

## SUSTAINABILITY OF YOUTH TOURISTS IN EVENT TOURISM: THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCES

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*Youth tourists are becoming more influential as one of the market potentials in both developed and developing countries. Besides their conventional characters of being individuals, travels with tight budget and preferred non guided tours or on backpackers, youth tourists also play significant roles in event tourism which are more specific in term of schedules and themes. However, youth sustainability of event tourism is hardly discussed in tourism studies in Malaysia. Based on a case study of Visit Malaysia Year 2007 and a convenient sampling of 130 respondents, this article draws the perspective of youth tourists in event tourism. The findings showed that the clarity of youth tourists in event tourism, form of participation and event suitability act as the mediating factors that encouraged youths' participation in event tourism. Sustainability of youth tourists in event tourism also depends on the promotional campaigns and knowing the youth tourists' desires and capabilities.*

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JEL Classification: *L83, M1, O1*

### INTRODUCTION

Sustainability of tourism industry in Malaysia has been argued in many perspectives especially in environmental, economic, cultural and



social sustainability. While these perspectives are very important in terms of sustainable tourism development as well as in terms of resources and assets for future generation be they the locals or international tourists, tourism industry is also subjected to sustainability of tourist demands or tourist markets. In this matter, one of the untapped tourists segment is youth tourists. Nevertheless as pointed by many scholars that youth tourism is limited in terms of research, there exist several questioned pertaining to the extent of its contribution to the sustainability of tourism industry as a whole and also specific tourism sector such as event tourism.

On the other hand, special thematic event has also been emphasized by many of the destinations. In fact, as of recent era of globalization, event tourism is one of the niche products for expanding both the tourism sector in developed and developing countries. Event tourism, whether of international or national standard, is capable to generate economic growth, increase employment, increase international arrivals and at the same time, strengthen local culture and promote domestic tourism (Vogt 1976; Ritchie, 1984; Getz, 1997, 2008). Like other tourism products, event tourism is currently aiming to attracting crowds of special segments, of which youth seems to becoming one of the most familiar 'fans', 'audience' and 'participants' for both market, domestic and international. In fact, youth tourist is growing rapidly due to changes of global socio-demography, low cost travel and widespread of backpacker's culture including dance culture (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2002; Firth & Hing, 1999; Ryan & Mohsin, 2001; Sellars, 1998).

Although there are substantial literature in event tourism and youth tourism, both hardly provide the perspective of the relationship between youth roles in event tourism. Event tourism, as deliberated by many renowned scholars, involves a variety of issues and research locality (Getz, 1997, 2002, 2008; Riley, 1988). There exist four major themes in event tourism, namely the economic impact, behavioral studies of large and world event including motivations of attendees, marketing, place identity and promotional as well as planning issues (Stokes, 2008; Williams et al., 1995, Buch, 2006; Scott, 1996; Baum & Lockstone, 2007; Bramwell, 1997). Nevertheless, little work is done to elaborate youth involvement in event tourism particularly in dealing with the year-round event in developing countries. On the other hand, youth tourism studies of recent years tend to explore specific international sport events, small scale sports, backpackers and youth at national level (World Tourism Organization, 2008; Tourism Australia, 2010; Firth & Hing, 1999). However, being one of the infancy in tourism sector in most developing countries, youth tourism, provides a limited understanding on the

demand and travel pattern, putting aside their exploration in the event tourism, particularly in thematic events of the country or destination. Hence empirical studies in developing countries provide real evidence for event planning and development and this gap of knowledge need to be attempted.

As for Malaysia, event tourism is becoming a priority, regardless of various new product development initiatives being taken in each state. The Visit Malaysia Year 2007 is a 'peak of a travel events' during the celebration of the 50 years the country achieves an independence and nationhood. It is reported that the Malaysian government expected to woo 20 million foreign tourists and earn 44.5 billion ringgit (12.36 billion U.S. dollars) worth of tourist receipts, giving a boost to the growth of national economy and the development of tourism-related industries (Lihua, 2007). In terms of tourism products, the country continues to promote its traditional advantages, its cultural and natural heritage, and leverage on the tag line "Malaysia Truly Asia", introduced in 1999. During the VMY 2007, a total of 50 major events were showcased throughout the country, enabling visitors to witness a unique multi-racial and multi-cultural tourism activities and lifestyles of this country. Among the events are the Floral Fest in Kuala Lumpur, Dragon Boat Racing in Penang, and Rainforest Musical Festival in Sarawak and Eco-challenge in Pahang National Parks. Most importantly, VMY 2007 demonstrates the government's determination to tap the great potential of the tourism industry, which stands as the third economic pillar and the second largest source of foreign revenue of the country.

