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Community Engagement Activities in Penang Island, Malaysia: Providing Understanding on How to Get to the Lake Toba Tourist Destination in North Sumatra, Indonesia

Posma Sariguna Johnson Kennedy

Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: **Posma Sariguna Johnson Kennedy**

Abstract

Lake Toba in North Sumatra, Indonesia, is one of the breathtaking natural destinations in the region. However, the accessibility from Penang Island, Malaysia to Lake Toba, Indonesia, remains a question for some Malaysian tourists. In this community engagement initiative, we present steps to provide understanding about travel from Penang Island to Lake Toba. The goal of this community engagement activity is to enhance understanding and promote the tourism potential of Lake Toba, including its transportation and

accommodation. With the support of the community, government, and relevant stakeholders, it is hoped that this initiative will open doors for more people to explore the beauty and cultural richness offered by the Lake Toba destination. Providing an understanding of Lake Toba Tourism Destination to students at UOW Malaysia KDU Penang University College can be carried out effectively. They are enthusiastic about participating in discussions and are very interested in visiting Lake Toba.

Keywords: Lake Toba, Transportation, Accommodation, Community Engagement, UOW Malaysia KDU Penang University College

1. Introduction

The tourism industry plays a crucial role in economic growth and the development of local communities. However, to fully harness the potential of tourism, it is important to enhance accessibility between different tourist destinations. Traveling is not just about reaching the final destination but is also an integral part of the tourism experience itself. It has become a habit for many people to enjoy the journey, explore new places, and discover the uniqueness and beauty along the way. Before planning a vacation, it is essential to schedule and adjust everything accordingly. Aspects such as transportation, accommodation, and meals should be carefully planned to avoid overspending or exceeding the budget. This applies when you are embarking on a journey to these destinations as well (Sari, 2018) ^[1].

Penang Island in Malaysia and Lake Toba in North Sumatra, Indonesia, are two attractive tourist destinations with strong appeal for both domestic and international tourists. Lake Toba offers breathtaking natural scenery with the world's largest volcanic lake, historic islands in its midst, and a rich and diverse Batak culture. There are many activities and attractions that can only be experienced by visiting this lake in North Sumatra. Penang Island is known for its rich cultural heritage, stunning colonial architecture, and vibrant nightlife. However, despite the high interest in both destinations, accessibility between them remains a challenge for some tourists, especially international travelers, particularly from Malaysia. Constraints such as limited transportation options, lack of available information, and geographical distance can hinder those who wish to explore both places in a single trip.

Information regarding the accessibility between Penang Island and Lake Toba will not only facilitate travel for tourists but will also yield significant benefits for both regions. By facilitating travel between the two, the potential for tourism growth can be enhanced, resulting in positive impacts on the local economy, cultural promotion, diversity, and cultural exchange between the two countries (Zahrah, 2023) ^[2]. Therefore, it is essential to pay attention not only to the final destination but also to the journey itself as an integral part of the tourism experience. By improving accessibility between Penang Island and Lake Toba, we can open doors for more people to explore the beauty and cultural richness offered by both destinations, and strengthen interregional relationships in the context of tourism.

2. Objectives of Community Service

Community service activities are crucial as they contribute to the social, economic, and environmental development of both countries collectively. In the context of travel from Penang Island, Malaysia, to Lake Toba, Indonesia, community service activities can help facilitate and enhance accessibility and the tourist experience.

The primary objectives of this service are to provide understanding and practical guidance to travelers wishing to journey from Penang Island, Malaysia, to Lake Toba, North Sumatra, and to increase public awareness of the tourism potential at both locations.

The benefits of this community service activity are expected to contribute to improving tourism accessibility from Penang Island to Lake Toba, enabling more tourists to enjoy the natural beauty and culture at both locations.

Here are several reasons why community service activities are important in the context of providing understanding:

- **Enhancing Accessibility:** Community service activities can help improve inter-island transportation infrastructure and cross-border accessibility. With initiatives supporting the development of transportation facilities and road networks, travel from Penang Island to Lake Toba can become easier, more comfortable, and more efficient for tourists.
- **Improving Service Quality:** Through community service activities, training and skill enhancement can be provided to tourism industry stakeholders, including transportation personnel, tour guides, and accommodation providers. This will enhance the quality of services offered to tourists, providing a more satisfying travel experience.
- **Local Tourism Promotion:** Community service activities can also help promote the local tourism potential at both destinations, Penang Island and Lake Toba. By increasing public awareness and understanding of the tourist attractions at both locations, the number of tourist visits and the economic contribution from the tourism sector can be increased.
- **Environmental Conservation:** Community service activities can also strengthen awareness of the importance of environmental conservation and

sustainable tourism. By involving local communities in efforts to preserve nature and culture, the beauty and diversity of tourist destinations can be preserved for future generations.

