

TOURIST'S PERCEPTION OF SAFETY AT
GUNUNG STONG STATE PARK, KELANTAN DARUL NAIM

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
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DEDICATION

To

Abah- Hilimi bin Abdul Rahim & Ma- Rushda binti Alias

who inspired me to further study

my beloved sister – Nurhizwani binti Hilimi

and brothers- Nur Illahi bin Hilimi, Nor Arif bin Hilimi & Nur Izuddin bin Hilimi

who supported me

all lecturers of M.Sc. Tourism Planning, UTM thanks for everything

guide in Mount Stong- Encik Ibrahim bin Abdullah & all of 'Geng Stong',

thank you very much for spending time with me

classmates of M.Sc. Tourism Planning 2010-2012

sweet memories in UTM will be always in my mind

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ABSTRACT

This study is about an evaluation of tourist's safety during mountain climbing in Gunung Stong based on their expectation and perception before and after climbing. The aim of this study is to identify safety level of tourists towards mountain based adventure tourism activity at Gunung Stong State Park. In order to achieve the aim of this study, quantitative approach and descriptive study has been used to carry out tourist's questionnaires in survey station, Baha's Camp. Four safety attributes were tested to tourists in order to identify their expectation and perception toward safety in Mount Stong. Their feedback has been analyzed in Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) to know the mean of each attributes. The result show that tour guide, equipment and park management were the important factors to tourist's safety based on the mean which plotted in different quadrant. In addition, the researcher also had identified the market segments of tourists who climbing Gunung Stong which is beginner climbers, intermediate climbers and expert climbers based on their perception of safety. It shows that different groups of adventure tourists have different level of safety concern during climbing Gunung Stong. Thus, the researcher has proposed several recommendations to improve the safety level in Gunung Stong which are by providing safety training, to conduct regular inspections, to acquire adequate and appropriate insurance coverage and to prepare appropriate safety forms for tourists. Hopefully, these recommendations will help the management to improve the safety in Gunung Stong and help to promote Gunung Stong as safe destination for mountain climbing.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini merupakan satu penilaian terhadap tahap keselamatan pelancong ketika mendaki Gunung Stong berdasarkan jangkaan dan persepsi mereka sebelum dan selepas mendaki. Matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti tahap keselamatan pelancong terhadap aktiviti pelancongan kembara iaitu mendaki Gunung Stong. Untuk mencapai matlamat kajian ini, kajian ini telah menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dan kajian deskriptif melalui pengumpulan data secara borang kaji selidik terhadap pelancong yang dijalankan di stesen kajian iaitu Kem Baha. Empat kriteria keselamatan telah diuji ke atas pelancong untuk mengetahui jangkaan dan persepsi mereka terhadap tahap keselamatan ketika mendaki Gunung Stong. Maklum balas mereka dianalisa menggunakan perisian data berkomputer (SPSS) untuk mendapatkan nilai min setiap kriteria. Keputusan analisis menunjukkan pemandu pelancong, peralatan dan pihak pengurusan taman merupakan faktor paling penting terhadap tahap keselamatan pelancong berdasarkan nilai min yang ditanda pada petak berbeza. Di samping itu, pengkaji juga telah mengenalpasti pasaran pelancong yang mendaki Gunung Stong iaitu pendaki permulaan, pendaki pertengahan dan pendaki yang pakar berdasarkan persepsi mereka terhadap keselamatan. Ini menunjukkan kumpulan pelancong kembara yang berlainan mempunyai pendapat yang berbeza terhadap tahap keselamatan di Gunung Stong. Oleh itu, pengkaji telah mencadangkan beberapa cadangan untuk meningkatkan tahap keselamatan di Gunung Stong iaitu menyediakan latihan keselamatan kepada kakitangan, melakukan pemeriksaan yang kerap, mendapatkan perlindungan insurans yang sesuai dan mencukupi serta menyediakan borang keselamatan yang sesuai kepada pelancong. Di harap semua cadangan ini dapat membantu pihak pengurusan untuk meningkatkan keselamatan di Gunung Stong dan membantu mempromosikan Gunung Stong sebagai destinasi yang selamat untuk mendaki gunung.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The primary conditions for the normal tourism development of a destination are **peace, safety and security**. Without these elements, destinations cannot be successfully developed in order to compete with other destinations. Therefore, safety and security has become a global issue and one of the primary concerns in tourism industry. In 2004, safety and security were classified among the ten most important world tourism issues.