However, efforts to encourage young people to actively participate in event tourism in the country have not been proven successful, because segment of youth tourist is difficult to verify with a complete and comprehensive statistics. Based on the youth development index, the domain of leisure time used is low, and surprisingly, the measurement is mostly for leisure time not associated with tourism activities (Ministry of Youth and Sport Malaysia, 2006). The index also showed that leisure time is only a 'fair measure' of youth involvement in tourism, as it included only three aspects of leisure, leaving doubts of what constitutes their real involvement. This is because, significant involvement of youth in developed countries was found to be ranging from an ordinary tourist to a successful businessmen, organizers and volunteer workers.

In fact, the literature of tourism in Malaysia only touches a limited aspect of event tourism and youth tourism. As for youth tourism, a study carried out by Badaruddin et al. (2009) focused on the trend of youth tourists in general, while Taiyab (2005) pointed out the underlying factors

that limit the spread and growth of youth tourism and of recent, Simanjuntak & Haliza (2009) explored on the interest of youth in responsible tourism. Meanwhile studies in event tourism is growing gradually, and topics of research include the small scale sport event (Yusof et al, 2009) and Habibah et al. (2008) explored on the hosting of Visit Malaysia Year 2007 with special attention of youth participation and family markets.

Based on the changing scenario of tourism competitiveness as well as sustainable tourism development and more importantly the limitation of youth study in event tourism, this untapped segment need to be explored, developed and managed in a sustainable manner. As youth tourism is limited in the body of knowledge of tourism studies, a further understanding of appreciating and developing 'youth as tourist' should not be left without guidance, planning and developmental perspectives of sustainable development. In fact detailing who youth tourists' are, their roles in event tourism and environmental knowledge tourists behaviours. It is the intention of this paper to look into the sustainability of tourist tourism in event tourism, with the special emphasis on the Malaysian experiences.

With an opinion that event tourism is a growing sector in the country, yet its body of knowledge is fragmented and limited, a study of sustainability of youth participation in event tourism is crucial. Therefore, this paper attempts to delineate the trend of youth travel and sustainability of youth tourists in event tourism in Malaysia, with special attempt of a case study of Visit Malaysia 2007. Thus, this paper is presented in three major sections especially to discuss the question posed here: Can youth tourists be sustained in event tourism? Is the event tourism, particularly the Visit Malaysia 2007 has been able to meet the needs of the youth segment? What are their needs when visiting or getting involved in event tourism? What are their suggestions to strengthen youth involvement in event tourism in the country? Overall this article hopes to provide an empirical contribution on how youth market can also be part of sustainable event tourism.

## **DEFINING YOUTH TOURIST AND THEIR SUSTAINABILITY IN EVENT TOURISM**

Although many stakeholders have long recognized youth market as a catalyst for tourism development (Adler, 1985; Clarke, 1992; Reisinger & Mavondo, 2002; Getz, 2002; Clark, 1992), there are mutually contradictory views about the potentials of this segment. On one hand,

youth travel is considered one sector that is less useful because young people expenditure is low (Firth & Hing, 1999). Nevertheless, the Australian Tourist Commission (ATC) found that youth travellers stayed in a destination far longer than the average tourists. Thus, their contribution in the overall expenditure is high. This explains why ATC invested heavily on two key sectors of youth market that is the backpackers and language learners.

There are several views on how large the size of youth travel is. This segment is ideally capable to strengthening the tourist market, domestic and international. However, it is difficult to determine the true potential because the size is not easily determined due to lack of systematic data support. This is the main reason this market has been overlooked and underestimated. However, UK-based consulting group, Aviation and Tourism International (ATI), found that Asia Pacific has shown the highest growth for the inclusion of youth in the 1990s from around the world. In fact, youth tourism currently represents the fastest growing sector of the travel industry, accounting for 20% of international arrivals (World Tourism Organization, 2008).

In search of clarity and knowledge of young travelers, there is no typology of youth travel that can be applied uniformly in all countries or destinations. In fact many tourist typologies have raised issues of clarity, validity and simplicity of usage, especially from the event managers. However, within the framework of market strength, dimension of youth travellers cannot avoid the following characteristics:

- Young tourists consist of active youth between the ages of 15 to 25 years. They often have similar hedonistic tastes in the context of attraction, being at a destination and the freedom to travel.
- Travel expenses of young travelers provide more benefits for the local in each destination because they are more frequently at purchasing local goods and engross little leakage.
- Patterns of consumption and expenditure by economic are of potential to promote small youth group travel.
- Youths can be the first to visit new places and attractions. As such, they play a major role in the development of a destination and in expanding local employment.
- Finally, when the young is satisfied, they are not acting as 'potentials' of buying more goods but also becoming the 'target' of the sale easier.

