

CHAPTER 10

INPUTING THE SUGGESTIONS OF RESIDENTS IN TOURIST DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Despite the strong support for tourism development by the government, the private sector and residents, it is apparent that the tourism industry in Melaka has been plagued by certain weaknesses. While some of these limitations are beyond the powers of the state administration to overcome, there are other aspects which need immediate or more intensive state involvement. For example, decisions on economic incentives to attract more foreign hoteliers or the issue of international flights to the Batu Berendam airport are matters beyond state jurisdiction but matters concerning cleanliness and land zoning, for example, are very much state matters. In efforts to overcome these limitations, it would be advantageous to consider the weaknesses and suggestions as identified by the local residents. The views of these residents are important as they may have direct dealings with the tourists themselves and may be more aware of tourists' complaints. As they live within or in the vicinity of the tourism zone or travel there frequently, they experience similar conditions as tourists which may hinder the successful development of the local tourism industry. The chapter discusses the various limitations and suggestions perceived by local residents and while the rate of responses varied from question to question, the number of responses was adequate to discern some patterns.

Community Involvement

Tourism development impinges on the life of the community living in the area. Most inhabitants in the central district of Melaka are affected to some degree by the

growth of tourism as tourism activities in Melaka are concentrated in the main administrative and commercial centre of the state. The participation of the local community in tourism planning is increasingly being recognised. In Malaysia, public views are sought in the promulgation of city structure plans as it is a procedural requirement. Such plans may include a tourism component as is the case with the Structure Plans for Melaka Tengah and Jasin districts. The survey data indicates that local residents overwhelmingly feel that they should be consulted on plans for tourism development with 98 per cent replying in the affirmative. A variety of opinions are given as to why their opinions should be solicited (Table 10.1). More than half (51.1 per cent) of the residents who responded to this question are of the opinion that the community will be affected in some way or another by tourism development. For example, land reclamation for tourism projects while not directly involving the acquisition of land from residents, gives rise to problems such as traffic congestion, noise and air pollution. Tourism creates employment opportunities (often low paying and seasonal) that necessitate intensive interaction with visitors. Local residents obviously become part of the tourist product attracting tourists through their culture and hospitality, and consequently, the community is affected by tourism in all its positive and negative manifestations. Relatedly, 30 per cent of the residents claim that seeking their support will ensure their co-operation as they will be aware of the projects planned for the area. Another 10.4 per cent of the residents maintain that having stayed in the area for some time, they know the area best and thus their opinions may count in any tourism development project while a further 7.8 per cent state that the different opinions that may arise are beneficial.

Table 10.1. Reasons for Community Involvement in Tourism Planning

Reasons	Number	Per cent
The community is affected by the development	92	51.1
Co-operation of residents	54	30.0
The community knows the place best	17	9.4
A variety of opinions	14	7.8
Conflict of opinions will arise	3	1.7
Total	164	100.0

Source: Field survey, June 1994.

CONSTRAINTS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY AS PERCEIVED BY LOCAL RESIDENTS

The state government is aware of shortcomings in the tourism industry and continues to implement measures to overcome them. However, the stress has been on the development of new tourism products while residents' perceptions may point to limitations which are not so obvious or even contrary to the impressions of planners. Residents were asked to state, in order of importance, the four main constraints or weaknesses in the local tourism industry as they perceive them. Of the 344 respondents interviewed, 215 indicated what they perceived to be the first constraint of the tourism industry. A total of 189 of these 215 respondents listed a second constraint, 134 a third and only 83 respondents mentioned a fourth. It is expected that the number of responses will decline as the number of constraints solicited increases. However, the number of

replies obtained is sufficient for analysis and the data highlights a concentration of the responses among a few major categories of limitations. For ease of discussion, the varied answers were structured into seven major categories, that is, constraints that are related to transportation, infrastructure, the environment, tourist attractions, planning, the travel experience and miscellaneous aspects. For example, the transportation category include problems such as traffic congestion, poor public transportation, lack of parking spaces for tourist buses and poor accessibility to tourist sites. From Table 10.2, it is obvious that transportation, infrastructure, factors affecting the travel experience of tourists and to a smaller extent, planning, appeared as major categories of constraints among all the four choices listed by respondents.