In Malaysia, tourism industry has been developed since the mid-year of 1980s and currently has been the second contributor to Malaysia's economic growth which generates RM 55 billion (Bank Negara Malaysia, 2009). In 2010, tourism industry contributes RM 56.5 billion to the Malaysia's revenue compared to 2009 which was RM 53.4 billion. The growth of tourism industry in Malaysia basically depends on the increasing number of tourist arrival to Malaysia as well as the total revenue earned. In 2010, Malaysia received 24.6 millions of tourists compared to 2009 which is 23.6 million (Tourism Malaysia, 2010). The total of tourist arrival in 2010 has been increased due to several factors such as safety and security applied by government Malaysia.

According to Malaysia Ninth Plan (2006-2010), several strategies have been taken to ensure that tourism industry will strengthen Malaysia's position as a preferred destination for tourist. The strategies are as follow:

- a) Ensuring sustainable tourism development;
- b) Improve product development and innovative tourism services;
- c) Encourage and facilitate domestic tourism;
- d) Improving marketing and promotion activities;
- e) Enhancing human resources development;
- f) **Ensuring comfort, safety and welfare of tourist.**

The last strategies focus on the safety issue and it shows that Malaysia is very concerned on the safety of the tourist in Malaysia especially in the adventure and leisure activities. For instance, tourist police has been formed to monitor the safety of tourist in the tourist destination to ensure that Malaysia is safe for tourist destination (Malaysia Ninth Plan, 2006-2010).

Furthermore, Lovelock (2003) has mentioned Malaysia as a safe country to visit in his study on New Zealand Travel Agent Practice in the Provision of Advice for Travel to Risky Destination. The result of his study reported that the mean score for safety ratings in Malaysia was 1.58. This safety rating referred to five-point Likert scale ranging from 1= Very Safe to 5= Very Risky. Based on his study, it shows that Malaysia as one of the safest country to visit.

Besides that, safety issues in adventure activities also become a global issue and become one of the primary concerns of the tourism industry (Page, Bentley and Walker, 2005). In the adventure tourism context, the safety in destinations such as mountains will be considered when the participants involve in the activities with a high degree of risks and challenges. However, **walking, hiking and trekking** become the major activities engaged by tourists when visiting Malaysia which comprises 46.3 percents in 2009 (Tourism Malaysia, 2009). This show that tourists still have an interest doing these activities even though they know it is dangerous.

