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THE GEOGRAPHY OF TOURISM IN MELAKA: IMPACTS AND LOCAL PERCEPTIONS

By

TAN WAN HIN

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ABSTRACT

Since the advent of mass tourism in the 1950s, developing countries have increasingly been the focus of tourist travel for reasons of climate, culture or curiosity. In the mid-1980s, Malaysia intensified efforts to promote this industry in view of the declining importance of the primary commodity exports of rubber, oil palm and tin. However, over the last ten years, there has been growing concern that tourism has not delivered its expected benefits and has instead brought about economic, social and environmental problems.

This study focuses on the state of Melaka where tourism has been identified as one of the main strategies for economic development. It traces the development and rationale for the development of the industry and discusses the present state of the industry. While tourism in developing countries has been characterised by structural deficiencies where the dominant tourism sectors have been controlled by foreign firms, this study shows that in the case of Melaka, foreign firms are involved in only four of the 53 hotels in the state and are totally divorced from other tourism sectors.

This study highlights an important aspect of the tourism industry which is commonly ignored in tourism planning: the host population and their receptivity towards tourists. It attempts to gauge local responses to the economic, social and environmental aspects of tourism development. The resultant responses from a sample of 344 respondents in Melaka city to various tourism impact items and statements were analysed. The analyses show that residents are generally supportive of tourism development. While such support is representative of new tourist destinations such as Melaka, it is also a consequence of tourism being a seasonal or weekend phenomenon and because most of the tourists (who are Singaporeans and locals from the neighbouring states) belong to a similar cultural background. The responses also indicated that residents are generally aware of the possible drawbacks of tourism development, but the lower mean scores indicates that the negative effects have yet to reach an unacceptable level. Subsequently, the survey responses were subjected to statistical testing to analyse differences in perceptions among demographic sub-groups. The analysis shows that dependency on the tourism industry was most important in accounting for differences in perceptions; however, these differences are only significant for 14 of the 67 impact items or statements. A possible explanation for the lack of differences in perceptions among demographic sub-groups could be because of the high level of awareness of tourism in a small state such as Melaka.

The study concludes with various suggestions to overcome weaknesses in the tourism development strategies in Melaka. This includes the need to shift from a policy emphasising tourist numbers to one that stresses the quality of tourist experiences through the provision of more new and improved attractions and facilities. It is also recommended that the suggestions and perceptions of local residents be incorporated in the planning process in view of the fact that hostility of the host population may be a determining factor in the continued success of the tourism industry.

ABSTRAK

Sejak perkembangan pelancongan pada tahun 1950an, negara-negara membangun telah merupakan destinasi pelancong kerana sebab-sebab iklim, budaya ataupun kepelikan. Pada pertengahan tahun 1980an, Malaysia telah mempergiatkan usaha mengembangkan industri pelancongan memandang kemerosotan dalam eskpot komoditi getah, kelapa sawit dan bijeh timah. Akan tetapi, dalam sepuluh tahun kebelakangan ini telah timbul pula kebimbangan bahawa pelancongan tidak menjanakan keuntungan ekonomi seperti yang dijangkakan tetapi sebaliknya telah menimbulkan masalah ekonomi, sosial dan alam sekitar.

Kajian ini bertumpu kepada negeri Melaka dimana pelancongan telah dikenalpasti sebagai salah satu strategi pembangunan utama. Ia mengesan perkembangan dan alasan-alasan untuk pembangunan pelancongan dan membincangkan keadaan semasa industri ini. Manakala industri pelancongan di beberapa negara membangun dicirikan oleh kelemahan struktur dimana sektor-sektor utamanya dikuasai oleh syarikat-syarikat asing, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa dalam kes Melaka syarikat asing hanya terlibat dalam empat dari 53 hotel dalam negeri dan tidak terlibat langsung dalam sektor pelancongan yang lain.

Kajian ini juga menitikberatkan satu aspek industri pelancongan penting yang biasanya diketepikan dalam perancangan ialah penduduk tempatan dan sambutan mereka terhadap pelancong. Respons penduduk tempatan kepada kesan ekonomi, sosial dan alam sekitar daripada pembangunan pelancongan dinilaikan. Respons daripada 344 orang responden di bandar Melaka kepada pelbagai kesan pelancongan yang dianalisiskan menunjukkan penduduk tempatan menyokong pembangunan pelancongan pada amnya. Walaupun sokongan sedemikian mencirikan destinasi pelancongan baru seperti Melaka, ia juga timbul kerana aktiviti pelancongan bertumpu kepada hujung minggu atau musim tertentu sahaja dan kerana kebanyakan pelancong (dari negara Singapura dan negeri berjiran) berasal dari latarbelakang budaya yang sama. Respons-respons ini juga menunjukkan bahawa walaupun penduduk tempatan sedar tentang kesan negatif pembangunan pelancongan, kesan-kesan ini masih tidak mencapai paras yang membimbangkan berdasarkan nilai min yang rendah dari respons penduduk. Seterusnya, kaedah statistik digunakan untuk menganalisiskan perbezaan dalam persepsi antara kumpulan-kumpulan kecil demografi. Analisis ini menunjukkan bahawa pergantungan kepada industri pelancongan adalah penting sekali dalam menentukan perbezaan ini tetapi ia hanya bertanggungjwab untuk perbezaan dalam 14 daripada 67 item kesan pelancongan. Kekurangan perbezaan dalam persepsi antara kumpulan mungkin timbul dari kesedaran tinggi tentang pelancongan dalam sebuah negeri kecil seperti Melaka.

Kajian ini juga mencadangkan beberapa langkah untuk mengatasi kelemahan dalam strategi pembangunan pelancongan di Melaka. Ini termasuk keperluan menukarkan polisi yang mengutamakan bilangan pelancong kepada satu polisi yang menekankan kualiti pengalaman pelancong melalui penyediaan dan peningkatan kemudahan dan tarikan pelancong. Juga disyorkan bahawa cadangan dan persepsi penduduk tempatan dipertimbangkan dalam proses perancangan memandangkan irihati tuan rumah terhadap pelancong boleh menentukan kejayaan berterusan industri pelancongan.

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Any error of facts, observations and judgements are my sole responsibility.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
MTPB	Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board
RM	Ringgit Malaysia (Malaysian dollars)
S$	Singapore Dollars
SEDC	State Economic Development Corporation
TDC	Tourist Development Corporation
U.S.A.	United States of America
US$	United States Dollar
VMY	Visit Malaysia Year
WTO	World Tourism Organisation