Meanwhile Tourism Australia defines youth segment as males and females, aged between 18 and 30 years. This group is commonly called

Generation Y with alternative labels such as 'Millennial' and the 'Dot.Com'. Their characters included that; they are experiencing, enjoy the Arts and events from music to adrenaline activities; most trips taken are motivated by goals such as desire to explore, experience, work or study abroad (Tourism Australia 2010). Working on the same work, Youth Travel Market analyst categorizes young tourist as those in age group of 15 to 30 years old. They found that youths loved travelling to unusual and remote locations to experience a variety of culture. They created their own itinerary and prefer travelling by bus or train, as this allows them to interact with the local community. In terms of overnight and hotel choice, they usually stayed at the low cost accommodation, especially hostel and budget hotel. They even stay longer in a destination, and are generally more tolerant and less concerned with threats such as terrorism, disease, environmental and political unrest (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2002; Elsrud, 2001).

The World Youth Student and Educational Travel Confederation (WYSE) also proposed that young travellers' aged between 16 to 24 years is a growing sector in tourism industry. For WYSE Amsterdam, adventurous young backpackers often seek a different and challenging destination, stay longer in visited places and take part in local activities and are more comprehensive than the ordinary tourist. The World Tourism Organization (2008) suggests that young travellers have three roles to play, namely as a 'growing market', an 'industry' as well as an 'opportunity' to generate positive values.

In terms of economic contribution, the WTO estimates that youth tourism accounted for 20% and 5% of youth from the global tourist trips in 2001 and 2005 respectively. With an estimated of 160 million international traveler, youth segment contributed over 20% of the total arrivals and income of about US\$136 million, or 18% of total tourist expenditure (World Tourism Organization 2008). According to STAY WISE, growth rates in the youth accommodation sector continue to be above the average for the tourism market as a whole in most regions. Total youth tourism accommodation bed nights are forecast to grow from 289 million in 2005 to almost 500 million by 2020. Total market value is also forecast to reach at least US\$12 billion by 2020, an increase of 58% compared with 2005 (Richards, 2007).

While the first part of this section provides a spectrum of youth tourism, the subsequent part of this section explores what does event tourism mean and how do they support event tourism at large. According to the tourism perspective; the term 'event tourism' is not widely used until the year 1987 when The New Zealand Tourist and Publicity

Department reported: 'tourism is one segment of an important event and is developing rapidly in the international An article written by Getz (1997) in "Tourism Management Special Events: Defining The Product" has developed a framework for event tourism. At that time, event tourism is referred as special events, hallmark, mega and specific event. Event tourism is now commonly known as events that are planned in an integrated whole (Getz, 2007).

Like other tourism products, event tourism provides positive enhancement for youth. This involves the strengthening of identity, widening of employment opportunities and opening their mind to love own culture and building of self-esteem, especially when event tourism involves competition, individual performance and the nation's pride. Event tourism is often related to the theme of travel, lively and full of various events to attract tourists and residents to going places. In the context of a city, tourism is one of the creativity that crafts a vibrant living. Here, the youths, whether they are made up of young professionals, or still studying, visiting or experiencing, an event will provide them a venue for 'being a creative mind' and 'fans' of spectacular events. This initiative will also allow the general goals of national development that is to improve self-esteem and national identity be realized among youth.

The third aspect that needs further explanation is the sustainability of youth tourist in event tourism. From the market demand perspective, the existence of youth tourist is dependent on the macro environments which include the changing demography, quality of life, climate change and the cheap flight facilities. Sustainability of youth tourist also depends on the viability of market expansion efforts implemented and adopted by the national and local stakeholders as well as the international tourism bodies. This includes a smart partnership of WYSE with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). However, only one third of the world tourism bodies currently have a specific policy on youth tourist or youth tourism. As for Malaysia, the Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia defines youth as that age between 15 and 40 years. This group consists of 10.1 million, or 45 percent of the total 25 million populations. The main focus of youth development programs and activities in the country is the young people age 18 to 25 years. They also travel individually or in a group.