- **Enhancing International Relations:** Community service activities can also serve as a platform to strengthen cooperation and relations between Malaysia and Indonesia in the context of tourism. By sharing knowledge, experiences, and resources, both countries can support and strengthen their tourism industries.

Thus, community service activities are expected to have a positive impact on both countries, including in the context of travel from Penang Island to Lake Toba. With strong support and collaboration from the community, government, and various stakeholders, inter-island tourism travel can become smoother and more beneficial for both countries (Suwena & Widyatmaja, 2017) ^[3].

3. Methodology

Community service activities were conducted concurrently with research on tourism carried out on Penang Island, Malaysia. The methodology of these community service activities involved discussions aimed at providing an understanding of the Lake Toba Tourism Destination to students at UOW Malaysia KDU Penang University College. Discussions covered topics on tourism in Penang Island, Malaysia, and Lake Toba, Indonesia, including gathering issues and discussing various solutions. One of the issues discussed was introducing students to the Lake Toba Tourism Destination and providing information on transportation and accommodation from Penang Island to Lake Toba, as well as compiling a comprehensive guide to assist travelers in planning their trips. Thus, the primary purpose of this community service activity was to introduce the Lake Toba Tourism Destination to students at UOW Malaysia KDU Penang.

This paper was written using a qualitative method through literature review, documentation, and field observation supplemented with unstructured interviews with informants encountered during the activities (Jamshed, 2014; Abdussamad, 2021) ^[4,5].



Pic 1: Arrival at UOW Malaysia KDU Penang University College

4. Activities

4.1 Lake Toba

Lake Toba is located in the Bukit Barisan Mountains of North Sumatra Province, with a geographic position between 2°6'35" – 2°56'28" North Latitude and 98°26'35" – 99°15'40" East Longitude. It is approximately 176 km south of the city of Medan, the capital of North Sumatra Province. The lake is bordered by seven administrative regions, namely the districts of Samosir, Toba Samosir, Simalungun, North Tapanuli, Humbang Hasundutan, Dairi, and Karo. Lake Toba is the largest lake in Southeast Asia and the ninth deepest lake in the world, as well as the largest volcanic caldera lake in the world. The lake is situated 905 meters above sea level with a length of 100 km, width of 30 km, and estimated area of approximately 1,130 km² and volume of 242 km³. The northern depth is 529 m while the southern depth is 429 m (Poerwanto, Widiatmaka, Basuni, & Sihotang, 2012)^[6].

Lake Toba is a stunning natural tourist destination in North Sumatra, Indonesia. Its allure is undeniable and serves as a magnet for both domestic and international tourists. Here are some of the main attractions of Lake Toba:

- **Natural Beauty.** Lake Toba is the largest volcanic lake in the world, nestled amidst enchanting mountains. The panoramic view of the lake, surrounded by lush green mountains, makes it a truly captivating destination for visitors.
- **Samosir Island.** Samosir Island is the central island in Lake Toba that offers a unique experience. It is the cultural center of the Batak Toba people, with traditional villages, Batak kings' graves, and traditional houses that can be visited by tourists.
- **Batak Culture.** Lake Toba is home to the Batak people, rich in cultural heritage and traditions. Tourists can explore Batak culture through traditional dances, customary ceremonies, local cuisine, and visits to museums and historical sites around Lake Toba.
- **Recreational Activities.** Lake Toba offers a variety of exciting recreational activities, including swimming, boating on the lake, fishing, hiking, and cycling around the island. Visitors can enjoy their leisure time with various fun outdoor activities.
- **Ethnic Diversity and Cuisine.** In addition to Batak culture, Lake Toba is also home to various ethnicities and cultures, enriching the tourist experience. Tourists can taste a variety of local and international dishes along the lakeshore and explore traditional markets for souvenirs.

The combination of stunning natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and various recreational activities makes Lake Toba one of the most popular tourist destinations in Indonesia. For many people, visiting Lake Toba is an unforgettable and enchanting experience that will always be remembered (Simanihuruk *et al.*, 2023)^[7].

