

Langka-We Pledge: Solution for Travelers' Sustainable Behaviors

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30880/mari.2022.03.05.021>

Received 15 July 2022; Accepted 30 November 2022; Available online 31 December 2022

Abstract: Globalization has enabled people to move from one country to another easily and helped accelerate the growth of the tourism industry. The economic benefit from tourism has to balance with environmental well-being. As environmental quality strongly depends on human behavior patterns, it is important to control tourist behavior at a tourism destination. This paper proposes practical policy project for attracting tourists with more sustainable behavior as well as improving those with low sustainability through a pledge, named "The Langka-We Pledge". Furthermore, this paper discusses how the implementation of a pledge can have a significant positive impact in promoting sustainable tourism.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Tourist Behavior, Travel Pledge, Environmental Awareness

1. Introduction

Tourism is defined by The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon that involves the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business purposes [1]. There are many types of tourism, such as cultural, religious, and health tourism. Nowadays, sustainable tourism is considered one of the most popular types of tourism as it allows destinations to be better places in the future for those who live there as well as for those who visit them [2]. Among the three pillars of sustainable tourism, environmental sustainability is getting more attention as the natural areas play an important role in promoting the tourist project [3]. Many people are aware of climate change, environmental health hazards, and its impacts. The more they are aware, the more movement to protect the environment arises. Many hotels are starting to adopt green practices, governments are creating zero waste campaigns, and travelers are promoting sustainable behavior.

According to Anđić and Vorkapić [4], sustainable behavior refers to behavior that encompasses peoples' values, norms, beliefs, and senses of responsibility in deliberate actions focused on providing the well-being of all living beings, for both present and future generations. Meanwhile, sustainable behavior in tourism refers to tourists' behavior that does not harm the natural environment at the tourism destination and may even benefit the environment globally [5]. When these people are traveling, they not only want to leave a long-term positive impact, but also contribute as much effort as they can to the

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local community [6]. Understanding tourist behavior helps tourism destination organizations to improve their strategies in attracting tourists to come [7]. Thus, it is important for tourism destinations to develop strategies that follow the current trend in tourism which is in line with protecting nature. Budeanu [8] believes that authorities need to invest in innovative sustainable projects to promote sustainable behavior among tourists.

Malaysia is one of the most visited countries in Asia for international tourists. In 2019, Tourism Malaysia reported around 26 million international tourists visited Malaysia and the tourism sector contributed about 15.9% to the country's total GDP (Gross Domestic Product) [9]. One of the top foreign tourist spots of Malaysia is Langkawi. Langkawi offers many tourist attractions, stunning landscapes, Geopark, pristine golden beaches, etc. making it a perfect tourist destination. In 2019, Langkawi was reported to receive around 3.9 million visitors [10]. However, with the rising number of visitors in Langkawi and the growing economy, it is also important to consider the environmental sustainability aspect. While experiencing a steep drop-off in arrival numbers due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Langkawi government needs to take the opportunity to prepare a future plan for the archipelago which includes promoting sustainable tourism.

It is important for the government to monitor the impacts of tourism, particularly to minimize the negative effects of tourist presence in natural areas. Tourism policies on environmental protection should be implemented to avoid the damage of incoming tourists. After closing its border for over a year, starting from 15 November 2021, the Malaysian government announced that Langkawi is open to travelers from countries approved by the Foreign Ministry, Health Ministry, and the Immigration Department under the travel bubble scheme [11]. Pandemic is the suitable period to develop new policy in accordance with environmental protection goals.

In response to the global Covid-19 outbreak, Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) initiated a tourism recovery plan that included preparing and rebranding Langkawi as a safe and sustainable tourism destination [12]. Various efforts have been made in order to maintain the natural beauty of Langkawi for future generations, such as green practices carried out by several hotels, Ecotourism practices, Geopark activities, etc. In 2007, Langkawi was included in the UNESCO Global Geopark list where one of its goals is to conserve nature [13]. Langkawi Malaysian Nature Society chairman Eric R. Sinnaya believes the island needs new strategies to care for the environment in order to thrive in the age of growing concern of climate change [14]. Therefore, this project aims to introduce “The Langka-We Pledge”.

“The Langka-We Pledge” as project will serve as a supporting notion for Langkawi in terms of long-term tourism sustainability. It aims to urge visitors to be respectful of the local environment and culture and eventually contribute positively to Langkawi as a tourism destination. Additionally, the objectives of “The Langka-We Pledge” are to support geotourism and ecotourism activities around Langkawi as well as to raise environmental awareness among travelers that will lead to sustainable behaviors.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Materials

“The Langka-We Pledge” project is implemented in the form of a passport stamp, “Do and Don’ts List”, and social media hashtag (#LangkaWePledge). Users might easily become overwhelmed by information overload in today's world of social media. Using hashtags allows users to cut through the digital clutter and focus on the information they need. On social media platforms like Twitter, hashtags are commonly used. It not only assists users in finding postings about specific topics, but they also in reaching out to more people who are interested in their contents [15]. Furthermore, Müller-Prove [16] stated that hashtags have become a common phenomenon and are frequently utilized to transmit messages in order to raise public awareness and promote public opinion.

