THE GIS AND SWOT ANALYSIS FOR THE LANGUAGE IN TOURISM: A STUDY ON THE LOCAL DIALECT IN MUAR, JOHOR, MALAYSIA

Nur Hidayah Abd Rahman[1], Julaina Nopiah[2], Shazriena Izlin Azhar[2] and Nurul Jamilah Rosly[2]

[1] Department of Tourism, Kulliyyah of Languages and Management, International Islamic University Malaysia, Johor, Malaysia
[2] Department of Malay for International Communication, Kulliyyah of Languages and Management, International Islamic University Malaysia, Johor, Malaysia
`hidayah_rahman@iium.edu.my`

Abstract. Malaysia is fortunate to have a diverse range of cultures and languages. Nonetheless, there are limitation of previous studies conducted in Malaysia that emphasize on the value of local language, particularly on the distinctive local dialects in Malaysia. This research has two goals: first, to identify the local dialect of Muar along the Muar River through a Geographic Information System (GIS) software; second, using a SWOT analysis to determine the local dialect's potential as a tourism product with unique selling points for Muar, Johor, Malaysia. The qualitative technique was employed through interviews with locals in Muar. Two categories emerged from the findings: first, the Muar's distinct dialect is dispersed throughout the Muar River as shown by the GIS analysis. Second, based on the SWOT analysis, the information indicates that Muar's distinctive dialect around the Muar River will offer the locals a rich cultural legacy, which is considered a potential product for tourism in Muar. This research will add to the corpus of knowledge and help the local community to maintain Muar's distinctive dialect as a tourism offering.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage Tourism, Geographic Information System (GIS), Language Tourism, Muar Dialect, SWOT Analysis

1   INTRODUCTION

The term "cultural heritage" refers to "artefacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, museums that have diverse values including symbolic, historical, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance" [1]. Cultural heritage encompasses both intangible (such as language and literature) and tangible (such as buildings and monuments). One tourism product that might improve a destination's tourism experience is the distinctive language of the local culture. When it comes to cross-communication between hosts and tourists during a destination's tourism experience, the usage of language is crucial. However, certain concerns about communication barriers resulting from a linguistic barrier between the host and the visitor have been raised [2].

Malaysia offers a diverse range of cultural history, encompassing historical buildings steeped in its own culture and languages (such "Pantun") that are derived from many ethnic groups. Malaysia is expected to have 33.2 million people living there overall in 2023, of which 57.9% are of Malay ethnicity [3]. Despite the country's official language being Malay, there are different dialects of the Malay language have spread throughout Malaysia's states and districts. One of Johor's districts, Muar is situated close to the Strait of Malacca's shore in Malaysia. Melaka, in the north, and Johor, in the south, had an influence on Muar's history and culture. As a result, Muar has a distinct dialect where [Ô] is used in voice phonetics [4]. Nonetheless, not much research has been done to pinpoint Muar's distinctive dialect or explore the possibility of incorporating this distinctive culture into Muar's tourism offerings. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to use a Geographic Information System (GIS) software to identify the local dialect of Muar along the Muar River and to conduct a SWOT analysis of the dialect as a potential tourism product that would have unique selling points for Muar, Johor, Malaysia. A Geographic Information System (GIS) was used in this study to identify the Muar Dialect along the Muar River because there is a limitation on previous study that integrate the language and the preservation for local culture which finally can improve the cultural heritage tourism in a destination. The potential of the Muar Dialect as a preservation effort will be examined further in more detail in this study through a SWOT analysis of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for Muar's cultural heritage tourism.

This paper will explain the significance of language in travel and provide a general overview of the distinctive Muar dialect. The qualitative methodology in this study will involve the interviews and observations of the local community. In this study, the GIS data on the local Muar dialect that spread throughout Muar and the SWOT analysis on the local Muar dialect as a potential tourism product are the two main findings. In conclusion, this paper offers various prospects for further investigation, particularly when it comes to combining tourism and the local dialect in an attempt to maintain, sustain and preserve the local culture and its heritage.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Language in Tourism

The tourism industry is seen as the platform to ensure the sustainability of the language for the local community, including the indigenous community, through preservation efforts towards the local culture [5] [6] [7]. However, most of the studies focus on language usage through information transformation in the tourism discourse, technological aspect and the usage of language in travel agencies perspectives [8][9][10][11][12]. Hence, the study's limitation focuses on preserving local culture, especially on the importance of the local language in contributing towards the place's identity and creating a unique selling point (USP) as well as technological improvement [13] [14] for the tourism destination.