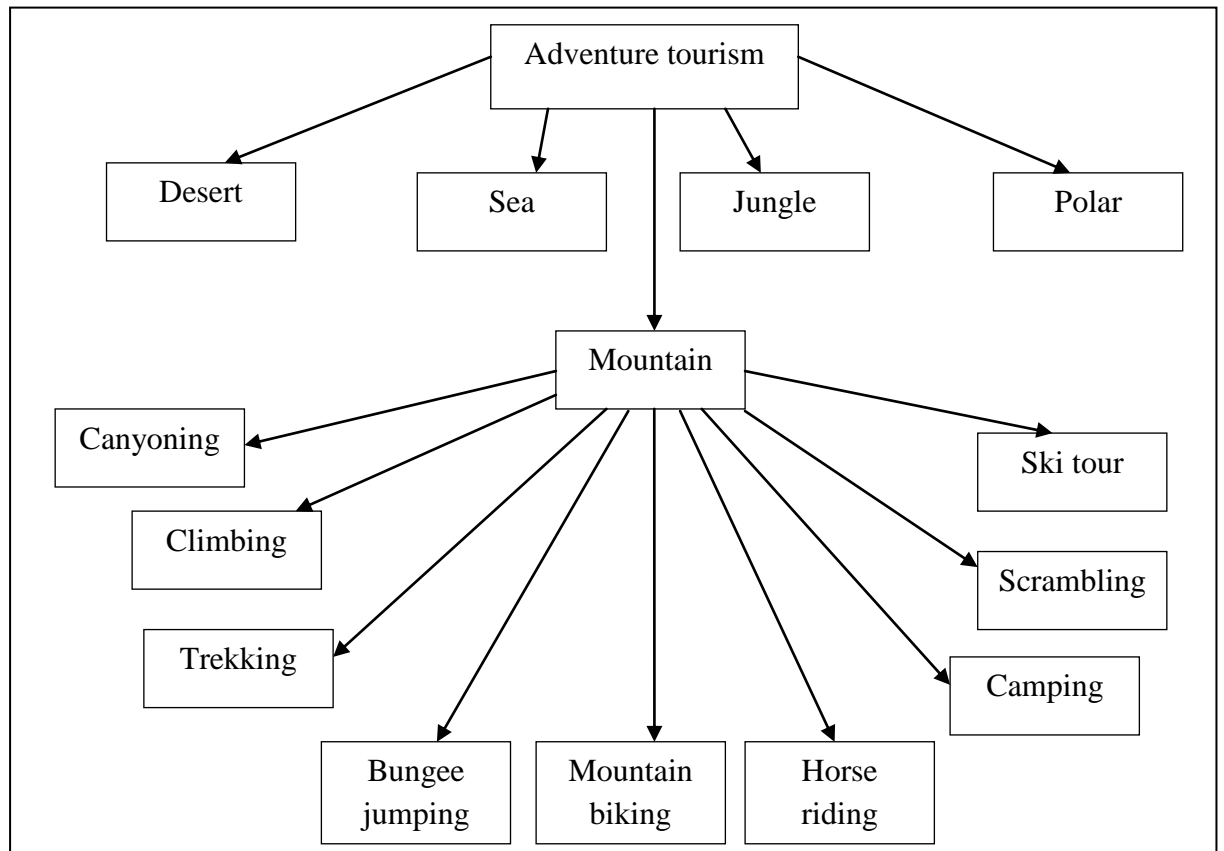
In addition, there are many types of adventure tourism activities with different risks provided by commercial operators to participants in different land, water based and air based environments. All the activities are shown below:

Table 1.1: Most commonly provided outdoor adventure travel activities

Land based	Water based	Air based	Mixed (land, water,air)
Abseiling	Body boarding	Ballooning	Adventure racing
Backpacking	Canoeing	Bungee jumping	Charity challenges
Bicycling	Canyoning	Cliff jumping	Conservation expeditions
Caving	Cruise expeditions	Gliding	Cultural experiences
Climbing	Kayaking	Hang-gliding	Gap year travel
Dog sledding	Sailing	Micro lighting	Hedonistic experiences
Hiking	Scuba diving	Paragliding	Spiritual enlightenment
Hunting	Snorkelling	Parachuting	Wildlife watching
Horseback riding	Surfing	Skydiving	
Jungle exploring	Water skiing		
Motorcycling	White water rafting		
Mountain biking	Windsurfing		
Mountaineering			
Orienteering			
Quad biking			
Scrambling			
Skiing			
Snowboarding			
Snow mobiling			
Snow shoeing			
Via Ferrata			
Wilderness experiences			

Source: Pam Wight and Associates (2001)

Besides that, mountain based adventure tourism has diversification in the activities as shown below:



Source: Beedie and Hudson (2003)

Figure 1.1: Diversification of mountain based adventure tourism

Mountains are particularly attractive destinations and wild but it offer lot of activities which are risky and dangerous. Based on Pomfret (2006), mountaineering is classified as a risk recreation and risky sport for the participants who join it. For the participants who enjoy this activity, they will perceive it positively and for those who not, they will feel anxiety and fear. In this case, the safety issues are crucial for some holidaymakers and tourist to choose a destination.

Hales (2006) noted that most of the risks in mountaineering adventure tourism differ based on the altitude and region, the type of the climbing and the expectations of the guides and participants. However, the risks of fatalities depends more on altitude, weathers and remoteness rather than the difficulties to climb.

1.2 Problem Statement

Safety and security in tourism can be considered as safety in a destination either in urban area or rural area. In urban area, the case like crime, pick pocketing, kidnapping, rape and others always happen to people especially foreigner. While the safety in rural or natural area always exposed to natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, and landslides (Nurul Iswani, 2006). In point of fact, safety is recognized as a key factor in the selection of destinations (Bentley and Page, 2001).

