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A Study on the Level of Understanding of Green Tourism among Student in Tourism and Hospitality Department, Politeknik Merlimau Melaka

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Abstract

Green tourism is a term that can be applied in any form of tourism that relates to natural environment and cultural heritage of an area or that undertakes good environmental management or green practice. It is a concept which takes into account the needs of the environment, local residents, businesses and visitors now and in the future. Green tourism in Malaysia concerns with promoting green products, educational programs on environmental management, and introducing the activities like waste management via programs such as recycle (The Star Online, 2010). The purpose of this paper is to look at the level of understanding of green tourism among Tourism and Hospitality students in Politeknik Merlimau Melaka. This is important among the younger generations in higher institutions as the understanding of green tourism can contribute to protecting, conserving and enhancing nature and the physical environment to ensure the long-term health of the life sustaining eco-system. This is a descriptive survey research and data were analyzed using SPSS Version 22 to obtain frequencies, percentage and mean score. The quantitative data were collected using 322 questionnaires distributed among Tourism and Hospitality department students in Politeknik Merlimau, Melaka. The findings of this research indicated a high level of understanding of green tourism among Tourism and Hospitality students in Politeknik Merlimau. Thus, this result will further help to encourage students to be more environmentally conscious and their willingness to implement certain practices to save the environment. Hence, this study suggest further enhance awareness and appreciation of green tourism in Polytechnic in order to conserve the environment.

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Key-word: - Green Tourism, Tourism and Hospitality, Politeknik

1. Introduction

Tourism plays an important social, economic, and cultural role worldwide. Green tourism is a term that applied to any form of tourism that relates to the natural environment and cultural heritage of an area or that undertakes good environmental management or green practice. There are three methods included by which a tourism practice would have to demonstrate practices for preventing or minimizing impacts to the environment if it were to be considered a green operations as follows: a. The wise use of resources such as raw materials, water and energy. b. The prevention of pollution (air, land, and water). c. The protection and where possible the enhancement of biodiversity. No matter what type of Green Tourism or Eco-Friendly Tourism we are considering, there really are benefits and if we want to get out and away from it all, there are precious few places left in the world to do so. Visiting some of these spots actually allows us to do our part to preserve fragile and endangered ecosystems while at the same time seeing things that very few other people will ever have the opportunity to see. Green tourism does not necessarily mean a vacation spent roughing it with little or no comforts. On the contrary, many people believe that it can be a wonderful adventure. Ecotourism resorts and ecology exist in almost every style. From recycling of waste and implementing grey water systems to tents on tree house-like platforms with a rain forest canopy, there are numerous vacationing options available. Simple efforts, such as keeping to the designated pathways, eating where locally grown cuisine are served and visiting cultural areas instead of typical tourist attractions, can go a long way toward “greening up” a standard vacation.

Green tourism is all about the provision of environmentally friendly tourism services of all kinds ranging from leisure, business and recreational tourism services. It is also about being an environmentally friendly tourist itself, such as taking a leisure trip to a beautiful resort but also in the processes, have the lowest impact on the environment where you are visiting. At the 2nd International Conference on Climate Change and Tourism 2007 in Davos, it was asserted that “the tourism sector must rapidly respond to climate change and progressively reduce the greenhouse gas (GHG) effect, for tourism to grow in a sustainable manner”. Green tourism concerns with the practices, which consider environmental responsibility since these activities, are able to reduce ecological footprint. The involvement of ecological footprint is with the lifecycle of the product, the practices such as laundry, and heating, cooling lighting, paper and shampoo bottles. Green tourism applied to indicate the tourism that is in the environmentally friendly manner (Furqan et al., 2010). The term “ecotourism” and “sustainable tourism” applied side by side of green tourism

Green tourism or another term related to environmental concern mostly used to label nature holidays to exotic destinations (Wight, 1994). Second, green tourism claims to signal that tourism operations taking place in that area do not harm the environment (Font and Tribe, 2001). The green tourism concept would be highly appealing to tourism enterprises and operators owing to increasing governmental pressure to improve environmental performance by adopting effective and tangible environmental management techniques. Receipts from tourism make an important contribution to the economies of the developing countries in terms of income, employment, and balance of payments effects. Thus, many developing countries have begun to actively pursue tourism as a means to create jobs, diversify their economies, and earn foreign currency. The last two decades have witnessed a growing interest in the relationship between tourism development and environmental quality (Erdogan and Tosun, 2009), with the emergence of special interest tourism including green tourism. In loose terms, a product or service can be green when it is beneficial to the producer and consumer without harming the environment.