Each passport of the tourists will be stamped only one time unless they renew the passport. It means that if the tourists’ passports have been stamped and they return to Langkawi with the same passport,

they will not receive another stamp. However, if they return to Langkawi with a new passport, they will need to get a stamp on their new passports. Along with the stamp, tourists will also be given a checklist of “Dos and Don’ts” that is distributed digitally upon arrival. The checklist is shown in **Figure 1**:



Figure 1. Sustainable Travel Tips (Do’s and Don’ts)

The QR code containing the above checklist will be available at the immigration counter to be downloaded by the tourists during the arrival process. Those who broke the oath will be fined righteously depending on the range of violation done by the tourists.

This project will mostly be advertised through social media as it has proven to be effective to reach the public [17]. To support this project, the authors have already coordinated with Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) therefore the tourists are advised to post their activities related to sustainable tourism during their trip in Langkawi via their own social media accounts by using hashtag #LangkaWePledge and mention the Langkawi Development Authority Instagram account (@langkawi_lada), Twitter (@LangkawiDevelo1), Facebook (Langkawi Development Authority/@ukklADA).

2.2 Methods

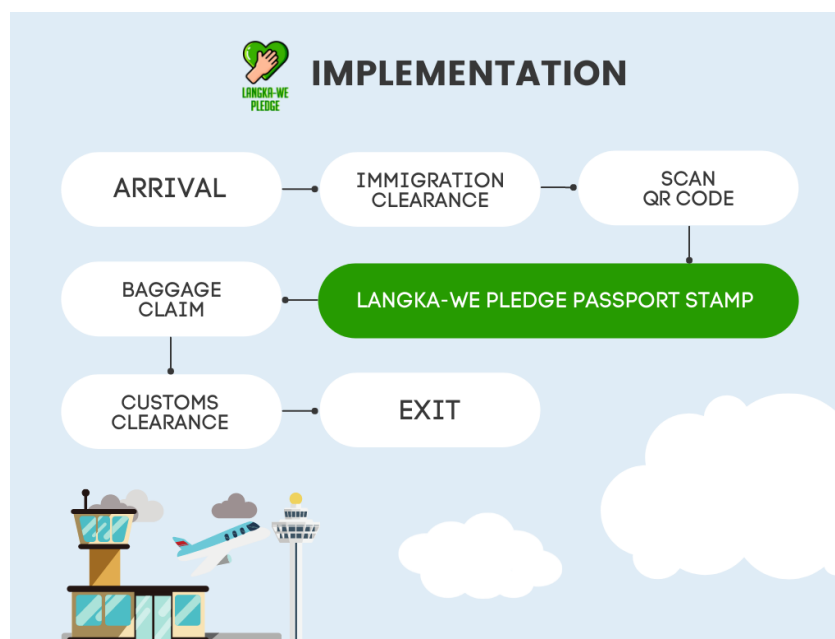


Figure 2. Implementation process of “The Langka-We Pledge”

Figure 2 shows six stages of “The Langka-We Pledge” procedure, which can be further elaborated as follows: Firstly, after arrival, foreign tourists follow the instructions to proceed to the immigration counter. Secondly, at the point of entry, the tourists’ passports must be presented for immigration clearance. Thirdly, near the immigration counter, QR codes will be provided for the tourists to scan, which will take them to a page with a "Dos and Don'ts" list. Then, the passport travel pledge will be stamped by the immigration officer. Foreign tourists refer to the respective information boards and check the airline name and flight number before proceeding to the baggage claim. Next, after the baggage claim is completed, the tourists should proceed to the appropriate gate, where each tourist undergoes a Customs Clearance. Lastly, tourists are welcome to Langkawi and the trip is just getting started.

3. Results and Discussion

Sustainable tourism is described as tourism that provides more advantages than drawbacks, particularly in terms of the environment, economy, and communities. It is hoped that this project can be directly supported by the local government considering that the procedure for introducing this idea must go through the immigration authority. For the island resort of Langkawi, Malaysia, the local state government and authorities are aware of the need to readjust their sustainable development strategies in Langkawi [18]. Therefore, a study was conducted by them resulting that eco-tourism has improved socio-economic well-being as a result of government intervention.

“The Langka-We Pledge” project in Langkawi could be used as a pilot project. If it is successful, a similar type of program can be implemented for other parts of Malaysia or the whole country. The project can be advertised and expanded through more networks. Apart from getting government support, the project can also reach support from tourism stakeholders such as Naturally Langkawi and registered travel agencies in Langkawi.

In implementing this project, the pledge stamp requires the signature of the passport holder to show that he/she agrees to act responsibly in supporting sustainable tourism. The stamp will serve as a new “visa” requirement to enter the archipelago that will include the following verse of the pledge (as shown

in **Figure 3**):

“People of Langkawi, I take this pledge as your guest, to preserve and protect your beautiful and unique island. I vow to respect nature, act responsibly and explore mindfully. I shall not take what is not given. I shall not harm what does not harm me. The only footprints I shall leave are those that will wash away.”