George (2003) reported that if a tourist feels unsafe or threatened at a holiday destination, he or she can develop a negative impression of the destination. This can be damaging to the destination's tourism industry and can result in the decline of tourism to the area. This can happen in the following ways:

- (i) Prospective tourists may decide not to visit the destination because it has a reputation for having a high crime rate;
- (ii) If tourists feel unsafe at a destination, they are not likely to take part in activities outside their accommodation facility;
- (iii) Tourists who have felt threatened or unsafe are not likely to return to the destination, and they are not likely to recommend the destination to others.

However, in mountain based adventure tourism activity, **tourist injuries** are the major problems occur in this activity. For instance, New Zealand recorded the high number of death cases involving foreigners taking part in adventure and recreational tourism activities such as major incidents in scenic flights, white water rafting, jet boating and tramping and mountaineering (Bentley and Page, 2006).

This problem happens due to different level of risk to which they expose participants. Bentley and Page (2006) noted that adventure tourism participants exposed to the injuries due to unfamiliar environments, remote locations and the opportunity to be personally tested or challenged as well as lacks of experience in this activity. Due to injuries in mountain based adventure tourism activity, the

participants will feel unsafe and do not want to join this activity in the future. As a result, the development of adventure tourism also will be decline if there are many injuries reported.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to identify market segmentation of tourists who join mountain based adventure tourism activity. The adventure tourism market can be segmented either by geography, demographic, the activities, types of adventure such as hard or soft adventure, the level of interest in adventure tourism and into on independent travellers and those who take organized packages.

In addition, this study also aims to determine the expectations of the participants while involved in this activity. As noted earlier, mountain based adventure tourism activity require high level of safety because it is the risky activities. Therefore, this study is done to spot what are the participant's expectations of safety level while joining this activity. If the elements of safety in this activity reach their expectation, the participants will satisfy joining mountain based adventure tourism activity.

Besides that, this study is conducted to identify the threats of participant's safety in mountain based adventure tourism activity. In tourism industry, the threats for tourist's safety and safety are crime, accident, ethnic unrest, health concerns, natural disasters, political unrests, terrorism and wars. But, in mountain based adventure tourism activity, the threats maybe only focuses on the accidents happen during climbing.

Finally, this study would identify actions taken by participants and management to ensure safety level in mountain based adventure tourism activity always become the priorities. The actions for both parties should be made before and after the activities starts because this activity has the high risk.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions of the study are:

- 1) What are the market segmentations of tourists who join mountain based adventure tourism activity?
How the market for tourist who joins mountain based adventure tourism activities can be segmented?
- 2) What are the expectations of tourists towards the safety level while climbing the mountain?
How tourists expect to the safety level while climb the mountain?
- 3) What are the threats that impacted tourist's safety in mountain based adventure tourism activity?
How the threats of tourist's safety give the impact to this activity?
- 4) What are the actions taken by tourists and management to guarantee safety level in mountain based adventure tourism activity?
How tourists and management take the actions to guarantee safety level in this activity?

1.5 Goal and Objectives of the study

The goal of this study is “to identify tourist's perception of safety at Gunung Stong State Park in order to promote as secure and safe destination for mountain climbing”.

Thus, the main objectives of the study area are:

- 1) To identify market segmentation of tourists who join mountain based adventure tourism activity.
- 2) To determine the expectation of tourist's toward safety level while climbing the mountain.
- 3) To study the threats that impacted tourist's safety in the mountain based adventure tourism activity.
- 4) To recommend the actions taken by tourists and management to guarantee safety level in mountain based adventure tourism activity.

1.6 Scope of the study

There are several aspects that the researcher wants to study which is suit with the time given and efforts of the researcher. The scope of the study is divided into four main areas. The areas covered in this study are as below:

1.6.1 Literature review

The literature review for this study is focused on the elements such as definition of safety, adventure tourism and mountain based adventure tourism. It also includes the previous study on the safety factors in tourism and adventure tourism.

1.6.2 Analysis of market segmentation of tourists who join mountain based adventure tourism activity.

This analysis will determine the market segmentation for adventure tourism in the mountain based activity. The market can be segmented either by geography, demographic, the activities, types of adventure such as hard or soft adventure, the level of interest in adventure tourism and into on independent travellers and those who take organized packages.

1.6.3 Analysis of the expectation of tourists towards the safety while climbing the mountain.

This analysis will determine the elements of safety that the tourists expect. This analysis is more on their previous experiences and preferences while involving in this activities.