The concept of green tourism is globally applied. To promote this concept, the worldwide agencies are such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), and the World Bank play significant roles. In all aspects of the tourism process, “green tourism” includes tourists, hotels, attractions, tourist managers, travel agents, tour operators and travel guides. This green tourism will protect the green environment with concepts of green consumption activities, to achieve social responsibility, economic development and ecological sustainability of the realm.

2. Literature Review

Tourism traditionally has been considered a relatively green industry, with the exception of its transport and land development implications, and for this reason it has only recently become an area of concern (Font and Tribe, 2001). According to Dodds and Joppe (2001), the green tourism concept can be broken down into four components:

- i. Environmental responsibility—protecting, conserving, and enhancing nature and the physical environment to ensure the long-term health of the life-sustaining eco-system.
- ii. Local economic vitality—supporting local economies, businesses and communities to ensure economic vitality and sustainability.
- iii. Cultural diversity—respecting and appreciating cultures and cultural diversity so as to ensure the continued well-being of local or host cultures.
- iv. Experiential richness—providing enriching and satisfying experiences through active, personal and meaningful participation in, and involvement with, nature, people, places and cultures

To continue focusing on green tourism countries around the world tried to practice the concept of green practices. For instance, in the developed countries like Japan the green tourism is by considering the whole criteria of being green in the tourism industry. According to Middleton and Hawkins (1998), the tourism industry uses green tourism certification or environmental awards as trademarks or logos to communicate the environmental qualifications of a company, with the hopes that customers develop positive attitudes toward their product or service. The use of green tourism certification issued by respected body is usually intended (Sasidharan, 2002) to control tourism’s negative environmental impacts on the natural resource, to educate tourists regarding the impacts of their actions and decisions, and to develop standards for environmentally friendly tourism products and services. The green tourism certification applied to hotels, resorts, marinas, travel agencies, tour operators, ground and water transportation services, airlines, and extended to certify the environmental soundness of tourist destinations and the natural resources at these destinations (Mihalic, 2000). Although ecotourism is the country’s main tourism products, however green tourism practices have received little attention.

The concept of green tourism in developed countries such as in Japan is similar to rural tourism concept, where it conducted within the natural environment, and offers tourists opportunities to experience local culture and rural lifestyle (Arahi, 1998). Green tourism in Japan is more concentrated on the sustainable environment of rural areas, and managed by the residents, although the central and local governments as well as rural residents share the capital needed for businesses.

Japan's green tourism is a type of rural tourism that utilizes both the rural culture, which has been cultivated under the long tradition of agriculture and forestry, as well as the nature of rural areas, such as forests and secondary nature in the form of farm lands as attractions (Knight, 1996; Arahi, 1998)

In United Kingdom, the Green Tourism Business Scheme established in 1997 and it covers the whole country. It is the largest and most established scheme of its type in the world with the main aims to ensure that the country remains at the forefront of sustainable tourism in the future. By using businesses accredited by the Green Tourism Business Scheme for the holiday or overnight stay, visitors or tourists assured that the accommodation establishments have met certain environmental criteria that they choose. The establishments assessed every two years against rigorous criteria, covering areas such as energy efficiency, waste minimisation and recycling, use of local produce, and support of public transport. Businesses that meet the required standard receive a Bronze, Silver or Gold award, based on their level of achievement.