4.2 Activities to Do at Lake Toba

The activities offered at Lake Toba are tourism options tailored to the interests of tourists. There are three types of tourists that can be identified based on their interests in tourism, namely: "alocentric, psychocentric, and midsentris. Alocentric tourists tend to seek new experiences and

adventures, while psychocentric tourists prefer to return to destinations they are already familiar with and relax more.



Pic 2a: Lake Toba



Pic 2b: With the Community at Lake Toba

Meanwhile, midsentris tourists have tendencies between the two previous types. Various activities provided at Lake Toba can meet the needs and interests of these three types of tourists. In a primary survey, some activities suitable for each type of tourist include the following^[8, 9].

In addition to the tourist activities mentioned earlier, various festivals, carnivals, and other cultural activities have become an integral part of life and tourism at Lake Toba. Cultural events offer a wide range of cultural products, such as music, dance, and agricultural products, while sports events focus on cycling races, running, and so on. In addition to the tourist activities mentioned earlier, various festivals, carnivals, and other cultural activities have become an integral part of life and tourism at Lake Toba. Cultural events offer a wide range of cultural products, such as music, dance, and agricultural products, while sports events focus on cycling races, running, and so on. Both types of events are held at the local, regional, national, or even international levels. Based on the calendar event trends, Lake Toba events tend to be held at peak seasons, namely June - August, which is also the school holiday season, as well as the end of the year. Conversely, the number of events during the low season is still limited. Therefore, cultural and sports activities at Lake Toba can be an attractive option for tourists during the holiday and year-end seasons.

Table 1: Tourist Attractions around Lake Toba Destination as Activities that Can Be Done by Tourists

Typology Traveler	Activity/ Activity	Can be done/ Found in
<i>Allocentric</i> (looking for new experiences and adventure)	Live in a Traditional Village	Meat Village, Jangga Dolok Village, Sibandang Village, Silimalombu Village, and others
	Camping	Eden Park, Lake Sidihoni, Holbung Hill, and several other open spaces
	Water-based sports: Canoeing and rafting	Bulbul Balige Beach, Parbaba Samosir Beach, Parapat Free Beach, Tigaras Beach, etc. etc
	Paragliding	Huta Ginjang in Muara and the Pakpak Bharat Government Office Area
	Geological Tour	Various Geosites from Toba Caldera as UNESCO Global Geopark
<i>Psychocentric</i> (to familiar destinations)	<i>Hard hiking and trekking</i>	Garden of Eden, Pusuk Buhit, Mount Sipiso-piso, and so on
	Sightseeing and relaxing	Almost in every DTW
	Shop	In tourism centers, such as Parapat, Tomok, Parbaba Beach, and Balige
<i>Midcentric</i> (between the two types above)	Culinary	The attraction of each destination
	Bicycle	Around the tourism center area, such as Tuktuk, or a tour around Samosir Island.
	Hiking (short distance)	Holbung Hill, or Aek Natonang Lake
	Visiting DTW culture	The whole DTW culture
	Boat cruising	Most hotels in Tuk-tuk Samosir Island
	Water-based recreation: Water park, banana boat, and so on	<i>Water Fun Nine</i> and <i>banana boat</i> at several locations such as Bulbul Beach and Parbaba Beach

Source: Compiled from documents ^[8, 9]

4.3 Accommodation on Samosir Island, Lake Toba

In Lake Toba, Samosir Island is a popular destination, offering a wide range of accommodation options, from budget stays to luxury resorts. Some popular areas on Samosir include Tuktuk, Pangururan, and their surroundings. Accommodation in Tuktuk and Pangururan are two attractive options for tourists visiting Samosir Island in Lake Toba (Kompas.com, 2012) ^[10].

Here is a more detailed explanation of both:

Tuktuk

Tuktuk is the main area on Pulau Samosir located on the edge of Lake Toba. It is the main tourist hub on the island, offering a variety of accommodation options, restaurants, souvenir shops, and other facilities. Tuktuk often becomes lively, especially during holiday seasons or when tourist visits are high.

Accommodation in Tuktuk is diverse and abundant for tourists visiting Pulau Samosir in Lake Toba. Some types of accommodation available in Tuktuk include hotels, lodges, guesthouses, homestays, and villas. Tourists can find various options according to their preferences and budget. Due to its strategic location on the edge of Lake Toba, accommodations in Tuktuk often offer charming views and easy access to various tourist attractions nearby.

