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Malaysia as a Film Location for Foreign Production

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Abstract

The foreign film industry is one of the creative industries that has helped a lot to generate the country's economy and improve the tourism sector. The arrival of foreign film production can enhance the country's reputation through the introduction of science and culture to the world community through film. In addition, the creative industry is able to introduce interesting places in Malaysia to be used as filming locations. Indirectly can promote Malaysia as a destination of choice for filming purposes. In addition to helping promote the country, job opportunities can be created for artists and behind-the-scenes crew. Various factors must be identified as to why foreign production companies make Malaysia one of their filming locations whether in the category of films, drama series, documentaries or television programs. This study aims to identify the focus location for the purpose of filming foreign films and also look at the attractions and facilities such as incentives provided by the government to the production of these foreign films for filming in Malaysia.

Keywords: foreign film filming locations, attractions, incentive facilities

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1.0 Introduction

Foreign filmmakers have often made Malaysia a filming destination since 1970 until now, 2022. Films are often associated with people and their lives, in an environment, place, and culture that mirrors the perceptions and minds of a group of people everywhere. produced (Mahadi, 2006).

The background of the place location also plays an important role in the film or storytelling. The setting is the main stage for the characters and the story (Imelda, 2017). In this regard, the background also plays a role in influencing the quality of a story. It can also be used for anything for the purpose of conveying information, educating or entertaining the audience. Malaysia is famous for its heritage buildings, multi-racial and multi-cultural society, and one of the attractions of filming outdoor productions in Malaysia is because Malaysia has natural beauty as well as flora and fauna in Sabah and Sarawak. The film *The Legend of Bujang Senang* (2017), *The Amazing Race Asia* (2006) is among the films that were filmed around Sabah and Sarawak. Meanwhile, the film *Anna and The King* (1993) also used the Malaysian historical monument, the National Museum of Malaysia, as one of the filming locations.

This dissertation aims to identify the focal locations that are often used by foreign film productions and also identify the attractions and incentive facilities provided by the government to these foreign production companies to undertake filming in Malaysia.

The findings of this study are significant to help foreign productions identify the focus of location as well as see the attractions and facilities such as incentives provided by the Malaysian government to foreign productions for filming purposes. This importance can attract foreign production to make Malaysia a filming destination, at the same time is one of the important sources of economic growth and

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creative industry growth in Malaysia. Their arrival can also indirectly introduce attractive locations in Malaysia as well as increase the tourism sector. Malaysia is indeed known as one of the main tourist attractions in Southeast Asia. This can be seen with several foreign films making Malaysia an international filming location. Crazy Rich Asians is one of the films that was shot in Malaysia around 2018 and won several prestigious awards such as Critics' Choice Awards and Hollywood Film Awards. Similarly, the director of the film titled Against The Wind Dr Brad Batchelor has chosen Melaka and Penang as the filming locations because of its unique forest environment and heritage buildings.

There are many interesting locations such as Buddhist temples, mosques, beautiful beaches, tropical forests and modern cities that can be turned into 'scary sights' or show a solid picture, "he said. also very reasonable.

(Dr. Brad Batchelor, Director of Films Against The Wind, 2011)

From the perspective of creative economy, it can be explained that the production of foreign films often make Malaysia as their filming location based on applications for foreigners to enter Malaysia to undergo filming activities at the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia through PUSPAL Unit. In 2018 a total of 162 applications from various countries in the categories of films, dramas, documentaries and advertisements. The rapid development of the film industry in Malaysia can be evidenced not only in the context of increased entry of foreign film production but also in terms of economic growth, employment opportunities for locals where this increase greatly affects the growth momentum of the Malaysian economy. According to Shures.R (2022), promoting Malaysia as an international filming destination will give good returns to the country especially in terms of economy as well as create more employment opportunities for locals to work with international companies. Therefore, the government needs to focus on ensuring that the country's economic growth continues to be sustainable to attract foreign film production with the facilities and privileges offered to creative industry players abroad.