Based on the literature of youth tourist, event tourism and sustainability of youth tourists in event tourism, it is important to note that the clarity of youth market, their need, motivation and capabilities of participating in event do play important roles. Youth, as tourist can

actually function or perform as active and passive involvement, the youth plays an important role in strengthening the country's image through an active participation or a passive participation, be they as a spectator; volunteer or organizer. In response to the event's appropriateness as an indication to show that the knowledge of youth had also increased, study on youth awareness and involvement in event tourism is indeed vital. However, lack of concern and misinterpretation of what was shown and experienced; infer that events have not been blending the taste, need and abilities of youth. Thus, this paper provides a profiling of youth tourists in event tourism, particularly a year round event of Visit Malaysia Year 2007. It is hope through an empirical case of VMY 2007, one of the major initiatives in translating event tourism in Malaysia, the potentials of youth tourists will be carefully transformed in the planning, development and hosting future events.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted in three phases. The first phase used the secondary data to assist in search of concept and understanding of both event and youth tourism. The second stage involved the detailing of events in VMY 2007, especially the spatial distribution, types and orientation of events. Data collected from the website as well as from other secondary sources were analysed into the spatial-temporal of events. The third phase involved a field survey of a convenient sampling of 130 respondents in selected area of Kuala Lumpur, the capital city. A questionnaire was developed to solicit the youth's involvement in in event tourism and their knowledge of VMY2007, including the suitability of events and recommendations to ensure the event's sustainability. The study area, Kuala Lumpur is chosen as it is the central venue for VMY 2007. As many event of VMY2007 were held in the capital city, convenient sampling in selected location of the event tourism calendar had made possible this study.

## **VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR 2007 AS THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCES IN MANAGING THEMATIC EVENT TOURISM**

Visit Malaysia Year 2007 (VMY2007) is one of the thematic event tourism held in the country. The VMY2007 was implemented in conjunction with the country's celebration of the independence anniversary of 50 years, aimed at fulfilling various tourist segments demand, locals and internationals. The country has successfully



organized this event as it has contributed for 45.7 billion of national income and 20.7 million of tourist arrivals (Sunday Times, February 20, 2008).

**Table 1** Month, Sponsorship and Event Tourism and Cultural Orientation of VMY2007

Aspect VMY 2007	Type	Number	Percentage
Event on spatial-	Central zone	23	46
	Northern zone	7	14
	Southern zone	6	12
	East Coast zone	5	10
	Sabah and Sarawak	7	14
	Nationwide	6	12
Events by month	Jan - April	24	24
	May-August	44	44
	September-	32	32
	Total	100	
The organizers	Government	25	50.0
	Private	18	36.0
	The combination of government & private	7	14.0
Cultural orientation	Local Culture	15	30.0
	Global culture	17	34.0
	Mix of local and global culture	18	36.0

*Source: Analysis of the study, 2007.*

Being a national agenda in tourism development, events held were spatially distributed. It was understood that a total of 50 events were planned, and six major tourist zones were set up and hosted the event. This includes the central zone of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. The central zone represented a 46 percent of the total events. And this is followed by the northern zone; Perlis, Pulau Pinang, Kedah and Perak and Sabah and Sarawak zone of 14 percent. Meanwhile

the East zone consisting of Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan contributed 10 percent of activities. The southern zone of Johor and Melaka however, contributed the least, only 4 percent of event. Events held throughout the nation nevertheless contributed quite a small percentage, 12 percent of the total, and these events include the Chinese New Year, Hari Raya and Deepavali celebrations.

Table 1 shows several aspects of event, including the organizers and influences of local and global culture in the organization of VMY2007. For the success of VMY in 2007, the cooperation with various stakeholders is vital, especially involving the government and private sector. However, from this study, the organization of VMY events was dominated by the government bodies, which amounted to 50 percent, followed by 36 percent and 14 percent of private sector and co-operation of both the government and private sector respectively. Most events were arranged by the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the promotional body, Tourism Malaysia. If examined in the context of product classification, VMY 2007 was a combination of various products including eco-tourism, recreation and sports-themed events and Mega Sales Carnival. Another distinct character is the cultural events especially the Colours of Malaysia, as it promotes cultural diversity of the various ethnic groups in Malaysia.

## **PROFILES OF YOUTH TOURISTS DURING VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR 2007**

Like other travellers, youths exhibit distinct behaviour when they consume event tourism. Based on a case study carried out on 130 young tourists at various locations around Kuala Lumpur, this section delineates the behaviour of youth tourist during the VMY 2007. This includes age group; capability in travel, their views of event suitability and recommendation, which directly and indirectly have some bearing of influences on the demand and supply of event tourism, especially VMY in 2007.