In Malaysia, the practice of green tourism is relatively new and limited to encouraging the use of green products, providing training programs on environmental management and introducing waste management techniques such as recycling particularly by participating resorts (The Star, 2010). Participating resorts in green tourism trained and educated their staff to be eco-friendly although the comprehensiveness of the training program was not consistent among resorts (Abdul Khalid et al., 2010). The main aims are to conserve water, energy and minimize waste, and resorts that actively monitored this practice managed to reduce their operating costs. Examples included switching to energy efficient devices, using key cards, constructing water treatment plant, separating solid and liquid waste, and recycling. Resort guests were also encouraged to reuse their towels and bed linens with a notice in the room to save resources like water and laundry detergent. Some resorts also used sustainable building materials and local materials in the architectural designs and construction.

Organic gardens or nursery, do exist in some resorts where one resort even has a system that encourages each department to take turns to care for the garden (Abdul Khalid et al., 2010). A good example in sustainable management practices is The Frangipani Langkawi Resort and Spa, which among others implement a water treatment plant to recycle the resort's waste water, use more sustainable building materials to reduce energy needs, create an organic garden to produce fresh vegetables for guests' consumption, and recycle or reuse existing leftover materials in other forms. The Frangipani was also recognized for its Nature/Environment Conservation for the Langkawi Geopark Tourism Award 2008 on December 22 2008. At PATA Travel Mart 2009 held in Hangzhou, China, The Frangipani was awarded on September 25 the PATA Gold Award for the category of Environmental Education Program. The Frangipani was again recognized for its conservation effort. At ATF 2010 held in Brunei, The Frangipani received the ASEANTA Awards for Excellence for the category Best ASEAN Conservation Effort. The resort, which tagged as The Greenest Resort in Malaysia, won a number of prestigious awards including Winner of ASEAN Green Hotel Standard Award 2008-2009.

Researchers used green tourism in the 1980s in a study that described the hotel industry's practice of placing green placards in each room that encouraged guests to reuse their towels. The study found that many hotels ultimately made little to no effort to actually conserve resources or reduce waste; they just wanted to appear to be environmentally friendly, or "green." It's important that travellers dig a little deeper into hotels' green claims when researching before booking. Fortunately, most environmentally-friendly hotels have information on their websites about their green initiatives that make it easier to learn about the concrete measures they are taking to conserve natural resources, protect plants and wildlife, and contribute to the well-being of local communities. Previous research in Malaysia have indicated about sustainable tourism practices, however the behaviour of stakeholders in green tourism has yet to be fully comprehensive. Therefore, ecotourism may well be Malaysia's main tourism product, however green tourism practices that support sustainable development of tourism has to be further developed. Courses such as hotel management, hygiene, food and beverage, front office are essential for the tourism sector. Besides, concern for environmental issues is one of the key components of higher education for tourism. Environmental education is becoming much more important day by day due to the protection all of these details by law. The role of education in conservation and in addressing the rapidly increasing environmental problems, while improving the environment is well known today. According to the Turkish constitution, everyone has the right to live in a healthy and balanced environment. Protection of environmental health, prevention of environmental pollutions and development of the environment are the duty of the State and every citizen (Vlavianos-Arvanitis, 1997). Tourism can function well if there is harmony among several interacting institutions. Among these various institutions, universities and education centres play an important role as they take professional responsibility to educate the human resources needed for the tourism sector. Hence, the role of education institutions in tourism development is critical (Shrestha and Rayamajhi, 1997).

Higher education has a critical role to play in producing sustainable students by helping them to understand "the complex connections and interdependencies between the environment, energy sources, and the economy" (Elder, 2009). Elder further states: "The education required to accomplish this is a new way of thinking and learning about integrated, systemic solutions not just to the economic and environmental challenges but also the interdependent health, social and political challenges.

Above all, this new way of thinking uses the green economy as the focal point for understanding the deep connections between economics, energy, the environment and social well-being, often referred to as *sustainability*.” The impact of the environment should be the primary concern in all university decision making processes and students should be part of this (Togo, 2009). The former United States president, Barrack Obama, said at the United Nations summit (Kanter, 2010) it is imperative that we act now to create a sustainable future. Our generation’s response to the challenge of climate change judged by history, for if we fail to meet it boldly and swiftly together, we risk consigning future generations to an irreversible catastrophe.