A total of 71 of the 215 respondents (33.0 per cent) listed aspects related to transportation as the most important constraint they perceived. It is significant that of these 71 respondents, 57 of them cited traffic congestion, a common problem in most urban tourist destinations. A combination of factors (such as the concentration of tourist accommodation and attractions in the city centre and the form of the city itself with street patterns which are ill-adapted to vehicular traffic) has resulted in traffic jams being a common occurrence in the tourist zone, especially during weekends. The problem of congestion persists though measures have been implemented by the local authorities such as the pedestrianisation of part of the historical zone, the provision of adequate parking spaces, restricting roads to one-way traffic, and disallowing roadside parking. The ring roads to divert non-tourist traffic away from the city centre were completed in early 1995 at a cost of RM54 million but the interchanges costing another RM45 million will only be implemented during the Seventh Malaysian Plan period (1996-2000). In the

Table 10.2. Constraints of the Tourism Industry as Perceived by Local Residents

Limitations	First Choice		Second Choice		Third Choice		Fourth Choice	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Transportation aspects	71	33.0	50	26.5	19	14.2	11	13.3
- traffic congestion	57		29		7		3	
- poor transportation	12		15		5		6	
- inadequate parking for buses	1		3		2		1	
- lack of accessibility to tourist sites	1		3		4		1	
Infrastructure aspects	65	30.2	55	29.1	53	39.5	28	33.7
- lack of public facilities	13		15		23		9	
- dirty stalls	34		24		14		8	
- lack of budget accommodation	8		3		12		3	
- lack of rooms	5		7		-		1	
- lack of entertainment facilities	4		2		4		5	
- lack of eating places	1		4		-		2	
Environmental aspects	9	4.2	15	7.9	9	6.7	9	10.8
- pollution	2		4		4		6	
- erosion	1		-		2		-	
- little conservation	5		7		3		3	
- destruction	1		4		-		-	
Tourist Attractions	16	7.4	6	3.2	10	7.5	6	7.2
- lack of tourist sites	13		5		10		6	
- too many museums	3		1		-		-	

Planning aspects	32	14.9	23	12.2	19	14.2	12	14.5
- inadequate promotion	12		9		4		4	
- no identity	1		-		-		-	
- lack of information	8		5		6		3	
- little public support	5		3		1		2	
- poor management	1		-		-		1	
- unplanned development	5		6		8		2	
Travel experiences	19	8.9	36	19.0	19	14.2	13	15.7
- poor services	6		9		7		2	
- high prices	7		19		9		4	
- lack of tourist guides	5		3		1		4	
- poor security	1		-		2		2	
- poor quality of handicraft	-		5		-		1	
Others	3	1.4	4	2.1	5	3.7	4	4.8
- commercialised	2		1		-		-	
- decline of cultural values	1		2		3		1	
- too many handicraft stalls	-		1		-		-	
- poor standard if living	-		-		1		-	
- too many golf courses	-		-		1		1	
- too many beggars in town	-		-		-		2	
Total	215	100.0	189	100.0	134	100.0	83	100.0

Source: Field survey, June 1994.

meantime, the congestion remains serious. This is because the majority of the tourist attractions are fixed in space and concentrated within the city. The promotion of suburban tourist sites such as theme parks in Ayer Keroh has been markedly unsuccessful in altering tourist flows and they only serve as secondary attractions. Tourists continue to converge onto the city centre to visit the premier tourist attraction of Melaka – the historical zone – or for other activities such as dining. Another 12 of the 71 respondents cited the poor transportation system between tourist sites as a major constraint. In an attempt to overcome this problem, SEDC introduced a shuttle bus service in April 1994 to link up the major tourist sites between the city and Ayer Keroh. Tourists purchase a ticket at RM5 and are allowed to drop off and board any of the two mini buses plying the route at hourly intervals. This service has been popular among foreign tourists but has been shunned by local tourists who find it more convenient to use their own vehicles because of the long interval between bus services, thus adding to the traffic congestion.