Various government initiatives such as the Film Production Incentive (FIMI) are one of the incentives for foreign film production to carry out filming activities in Malaysia. Services offered by FIMI such as incentives, location search, database on local film producers and logistical support, all aim to attract foreign film production to boost the local economy through the attraction of foreign film production to Malaysia.

This FIMI incentive will make Malaysia a filming destination center offering 30 per cent cash rebate and an additional up to 5 per cent through cultural testing on production cost expenses in Malaysia covering local and international production and post -production activities. Compared to rebates offered by neighboring countries like Australia offering as much as 40 per cent, Singapore by 50 per cent, the Philippines by 15 per cent and Thailand 15 per cent. With the competition of this cash rebate offer with neighboring countries, Malaysia only offers 30 percent and this makes it more competitive, especially among ASEAN countries. According to Bill Donovan 2022, the 30 per cent rebate offered through the Malaysian Film Incentive (FIMI) and an additional five per cent cultural test rebate is considered a good idea and an attraction for more foreign production companies to make Malaysia a filming location.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Attraction

2.1.1 Filming location

The location background of a film plays an important role in influencing the process for tourists to make choices about where to visit (Gartner 1989; Echtner & Ritchie 1991). The setting of a filming location is the place where filming activities or dramas are being produced. Locations are divided into two categories, indoor (recording studio) and Outdoor (garden, field). Film producers always need a suitable location for their films. Whether in a natural environment or in the city, the location must be beautiful or unique and evoke a certain sentiment (Vagionis & Loumioti, 2011).

The film Anna and The King directed by Andy Tennant in 1999 also chose Penang, Ipoh and Langkawi as filming locations. This explains that, these locations have their own attractions and the director of the film sees the uniqueness of the location to attract viewers to watch the film. According to Rashid Karim (2022), in terms of location, we have a great location, especially for productions that require tropical or Asian elements. Locations in Malaysia are usually not only suitable but also have a cool and unique atmosphere.

While the film Crazy Rich Asians directed by Jon M. Chu, is a romantic comedy film released in 2018, based on the book Crazy Rich Asians by Kevin Kwan published in 2013. The film is set in Singapore, where an American Chinese Professor; protagonist Rachel Chu, is shocked when she finds out that she is friends with a man from one of the richest families in Singapore. The film was a huge success in the Asian community, and box office with a gross of \$ 239 million, out of just a \$ 30 million filming budget. In October 2018, it was named the romantic comedy genre with the highest citations.

Singapore is now so built up. It's a tiny island and they have used every available space. They have been built into the sea. A lot of the end old structures featured is the original novel like Beach Road are now several kilometers inland, so you wouldn't be able to film what we've been able to in Malaysia.

Farah Abushweshah (2019)

According to Crazy Rich Asian film director Farah Abushwesha. The film uses one hundred percent of its location in Malaysia, such as in Carcosa Seri Negara Kuala Lumpur, and around Georgetown Penang, but the film depicts Singapore as the filming location. This is much disappointing for the audience and the people of Malaysia because no appreciation is given to Malaysia. According to Srivaran (2020) filmmaking in Singapore is just hyperreality and unrealistic images. Malaysia was a big part of the film and was not given the recognition it deserved. Therefore, the Malaysian Government should look at the background of locations recorded by foreign film productions so that Malaysia's identity remains in international films.

Sabah and Sarawak are also preferred locations for filming foreign films. As in Sabah, the focus of foreign film production in the documentary category often conducts filming around Sabah such as Borneo Wildlife, Tabin Wildlife Reserve, Sepilok Orang Utan, Bornean Sun Bear, Labuk Bay Proboscis, Sandakan River Cruise, Kinabatangan River Wildlife Adventure and Mari Mari Cultural Village. Beautiful scenery is able to leave a longer impact and memory in addition to long -term advertising effects (Chua Soon Min, 2018). Therefore, the uniqueness of multi -ethnic culture in the beauty of nature that is embroidered with its unique story makes Sabah and Sarawak a target for films, dramas or documentaries.