One important consequence of environmental neglect is the depletion of our natural resources, especially energy and water resources. (Ibrahim, 2017) Overall, educating new generation today especially those in higher education about sustaining the environment through green tourism is very important. Universities tasked to engage with values in order to produce students who can play a role in seeking solutions to societal problems. (Togo, 2009). The level of green tourism among Malaysian focusing on polytechnic student has not been identified. Polytechnic is one of the providers of Technical and Vocational Education and Training institution that was aimed to produce at least 680,000 professionals during 2020. In fact, Malaysia’s Prime Minister, Dato’ Seri Najib Bin Tun Razak had gave commitment to Kyoto Protocol in order to reduce at least 40% CO2 emissions during 2020. Thus, graduates from polytechnic were aimed to be the professional workers during 2020 that will fulfill the target of reduction CO2 emissions and keep the effort to ensure the sustainability of the environment through the understanding of green tourism. Thus education and awareness towards green tourism can curb problems associated to depleting the earth’s natural resources which in turn will not sustain the environment and consequently destroy mother nature.

3. Research Methodology

This is a descriptive study using a survey questionnaire as a tool to gather information. According to Noraini Idris (2010), a survey is useful when researchers want to collect data relating to the phenomenon that not observed directly. Data collected through primary data obtained through questionnaires that distributed by the researcher. A questionnaire is also an instrument that can reduce expenses, time and energy in collecting data. 322 students involved in the study provided feedback. The questionnaire divided into four sections. The first part contains question about the respondents’ profile, which are gender and programme studied in Hospitality and Tourism department. The second part consists of the students understanding of Green Tourism which is divided into four sections, A,B,C and D. The first section consists of questions pertaining to the knowledge about green tourism. Secondly, characteristics of green tourism. Thirdly, implementation of green practice. The fourth section is the perception and opinion about green tourism.

Measurement data for the second part used a Likert scale to measure knowledge, characteristics, implementation and perceptions of students. Respondents rated 5 scale options, 1 = strongly disagree (STB), 2 =disagreed (TB), 3 = not sure (TP), 4 = agree (B), and 5 = strongly agree (SB). Data were analyzed using the Statistical Program for Social Science(SPSS). Descriptive statistics used to determine the percentage frequency and average. Interpretation of the mean score used to determine the understanding of green tourism among the respondents.

Data interpretation has resulted in the mean value of respondents according to research objectives. Interpretation of the mean scores interpreted based on Table 1 (Pallant, J. 2007)

Table 1: Interpretation of Mean Sores

Mean score	Interpretation (Level)
1.00 – 2.33	Low
2.34 – 3.66	Average
3.67– 5.00	High

Data Analysis

Data analyzed consisted of questions related to the students’ understanding of green tourism. Questionnaires distributed by the researcher based on the objectives of the study for collecting data. The data were analyzed using mean values.

A. Analysis of Knowledge about Green Tourism

This division consists of six questions related to the students’ knowledge and understanding of green tourism. The results showed a lower mean of 3.76 for the first question asked. This situation occurred because a few percentages of the respondents have not heard about green tourism. However, Table 2 shows that the overall mean score for questions asked was 4.09. This gives the interpretation that the respondents have placed the level of knowledge of green tourism in terms of understanding to be high.

Table 2: Knowledge about Green Tourism

No	Item	Mean score	Interpretation
1	I know and have heard about Green Tourism	3.76	High
2	Green Tourism also means eco tourism	4.02	High
3	Green Tourism is an important component of sustainable tourism	4.17	High
4	Green tourism is a term that can be used for any form of tourism related to the environment and cultural heritage of an area or which undertakes good environmental (or green) environmental management practices	4.14	High
5	Green tourism states that we should not only protect and preserve the place in which we live but also the places where we travel	4.24	High
6	Green tourism minimises the environmental impact of tourism and maximises its adaptation to climate change.	4.21	High
Percentage, Mean Score and Overall Interpretation		4.09	High