Here is a comprehensive explanation of accommodations in Tuktuk:

- Hotels. Tuktuk offers several comfortable and modern hotels for tourists. These hotels often come with complete facilities such as spacious and clean rooms, air conditioning, cable TV, private bathrooms with showers, and room service. Some hotels may also provide swimming pools, spas, restaurants, and airport shuttle services.
- Lodges. In addition to hotels, there are various other types of accommodations in Tuktuk, such as guesthouses and homestays. These accommodations are usually more affordable than hotels but still offer comfort and a pleasant atmosphere for guests. Some lodges may have simpler facilities but still provide friendly and warm service to tourists.
- Villas. For those seeking a more luxurious and exclusive lodging experience, there are also several villas available in Tuktuk. These villas are usually

equipped with complete facilities such as kitchens, spacious living rooms, private swimming pools, and beautiful gardens. Visitors can enjoy maximum privacy and comfort while staying in these villas.

- Easy Access to Attractions. One of the main advantages of accommodation in Tuktuk is its strategic location on the edge of Lake Toba. This provides easy access for tourists to enjoy the charming views and various tourist attractions nearby. Some accommodations may even offer direct views of Lake Toba, providing an unforgettable experience for guests.
- Vibrant Nightlife. Tuktuk often becomes lively, especially during holiday seasons or when tourist visits are high. Tourists can enjoy various nightlife activities such as dining at local restaurants, enjoying live music at cafes or bars, or shopping for souvenirs at shops along the lakeside.

With the variety of accommodation options and facilities offered, Tuktuk becomes one of the popular tourist destinations on Samosir Island. Whether tourists are seeking comfort and luxury or prioritize authentic and affordable experiences, they can find accommodation suitable for their preferences and budget in Tuktuk.

Pangururan

Pangururan is an alternative option for quieter and more secluded accommodation around Lake Toba. Located in the central part of Samosir Island, Pangururan offers a more peaceful and relaxed environment compared to Tuktuk. Although not as abundant as Tuktuk, Pangururan also has several comfortable accommodation options, including hotels, guesthouses, and homestays. Because it is located away from the hustle and bustle of Tuktuk, Pangururan often becomes a choice for tourists seeking tranquility and wanting to enjoy the natural atmosphere of Lake Toba more intimately. Despite being quieter, Pangururan still provides easy access to tourist attractions on Samosir Island, such as cultural sites, waterfalls, and beautiful beaches.

Here is a more detailed explanation of accommodations in Pangururan:

- Hotels. Several comfortable hotels are available in Pangururan, offering convenience and modern facilities for tourists. These hotels often provide spacious rooms

equipped with amenities such as air conditioning, TV, private bathrooms, and room service.

- Guesthouses. Pangururan also has several guesthouses that offer more relaxed accommodation connected to nature. Guesthouses typically have a friendlier and warmer atmosphere, with simple yet comfortable facilities. Tourists often have the opportunity to interact more closely with the guesthouse owners and get local tips about tourist attractions around Pangururan.
- Homestays. For tourists seeking a more authentic experience connected to local culture, homestays are a good option in Pangururan. Homestays are usually hosted by local residents, who welcome guests into their homes and provide a different lodging experience from other
- Commercial accommodations. Guests can participate in daily family activities, learn about daily life in the village, and taste traditional Batak cuisine.

Although not as abundant as Tuktuk, accommodation options in Pangururan still meet the needs of tourists with various preferences and budgets. With its peaceful and nature-connected atmosphere, tourists can enjoy peaceful moments on Samosir Island while still enjoying easy access to nearby tourist attractions, such as cultural sites, waterfalls, and beautiful beaches. This makes Pangururan an attractive choice for those seeking a more intimate and authentic lodging experience at Lake Toba.

Both Tuktuk and Pangururan offer unique lodging experiences for tourists visiting Samosir Island. The choice of accommodation depends on personal preferences, with Tuktuk suitable for those seeking bustling activity and easy access to facilities, while Pangururan is suitable for those who want to enjoy tranquility and the natural beauty of Samosir Island more exclusively.



Pic 3a: Cultural Activities in Tuktuk



Pic 3b: Cultural Activities in Pangururan

4.4 Transportation to Lake Toba

Transportation to Lake Toba, especially to Pulau Samosir located in the middle of the lake, can be done through various routes and modes of transportation available [11, 12, 13, 14, 16].

From Penang, Malaysia to Medan, Indonesia:

Option 1: Air Travel - Fly to Medan, Indonesia:

Travelers who wish to reach Lake Toba/Pulau Samosir quickly can choose to fly to Kualanamu International Airport in Medan, North Sumatra. Book a flight from Penang International Airport (PEN) to Kualanamu International Airport (KNO) in Medan, Indonesia. Airlines such as AirAsia and Malindo Air operate flights between these airports.