Another 65 (30.2 percent) of the 215 respondents cited the lack of tourist infrastructure as the most important constraint. Among the items listed under this category, the lack of budget hotels and entertainment centres, and room congestion during weekends do not appear to be as crucial as the dirty condition of food stalls in the city. The poor public drainage system, the abundance of litter and the poor physical conditions of the stalls selling food and refreshments in the city resulted in half of the 65 respondents citing 'dirty stalls' as a major hindrance to efforts at developing tourism. Of lesser significance under this category of inadequate infrastructure is the lack of public facilities such as public restrooms. For instance, there is only one public toilet facility

located next to the tourist police headquarters in the historical zone.

The third most important category cited by 14.9 per cent of the residents as what they perceive to be the main constraint of the tourism industry in Melaka reflects weaknesses in the planning dimension. A third of the responses in this category mentioned the lack of promotion as one of the limitations in Melaka's tourism industry. Undoubtedly, this criticism may be unfair. Funds for promotion are scarce and promotion thus has to be selective and limited to particular types of media and to markets which are ascertained to be potential sources of tourists such as Singapore. However, the lack of promotion has been overcome to some extent as Melaka has been incorporated as one of the 12 destinations promoted overseas by MTPB. While the problem of overseas promotion may be more difficult to overcome because of the shortage of funds, other constraints related to planning can be more easily resolved. For example, a quarter of the residents citing poor planning as the major constraint mentioned the lack of adequate information such as road signs and information on tourist sites. There is a need for additional tourist information booths in addition to the two existing booths at Ayer Keroh and at the historical zone while road directions to tourist sites have to be upgraded.

A distant fourth category mentioned as the first constraint by 8.8 per cent of the respondents relates to conditions influencing the travel experience of tourists. Factors such as rudeness and poor service, lack of security and high prices may result in an unsatisfactory travel experience with repercussions for future tourism development. About 78 per cent of tourists to Malaysia are repeat visitors and as 'word of mouth' has been claimed as one of the most effective ways to promote a destination, a satisfactory travel experience should be ensured. The other categories of constraints such as the lack

of tourist sites or the existence of too many museums (7.4 per cent) or adverse environmental effects (4.2 per cent) are not perceived as significant hindrances to the development of the tourism industry. The categories of constraints which has been discussed above also featured significantly in the second, third and fourth constraints cited by residents indicating that residents were unanimous in their perceptions of the major shortcomings of the tourism industry.

Receptivity of Residents to Tourist Types

While highlighting its historical past in tourist promotion, Melaka strives not only to attract tourists with this special interest but as wide a spectrum of tourists as possible. It would not be viable for Melaka to depend on a single category of tourists interested solely in its historical heritage as the number of such tourists is small. Thus, various other attractions such as theme parks, golf courses and resorts to cater to the differing demands of tourists have been developed. The emphasis of Melaka's tourism promotion, as is the case nationally, has been directed at tourists who can bring in revenue to the state. Accordingly, while the state government has been involved in the construction of hotels for the higher income group of tourists, it has totally divorced itself from building budget accommodations. The types of tourists sought after by the state is also very much reflected in the choice of tourist types by local residents.

As evident from Figure 10.1, 39.7 per cent of the residents indicated their preference for tourists on a package tour. Package tourists from countries such as Japan and Taiwan presently form the dominant component of the foreign tourist market. This