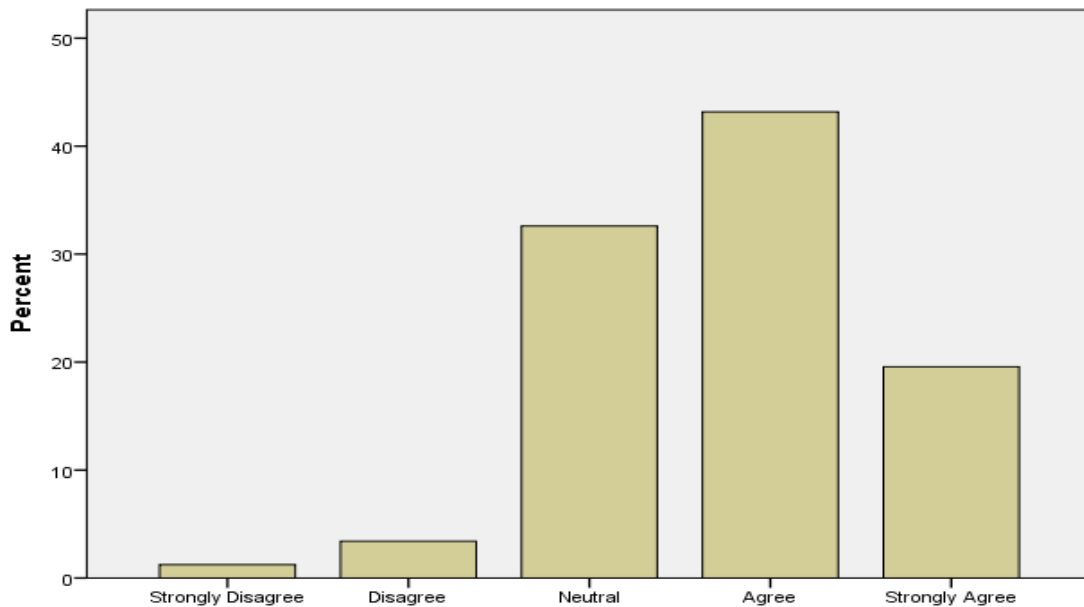


Figure 1 : Survey knowledge about Green Tourism

Referring to the bar chart in Figure 1, it shows that majority of 322 students of Tourism and Hospitality department in Politeknik Merlimau knew and have heard of green tourism

