

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL
HERITAGE TOURISM IN MALAYSIA: IMPLICATION
FOR PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**

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The Development of Sustainable Cultural Heritage Tourism in Malaysia:
Implication for Planning and Management

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the development of cultural heritage tourism in Malaysia, and questions if this tourism development has been managed in a sustainable manner. Recent national tourism policies in Malaysia increasingly have been aimed towards promoting cultural heritage tourism, signifying that cultural heritage tourism could be potentially one of the most important areas in the growth of the country's tourism industry. While tourism development has contributed to the country's economic growth, for cultural heritage, the thrust of the tourism industry is to make the most of the country's non-renewable resources. This thesis identifies three key objectives required for creating sustainable tourism development in Malaysia: meeting the needs of local communities, satisfying the demands of a growing number of tourists, and safeguarding the remaining natural and cultural resources.

Knowledge leading to improvements in the development of cultural heritage tourism is important, as knowledge is a primary means of strengthening its positive aspects and simultaneously mitigating its negative aspects, so that development can maintain a long-term viability. This study also explores some of the key management issues relating to the development of cultural heritage tourism at both Federal and State levels. A broad understanding is necessary for providing a firm basis in prescribing a thorough and realistic sustainable development framework. The study employs questionnaires, surveys, and interviews with a range of government officials, local communities, and tourists. The findings indicate that the government has played a major role in shaping the development of sustainable cultural heritage tourism in Malaysia, but at present there are many shortcomings that need to be addressed, such as definitions of the term Cultural Heritage, as well as management issues, including conflicts and bureaucratic barriers. These problems, consequently, hinder a comprehensive management of cultural heritage tourism. Additional findings indicate that local communities are not actively involved in tourism planning or decision-making processes, though they generally are satisfied with development at the locations of this study. The study also calls for higher quality tourist services, and the promotion of other elements of cultural heritage to compliment the already established yet limited elements. Finally, it suggests a Sustainable Cultural Heritage Tourism Framework, incorporating social and cultural elements. This thesis contributes new knowledge to the field of cultural heritage tourism in Malaysia and may serve as a starting point for researchers interested in this area. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to be useful for guiding policy actions in the future.

Keywords: Tourism, Heritage, Cultural Heritage Tourism, Sustainable Development

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	xi
List of Photos	xiii
List of Maps	xiii
List of Abbreviations	xiv

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Overview	1
1.3	Background to the Study	4
1.4	Purpose of the Study	6
1.5	Research Question and Objectives of the Study	6
1.6	Research Methodology	8
1.7	Context of the Study	8
1.8	Significance of the Study	9
1.9	Gaps in Knowledge	9
1.10	Limitations of the Study	10
1.11	Outline Structure of the Thesis	10

CHAPTER 2: MALAYSIA

2.1	Introduction	12
2.2	Geography	12
2.3	Historical Perspectives on the Formation of Malaysia with the Influence of Colonisation on the Malaysian Communities	14
2.3.1	<i>Early Development of Malaysia</i>	14
2.3.2	<i>Period of Colonisation</i>	17
2.3.3	<i>Malaya – Pre Independence</i>	21
2.3.4	<i>Malaya – Post Independence</i>	22
2.4	The Society	22
2.4.1	<i>Population</i>	22
2.4.2	<i>Religion</i>	25
2.4.3	<i>The Political System</i>	26

2.5	The Economy	27
2.5.1	<i>Economy – Post Independence</i>	27
2.5.2	<i>Economy – Post 1980</i>	28
2.6	Conclusions	29

CHAPTER 3: GLOBAL TOURISM AND THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE

3.1	Introduction	31
3.2	A Brief History of Tourism	31
3.3	Tourism as an Industry	33
3.4	Conceptual Definitions and Frameworks	34
3.4.1	<i>Tourism</i>	34
3.4.2	<i>Tourists</i>	39
3.4.3	<i>Common Classifications of Travellers</i>	40
3.5	Tourism Development	42
3.6	Tourism Development in Malaysia	49
3.6.1	<i>Tourism Development Organisations – National and Regional Organisational Frameworks</i>	50
3.6.2	<i>Tourism Malaysia</i>	52
3.7	Tourism Policies and Planning in Malaysia	57
3.7.1	<i>Second Malaysia Plan (1971-1975)</i>	60
3.7.2	<i>Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980)</i>	60
3.7.3	<i>Fourth Malaysia Plan (1981-1985)</i>	60
3.7.4	<i>Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990)</i>	61
3.7.5	<i>Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995)</i>	61
3.7.6	<i>Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000)</i>	61
3.7.7	<i>Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2005)</i>	62
3.7.8	<i>Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010)</i>	63
3.8	International Tourism in Malaysia	63
3.8.1	<i>Arrivals and Types</i>	63
3.8.2	<i>Travelling Patterns</i>	67
3.9	Domestic Tourism in Malaysia	67
3.10	Conclusions	69