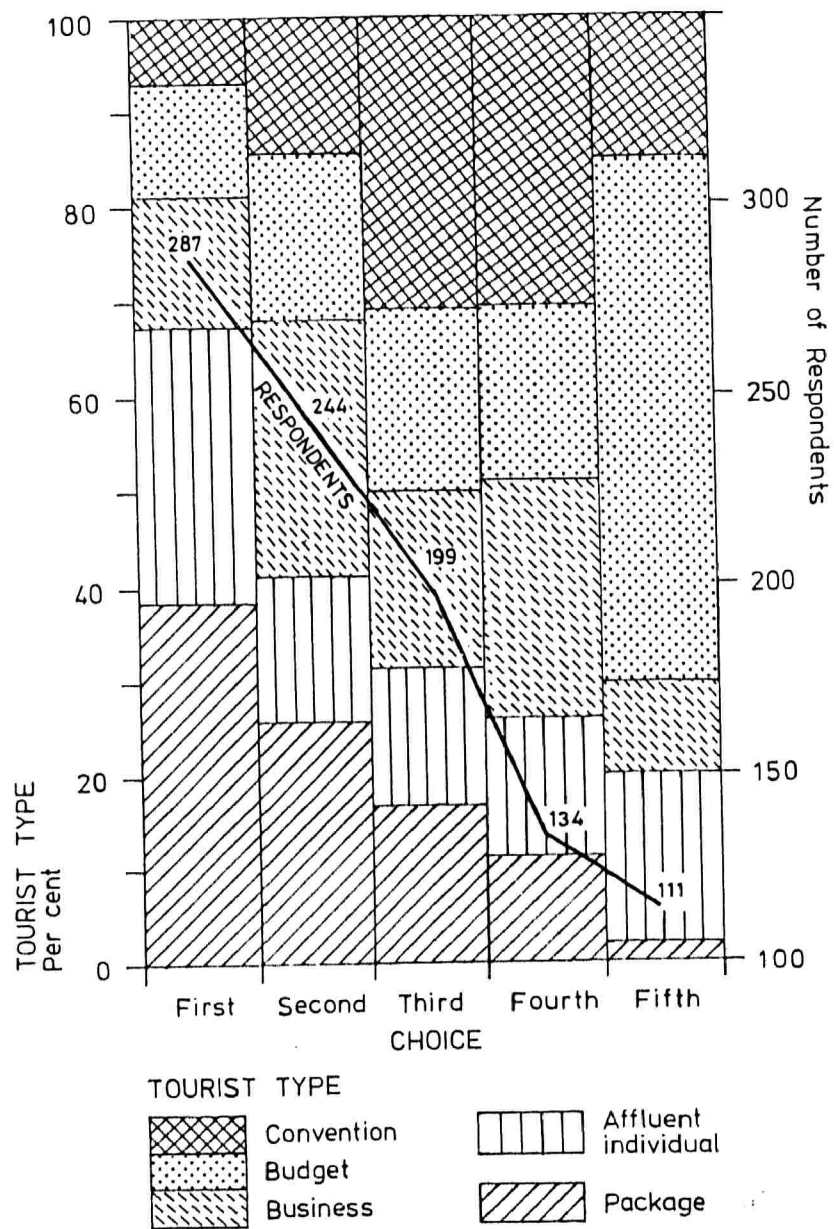


Figure 10.1 Preferences of Tourist Types as Perceived by Local Residents

Source: Field survey, June 1994.

tourist type is also least likely to give rise to social conflicts between hosts and guests as the travel itineraries are pre-planned and contact with the local population restricted to a few individuals. However, in the case of Melaka, most of these tourists are on package tours to Kuala Lumpur and Singapore which include Melaka as part of their travel itinerary and thus stay at the most only one night in a participating hotel. In some cases, an overnight stay may not form part of the package and the return journey to Kuala Lumpur or Singapore is made after dinner. Package tourists have often been criticised on the grounds that much of the payment, such as air fares and room charges are made overseas. For example, payment for accommodation may be made to the headquarters of an affiliated company managing the local tourist hotel. While this may not be totally true of Melaka as most of the hotels are locally owned or managed, other tourist establishments such as souvenir stalls and museums may not profit from the patronage of such tourists as tourists have hardly any time to indulge in shopping or other tourist activities because of the short duration of their stay. It would thus be advantageous economically to prolong their usual overnight stay through the provision of new attractions or the upgrading of existing ones.