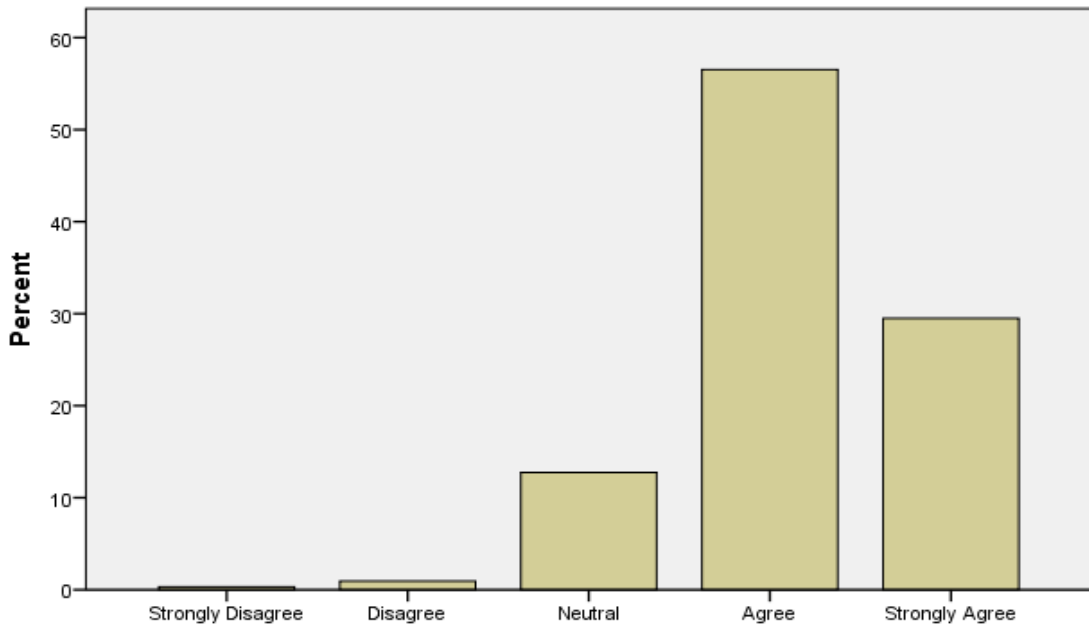


Figure 2 : Green tourism is a term that used for any form of tourism related to the environment and cultural heritage of an area undertakes well environmental (or green) environmental management practices

Figure 2 above showed that more than 50% of respondents agreed that green tourism is a term that can be used for any form of tourism related to the environment and cultural heritage. It said that the respondents understood about green tourism in terms of taking good care of environment and practices good environmental management practices.

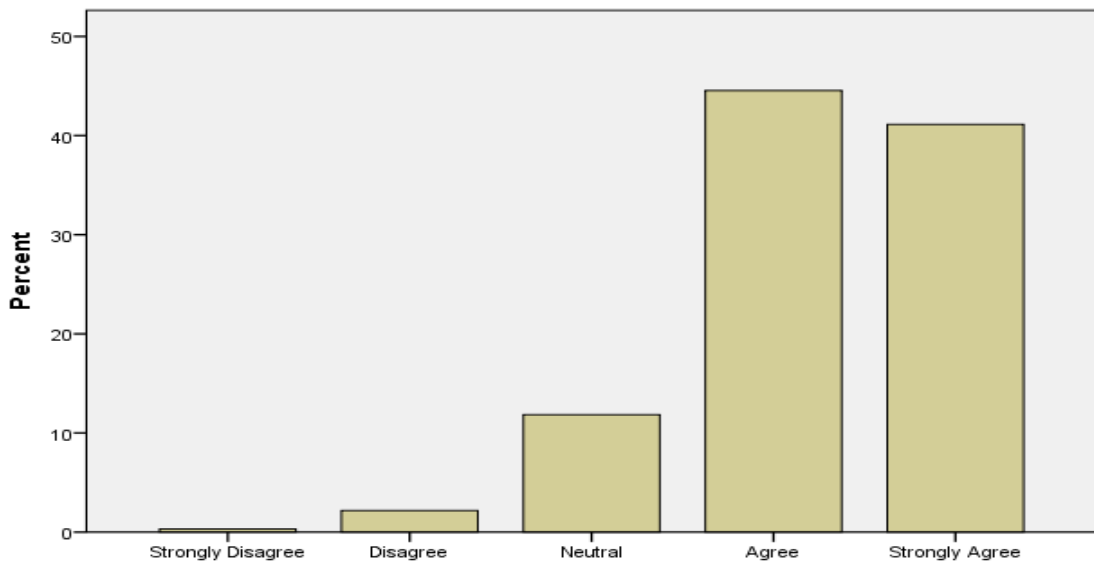


Figure 3: Green tourism states that we should not only protect and preserve the place in which we live but also the places where we travel

From the above bar chart, it concluded that it is agreeable among the respondents of the importance of protecting and preserving the environment wherever we are. This is the first step towards the understanding of green tourism among the respondents. Thus, this will help in maintaining, preserving and sustaining the tourist attractions and environment as a whole.

B. Analysis of Characteristics of Green Tourism

In this section, five items that developed are link to the characteristics of green tourism. The results are shown in Table 3. Overall, respondents indicated that they understood the characteristics of green tourism. Thus, the level of understanding about it is high with the overall mean score of 4.13.