2.2 Background of Muar

Situated in the southern region of Malaysia, the state of Johor was ruled by the Majapahit Government Empire from 1361 until the 14th century, when the Melaka Sultanate took power [15]. Since the earliest settlement in this area was at the river's estuary, the word "Muara," which means the estuary, served as the inspiration for the name Muar. Muar was dubbed the Bandar Maharani in the past, and on November 24, 2012, it was proclaimed a Royal City [15]. One of the tourism images for Muar City is cultural heritage tourism because of its historic structures constructed before World War II and its regional cuisine, which includes "Mi Bandung" and "Satay". As a result, given the similarities between Melaka and Muar, there is a tough competition between the two tourist destinations. The 12 sub-districts of Muar with a range of tourism offerings, from cultural heritage to rural tourism are depicted in Figure 1.
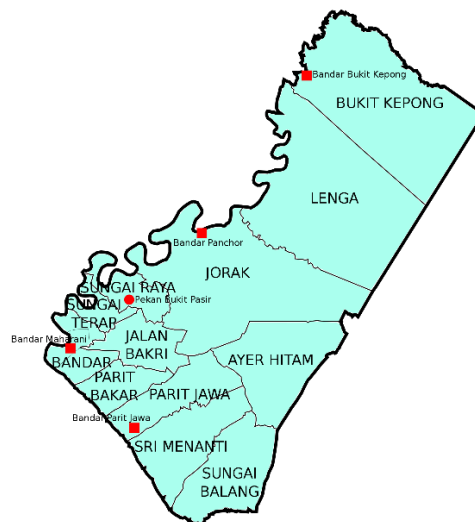

Fig. 1. The map of Muar District

2.3 The Uniqueness of Muar Dialect

The Malay genealogical boundaries were split between the Malaysian Peninsula's eastern and northern regions [16]. The Johor sub-area, Muar sub-area, and Mersing sub-area are the three sub-areas that formed by the Johor dialect [16]. Muar-Batu Pahat sub-area includes Muar Dialect. The Muar-Batu Pahat sub-area is known to the vocal phonetics that produce [Ô]. *Olob, lob* (title for men), endek (title for women), *ngape* (us), *ngkape* (you), *gelupo* (struggle in pain), *libang-libu* (back and forth), *melak* (maybe), *be'daah* (cheat), *kelesa* (lazy), *berendut* (love), *ba'atan* (excessive) and other terms are among the many linguistic expressions found in this Muar dialect. This dialect varies from the standard Malay language in terms of both phonological and lexical (word)

usage. Moreover, it will also be interesting to anyone who is familiar with this dialect because of its tone and intonation.

3 METHODOLOGY

The amount of research based on dialectology or geolinguistics has increased recently. Currently, the researchers still did not pay much attention to studies on local subdialects in a state using Geographic Information System (GIS) software [17]. Hence, the interview and researcher observation techniques were employed in this study to collect the primary data. The local community in Muar was selected for this study which encompasses the respondents of the age of 13 and above, and resided in various villages in the Lenga, Gombang, and Bukit Kepong areas. Random selection was used to choose the respondents. In order to accomplish the study's primary goal of identifying the use of Muar Dialect along the Muar River, GIS software was utilized during the data analysis stage. Meanwhile, the data gathered from the observation and interview will be further examined to determine the strengths, weaknesses, potentials, and threats of Muar Dialect towards the preservation of this local culture and its own heritage values that can contribute to the tourism industry in Muar.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 The GIS Software Analysis for the Muar Dialect

Based on the results in GIS software, the primary goal of the first objective is to locate the Muar Dialect along the Muar River. According to the findings of the interview session conducted with twenty residents, the dialect was used differently in each of the three Muar areas—Lenga, Gombang, and Bukit Kepong. However, it alludes to a lexical equivalent. The variations between a few lexical items in the Lenga, Gombang, and Bukit Kepong dialects are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. The transcription of Muar Dialect

English	Transcription of Standard Malay Language	Transcription of Lenga Dialect	Transcription of Gombang Dialect	Transcription of Bukit Kepong Dialect
Dirty	/kɔtər/	/belutaʔ/	/nčəmə/	/lɔkoh/
Wasting	/boros/	/bunčah/	/poʔ/	/bončah/
Late/Slow	/lambat/	/kələlət/	/məlenə/	/ kəlečə/

Furthermore, the variations in the lexical for the word 'late' or 'slow' *(/lambat/)* indicate that there is a dialect usage around the study area. In Lenga, the */kələlət/* variant describes something in a slow context, for example, *"Ngkape la kawan ko ni **kelelet** sangat ni? Dekat sejam dah aku tunggu ye!"* (Why are you so slow? I've been waiting

almost an hour!). This lexical uses dialects differently than the Gombang Dialect and Bukit Kepong Dialect. Figure 1 shows the GIS map for this lexical in different locations.
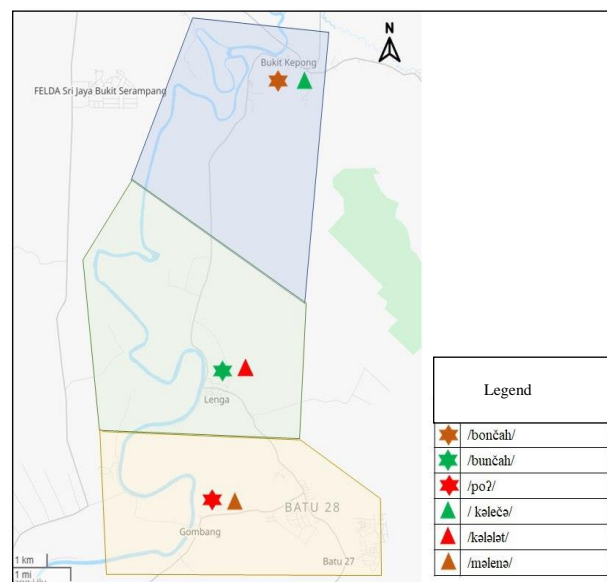