1.6.4 Analysis of the threats of tourist's safety in mountain based adventure tourism activity.

The analysis includes the main threats that become the obstacles to the safety of tourists while they are involved in mountain based adventure tourism activity. As noted earlier, tourist injuries are the major problems that affect the safety in this activity.

1.6.5 Analysis of the actions taken by tourists and management to guarantee safety level in mountain based adventure tourism activity.

These analyses involve the responsible of both tourists and management in order to ensure that the safety level in mountain based adventure tourism activity are always the priorities to avoid any accidents happen. It also covers of the safety management system that provided for tourist in Mount Stong State Park.

1.7 Study approach

In order to achieve the research objectives, a systematic process of conducting this study had been organized. Basically, this research process consists of four major stages, which involve preliminary stage, data collection, data analysis, conclusion and recommendations. This research will be carried out in four stages as follows:

1.7.1 Preliminary stage

The first stage of the study is preliminary stage which comprises the statement of the problems or issues that arise related to the safety level during mountaineering, identifying the objectives of the study and literature review based on the previous study.

1.7.2 Data collection

The second stage is the data collections that include the collection of primary and secondary data. This is an important stage towards achieving the objectives. For this research, the primary data will collect from the interviews and observations at

the study area. While secondary data will be used in collection of the information such as books, journals, previous research papers, electronic resources as well through the World Wide Web and online e-databases (Science Direct and Emerald Journal) from University of Technology Malaysia, UTM library's website.

1.7.3 Data analysis

In this stage, it is able to determine whether the stated objective has been achieved or vice versa. It involves the analysis of market segmentation of tourists who join mountain based adventure tourism activity, the analysis of the expectation of tourists towards the safety while climbing the mountain, the analysis of threats of tourist's safety in mountain based adventure tourism activity and lastly the analysis of the actions taken by tourists and management to guarantee safety level in mountain based adventure tourism activity.

1.7.4 Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion and recommendations is the final stage of the research. In this stage, the findings would able to show the result of the research. Conclusions need to be drawn in-line with the objectives of the research. At the same time, some appropriate recommendations related to the problems may be made for a better solution in relation to the stated problems, or for further research purposes.

