tourism in Malaysia

There are various sources and people who define tourism. According to World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism involves the activities of people moving to and remaining in places away from their current condition for not more than one successive year for recreation, business, and another purpose (Ugurlu, 2010). Tourism can be defined as the interaction of tourists, business providers, host governments, and host group in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors has raised the relationships and sum of the phenomena (Robert & Goeldner, 1986). Tourist is the same statement with the visitor.

In the UNWTO's list, Malaysia has been ranked ninth of 10 most visited countries, with 24.6 million international tourist arrivals in 2010 (The Star online, 2012). Besides that, after China and Hong Kong, Malaysia was ranked the third top travel destination in Asia and the Pacific region in 2014 by the UNWTO World Tourism Ranking. Malaysia also rely on its diversified cultural or natural heritage sites and entertainment infrastructure to attract an extensive leisure market other than only being an active business and meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) destination.

In Malaysia, there is an agency under the Ministry of Tourism & Culture whose job is promoting Malaysia as a preferred tourism destination which is Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board or popularly known as Tourism Malaysia. The statistics of tourist arrivals and receipts to Malaysia in 2016 were 26.8 million arrivals and RM82.1 billion receipts (Ministry of Tourism & Culture of Malaysia, 2017).

Malaysia is a country that rich with stunning nature including the beautiful beaches and the world's oldest tropical rainforest, which is almost accessible to human. Various type of recreational activities could be done here such as diving, hiking, bird watching, cave exploration and more. All of this activities give the memorable experiences to the participants and we can say that tourism industry is one of the one of the pioneer examples of the experiences economy.

## **1.2 Outdoor Recreation Activities**

Outdoor recreation activities have been characterized as those activities that are attempted outside the limits of structures (i.e., in the outdoors), can be embraced without the presence of any fabricated office or framework, may require huge zones of land, water as well as air and may require open - air zones of prevalently unmodified natural landscape (Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation, 2014).

By performing physical exercise at the outdoors, it provides a way to get outside from hustle and bustle of life and enjoy our natural surroundings. There are have several of outdoor recreation activities that will make us want to go back outside for more. The advantages of doing outdoor recreation are endless and will help keep us physically and mentally healthy and many of studies proved it. Almost all the activities involve walking and it is a common denominator for most of the forms of outdoor recreation.

Walking has been shown to have many health benefits for older adults such as managing weight, controlling blood pressure, decreasing the risk of heart attack, lowering the risk of stroke, reducing the risk of breast cancer, osteoporosis and other else. People who took a 50 minutes' walk in nature showed better performance on memory tasks than people who had walked through urban settings (Berman et al., 2012). Recreational activities also help reduce stress and prevent some cases of depression by doing it consistently. As a result, participants will have a better self-esteem partially due to a decrease in stress and to the overall feeling of well-being that occurs from regular aerobic exercise. Breathing fresh air in a natural, serene environment also helps many people to relax, reduce stress and anxiety.

Outdoor recreational includes activities such as hiking, camping, canoeing, kayaking, biking, fishing, and so on. Nowadays, mountaineering activities are becoming increasingly popular all over the world including Malaysia. There

are many interesting places that have always been a spotlight for hikers to hike. In Malaysia, the place is Bukit Broga, Bukit Tabur, Gunung Arong, Gunung Irau, Gunung Nuang, Gunung Baling and other else. In this globalization era, recreational have become a trend or lifestyle for humans and become a basic necessity in life.

### **1.3 Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE)**

In recent years, tourism industry becoming competitive between each of the countries. Each manager in the destination places must provide their visitors with absolutely memorable experiences to overcome this situation. Usually, visitors will look at the destination attributes that interesting them to visit. The formation of visitor's experiences will be affected by the attributes of the destination places. "The visitors could create their MTE if the development of an environment (i.e., destination) is facilitated by destination manager which are their critical role," (Tung & Ritchie, 2011).