CHAPTER 4: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

4.1	Introduction	71
4.2	Sustainable Tourism Development	71
4.3	Achieving Sustainable Tourism Development	75

4.4	Alternative Forms of Tourism	80
4.5	Conclusions	83

CHAPTER 5: CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM – GLOBAL AND MALAYSIAN PERSPECTIVES

5.1	Introduction	84
5.2	Culture	84
5.3	Heritage	85
5.4	Heritage – Selected Countries’ Perspective	89
5.5	Heritage and History	89
5.6	Cultural Heritage Tourism	91
5.7	Heritage as a Process and Product	96
5.8	Sustainable Cultural Heritage Tourism	98
5.9	Issues of Authenticity and Local Identity	101
5.10	Cultural Heritage Tourism and Local Community	104
5.11	Cultural Heritage Tourists	109
5.12	The Development of Cultural Heritage Tourism in Malaysia	110
5.13	Conclusions	115

CHAPTER 6: METHODOLOGY

6.1	Introduction	117
6.2	Research Framework	117
6.3	Qualitative Research	121
6.4	Quantitative Research	122
6.5	Structure of Questionnaire Survey	126
6.6	Survey of Local Community	126
6.6.1	<i>Background Study</i>	126
6.6.2	<i>Questionnaire Setting</i>	128
6.7	Survey of Tourists	131
6.7.1	<i>Background Study - Travel Characteristics</i>	131
6.7.2	<i>Background Study - Factors that Influence Tourists’ Decision to Visit</i>	131
6.7.3	<i>Questionnaire Setting</i>	132
6.8	Stages in the Development of Questionnaire Sets	134
6.9	Sampling Process	136
6.9.1	<i>Population</i>	136

6.9.2	<i>Sampling Frame</i>	136
6.9.3	<i>Local Communities</i>	137
6.9.4	<i>Tourists</i>	137
6.9.5	<i>Sample Design</i>	137
6.9.6	<i>Sample Size (Identifying and Determining Sample Size)</i>	138
6.10	Data Collection	139
6.10.1	<i>Pilot Study</i>	139
6.10.2	<i>Actual Fieldwork</i>	141
6.10.3	<i>Survey Location</i>	142
6.11	Conclusions	145

CHAPTER 7: COMMUNITY SURVEY – ANALYSIS

7.1	Introduction	146
7.2	Community Profile	146
7.3	Community and Cultural Heritage	159
7.4	Perceptions about the Importance of Cultural Heritage	151
7.5	Cultural Heritage and Tourism	153
7.6	Attitudes towards the Development of Cultural Heritage Tourism	160
7.7	Conclusions	163

CHAPTER 8: TOURIST SURVEY – ANALYSIS

8.1	Introduction	165
8.2	General Profile of the Tourists	165
8.3	Travel Patterns	172
8.4	Interest in Cultural Heritage amongst Tourists	175
8.5	Heritage Presentation	180
8.6	Factors Influencing Tourists' Decisions	182
8.7	Independent Sample t-test	184
8.7.1	<i>Independent Sample t-test on Malaysian Tourists</i>	184
8.7.2	<i>Independent Sample t-test on Foreign Tourists</i>	186
8.8	General Description and Comments Regarding Sites Visited	188
8.9	Conclusions	189

CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

9.1	Introduction	190
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9.2	Local Communities	190
9.2.1	<i>Social and Cultural Costs</i>	193
9.2.2	<i>Economic Costs</i>	194
9.3	Tourists	194
9.4	The Authorities	201
9.4.1	<i>Definitions of Cultural Heritage</i>	201
9.4.2	<i>Management of Cultural Heritage</i>	201
9.4.3	<i>Sustainable Cultural Heritage</i>	203
9.4.4	<i>Benefits Derived from Cultural Heritage Tourism</i>	204
9.5	Conclusions	207

CHAPTER 10: FINAL DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1	Introduction	208
10.2	Final Discussion	208
10.2.1	<i>Meaning of Cultural Heritage Tourism</i>	208
10.2.2	<i>Roles of Authorities in Planning and Managing Cultural Heritage Tourism</i>	209
10.2.3	<i>Impacts of Cultural Heritage Tourism on Local Communities</i>	211
10.2.4	<i>Demand for Cultural Heritage Tourism</i>	213
10.3	Recommendations	214
10.3.1	<i>Implications for Policy and Planning</i>	214
10.3.2	<i>Cultural Heritage Product Development</i>	215
10.3.3	<i>Education in Cultural Heritage Related Matters</i>	216
10.4	Contributions to Knowledge	217
10.5	Suggestions for Further Research	218
10.6	Concluding Remarks	219
	REFERENCES	221