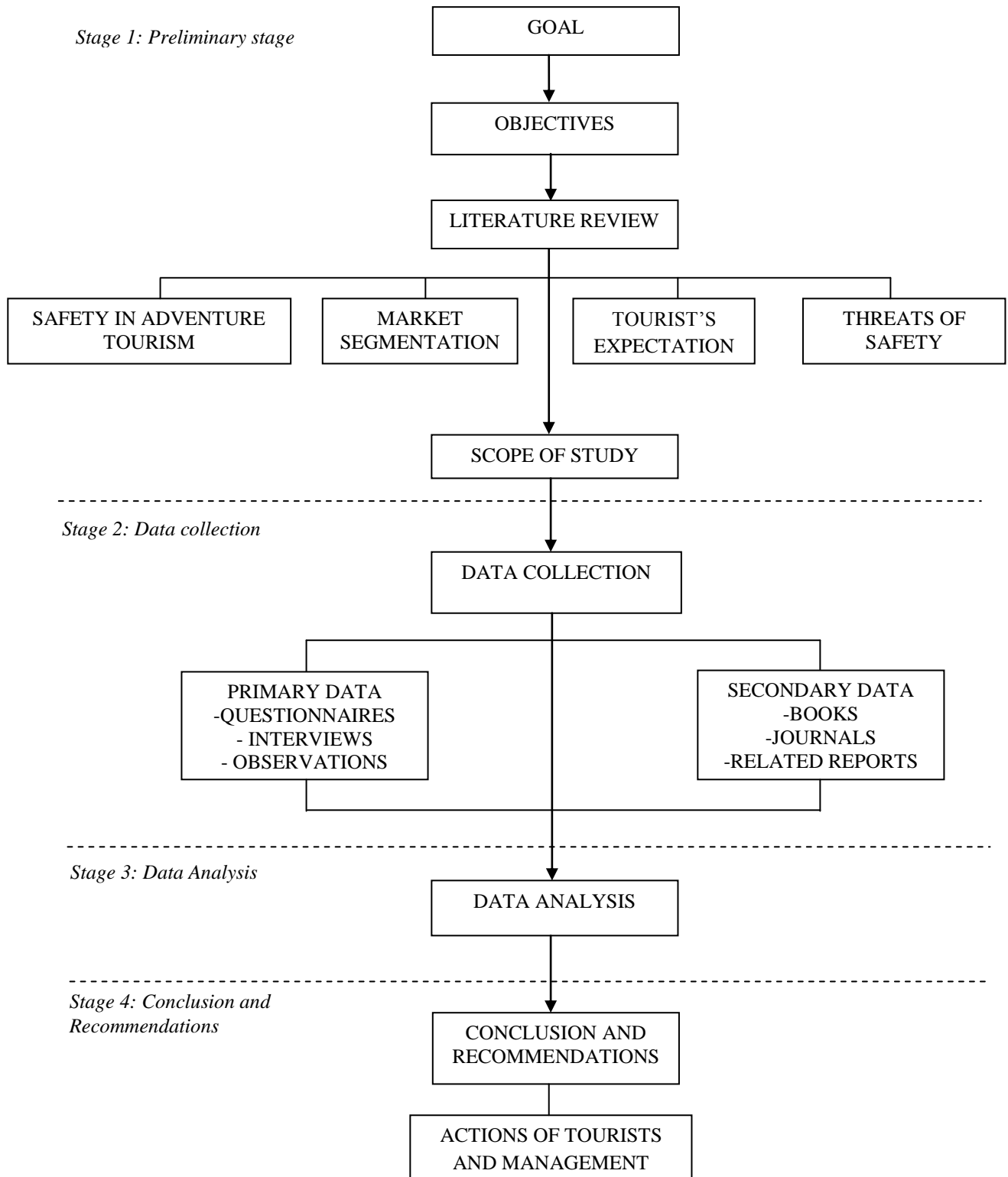


Figure 1.2: Study Flowchart

1.8 Study area

Gunung Stong State Park is located at the state of Kelantan in the small village of Dabong. It is about 155 kilometres from the state capital, Kota Bharu. Gunung Stong State Park is a forested area with 21,950ha and the height of 1420 metres above the sea level. It also consist several mountain peaks such as Gunung Ayam, Gunung Tera, Gunung Saji, Gunung Koh, Gunung Baha, Gunung Beirut and Gunung Che Tahir. It also has seven-tiered waterfalls named Jelawang Waterfall which is the highest in Southeast Asia that drops from a height of about 990 metres.

Gunung Stong State Park is listed in the National Ecotourism Plan as one of the top 10 special places for ecotourism. It has variety of caves, rivers, waterfalls and as home for elephants, tigers, bears, gibbons, hornbills and a range of other exotic wildlife. Its jungle also consisted a variety of flora and fauna including the world's largest flower, the Rafflesia from kerii meyer species, the endemic long-sectioned bamboo, a type of purple herb (*Didymocarpus calcareous*) and a unique palm species (*Licuala stongesis*).

In addition, Gunung Stong State Park is a destination that offers a variety of activities that would appeal to both nature-lovers and adventure seekers. One of the activities is mountain climbing that has been operated by Baha Adventure Team at Baha's Camp. The attractions around the Baha's Camp are as below:

Table 1.2: Attractions around Baha's Camp

Attractions	Descriptions
Princess Pool (Kolam Tuan Puteri)	It only takes a minute to walk over to the pool from Baha's Camp
Seven Wells (Telaga Tujuh)	A series of smaller waterfalls that empty into mini pools
The Y Waterfalls	Known as the Last Waterfalls which separate waterfalls from two mountains, Gunung Stong and Gunung Ayam. It believes that those who drink from it will retain a youthful appearance. It takes 30 minutes from Baha's Camp