### **WHO ARE THE YOUTH TOURISTS?**

Generally youth tourists are usually single, young, educated and males. Based on the respondents' socio-demographic background shown in Table 2, youth tourists exhibit similar characters. Majority of the respondents was from the age group of 20 to 24 years old. Most respondents were single and still studying, 95% and 82% respectively.

The respondents however consist of 68% females and 32% males. In terms of ethnics, 61% and 92% of the respondents were Malay and Muslim, compared to other ethnic, Chinese and Indian, which comprised of less than 10 percent of the total respondents.

**Table 2** Profiles of Respondents' Socio-demography

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Males	42	32.31
	Females	88	67.69
<b>Age</b>	15-19 years	38	29.23
	20-24 years	79	60.77
	25-29 years	12	9.23
	30-34 years	1	0.77
<b>Race</b>	Malay	119	91.54
	Chinese	7	5.38
	Indian	3	2.31
	Others	1	0.77
<b>Religion</b>	Islam	119	91.54
	Buddha	6	4.62
	Hindu	3	2.31
	Christian	2	1.54
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	123	94.62
	Married	7	5.38
<b>Occupation</b>	Own work	2	1.54
	Government	16	12.31
	Private	5	3.85
	Others (including studying)	107	82.31
<b>Origin</b>	In Kuala Lumpur	9	6.92
	Not in Kuala Lumpur	121	93.08
<b>Level of education</b>	Diploma/First Degree	84	64.62
	Secondary School	39	30.00
	No schooling	1	0.77
	Others	6	4.62

*N = 130 respondents; Source: Fieldwork, 2007*

A total of 65% of respondents have their educational attainment at the Diploma/ Degree level, followed by 30% of the secondary school level. The respondents came from various origins, whereby 38% were from Bangi, 22% from Penang, 18% from Perak, 6% from Kedah, 5% from Kuala Lumpur and Shah Alam, 3% from Selangor and 1% from Klang. Basically they were from outside Kuala Lumpur rather than being the locals of the capital city.

## **FORMS OF PARTICIPATION, EVENT SELECTION AND REASON FOR PARTICIPATION**

Sustainability of event from youth perspectives definitely need their recognition of whether those event provides choices for active or passive participation. In this matter, form of participations, event selection and reasons underlying should be supportive and encouraging. From the fieldwork, two forms of youth participation in event tourism were identified, namely the active and passive participation. For youths, active participation refers to 'an active travelling to a destination', 'stayed at destination', 'being a spectator' and also as 'a participant of an event'. While passive participation is referring to only being a 'visitor', 'day tripper', 'spectators' and to some extent enjoyed showcased of events aired in the television'. Based on Table 3, a total of 30.8% said they are passively involved while over 60% of the respondents mentioned that they are active participants of event tourism.

There are tendencies among the respondents to choose particular events. This is because each respondent has a distinctive taste. From the many responses obtained, the youths were more fascinated to events in the form of entertainment and shopping, each contributing 55.38% and 41.54%. Educational events, family activities and ICT exhibitions are also their choices, whereby these activities range around 35% to 15% of the total visits. These trends are associated with many of the respondent's reasons to engage in events. Among dominant reasons are interesting entertainments to experience, reduce stress, provide enjoyment and eliminate fatigue from everyday working or studying. Shopping activity is associated with youth's favourite 'wandering', especially during the season of shopping sales.

The respondents were also asked whether the VMY programs suited the family segment or otherwise. Many of them agreed that generally, VMY is suitable for families. Among the respondents, a total of 53.0 percent has been with their families for companions. Nevertheless they

still preferred to spend leisure time with their companions, and the percentage ranked the first as the choice of preferred companion.