APPENDICES

Appendix A:	Acts and Legislations Related to the Development of Cultural Heritage in Malaysia	243
Appendix B:	Community Survey	244
Appendix C:	Tourist Survey	247

Appendix D:	Interview: Government Officials	251
Appendix E:	Reliability Test of Attitude Instrument	253
Appendix F:	Mean Comparison between Groups within Local Communities	254
Appendix G:	Item-Total Statistics	255
Appendix H:	Percentage of Tourists Responding to 10 Items that Influenced Their Decision to Visit	256
Appendix I:	Mean Comparison and t-value of Respondents' Motivation – Malaysian and Foreign Tourists	257
Appendix J:	Mean Comparison between Groups within Malaysian Tourists	258
Appendix K:	Mean Comparison between Groups within Foreign Tourists	259

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

2.1	Population of Malaysia	23
2.2	Population by Religious Grouping (%)	26
2.3	Major Foreign Earnings	29
3.1	Prosser's Model of Tourism Development	45
3.2	William's Model of Tourism Development	46
3.3	Miossec's Model of Tourism Development	47
3.4	The Objectives and Functions of the Ministry of Tourism and Its Agency at the Federal Level	55
3.5	Marketing Offices in Major Foreign Cities	56
3.6	Budget Allocation for Tourism in National Development Plan	59
3.7	International Tourist Arrivals, Tourist Receipts and Length of Stays 1990 – 2008	65
3.8	Number of Arrivals by Selected Country	66
3.9	Existing and Potential International Markets	66
4.1	Characteristics Mass and Alternative Tourism	81
5.1	Prentice's Typology of Heritage Attractions	94
6.1	Methodology Used for Each Objective	120
6.2	Types of Questionnaire Survey Method	125
7.1	Community - Demographic Background	146
7.2	Community – Employment	147
7.3	Tourism-related Jobs	148
7.4	Definition of the term Cultural Heritage by Local Communities	149
7.5	Knowledge about Cultural Heritage amongst Age Group	151
7.6	The Importance of Cultural Heritage to Community amongst Age Group	152
7.7	Scenarios Preferred by Community	153
7.8	Impacts Perceived by Community	154
7.9	Positive Impacts Perceived by Local Communities Regarding Cultural Heritage as Tourism Attraction	154
7.10	Negative Impacts Perceived by Local Communities Regarding Cultural Heritage as Tourism Attraction	155
7.11	Community's Opinions on Tourists' Activities	156
7.12	Independent Sample t-test for <i>what you think of tourists in public areas</i>	157

7.13	Mean Comparison between Genders on Tourist Activities	158
7.14	Mean Comparison between Tourism and Non-tourism Related Jobs	159
7.15	Positive Statements in the Attitude Instrument	161
7.16	Negative Statements in the Attitude Instrument	161
8.1	Country of Origin	167
8.2	Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 453)	169
8.3	Level of Education within Age Group (University Qualification)	170
8.4	Trip Characteristics of Respondents (N = 453)	173
8.5	How Tourists Learned about Cultural Heritage Sites	175
8.6	Interest in Cultural Heritage (N = 453)	176
8.7	Motivation to Travel and Visit to Destination	176
8.8	Tourist Specific Subject-of-Interest	177
8.9	Interest in Cultural Heritage between Gender	178
8.10	Interest in Cultural Heritage amongst Age Groups	178
8.11	Interest in Cultural Heritage amongst Different Education Background	179
8.12	Heritage Presentation (N = 453)	181
8.13	Reasons for Dissatisfaction with Tour Guide	181
8.14	Reasons for Not Engaging a Tour Guide	181
8.15	Reliability of Motivation Instrument	182
8.16	General Descriptions of Cultural Heritage Sites	188
8.17	Recommendations	188

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE

2.1	The Foreign Colonies in Malaysia	16
3.1	The Tourism Systems	39
3.2	A Classification of Travellers in the Tourism Industry	41
3.3	Butler's Destination Life Cycle	43
3.4	Organisational Structure for the Ministry of Tourism	53
3.5	Organisational Structure for Tourism Malaysia	54
4.1	Model for Sustainable Development	76
4.2	Model for Sustainable Tourism Development	77
5.1	Factors behind the Growth of Heritage Tourism	92
6.1	Questionnaire Set - Local Community	130
6.2	Questionnaire Set – Tourist	133
6.3	Stages in Questionnaire Design	135
7.1	Tourism Related Jobs by Gender	148
7.2	Knowledge about Cultural Heritage	150
7.3	The Importance of Cultural Heritage to Community	152
7.4	Mean Comparison between Genders	158
7.5	Mean Comparison between Tourism and Non-tourism Related Jobs on Tourist Activity	159
7.6	Mean Comparison between Tourism and Non-tourism Related Jobs on Attitude towards Cultural Heritage Tourism	163
8.1	Total Number of Malaysian and Foreign Tourists	166
8.2	Total Number of International Tourists: ASEAN and Non-ASEAN	166
8.3	Level of Education within Age Group (University Qualification)	170
8.4	Annual Household Income of Malaysian Tourists in Ringgit Malaysia (RM)	171
8.5	Annual Household Income of International Tourists in Ringgit Malaysia (RM)	172
8.6	Purpose of Visit to Malaysia	174
8.7	Travel Arrangement	174
8.8	Interest in Cultural Heritage amongst Age Group	179
8.9	Interest in Cultural Heritage amongst tourists with different Educational Background	180
8.10	Distribution of the Total Score of Each Respondent on the 10 Statements	183