Option 2: Land Travel - Bus or Taxi to Medan:

Take a bus or taxi from Penang to Medan. This might involve crossing the border between Malaysia and Indonesia. The journey can take several hours, depending on the mode of transportation.

Note: The availability of transportation options may vary, and it's recommended to check schedules, book tickets in advance, and confirm the latest travel information. Always check for the latest travel advisories, entry requirements, and transportation options as they may change.

From Medan to Lake Toba/Pulau Samosir:

You can choose between overland routes that offer stunning natural scenery or air routes that are faster and more comfortable. This destination is truly captivating with its unparalleled beauty. Enjoy your journey and witness the natural wonders of Lake Toba waiting to be discovered.

Here is a detailed explanation of several transportation options that can be used by travelers from Medan to reach Lake Toba/Pulau Samosir:

Traveling Overland:

a. Take a bus, bus or use a combination of public transportation

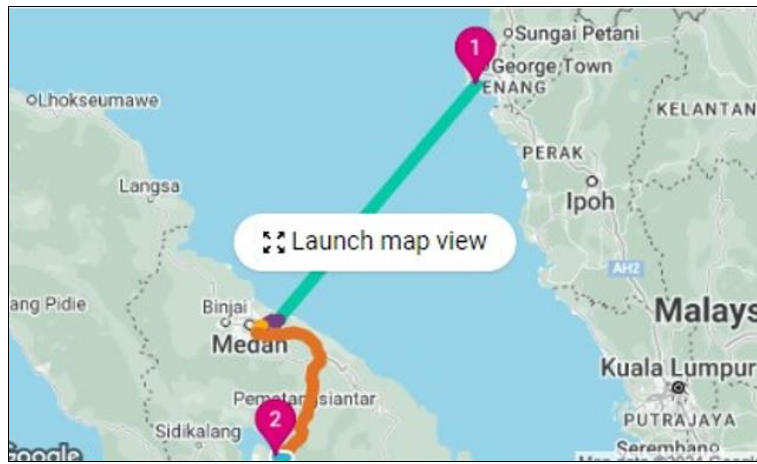
After arriving at Kualanamu Airport, Medan, the journey can be continued via land travel by using a private car, taking a bus, or using a combination of public transportation options to Terminal Bus Parapat to reach the Ajibata Port in Parapat. From there, the journey continues by ferry to Pulau Samosir. The ferry ride takes about 45 minutes. Then, the journey can be continued to Tuktuk by taxi or motorcycle taxi.

b. Train

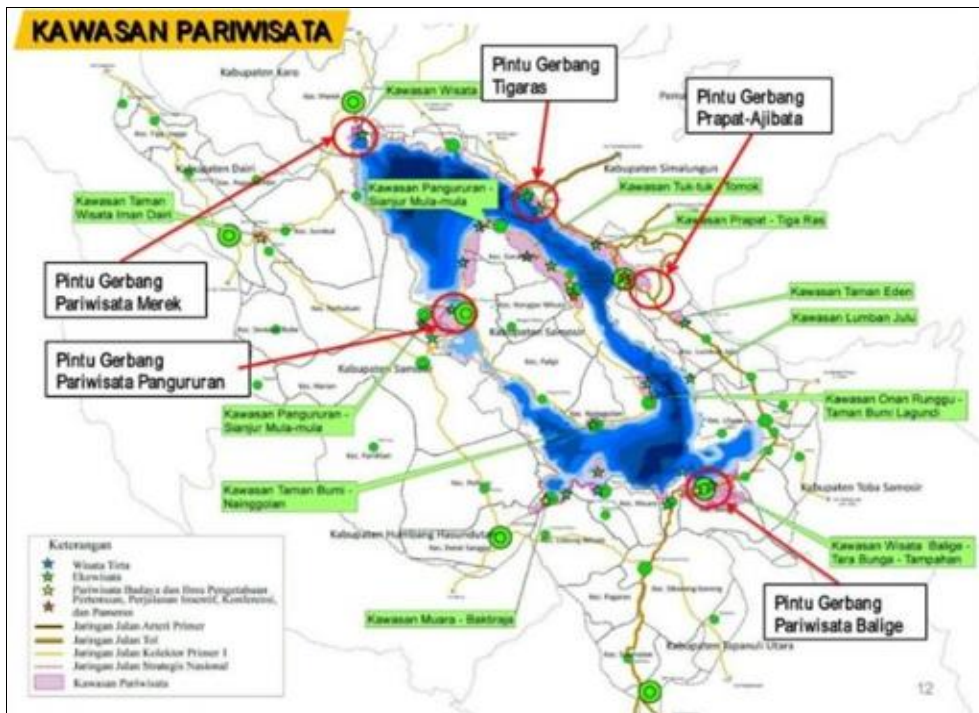
Another alternative is to take the train from Medan to Medan Central Station. From this station, travelers can continue their journey by taxi or public transportation to Ajibata Port in Parapat, and then cross to Pulau Samosir using a ferry.