2.1.2 Language

In addition, language selection factors also influence the attractiveness of foreign film production due to the diversity of languages available in Malaysia. In Malaysia, Malay was chosen as the national language. The national language was created as a means of communication or common spoken language and the official language of the country to unite the people of various ethnicities (Sharifah, 2019).

Malaysians come from a wide range of immigrant product lineages, spanning various immigrant communities from almost every part of the world. In a study Harifah (2015) also said that, Penang tourists consist of repeated tourist visits. This is because the Penang community is multi -racial and the majority of the population is ethnic Chinese. Therefore, language communication is not a problem in the location if there is a foreign film production filming there.

There are also other races such as Indonesians, Chinese and Indians who have migrated to Malaysia. As a result of the process of interaction and assimilation between these races, there is a plural society in Malaysia. According to Giles (1979: 254), the phenomenon of language choice tends to exist in most multiracial societies, each with a different spoken language. Languages usually do not understand each other. However, there are at least one or more languages they understand. It is this language or language that becomes the language of communication when they communicate with each other.

2.1.3 Weather

Other countries that have the same climate that is the equatorial climate are Indonesia, Brazil and Nigeria. The area with the heaviest rainfall is the interior of Sarawak because the area is subject to humid winds. According to Abdul (2019), in 2018, the production of the film The White Rajah had visited Sarawak to start filming but could not continue filming due to the heavy rainy season at the end of the year. Therefore, the weather factor plays an important role for each production to arrange filming activities in line with the weather in Malaysia.

2.1.4 Skilled filming crew workforce

The foundation of the success of the Malaysian film industry lies not only in the cost of production, but also depends on the skilled workforce in the industry. The level of quality of local film production reflects the level of professionalism of the local film production force (Asia & Fuziah, 1999). From the perspective of local production, according to Fuziah Kartini, Faridah Ibrahim and Mohd Safar Hasim (2009), the local film industry is in dire need of skilled manpower to help improve the quality of domestic films to a level that can be proud of.

To further enhance the skills and professionalism of behind -the -scenes film crews and film and video industry workers, the Malaysian Film Professionals Association (PROFIMA) is responsible for providing training in various skills, as well as exposing them to work and gaining experience in third party and international productions.

2.1.5 Promotion

Boone & Kurtz According to Boone and Kurtz (2002) defining promotion is the process of informing, persuading, and influencing purchasing decisions. In 2016, Malaysia received 26.8 million international tourist arrivals compared to 2015 which recorded 25.7 million international tourist arrivals. Hudson and Ritchie (2006) define film tourism as a tourist visit to a destination or attraction resulting from that destination being displayed on television, video, or a cinema screen.

The benefits of film tourism are becoming increasingly apparent. The setting of the film itself attracts tourists and it can use the film as a stepping stone for promotional and marketing purposes if the film is seen to be suitable for the destination shown. According to Morgan and Pritchard (1998), setting a location setting in a film is best in tourism products. Efforts to promote Malaysia as an international filming destination will give good returns to the country especially in terms of economy as well as create more employment opportunities for locals to work with international companies (Shures, 2022).

2.2 Government support

2.2.1 Film Incentive Program in Malaysia (FIMI)

Various approaches are taken by the government to drive the ecosystem and increase the economic contribution of the creative content industry and the creative industry. The Filming Program in Malaysia (FIMI) was launched in 2013 to target Malaysia as one of the tourist destination countries (Dr Farida Veerankutty, 2019).

With this incentive, it allows Malaysia to become an international filming destination hub if it meets the criteria of Malaysian cultural elements. These incentives will not only encourage the publication of quality creative content. It will also make Malaysia the destination and hub of choice for foreign film productions.

3.0 Methodology

Qualitative methodology is used for this study by using observation method (observation) and secondary data (secondary data) using thematic analysis that involves where researchers collect data to answer research problems.