**Table 3** Multiple Responses for Youth Tourist VMY 2007

Aspects	Answers	Numbers	Percentage
VMY generally compatible with youth taste and needs	Yes	105	80.8
	Not	25	9.2
	No response		
Form of participation in TMM07	Active participation	84	64.6
	Passive participation	40	30.8
	No response	6	4.6
Types of Events (various responses)	Entertainment	72	55.38
	Shopping	54	41.54
	Education	20	15.38
	Family Activities	46	35.38
	Exhibitions and festivals	30	23.08
	Other	4	3.08
Companion when attending events during VMY (multiple answers)	Friends	78	60
	Couple	18	13
	Family	69	53.1
	Others	6	3.4
Satisfied with the program organized	Yes	90	69.2
	No	40	30.8
Cost per visit	Less than RM500	87	66.9
	RM501-RM1000	25	21.9
	RM1001-RM1500	4	3.1
	RM1501-RM2000	4	3.1
	More than RM2000	10	7.7
Mode of transport (multiple answers)	Private cars	63	48.5
	Taxi	12	9.2
	Bus	31	23.8
	LRT / commuter	83	63.8

*N = 130 respondents; Source: Fieldwork, 2007*

Among the events the respondents shared with their family members are the Month of Golden Celebration, shopping and visiting trade and thematic fairs. On the other hand, the shared events with their friends included the nation celebration and shopping, besides more adventure and fun-based events. From the research findings, young tourists are found to be a 'minimalist spender'. In a simple word, they did not spend a lot of money to enjoy activities presented to them and to the tourists in general. They were more common in the use of public transports, and stayed at the destination within their spending capability. This is consistent with the trend of international young travellers normally known as backpackers. However, when asked the question whether they took a long-haul travel for an event, the majority did not agree to the fact of this initiatives and advantages. In fact, as many events were held in the capital city, they took the chances to experience spectacular and vibrant moment within their budget, time, leisure and routine of their life.

## **EVENT SUITABILITY**

Organizing events throughout the year is regarded as a 'stimulus' for an active participation among youth tourists. This is because they can choose activities according to their preferences. In fact, organization of events in large scale and in a variety of places has enhanced access for youth to travel, hence become the spectators of events of their own choices. This study tried to include as many events that have been offered in 2007, and their views on the event appropriateness are shown in Table 4. This table reveals the youths' responses on events that are most popular and are the least acceptable, followed by the reasons associated with their preferences shown in Table 5.

Among the youths, information and the accuracy of an event do not parallel with each other, or there is a misunderstanding about the content and purpose of the event. Notably, the majority of respondents said that tattoos were not appropriate to showcase youth interest in tourism activities. For them, the tattoos were associated with the 'practice of tattoos' contrary to the religion of Islam; instead, the show is actually one of the military art performances. However, their responds of what makes a perfect event for youth, showed that the majority agreed upon the Month of the country's independence celebrations as the most attractive to youth. They were pleased that the celebration contains a variety of events, in almost all states or in the capital of each state. The youths tend to be the major audience to the most prestigious sports and outdoor activities. In fact, their willingness to pay and be part of the spectacular events such

as Formula One was at the expense of spending their pocket money to achieve satisfaction.

**Table 4** Views of Youth Tourists about Events Most Suitable and Not Suitable to Them

<b>Best event</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Most appropriate event</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Eye On Malaysia	5	3.85	Flora Fest	3	2:31
Flora Fest	1	0.77	Malaysian Open Golf Championship	10	7.69
Le Tour De Langkawi	5	3.85	Petronas Malaysian F1 Grand Prix	2	1:54
Petronas Malaysian F1 Grand Prix	11	8:46	Samaya International Arts Festival	2	1:54
Colours of Malaysia	3	2:31	Colours of Malaysia	3	2:31
Malaysia Mega Sale Carnival	4	3:08	Malaysian Motorcycle Grand Prix	1	0.77
Malaysia International Fireworks Competition	1	0.77	KL International Tattoo show	14	10.77
Merdeka Month Celebration	13	10:00	KL International Fashion Week	1	0.77
Malaysian Motorcycle	4	3:08	KL International Gourmet Festival	1	0.77

Grand Prix					
KL International Fashion Week	2	1:54	International Street Artists Festival Samaya	4	3:08
Malaysia Year End Sale Carnival	2	1:54			
International Street Artists Festival Samaya	1	0.77			
No response	78	60.00	No response	89	68.46
Total	130	100.00	Total	130	100.00

*N = 130 respondents; Source: Fieldwork, 2007*

**Table 5 Reasons for Suitability of Event**

<b>Events</b>	<b>Reason for Suitability of event</b>
Merdeka Month Celebration	Create awareness This time I know the history of my country Adore for the country Cultivate the spirit of patriotism among the youth Because it can instil patriotism among young Educating the nature of patriotism in the hearts of youth Thinking of independence to better Love the country so that more youth and encourage youth to serve country
Petronas Malaysian F1 Grand Prix	Motor event Teenagers nowadays are fond of this sport The most prestigious sports Interest in motoring Because the motoring world is tough and challenging, thereby draw young people attention. 'Racing' is fun. GP has its own class. Helping young to experience and feel real international racing
Colours of Malaysia	This event requires the cooperation and relations for social cohesion Because many cultural performances

*Source: Fieldwork, 2007*



## YOUTH SUPPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EVENT TOURISM

This study also gauges youths' views in seeking their support for event tourism enhancement. Furthermore, they were asked whether they were ready to contribute actively in the future event tourism. They were asked whether they would go to the states that organized similar event tourism at state level or otherwise.