c. Private Vehicle

For travelers who have private vehicles or rent cars, they can drive from Medan to Ajibata Port in Parapat. After arriving at the port, vehicles can be transported by ferry to Pulau Samosir, and then continue the journey to Lake Toba/Pulau Samosir.



Pic 4a: Map of Penang (Malaysia) to Sumatra Island



Pic 4b: Map of Lake Toba

Traveling by Air:

For travelers who want to save travel time and be more comfortable, air routes are an ideal choice. Here is a guide to reaching Lake Toba via air route:

a. Silangit Airport

Silangit Airport is the closest airport to Lake Toba and serves domestic flights. You can search for direct flights to Silangit Airport from several major cities in Indonesia such as Jakarta, Medan, or Batam. Upon arrival at Silangit Airport, you can use a taxi or public transportation to reach Ajibata Port.

b. Ajibata Port

From Ajibata Port, you can board a ferry or speedboat that will take you to Pulau Samosir. This journey usually takes about 30-45 minutes depending on the type of boat you choose. Enjoy the journey along the stunning Lake Toba before arriving at your final destination.

Note: Make sure to book transportation tickets well in advance so you don't run out of space or experience delays. If you choose the overland route, pay attention to traffic conditions especially during weekends or holiday seasons.

Always adhere to safety regulations and the scheduled departure of transportation. Prepare a map or digital navigation to help you navigate your journey route.



Pic 5: Discussion Held at UOW Malaysia KDU Penang University College

After arriving at Lake Toba/Pulau Samosir, travelers can easily explore various areas by walking or using motorbikes that can be rented around the area. Its strategic location on the edge of Lake Toba facilitates tourists' access to various tourist attractions nearby, while the variety of

accommodation options, restaurants, souvenir shops, and other facilities make Tuktuk a popular destination for visitors.

Important notes:

- Make sure to plan your trip well and book accommodation in advance, especially during holiday seasons or special events in the area.
- Ensure you have all the required travel documents, including passports, visas (if required), and your travel tickets.
- Make sure to carry cash in the local currency to facilitate payments at places that may not accept credit cards or digital payments.
- Before departing, always check the latest information on transportation and the conditions of your destination. This can help you avoid unwanted issues during your trip.

5. Discussion

5.1 Reasons Why the People of Penang, Malaysia Might Not Be Familiar with Lake Toba

There are several reasons why some Malaysians, especially those residing in Penang, might not be very familiar with the location of Lake Toba:

- **Geographic Distance.** Lake Toba is located in the North Sumatra province of Indonesia, while Penang Island is situated on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia. The geographic distance between these two locations can lead to a lack of awareness or knowledge about the existence of Lake Toba among Malaysians, especially those not directly involved in the tourism industry or without specific interest in overseas tourist destinations.
- **Focus on Local Tourism.** Malaysians, including those living in Penang, may be more focused on local or domestic tourist destinations, such as Penang Island itself, Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, or other destinations within Malaysia. This can result in less attention being paid to international destinations like Lake Toba.
- **Lack of Promotion and Information.** Although Lake Toba is a well-known tourist destination in Indonesia, promotion and information about it may not be as widespread as for more globally renowned destinations like Bali or Yogyakarta. The lack of promotion and information about Lake Toba in Malaysia, including Penang, can reduce the level of awareness and interest among Malaysians in the destination.
- **Different Tourism Preferences.** Each individual has different preferences and interests when it comes to tourism. Some may be more interested in natural destinations like mountains and lakes, while others may prefer city or beach destinations. Malaysians in Penang may have different tourism preferences that do not include visiting Lake Toba.
- **Limited Accessibility.** Although there are several ways to reach Lake Toba from Penang, such as through flights or long overland journeys, accessibility may be a limiting factor for some Malaysians who may not have the time or resources to travel to the destination.
- **The combination of factors such as geographic distance, lack of promotion, and individual preferences can cause some Malaysians, especially those living in Penang, to be less familiar with the location of Lake Toba. Thus, Penang residents may not know how to travel to Lake Toba for several reasons:**