Table 3: Characteristics of Green Tourism

No	Item	Mean score	Interpretation
1	Holiday involving research on flora and fauna.	4.16	High
2	Protecting natural habits and preserving wildlife	4.22	High
3	Support the economy of the local community and improve the quality of life of the population	4.04	High
4	Promoting usage of local product	4.06	High
5	Traveling to natural areas that preserve the environment and improve the well-being of the locals	4.20	High
Percentage, Mean Score and Overall Interpretation		4.13	High

C. Analysis the Implementation of Green Practices.

Table 4 summarize about the implementation of green practice that indirectly indicated whether the respondents understand about greening the earth. This section consisted of six questions asking the respondents about their roles in implementing green practices. The mean score is high with overall mean score of 4.20. This clearly indicated that tertiary students understand the importance of practicing green in their everyday life.

Table 4: Implementation of Green Habits

No	Item	Mean score	Interpretation
1	Practice garbage separation by placing waste materials into kitchen waste, paper, glass, plastic, aluminium cans	4.31	High
2	Save water usage	4.24	High
3	Energy saving by using energy saving lamp bulbs (energy saving)	4.21	High
4	Using renewable/alternative energy source (solar energy)	4.14	High
5	Buy recycling products (ink cartridges, toilet paper)	4.13	High
6	Using public transportation (bus, taxi, train)	4.20	High
Percentage, Mean Score and Overall Interpretation		4.20	High

D. Analysis of the Perception of Green Tourism

The last set of questions as shown in Table 5 developed in order to gain respondents perception and opinion about green tourism. The first two questions mean score was 3.92 and 3.96. Although the interpretation considered high with the overall mean of 4.17, information about green tourism made much easier to obtain.

In addition, we should raise the level of awareness about green tourism among students nowadays. This will help future generations to go green and travel green when choosing a destination for a holiday.

Table 5: Perception of Green Tourism

No	Item	Mean score	Interpretation
1	Information about green tourism is easy to obtain	3.92	High
2	Green tourism concept is something new	3.96	High
3	Green tourism opens my mind to environmental conservation	4.22	High
4	Green tourism is not limited to those involved in the tourism industry alone	4.21	High
5	Exposure to green tourism is essential in Politeknik Merlimau, Melaka	4.35	High
6	Generally, green tourism shows eco-tourism	4.40	High
Percentage, Mean Score and Overall Interpretation		4.17	High

Conclusion

As the conclusion, the level of understanding of green tourism among students in tourism and hospitality department of Politeknik Merlimau, Melaka is at a very satisfactory level. All data analysed indicated that their understanding of the studied research topic achieved a high level of mean score. Green tourism involves people travelling to endangered environments or locations where the ecosystem is overly fragile, offering them some type of education regarding the local ecosystem and offering solutions as to how it preserved. Tourist industry is one of the main sectors that have played important economic roles in many countries. Since the industry demands the usage of environment; therefore, potentially it can be a vital member to protect the environment. Along with this, the concepts of green tourism and sustainable tourism employed. Around the world, the concept of green tourism is adopt, however, is consider new in Malaysia. Although, the government and Non- Governmental Organizations try to put lots of efforts to promote green tourism, this concept still demands more investments. Therefore, it is suggested that both government and NGOs to put more efforts in practicing green tourism amongst the players of the industry such as hotels and tourist. Educating local community and the public to promote green tourism and to develop environmentally responsible behaviour could further be enhance through active participation in environmental-related activities such as enrolment in nature-related activities, environmental seminars, campaigns and involvement in outdoor activities and hobbies. In order to ensure successful implementation of environmental education to the community and younger generation, the relevant stakeholders need to equip themselves with adequate knowledge, proper attitude and appropriate consumption pattern and lifestyle (Aini 2003).

Polytechnic student identified as the future professional that will fulfill the missions of the Malaysia's transformation. In order to raise awareness among polytechnic student regarding the importance of green tourism and sustaining the environment, a formal education developed. Formal education in this situation identified as teaching and learning process in a classroom or through virtual environment. In addition, among the methods that identified is to educate through communication, training and research. The process of teaching and learning that embedded the understanding of green in everyday practice implemented at all polytechnics in Malaysia.

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