During this study, it was found that the publicity for holding the state promotional year for both Kelantan and Terengganu were already made nationally. For particular event of VMY08 organized at the state level, Kelantan and Terengganu as shown in Table 6. For an organization of Visit Malaysia Year (VMY), the majority of supports were very encouraging. However, knowledge about VMY at the state level was less prominent. Only 30% of respondents said that they knew this programme.

**Table 6** Support for Future Event Tourism

Aspects	Response	Number	Percentage
VMY program should be held again	Yes	117	90.0
	No	13	10.0
Aware of VMY 08 programme and promotion in Kelantan and Terengganu	Yes	39	30.0
	No	91	70.0
Intention of visiting VMY08 programme in Kelantan and Terengganu	Yes	70	53.8
	No	60	46.2

*N = 130 respondents in each aspect; Source: Fieldwork, 2007*

Despite little knowledge, they were quite positive when asked on decision making to visit those particular destination or otherwise. Among the respondents, nearly one third mentioned they have the intention to do so. Perhaps the answers were coincident with their background, especially

when many of them were originated from both states and taking vacation at this juncture will widen their spectrum of their activities back home.

## **PROPOSAL TO INCREASE YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN EVENT TOURISM**

As an untapped market that has the potentials to be developed and sustained in the country, the respondents were also responsive to the future of event held every year. They also provide feedback on measures that should be taken by all stakeholders. Based on their recommendations, it is clearly not the only event tourism to meet the basic demand of travel, the assurance of organizing events that provides special incentives to youth is also crucial. Initiatives such as fiscal incentive, entertainment, educational campaigns and promotions would definitely impact the volume of youth to destination that hosted the thematic events. Some of their views are as follows:

*'Promote other states besides Kuala Lumpur as KL often has traffic jams.'*

*'Organize more events involving young people, world-class competition events'*

*'Organize more activities involving the youth in every event held '*

*'Add more advertisements of places to be visited in conjunction with the TMM'*

*'Organize more events that may be accompanied by the youth and young adults.'*

*'Organize more events in other states to develop an area, for example in Kelantan '*

*'Organize more great promotions and discounts to attract visitors as well as festivals and fairs KL Penang for example.'*

*'Insert the traditional elements that youth now know about'*

*'Give discounts for youths and local residents'*

*'Clean and decorate KL first'*

*'Create a unique place in terms of scenery and building structures that are strange and unique'*

*'Create more recreational activities, increase entertainment, dangdut, especially in the vicinity of the Bangi; Zouk and La Queen are boring.'*

*'Create a 20-50% subsidy for youth who are still learning'*

If the recommendations are associated with efforts to enhance the role of youth travel, there are many aspects and task remains to be done by the tour operators. The basic, it is timely for young travellers to be the segment niche in larger scale. If we are capable of promoting large-scale

international travel segments, then, initiatives to promote youth tourism is also capable of meeting the target. Through an array of recreational programmes been offered at institutions of higher learning, youth travel programmes can be strengthened further. Steps to reproduce exhibition of adventure programmes and improve access to information should be complementary to the youth development agenda and the tourism sector.

## **SUSTAINABILITY OF YOUTH TOURIST: LESSON LEARNT FROM VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR 2007**

Even though this paper is basically written on a purposive study on the total of 130 respondents, the results of study presented empirically 'what is understood and desired by youth tourists in event tourism. Event tourism, has successfully captured the hearts of international tourists cannot be considered too 'successful' because the potential of domestic tourists, especially youth tourists have not been fully maximized. Therefore, to increase youth tourism and to strengthen the role of youth as players or spectators, integrated event tourism management should be the approach undertaken by stakeholders or tourism providers. Efforts to promote youth tourism as prompted by the most active tourism state, particularly the Melaka state government showed that 'knowledge and creativity of youth' in tourism is not strong at both state and national level.