- **Limited Information.** Information on how to travel to international destinations like Lake Toba may not be widely disseminated in the local media or tourist information they access. The primary focus of tourist information may be more concentrated on domestic or regional destinations.
- **Lack of Promotion.** Promotions for destinations like Lake Toba may not be as intensive as for other globally known tourist destinations. Consequently, people may not be well exposed to the potential of a holiday to Lake Toba.
- **Limited Knowledge Level.** While many Malaysians have an interest in travel, their knowledge of specific international destinations may be limited. Lake Toba may not be the focus of their attention due to a lack of information or awareness of its existence.
- **Indirect Accessibility.** Traveling from Penang to Lake Toba requires multiple changes in transportation modes and a considerable amount of travel time. The lack of direct flights or efficient transportation routes may lead some people to choose destinations that are more easily accessible.
- **Different Interests.** People have different holiday preferences. Some may be more interested in beaches or cultural destinations, while others may not be particularly interested in nature vacations like those offered by Lake Toba.
- **Time and Cost Limitations.** Traveling to international destinations like Lake Toba may require significant time and financial investment. People may have limitations in this regard and opt for destinations that are closer or more financially feasible.

The combination of the above factors can explain why some Malaysians in Penang may not know how to travel to Lake Toba (Silaban, Silalahi & Octoyuda, 2021; Kennedy *et al.*, 2023)^[17, 18].

5.2 Various Inputs from the Discussion on Lake Toba Tourism

To increase awareness and knowledge among Malaysians in Penang about traveling to Lake Toba, the following are some solutions that can be considered:

- **Tourism Promotion Campaigns.** The government and tourism agencies can conduct intensive promotion campaigns about Lake Toba through local, online, and print media. They can use advertisements, brochures, promotional videos, and social media campaigns to highlight the attractions and travel facilities to Lake Toba.
- **Provision of Accessible Information.** Information about travel routes, transportation modes, accommodations, and tourist attractions at Lake Toba should be readily available on tourism websites, tourist information offices, and travel apps. This information can also be distributed at local government offices, travel agencies, and shopping centers as part of tourism promotion efforts.
- **Cross-Border Cooperation.** The governments of Malaysia and Indonesia can collaborate to improve accessibility to Lake Toba, including providing more efficient and direct transportation routes between Penang Island and Lake Toba. Cross-border agreements can also facilitate travel between the two countries and

expedite immigration and customs processes.

- **Tourism Industry Partnerships.** Airlines, travel agencies, and tour operators can form partnerships to offer attractive and affordable travel packages to Lake Toba. Discounts, special offers, or all-inclusive holiday packages can attract more people to visit Lake Toba.

Education and Training. Education and training programs can be organized for tourism industry stakeholders, such as tour guides and travel agents, about the potential of Lake Toba as a tourist destination. They can be provided with comprehensive knowledge about tourist attractions, local culture, language, and transportation services at Lake Toba (Kennedy, Tobing & Lumbantoruan, 2022)^[19].

By adopting these measures, awareness and interest among Malaysians in Penang regarding Lake Toba can be increased, thus boosting cross-border tourist visits and strengthening relations between Malaysia and Indonesia in the tourism sector.

To attract more Malaysian tourists, especially from Penang, to Lake Toba, the following steps can be taken:

- **Active Promotion.** Conduct intensive promotion campaigns in Penang and surrounding areas to introduce Lake Toba as an attractive tourist destination. Utilize various media, including print advertisements, television, radio, and social media, as well as hosting promotional events at shopping centers, universities, and other public venues.
- **Attractive Tour Packages.** Develop attractive and affordable tour packages that include transportation, accommodation, and various activities at Lake Toba, such as visits to cultural sites, swimming at waterfalls, or enjoying the beauty of the lake by boat. Collaborate with travel agents and tour operators to develop tour packages that suit the preferences and budgets of travelers from Penang.
- **Adequate Transportation Facilities.** Improve accessibility to Lake Toba by providing direct flights from Penang to Medan or the nearest airport to Lake Toba. Introduce efficient and comfortable bus or train routes from Penang to Lake Toba for travelers who prefer overland travel.
- **Accessible Information.** Provide comprehensive and easily accessible information about travel, accommodations, tourist attractions, and activities at Lake Toba through tourism websites, brochures, and travel apps. Organize information sessions and tourism exhibitions in Penang to introduce Lake Toba to the local community and travel agents.
- **Cultural Cooperation Promotion.** Organize cultural events and festivals showcasing the arts, culture, and traditional cuisine of Lake Toba in Penang to attract tourists interested in authentic cultural experiences. Build partnerships with arts and cultural communities in Penang to promote cultural exchange between the two regions.
- **Commitment to Sustainability.** Advocate for environmental and cultural sustainability at Lake Toba,

which can attract tourists concerned about environmental and sustainability issues. Develop eco-tourism and environmentally friendly programs that emphasize nature conservation, the use of renewable energy, and the reduction of plastic waste.