Fig. 2. The variation of lexical of the word 'late' or 'slow'

Thus, the GIS software analysis yields information about the local dialects and how geography influences them. More research is nevertheless required on a specific lexical that can be applied to customer service as well as marketing strategies to boost Muar as a tourism destination.

4.2   The SWOT Analysis of Muar Dialect for Tourism

Studying dialectology or geolinguistics is essential, particularly for initiatives aimed at preserving cultural heritage. As part of the cross-cultural experience, learning and using the local language through the various dialects in Muar adds a distinctive element to the potential tourism experience. The identity of a tourism destination will be formed and local culture will be better understood due to this tourism experience. Hence, this study discovers there are strengths, weaknesses, potentials and threats of the local dialects as the potential element of the local cultural heritage that can be marketed as one of the tourism products in Muar. The SWOT analysis for this study is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. The SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
- The unique dialect used by the local community - The influence of the dialect and the history of the destination	- The decreasing practice of the local dialect among the young generations - Lack of research on the local dialect - Lack of integration of local language as the potential branding for the destination
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
- Encouraging the efforts in the preservation of Muar Dialects - Encouraging the inter-cultural exchange - Encouraging education, especially the youth generation, to learn and use the local dialect - The local dialect is the marketing strategy in the promotional materials and the branding of the destination, such as the tagline and the souvenir product	- Creating confusion between the standard Malay Language and the local dialect

According to the research, Muar's distinctive dialects are influenced by the river. The Muar district's boundaries are shown on the map in Figure 3. Muar and Melaka are adjacent to each other. The Melaka Malay community moved to the Muar region and settled in the Lenga, Gombang, and Bukit Kepong areas as a result of this distinction. The migration of Sultan Mahmud and some of his people across the border of Muar, Johor, following the fall of Melaka City in 1511 to the great Portuguese occupation is the source of the spread of the Melaka Malay dialect [18]. Due to its contribution to the various dialects found in various parts of the Muar area, this history has given rise to the strengths of the Muar dialect.

Fig. 3. The map of Johor

A few weaknesses in the study such as there are the decline in the use of the local dialect by younger generations, the restriction of the research to local dialects, and the no effort to incorporate the local dialect as a tool for destination branding and marketing in Muar. The primary concern on threat is in terms of the usage and practice of the local dialects by the local community, especially among the young generations due to the confusion and mixing of the local dialect with standard Malay. Hence, the sustainability of the local dialect for the next generations will be negatively impacted towards the efforts in the preservation of this valuable local heritage.

On the other hand, Muar has good opportunities to make use of its distinctive dialects, including supporting initiatives aimed at preserving Muar Dialects through development and research for the cultural heritage. This effort aims to preserve local dialects through research, thereby fostering intercultural exchange between domestic and foreign tourists. Additionally, this endeavour will promote learning and using the local dialect in the teaching and learning, particularly among the younger generation. Moreover, the local dialect can be used as a medium for a marketing strategy in promotional materials and increasing the branding of the local tourism destination by using the local dialects in the destination tagline to draw the attention in visitors. This distinctive tagline from the local dialect can be a part in the souvenir merchandise such as printed on t-shirts, keychains, and other mementos. As a result, this strategy will help visitors retain a specific impression and creating the destination image of Muar.

5   CONCLUSION

The two primary findings of this study are; 1) the local dialects were influenced by its geographical area along Muar River, and 2) the local dialects provide various potentials in research and development as well as the tourism product based on the SWOT analysis. Nonetheless, some recommendations are made for further research, particularly to identify the different lexical used in customer service for the travel and hospitality sector and to incorporate with the local dialects. This will improve the local context's tourism experience. Furthermore, the results of the SWOT analysis will strengthen Muar's marketing and promotional strategy by incorporating the local dialects into their plan.

Nevertheless, this study has certain limitations because of the constraints based on the previous research that concentrated on the preservation of local dialects and how they contribute to the sustainability of the local cultures through tourism industry. This study discovered that the majority of previous research had concentrated more on language usage for customer service, particularly in the travel and tour and hospitality sectors. For instance, much attention were given to the study on the significant languages such as Japanese or Spanish in customer service in the tourism and hospitality industry. Hence, this study creates the critical turn of the language for tourism studies by highlighting the importance of the local language or local dialects as one of the tools for tourism marketing strategies as well as a unique tourism product [19] which tourism is seen as the medium to preserve the local dialects due to its valuable cultural heritage.

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