In this regard, several issues identified at the each level of planning, development and hosting of youth tourism as one of the major themes of event tourism should be addressed. Firstly, deploying a youth tourist typology should become the pioneering initiative at planning level. As of now, 'youth as tourist' is based on the stakeholders' understanding and initiatives. The awareness of whether the youth had knowledge to travel or vice versa should be investigated at this stage more holistically. Youth tourist had their distinct characteristics and differences exhibit between youth according to their status of work or studying, spatial of urban or rural and also taste of adventurous or passive. Their nature of touring and involving in event tourism are bound to factors especially 'limited money but without time constraints' and with 'high esteem to involvement', need some intervention in terms of fiscal incentives, special events and sponsored programmes. In fact, enhancing pro-poor tourism or social tourism in handling event tourism for youth segment is realistic as this event can be tailored with their co-curriculum at the higher-learning or working environment.

Secondly, while the involvement of youth tourists in event tourism is promising, the promotional campaigns and programmes have to ensure that it fulfil the youths' desire and wants more pragmatically. Often, youths have high contact with media and internet sources, thus, the promotional campaigns should optimize these approaches. Youths have the potential to draw crowds for outdoor and adventure tours. On the other hand, events such as urban park, clean and green tourism and art tourism which at this juncture emphasizes on the high end tourist and internationals, should also look in proactive initiatives on how to get youth engagement.

Thirdly, youth tourists are easily attached to popular culture. Even though this factor may be considered negative in terms of bringing changes into society, yet it may also foster a local popular culture if such influences were promoted widely.. Involving music, local art and leisure into event tourism, especially to cater youth market in both areas, urban and rural, may generate more interests among youths. Moreover, providing incentives such as cheap tickets and transportation coupons help youth to enhance thematic event tourism.

Fourthly, youth plays important position in urban and rural localities. As there exist in several spatial-temporal zones in tourism development in the country, involving youth in diverse scale of event tourism should consider easing their accessibility according to similar zoning and this ensure the youth sustainability in event tourism. The central zones, which include the urban localities, especially city such as Kuala Lumpur, Melaka and Shah Alam, youth tourists' profiling may exhibit differently from the east coast zones. This is due to their active roles as students who are still pursuing their studies in various higher learning institutions. Eventually this trend is favourable in creating event tourism that involves higher learning youths. In this regards, thematic events will therefore be in line with the formation of 'knowledge tourist' among youths.

Finally, as the event tourism seems becoming one of the niche products of the country, youths should be the one of the segments that get the opportunities to experience and play active roles in organising and showcasing varieties of programmes at national, regional and local level. In line with the new economic model that recognizes tourism is one of the 12 major sectors to uplift the country's position as developed nation, Visit Malaysia Year will therefore be continued in near future. Therefore, it is crucial that at every level of planning, development and hosting event tourism in the country, youths should be one of the key players.

## **CONCLUSION**

Event tourism is gradually increasing and favouring the youth tourists. In a developing country like Malaysia, event tourism also inhibits youth involvement, be they active or passive players. Based on the country's Visit Malaysia Year 2007, youth involvement in event tourism is gradually increasing, yet unexploited by many of the tourism providers as well as the youth themselves. They are capable of creating and sustaining the market size, especially when events are held in areas of their easy access, within their capability to spend and most importantly, being able to be the spectators of the events.

As youth tourists are dynamic yet untapped by most of the developing countries, the typology of youth tourists in event tourism may advance some of the familiar typology created by scholars such as Cohen, Nash and others. They provide an in-depth study to draw who dominates the youth tourists. Though their involvements have marked some understandings of the events that they favoured, the suitability of taste in event has yet to be ventured more pragmatic.

This study also provides a profile of youth behaviour during event tourism. Youth tourists did not maximize and did not take the bulk of advantage to travel throughout the nations due to several constraints. Their sporadic movement at the national level is quite limited. However, being at the central venue of VMY, youth in capital city have the advantages of being able to be at the easy access of the totality of the events held. Long stays at events were not practiced due to their obligation to studies and working.

Based on the issues of suitability of events, this study found that there is generally accepted understanding of event tourism. Their tendencies of going to events are favouring fun, play and relax compared to the highly-seeking knowledge, experience and role-play. However, what is rather contrasting with general youth tourists is that their preferences to travel with families are increasing. In fact they urged that event tourism do offer multi-destination incentives to widen the opportunities of being able for youth to be with the families as well as be with their friends.

As a conclusion, youth tourists do take part in year round events. Nevertheless their roles should be mould toward being a knowledge tourist who seeks opportunities while enduring the programmes held during the events. Perhaps, in-depth national studies should be initiated to underpinning the youth tourist market in thematic event.

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