In line with the receptivity for high spending tourists, the affluent individual mass tourist is rated a second choice by 31.4 per cent of the local residents. Business tourists who may do a little sightseeing are rated third while the budget tourists or backpackers are rated next. These backpackers have been discouraged, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, because of their influences on the morals of the local youths and their limited spending. This view may no longer be relevant in the present context and in the case of Melaka. Their low per day expenditures are often compensated by a longer length of stay

and thus their trip expenditures may equate or even exceed other tourists (Wood 1979). Additionally, it is the smaller restaurants, budget hotels and local transportation companies who benefit from these expenditures. For example, all the guesthouses in the vicinity of the historical zone that are owned and operated by local entrepreneurs cater to these budget tourists. These enterprises are characterised by their higher integration into the local economy with significantly lower leakages (Wood 1979). The decision to stay at budget accommodations may not be indicative of income levels but rather a desire to economise, extend their holiday and to interact with the local population. Lastly, residents rated tourists attending conventions as the least preferred type of tourists as Melaka still lacks the facilities to host large scale conventions.

Sources of Tourists

The main tourist sources to Malaysia have remained relatively unchanged for more than two decades with the bulk of tourists coming from Asia, particularly from neighbouring Singapore. State level data on the breakdown of tourists by countries of origin is merely estimated from the national percentages; however, the percentage of Singaporean tourists to Melaka may be above the national average of 58 per cent of all foreign tourists in 1996 because of the proximity to Singapore. The perceptions of local residents on the countries of origin of tourists that they prefer contrasts sharply with the present scenario. Domestic tourists are strongly favoured with 48.2 per cent of the respondents listing this category as their first choice (Table 10.3). Residents are well aware that over-dependence on a foreign market is unhealthy as evidenced by the fall in tourist arrivals during the Gulf War of 1991 and more recently with the outbreak of

cholera in Penang in 1996 and the haze that enveloped the whole country in late 1997. Domestic tourists presently make up about 60 per cent of the tourists to Melaka but the market is largely untapped. The potential of domestic tourism is indicated by the large number of Malaysians who continue to holiday overseas. What needs to be done is to convince the present two million local excursionists who visit Melaka to extend their stay through the provision of moderately priced hotels and new attractions.

Table 10.3. Local Residents' Choices of Sources of Tourists

Source of Tourists	First Choice		Second Choice		Third Choice		Fourth Choice	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Local	140	48.3	24	9.0	18	7.0	11	4.8
Singapore	17	5.9	46	17.2	31	12.1	50	21.9
Thailand	1	0.3	4	1.5	9	3.5	7	3.1
Indonesia	3	1.0	2	0.7	6	2.3	13	5.7
Rest of Southeast Asia	11	3.8	15	5.6	20	7.8	17	7.5
Japan	42	14.4	72	26.9	33	12.9	29	12.7
Rest of Asia	9	3.1	15	5.6	26	10.2	20	8.8
Europe	48	16.6	50	18.6	49	19.1	22	9.7
Americas	13	4.5	13	4.8	27	10.6	24	10.5
Oceania	5	1.7	27	10.1	37	14.5	35	15.3
Others	1	0.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	290	100.0	268	100.0	256	100.0	228	100.0

Source: Field survey, June 1994.

Japanese tourists were rated as the second choice by local residents, soliciting 24.8 per cent of the responses. The high-spending Japanese tourists whose propensity to travel has been aided by company-sponsored trips and high income are also looked upon as an

important source at the national level. Melaka lacks both sufficient attractions and the accessibility to draw Japanese tourists directly from Japan and thus needs to work more closely with tour companies in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore to encourage a greater number of these agencies to package Melaka as part of the travel itinerary. The Europeans were rated as the third choice while the Singaporeans, who now constitute the main foreign source of tourists were only ranked fourth in preference. The low preference for Singaporean tourists reflects the declining importance of this market source. In 1990, Singaporeans constitute 64 per cent of total foreign tourists to Malaysia; this fell to 60.5 per cent in 1995. By the year 2000, the percentage is expected to drop to 54.3 per cent (*Star* 7th May, 1996). The strong filial ties that have drawn Singaporeans to visit Malaysia continue to weaken as the older generation fades away. The new generation of Singaporean tourists, brought up in a different social and economic climate, is young with a median age of 34 years, has a high discretionary income and has a wider choice of destinations that offers him better value for money. The preponderance of alternative nearby tourist attractions such as Batam Island in Indonesia has also accounted for this decline in the percentage of Singapore tourists.