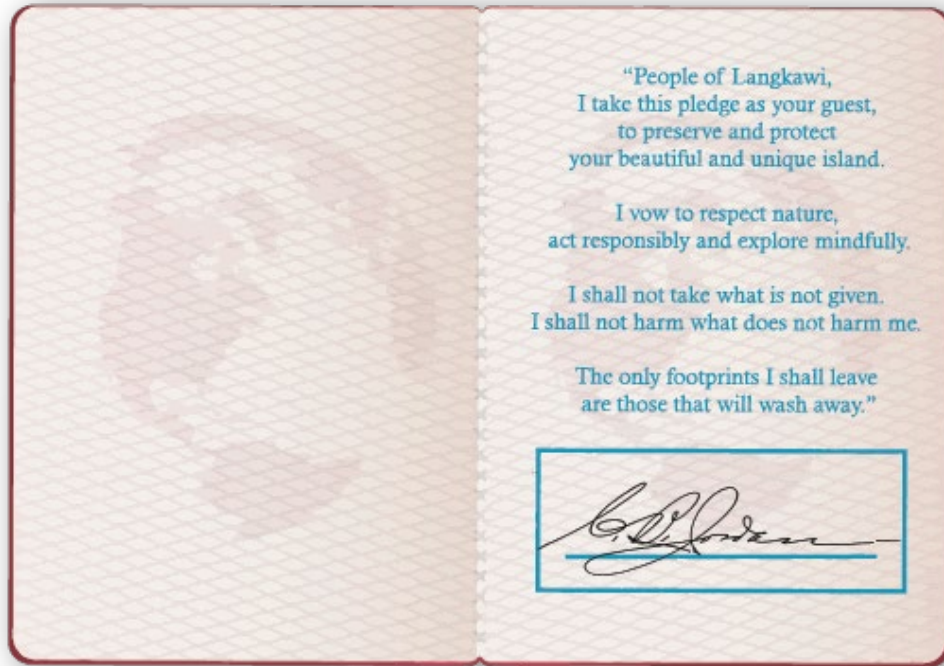


Figure 3. Langka-We Pledge Passport Stamp (Illustration)

“The Langka-We Pledge” has various advantages which will benefit Langkawi in the long term. It is a small but essential thing toward shifting tourists' behavior about the archipelago's natural and living resources. Tourists will experience a very different arrival process than they had anticipated. Apart from the usual entry stamp (if applicable), they will be given a pledge stamped on their passports that everyone must sign their commitments in order to enter the nation. This project can also be beneficial to build a positive image of Langkawi as a sustainable tourism destination.

Aside from that, the stamp fee can be charged to foreign tourists on arrival. Thus, it can be one of the new sources of income that can be obtained by the government. Additionally, for some people, stamp collecting can be a fun and rewarding hobby. There are many colorful stamps from different countries and different points of history to collect. As a result of this, stamp collecting may become an educational means for tourists.

Other than that, the benefit of this project idea is to advance the current immigration app (myIMiv2) for reporting the tourists' green activities or develop the creation of a new app for such reporting. The aim of this app is for tourists to collect points for each of the green activities they have contributed. The activities will be set into various categories of sustainability practices. The points can be converted into various rewards, from discounts at selected local restaurants to free passes at many attractions in Langkawi.

4. Conclusion

Carbon emissions, poor waste management, and natural resources depletion are causing serious global ecological issues. Before the Earth reaches an ecological tipping point, everyone needs to take part in changing behavior towards environmental sustainability, not only in their place of residence but

also when traveling. The government also needs to create a policy to support the action. "The Langka-We Pledge" can be a project designed to promote sustainable tourism. It is a small act but can have a big impact on future generations. Through "The Langka-We Pledge", the authors believe that the project would make a change in people's travel behavior in the years to come. As people are getting more concerned about environmental sustainability, this project can lead them into action, especially when traveling to another area away from their homes.

Additionally, this project will be an example of co-shared responsibility between local governments, community, and tourism stakeholders. With the reopening of Langkawi for foreign tourists after a long period of border closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the authors think it will be a good opportunity to introduce "The Langka-We Pledge" as a travel project. This will improve Langkawi's image as a pro-environmental destination. Increasing people's awareness of environmental issues would require long-term efforts, thus it is important to start from now, from a small act, and by each individual. Future research can be conducted to develop the efficiency of this project towards improving tourist sustainable behavior.

Acknowledgement

This project was made in response to a tourism recovery plan that included preparing and rebranding Langkawi as a safe and sustainable tourism destination. The authors would like to express special thanks to Prof. Madya Dr. Norain and collaborative lecturer, Dr. Mohd Onn Rashdi Bin Abd Patah, for the support and guidance. The authors would also like to thank the Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) for their cooperation.

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