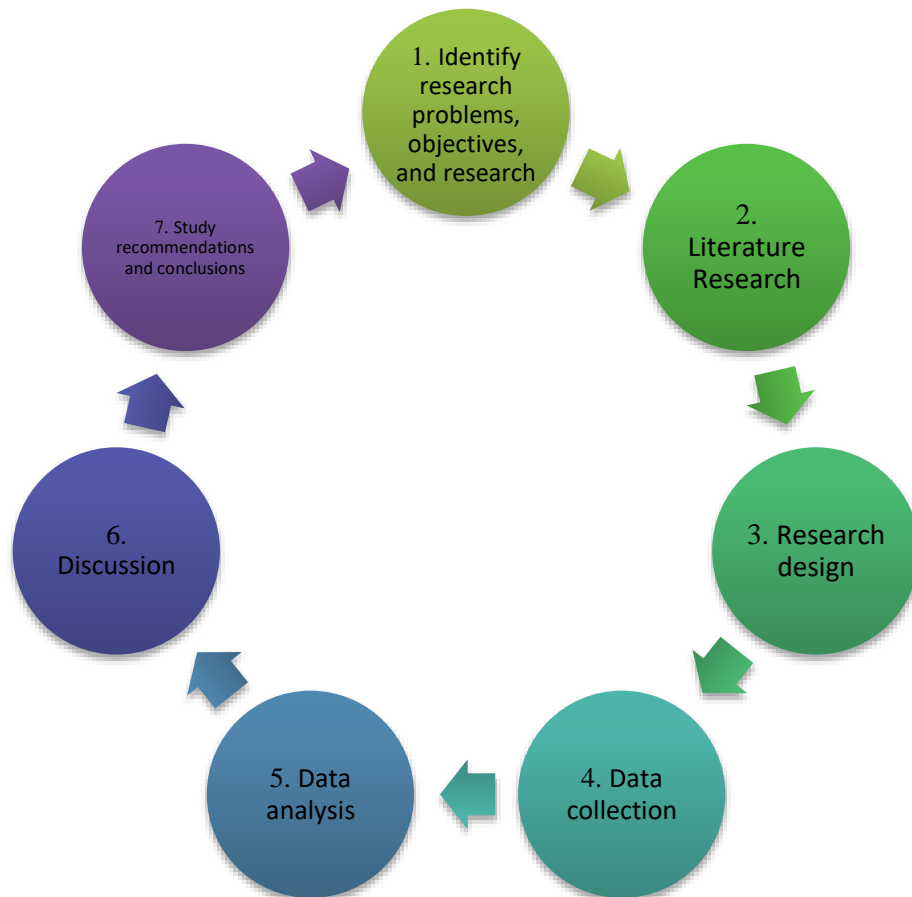


Figure 1: Research design

Figure 1 shows the steps taken to describe the study design that began with Step 1 which is to identify the problems of the study, the objectives of the study and the purpose of the study. Followed by Step 2 which is to collect past research related to the focus of filming locations of foreign film productions, promotional attractiveness for tourism and foreign productions, government incentives and facilities, and withdrawal theory from Everett Spurgeon Lee. Step 3 is used to determine the study design in which qualitative methods involving thematic analysis are used by using observation methods (observation) and secondary data (secondary data). As stated in Step 3, the thematic analysis method was selected and used in this dissertation, this thematic analysis uses a deductive thematic analysis method that uses data based on various themes derived from the objectives and theories of the study. According to Bingham and Witkowsky (2022), deductive analysis involves the application of theory to data used to test theory when used to create data coding. The next step 4 is data collection through observation in focal locations such as Penang, Johor Bahru, Kuala Lumpur, Sabah and Sarawak with information taken from personal photos, video recordings and library research and online research as well as actual reports from the Filming Application Agency Foreign and Overseas Performing Artists (PUSPAL).

Observation Method

The observational method is a research method for measuring research variables. In addition to questionnaires and interviews, observations are also an available alternative for information gathering or data collection. Observation allows the researcher to observe a

subject's behavior based on identified variables. This method of observation is divided into two, namely: Non -Participant Observation (full observation) and Participant Observation (participants as observers). In this study, the researcher identified the location focus through direct observation because the researcher was involved in managing foreign film shooting applications for three and a half years at the Foreign Filming and Performance Center Agency (PUSPAL) at the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia.