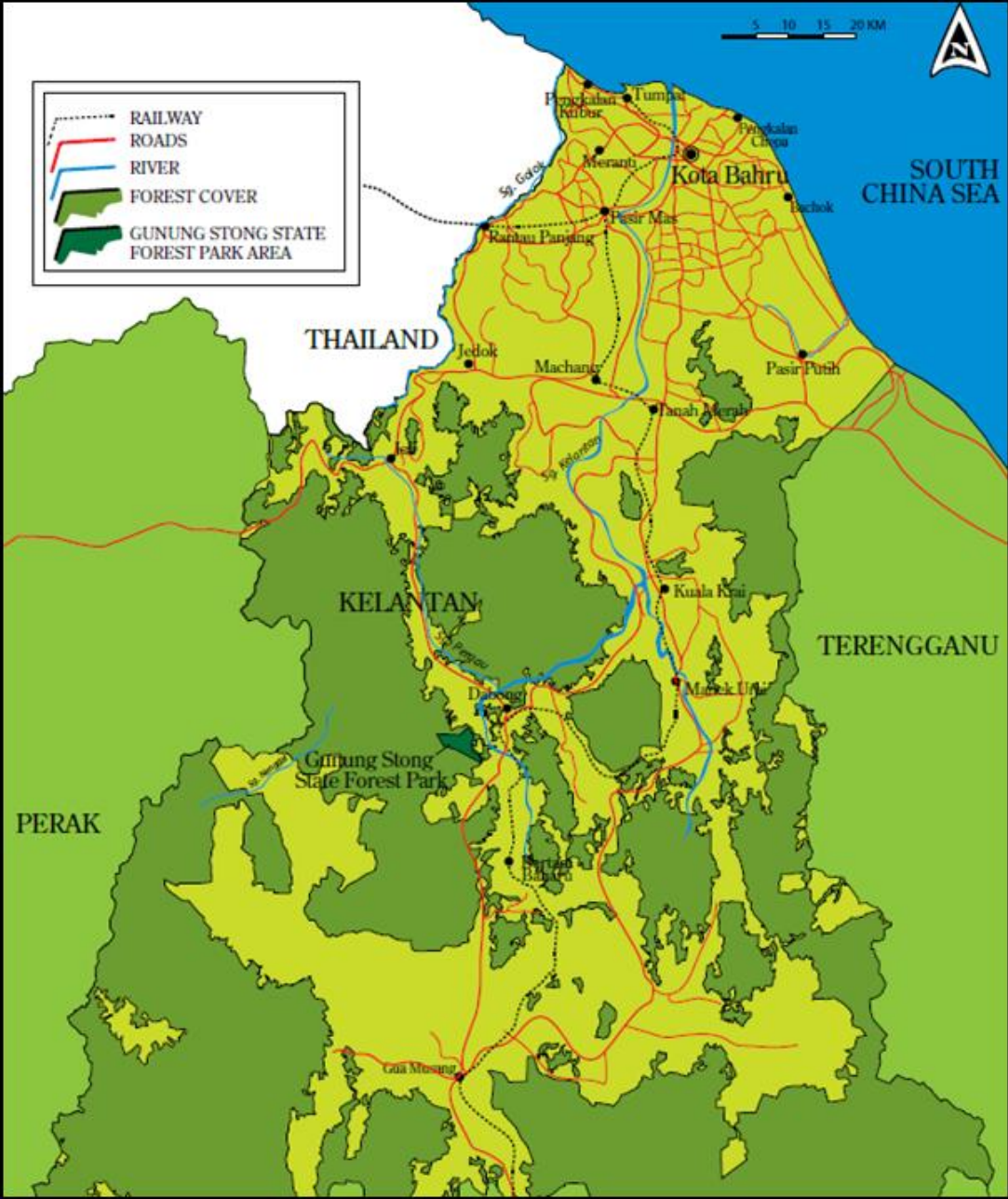


Figure 1.3: Location map of Gunung Stong State Park

1.9 Significance of the study

The study on safety level towards mountain based adventure tourism activities is crucial because limited research conducted in this field in Malaysia. Hence, this research will give some information about safety in Gunung Stong State Park especially to the new adventure tourists. Through this information, perhaps, it can be one of the pull factors in promoting Gunung Stong State Park as adventure tourism destination which is safe for everyone.

In addition, this research will help the industry to explore more on mountain based adventure tourism in order to capture the demand in this field. If tourist feels safe at a destination, they are likely to take part in this activity and directly will increase the demand as well as the revenue to the adventure tourism operator.

Moreover, this study also can be one of the guideline to the management who operate the mountaineering activities. It is vital to manage the safety level of the participants while they are joining these activities because the safety is priority for them. Through this study as a guideline, the management will know about participant's expectation while joining these activities.

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