Tourism Attributes to be Promoted

The development of the national tourism industry has been hampered by the lack of an image in its marketing as a variety of attractions are promoted by MTPB. This is not the case in Melaka which has portrayed its history as the central theme in tourism promotion. The theme 'where it all began' while debatable has been successfully used to highlight Melaka as the historical city of the country. Based on the perceptions of local

residents, the state of Melaka has little choice but continue to focus on its historical attractions in the promotion of the state. A total of 97 out of 160 responses (60.6 per cent) selected this asset as central to the state's tourism promotion (Table 10.4). This is

Table 10.4. Attributes to be Promoted as Perceived by Local Residents

Attribute	First Choice		Second* Choice	Third* Choice
	Number	Per cent		
Historical attractions	97	60.6	15	2
Cultural diversity	29	18.1	37	7
Natural environment	16	10.0	14	6
Food paradise	10	6.3	3	8
Friendliness of people	3	1.9	9	2
Economic aspect	3	1.9	2	1
Family destination	1	0.6	5	2
Cheap holiday destination	1	0.6	2	1
Shopping centre	-	-	4	2
Local handicraft	-	-	-	1
Total	160	100.0	91	2

* Percentages are not tabulated because of the smaller number of responses.

Source: Field survey, June 1994.

expected as the state lacks other touristic resources such as long stretches of beaches and pristine tropical rainforests. However, the presence of the various religious, ethnic and cultural groups and their varied cultural activities was cited by another 18.1 per cent as an asset to be promoted. In addition to the cultures of the three dominant ethnic groups - the Malays, Chinese and Indians - Melaka has the advantage of being hosts to two other unique cultures, that of the Portuguese and the *peranakan* community.

The Portuguese community are descendants of sea-farers who had once ruled the state in the 16th Century and their unique lifestyle, language, customs and music are a potential tourist attribute to be promoted. For example, the language spoken by the Portuguese who have been grouped together in the Portuguese settlement since 1930 is normally referred to as *crisang* or 16th Century Portuguese. The *peranakans* have developed a whole new culture of their own with elements of Malay and Chinese culture and their spicy cooking, and colourful ornate art and craft could be also stressed in tourist promotion. A smaller percentage of residents (10.0 per cent) cited the physical environment or scenic beauty of the state as a possible tourist attraction. An even smaller number of respondents (6.3 per cent) stated the variety of food from the different cultural groups as a possible attraction.

In perceiving the tourist attributes that should be promoted, residents have chosen those that are most obvious and where Melaka has an advantage compared to other tourists destinations in Malaysia. For example, it would be unwise to emphasise Melaka as a beach resort due to the lack of suitable beaches compared to the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. While it is important for Melaka to continue to upgrade the existing historical and cultural exhibits, it should also be realised that it needs to attract a wide range of tourists and provide a variety of attractions to encourage a longer length of stay and draw repeat visitors. Thus, other tourist attractions such as theme parks and shopping centres have been or are being constructed. With the presence of theme parks such as the proposed Disneyland complex in Ayer Keroh or mega shopping malls, Melaka will be able to promote itself as a family destination or a destination where the differing needs of tourists can be met.