By taking these steps, it can be expected that interest and tourist visits from Penang to Lake Toba will significantly increase, providing economic and social benefits to both regions. Local district governments around Lake Toba have a crucial role to play in promoting and developing tourism potential and ensuring sustainable development in their areas (Harahap et.al., 2023; Simanjuntak, 2016)^[20, 21].

The following are some actions that can be taken by local district governments around Lake Toba:

- **Infrastructure Development.** Improve and enhance transportation infrastructure, such as roads, airports, ports, and railway lines, to facilitate tourist access to Lake Toba. Develop supporting tourism facilities, such as parking lots, public toilets, and local transportation services.
- **Tourism Promotion.** Conduct intensive promotion campaigns at the local, national, and international levels to attract more tourists to Lake Toba. Develop attractive promotional materials, such as videos, brochures, and tourism websites, to introduce the attractions of Lake Toba and other tourist destinations in the vicinity.
- **Empowerment of Local Communities.** Develop training and mentoring programs for local communities to enhance skills in the tourism industry, such as tour guiding, handicrafts, and accommodation services. Encourage community participation in the management and preservation of the environment and cultural heritage around Lake Toba.
- **Environmental and Cultural Management.** Establish strict policies and regulations to protect the environment and cultural heritage around Lake Toba from damage and degradation. Ensure that tourism development is carried out responsibly and sustainably, taking into account conservation principles and eco-tourism development.
- **Partnerships and Cooperation.** Build partnerships with private sector entities, non-governmental organizations, and international institutions to support tourism development around Lake Toba. Foster cross-border cooperation with local governments and relevant institutions in the surrounding areas of Lake Toba to coordinate tourism development efforts and environmental preservation.
- **Crisis and Security Management.** Develop crisis and emergency management systems to address potential natural disasters and other emergencies that may affect tourism and tourist safety around Lake Toba. Strengthen security and protection for tourists through increased surveillance and law enforcement at tourist destinations.

(Tanjung et al., 2024, Sianipar et al., 2021)^[22, 23].



Pic 6: Souvenir Exchange with UOW Malaysia KDU Penang University College

6. Conclusions

By undertaking these measures, local district governments around Lake Toba can play a vital role in promoting and developing tourism potential and ensuring sustainable and inclusive development for local communities.

Lake Toba, as one of the main tourist destinations in Indonesia, offers a wide range of activities and experiences for tourists. Besides its stunning natural beauty, Lake Toba also hosts various festivals, carnivals, and other cultural events throughout the year. Festivals and cultural events showcase local cultural products such as music, dance, and agricultural products, while sports events focus on cycling races, running, and more.

There are various transportation options to Lake Toba, especially to Pulau Samosir. Tourists can choose between air or land travel depending on their preferences and budget. Overland travel involves various options such as buses, trains, or private vehicles with a ferry eventually heading to Pulau Samosir. On the other hand, air travel involves flights to Silangit Airport near Lake Toba, followed by a short journey to Pulau Samosir using a ferry or speedboat. It's important to plan the trip well and check for the latest transportation information.

Although Lake Toba offers a rich tourist experience, some Malaysians, especially those living in Penang Island, may not be very familiar with this destination. This could be due to several factors such as geographical distance, focus on local tourism, lack of promotion and information, different tourism preferences, and limited accessibility. To increase awareness and interest among Malaysian tourists, especially from Penang Island, towards Lake Toba, several steps can be taken, including active promotional campaigns, providing attractive tour packages, improving transportation facilities, and educating the public about the tourism potential of Lake Toba.

The community service activities and tourism research conducted in Penang Island; Malaysia can proceed smoothly. Providing an understanding of Lake Toba Tourism Destinations to students at UOW Malaysia KDU Penang University College can be carried out effectively. They enthusiastically participate in discussions and are very interested in visiting Lake Toba by being willing to learn how to reach the destination through the information and knowledge of transportation and accommodation discussed through this community service activity.

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