

**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

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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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## **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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