INCORPORATING LOCAL SUGGESTIONS IN TOURISM PLANNING

The earlier discussion has highlighted the limitations of the tourism industry in Melaka as perceived by local residents. While promotional activities may be intensified and may succeed in reaping a larger share of the increasing tourist traffic to Malaysia, problems or difficulties presently faced by tourists will hinder further expansion of tourism in Melaka. Local residents who live in the vicinity of the tourist activity zone experience the same difficulties as tourists or these constraints may have been communicated to them by the tourists themselves. The suggestions of local residents on how to further improve the tourism industry are thus pertinent and need to be considered by the planning authorities. In the questionnaire survey, residents were asked to state, in order of priority, three suggestions on how the local tourism industry can be improved. These varied suggestions were then categorised under six groups:- accessibility, travel experiences, public amenities, tourists sites or attractions, planning and the tourism infrastructure. The main groups of suggestions are those related to tourist attractions, public amenities, accessibility and planning (Table 10.5). It appears that local residents do not consider the tourism infrastructure or the travel experience as major areas to focus development efforts on. The tourism infrastructure such as shopping and entertainment centres while important are not considered so essential compared to improved accessibility or better attractions. The most important category of suggestions is tourist attractions, and 68 of the 217 respondents (31.3 per cent) who responded proposed suggestions relating to this aspect. Of this total, more than a third of the respondents highlighted the need for more tourist sites while another third stressed the need to carry out beautification and conservation works on existing sites. The next highest category of suggestions is related

Table 10.5 Suggestions of Local Residents on Improving the Tourism Industry

Suggestions	First		Second		Third	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Tourist Attractions	68	31.3	41	21.8	33	23.9
- Decentralisation	4		-		1	
- Quality of exhibits/museums	1		-		-	
- Beautification and conservation	27		19		11	
- More festivals, tourist events	7		8		6	
- More tourist sites	29		14		15	
Improving Accessibility	44	20.3	34	18.1	19	13.8
- Widen & improve roads	34		20		11	
- Improve public transportation	10		12		7	
- More entry points	-		1		-	
- International airport	-		-		1	
- Pedestrian malls	-		1		-	
Public amenities	42	19.4	46	24.5	27	19.6
- Improving public utilities	7		17		8	
- Cleanliness	32		28		18	
- More parks for resting	3		1		1	
Planning	33	15.2	31	16.4	22	15.9
- Proper planning	5		5		1	
- Leave Melaka as it is	2		-		-	
- Promotion	25		16		12	
- Developing an image	-		-		-	
- Education of local residents	-		3		6	
- Local resident involvement	-		2		2	
- Promote lesser known communities	-		1		1	
- Maintain the natural environment	-		3		-	
- Promote domestic tourism	-		1		-	
Improving the Travel Experience	21	9.7	24	12.8	26	18.8
- Reduce cost and prices	5		4		9	
- Improve services (politeness)	2		3		6	
- Reasonably priced hotels	13		11		10	
- Training for guides	-		1		1	
- Security	-		3		-	
- Regulate fleecing by stall operators	-		1		-	
- Quality souvenirs	1		1		-	
Tourism Infrastructure	9	4.1	12	6.4	11	8.0
- More shopping centres	2		3		2	
- More hawker stalls and restaurants	2		2		4	
- Entertainment facilities	2		3		3	
- Parking Lots	2		4		1	
- More detailed maps	1		-		1	
Total	217	100.0	188	100.0	138	100.0

Source: Field survey, June 1994.

to issues of accessibility to the tourist sites (20.3 per cent of respondents) followed by aspects concerning public amenities for tourists (19.4 per cent).

When individual suggestions are analysed, it is clear that only a few stand out and confirm the major shortcomings in the industry discussed earlier. The highest number of 34 respondents (15.7 per cent), suggested the need to widen or improve the roads in Melaka. This was followed by suggestion to improve cleanliness (14.8 per cent), the need for more tourist attractions (13.4 per cent), beautification and conservation of the existing tourist sites (12.5 per cent), more active promotion (11.5 per cent), construction of reasonably priced hotels (6.0 per cent) and improvement in the transportation system (4.6 per cent).