The product of recreation is experiences. Every time recreational activities are done by an individual there is the experience that he or she will gain regardless of whether the experience is positive or negative. Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick (2012) define that MTE which is a tourism experience positively remembered and recalled after the event occurred. There are have seven experiential factors lead to strong memorability which are hedonism, novelty,



knowledge, meaningfulness, involvement, local culture and refreshment (Kim et al., 2012). The present study extended the conceptualization of memorable tourism experience by including negative experiential factors into the memorable tourism experience scale. Visitors usually develop severe negative feelings because of accidents or illness (Aziz, 1995; Ryan, 1991, 1993).

The study was conducted at Gunung Baling, Kedah. It is well known mountain among hikers that located at Baling, Kedah after being viral in social media in 2015 because of its scenery. The summit offers beautiful 360 - degree view of its surrounding. Mostly the hikers who hike at this mountain were brought their mobile phone or camera to take pictures at the peak of the mount. That pictures will be kept in their memories and it will be recalled after they visit at one place. Every recreation places must have their unique characteristic that will provide a reason for people to revisit again to that place.

Thus, it is important to analyse what visitors remember from their past tourism experiences and the findings of the study may beneficial to both Baling District Council and visitors. This research was conducted at Gunung Baling, Kedah to help tourism planners and destination managers to design products or services that can satisfy their visitors' desires for new memorable experiences.

## 1.4 Problem Statement

In Malaysia, there are various recreational activities could be done and one of them is the mountaineering which is becoming trend and also madness among of the visitors nowadays. Since the beauty of the Gunung Baling and Gunung Pulai became viral on social media in 2015, the arrival of hikers was increased. Head of Mukim Pulai, Badrol Hisham Che Li said that the number of hikers who hike during weekends especially at Gunung Baling reaching over 500 people (Utusan Online, 2016). Negative emotions (unpleasantness) should decrease satisfaction levels and loyalty (Dube & Menon, 2000; Lee, Lee, Lee & Babin, 2008).

But, several of them re-hike Gunung Baling so many times. "This is the 3rd hike of Gunung Baling where the main mission to see the sunrise comes from the peak of Gunung Baling because before this I just climbed in the morning, did not get to see the sunrise," (Sobri, 2016). An unhappy visitor will absolutely not return, and there is no guarantee that a satisfied visitor will return back (Hosany & Witham, 2010). That is shown that there something special about Gunung Baling that make them want to come back again.

Most of the hikers are willing to come even though it is far. Head of Mukim Pulai, Badrol Hisham Che Li (2016) identify that many climbers come from outside the Baling district, some coming from Penang, Perak and Kuala

Lumpur, and there were also hikers from Singapore. Besides that, some of the hikers said that hiking at Gunung Baling can release their stress. According to one of the hikers, Jafarina Jaafar, said that "the feeling in this forest is different because there is no engine noise, no traffic jam, and no traffic. What's there is beauty, greenery, and fresh air make stress disappear," (Nurul, 2016). Bell (2005) states that people recover from stress because they tend to go to green spaces like nature reserves, woodlands, and also urban parks.

Hikers are getting satisfaction from their hiking at Gunung Baling, Kedah, but MTE is beyond satisfaction. Thus, this study is conducted to find out what are the memorable dimensions and the factors influencing hikers' memorable experience that make them remember about their experience during hiking at Gunung Baling, Kedah. Indirectly, it can help the management, Baling District Council, to give the best services by providing the best memorable experiences to the hikers.

## **1.5 Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to evaluate memorable tourism experience of hikers at Gunung Baling, Kedah. Specifically, the objectives of this study are listed as below:

- i. To determine the components of memorable tourism experience of hikers at Gunung Baling, Kedah.
- ii. To identify the factors influencing hikers' memorable experience at Gunung Baling, Kedah.

## **1.6 Justification**

This study was conducted to measure the MTE of hikers at Gunung Baling, Kedah in order to help the management (Baling District Council) to know which the components of MTE scale that were preferred by the hikers. The information that was collected will be shared with the management and may assist decision making for them to improve and conserve the Gunung Baling for giving the best memorable experience to the hikers. These improvements will make the hikers want to revisit and may attract more new hikers to Gunung Baling, Kedah. Lastly, this research may become reference for future studies that concerns other areas of study in this topic.

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