Secondary data

Secondary data are existing data collected by previous researchers. Data is data obtained from data published in books, journals, seminar articles, newspaper clippings, magazines, report articles, working papers, and many more. These materials are necessary to further strengthen the basis of the methods conducted in this study. Data in research plays a very important role because the results of the study depend on the data used. According to Sabitha Marican (2005), data is a calculation of the characteristics, events, facts or dimensions that can be calculated of an event. A dataset (data collected) can contain thousands of observations (Burning & Kintz, 1987).

4.0 Findings

Observational instruments were made by the researchers to look at the aspects studied in this location focus study. This study involves some locations, each of which has its own uniqueness and special features.

- i. **Rumah Agam Cheong Fatt Tze**
- ii. **Penang Peranakan Mansion**
- iii. **Sek Tek Tong Cheah Kongsi**
- iv. **Iskandar Malaysia Studio**

From the results of in-depth interviews, the researcher was able to conclude that most local sponsors (local companies) are more comfortable marketing their own companies and services. They will bring brochures or booklets of their own locations and sell locations in Malaysia for filming purposes.

Obviously promotion is very important in business. Medik and Middleton (1972) stated that tourism involves the entire activity that starts from a person planning to travel to returning back to the initial destination. Kaynak and Yavas (1981) stated that the language of a person traveling to a destination is to fulfill a certain goal and the goal exists from a factor called motivation. Therefore, for tourism marketing, marketing must ascertain what the real needs of tourists are and then must create a value (pull factor) in their business to serve those needs.



Table 2: Incentives provided by each country.

Table 2 above shows the differences in incentives offered in each country. By improving the cash rebate with an additional 5%, Malaysia is able to overcome competition among neighboring countries. If you look at this table, Thailand and Singapore are the closest competition. Thailand offers a 25% incentive while Singapore offers a 40% incentive to international film productions. With the beauty of nature, has beaches and mountains as well as a multi -racial and multi -ethnic community.

5.0 Discussion

From the results of in-depth interviews, the researcher was able to conclude that most local sponsors (local companies) are more comfortable marketing their own companies and services. They will bring brochures or booklets of their own locations and sell locations in Malaysia for filming purposes.

Based on the data obtained as a result of observational studies and secondary data, it turns out that each location studied has its own uniqueness to be the background location in a film. Each location owner has his own way of trying to promote his location internationally. Realizing that each location has its own special features, they try to implement and meet the demands of foreign productions for the purpose of carrying out foreign film filming activities. This can indirectly generate national income. This very important pull factor can be seen where every location or local company will go to a location to persuade the pull factor and it needs encouragement. Although some locations require them to promote and market their services which is called direct marketing where it is direct communication with individuals that have been carefully targeted. This indirectly, can create an ongoing good relationship with customers.

6.0 Conclusion

After observing and discussing this dissertation in several locations, the researcher found a very weak element of promotion by the Government. This statement is also supported by Professor Prof Dr Md Nasir Ibrahim, (2022) who is the Chief Executive Officer of FINAS also admits that the lack of promotion is the reason why many foreign producers do not know about the existence of cash rebates through the Film Shooting Incentive in Malaysia (FIMI). Professor Prof Dr Md Nasir Ibrahim also hopes that an awareness campaign for the program should be intensified to spread the word to foreign productions about filming in Malaysia. He added that all destinations will be promoted through the corporation's collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture. On June 26, 2022, in the Sarawak Creative Industry Activists' Art Talk program in Sarawak, he will also ensure more vigorous promotion and more foreign producers will come to film in the country. Therefore, the location background is very important in the production of a film to attract foreign film production to make Malaysia an international filming hub. According to Professor Md Nasir (2022) the Malaysian National Film Development Corporation (FINAS) intends to make attractive destinations in the country a mandatory location for international film and drama producers to produce their productions.

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