These suggestions reflect the existing constraints that have been perceived by residents and discussed earlier. While the state government is aware of these constraints and have implemented some of the suggestions, slight adjustments to the emphasis in state tourism policy will be required in light of these perceptions by local residents. Firstly, there is an urgent need to overcome the problem of transportation in Melaka city. Traffic congestion and the inefficient public transport system, unless ameliorated, will negate any effect arising from a more intensive promotion campaign because incidences of bad travel experiences are easily communicated to other tourists. The usual official response to overcome traffic congestion is to build or widen more roads. For example, a coastal highway has been planned on reclaimed land fronting the historical zone to ease congestion in the city. However, work on this highway has yet to begin while existing roads in the city centre cannot be widened any further. To overcome the present weekend congestion, more

drastic and immediate measures have to be sought and this may include limiting the number of cars entering the city centre on weekends and improving the present bus transportation system.

Secondly, issues regarding the general cleanliness and beautification of tourist sites as well as the city itself have to be addressed. The main concern of residents is the dirty state of food and refreshment stalls that may give rise to health problems among tourists and negative implications on the growth in tourist arrivals. Matters regarding general cleanliness and hygiene can be easily tackled through stricter enforcement of health regulations and public awareness campaigns. However, the beautification of tourist sites including the renovation and repainting of the existing dilapidated old buildings in the vicinity of the historical zone poses various problems. Most of these privately owned buildings are no longer used for any commercial function while the renovation costs involved may be beyond the means of the owners. Except for the conversion of some pre-World War II houses into restaurants, hotels and antique shops, the private sector has been slow in responding to the call to redevelop the area. A possible solution is for the state government to provide some form of loan or subsidy to these owners to improve the appearance of the buildings. A more controversial solution will be to solicit the assistance of private entrepreneurs to develop the area in exchange for the tourism and commercial revenue that can be generated.

Thirdly, a change in emphasis in the accommodation sector is required to meet the latent demand for budget or moderately priced rooms. As elsewhere in the country, private

entrepreneurs prefer to build large international class hotels in Melaka because of the potential higher returns. To meet the demand for moderately priced accommodation, the national government established a series of such hotels under the “Seri Malaysia” chain during the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-95). However, none of the ‘Seri Malaysia’ hotels was built in Melaka. Hotels of the budget or moderately priced category also benefit the economy of the state by reducing leakage as these hotels are locally owned and operated. Additionally, the availability of such hotels will also encourage domestic tourism thus boosting the state revenue from tourism.

The fourth emphasis in tourism policy as discerned from the perceptions of local residents is the siting of attractions outside the city centre. Although the state government has implemented this to some extent through the development of theme parks, golf resorts, shopping arcades and the proposed Disneyland park in the vicinity of Ayer Keroh, the policy has been compromised by the proposed developments on reclaimed land fronting the historical zone. Projects such as the proposed water theme park and Sea World will only impose additional strains on the existing infrastructure and frustrate efforts to reduce vehicular congestion and pollution in the historical zone.

Lastly, residents perceive the importance of promotion in enhancing the awareness level of Melaka as a tourist destination. The budget available to the state for promotion is limited and will not allow for extensive overseas promotion. In view of this, a more selective approach to tourism promotion is necessary. Potential sources of tourists and more effective means of promotion have to be determined. For example, a tourist profile study will identify the main tourist generating countries where promotion should be carried

out. As Melaka is not a primary tourist destination to foreign tourists who visit a few destinations on the same trip, joint marketing strategies with other destinations such as Singapore or Kuala Lumpur may be more effective and economical.

CONCLUSION

The chapter reviewed the perceptions of local residents on certain limitations of the tourism industry in Melaka. What residents have perceived reaffirms much of what is already known about the tourism industry in Melaka but yet mostly left unsolved. Many of the problems faced by Melaka accrue from the fact that it is an urban tourist destination. The level of tourist activity in cities is much higher than in those areas usually thought of as resorts. Cities may function as gateways but in the case of Melaka, it has its own appeal, grouping a large range of historical or cultural attractions, recreational and entertainment facilities, and shops in the city centre itself. Consequently the centre has become the focus for the location of many hotels and guesthouses as trips to urban areas are generally short and tourists want to see as much as possible in the time available to them (Pearce 1981). Nevertheless, the perceptions of local residents have highlighted various suggestions aimed at developing the industry and the need to incorporate public participation in tourism planning, a process which is becoming increasingly popular in other parts of the world.