8.11	Mean Comparison between Malaysian Tourists with Children and Malaysian Tourists without Children	185
8.12	Mean Comparison between Malaysian Tourists with Basic Education and Malaysian Tourists with Higher Education	186
8.13	Mean Comparison between International Tourists with Basic Education and International Tourists with Higher Education	187
8.14	Mean Comparison between International Tourists with International Tourists without Interest in Cultural Heritage	187
9.1	Perceived Benefits by Local Communities	192
9.2	Perceived Costs by Local Communities	193

LIST OF PHOTOS

PHOTO

2.1	Stadhuis Building (1650)	19
2.2	Perak Museum (1886)	19
2.3	Sultan Abdul Samad Building (1897)	20
2.4	Kuala Lumpur Old Railway Station (1911)	20
2.5	Kerapu Bank (1912)	21
5.1	<i>Wau</i> (a large, flying kite)	112
5.2	Shadow Puppet Performances	112
5.3	<i>Thaipusam</i>	113
5.4	<i>Chingay</i>	113
5.5	<i>Batik</i>	114
5.6	<i>Songket</i>	114
6.1	Site 1 - <i>A Famosa</i>	142
6.2	Site 2 - Maritime Museum	143
6.3	Site 3 - Fort Cornwallis	143
6.4	Site 4 - Goddess of Mercy Temple	144
6.5	Site 5 - Melaka's Sultanate Palace	144
6.6	Site 6 - Pasar Besar Siti Khadijah (an old historical market)	145

LIST OF MAPS

MAP

2.1	Southeast Asia	13
2.2	Malaysia	13
2.3	The Melaka Empire	15
2.4	The <i>A Famosa</i>	17

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of South East Asia Nation
BOD	Board of Directors
CH	Cultural Heritage
CHT	Cultural Heritage Tourism
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MP	Malaysia Plan
MOCAT	Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism
MOT	Ministry of Tourism
MOTC	Ministry of Tourism and Culture
MTPB	Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board
NDP	National Development Plan
NEP	New Economic Policy
SEPU	State Economic Planning Unit
RM	Ringgit Malaysia
TDCM	Tourism Development Corporation Malaysia
UMNO	United Malayan National Organization
UNESCO	United Nation for Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nation World Tourism Organization

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a general introduction to this study. First, the chapter provides a brief background to the research problem. After explaining the aims and objectives of the study, it states the significance of the study and gives a summary of the research methodologies employed. Finally, the chapter briefly describes the various parts of the thesis, by providing short summaries of each chapter. This puts the overall discussion into perspective.

1.2 Overview

Tourism has become the world's largest industry, contributing significantly to the world's total gross national product. It is also the largest single employer, with an estimated number of 231 million people employed worldwide in 2007 (WTTC, 2008). Despite the world's economic fluctuations and political instabilities, tourism enjoyed an average growth rate of 3.9% in 2007 and 3.0% in 2008 (WTTC, 2009). In addition, in 2008 international tourism arrivals reached 922 million, while receipts from foreign tourism reached US\$8 trillion (*ibid*). While the total earnings from tourism are greater in industrialised countries, they also have contributed significantly towards the development processes of many developing nations in terms of foreign exchange earnings, provision of employment and infrastructure, as well as the ability to generate regional economic development (Rigg, 2003; Meethan, 2001; Ap *et al.*, 1995; Inskeep, 1988; Krippendorf, 1987). Moreover, tourism earnings reduce levels of reliance on exports of traditional primary commodities, providing an opportunity for many developing countries to diversify their economic bases (Singh, 2003; McCool, 2001; Dann, 1999).

Although tourism has been perceived as the industry of the future, it faces many challenges as it enters the new century. These challenges include a greater commitment towards the communities that serve as hosts to the tourists (Tosun, 2003; Tosun and Timothy, 2003), increased respect for the places that accept and receive tourists (Meethan, 2001; Sharpley, 1994), and greater responsibilities towards the tourists themselves (Winter, 2008; Aas *et al.*, 2005). The ultimate challenge is therefore in delivering tourism products that are appropriate to and compatible with both hosts and guests. In this sense, cultural heritage (CH) tourism is seen as capable of fulfilling such requirements.

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