

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the pattern of the domestic tourism in Malaysia based on data collected from a survey conducted by the Bureau of Consultancy, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board. The survey covered a total of 12476 respondents from 4236 selected households in 14 major towns throughout Malaysia over a twelve-month period between August 1997 and July 1998. Owing to the differential in the response rates, the distribution of the respondents was not reflective of the national population, and it is not possible to examine the distribution of tourists in each destination in terms of the place of usual residence. Hence, the analysis focused mainly on the place of destination rather than the place of origin.

Data show that about 37.6% of the respondents aged 20 and above had travelled during the 12-month study period. However, only a small proportion (less than 5%) had taken a domestic tour in each month under study, except May-June and December, which coincide with school holidays and festive occasions. In view of the small proportion that has gone on local vacation even during the "peak" seasons, more innovative strategies and programs need to be developed to promote the tourism industry within the country, especially now that the country is facing a dramatic drop in foreign tourist arrivals due to the Iraq War and SARS epidemics that affect global tourism.

Pronounced differentials in domestic tourism can be observed across the various sub-groups of the population. In particular, the survey found that the better-educated and the higher income group tend to more likely take a domestic vacation as compared to their lesser-educated and lower income counterparts. The Sabahans and Sarawakians were also shown to have a higher propensity to travel as compared to their counterparts in Peninsular Malaysia. However, it is to be noted that most tourists tend to travel within the region, and there is a need to encourage inter-regional tourism to promote national integration and unity.

Most domestic tourists travelled on their own, rather than joining package tours. The majority was found to go on vacation with family members rather than travelling individually. Many tourists have also taken the opportunity to visit friends and relatives during these trips. Clearly, tour operators would have to come up with more attractive packages to lure more tourists to go on organised group tours, especially over long distances. This may include lowering of airfares and the provision of comfortable accommodation at affordable rates.

Most domestic tourists spend less than RM200 per person per trip. The relatively low level of domestic tourism, coupled with the low expenditure per trip means that much of the tourism receipts are still dependent on foreign tourists, which are subjected to the vagaries of the international environment and stiff competition within the Asian and ASEAN regions.

The survey showed that domestic tourists tend to be drawn to only a few destinations in the country. Most of these are beaches, island or hill resorts. The annual events such as the Mega Sales and the Formula 1 appeared to have relatively small impact on domestic tourism. A combination of promotional programmes and advertisements as well as the development of new tourists' spots may have to be stepped up further to promote local tourism. One of these strategies includes the organisation of group tours for students during the vacation.

The survey shows that there are quite a number of tourist spots in the country. A number of measures may be taken to further develop domestic tourism.

The dissemination of up-to-date and accurate information is important for the promotion of domestic tourism. The Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board plays a very important role in promoting Malaysia to the whole nation. For example, tourism related brochures should be made easily available at tourist information centres or kiosk, airports, train stations, bus terminals, commuter stations, post offices, hotels and travel agencies. Rapid development in the information and communications technology has an impact on the marketing of tourism products. For example, tourists should be able to obtain information and make reservations at paid accommodations, such as hostel, training centres and campsites.

There is also a need to establish accommodation products, such as family-style, good quality and value resorts with cooking facilities, children's playground, and house keeping units. Also, efforts should be made to upgrade existing hotels, motels and apartments to cater for the need of children, the elderly and the disabled. There is also a need to build more youth hostels, budget hotels and camping grounds to cater for tourists with a shoestring budget. In the long run, the objective is to offer the public the assurance of clean, tidy, friendly and modern accommodations to encourage repeat visits. Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) should work in close partnership with local authorities and tour operators to ensure that standards are maintained and continuously improved.

Malaysians should be more exposed to heritage tourism (national parks, nature reserves, museum, galleries, cultural festivals and historical sites). New attractions are necessary to introduce domestic tourists to new or lesser-known localities. Every town should develop and promote aggressively its own attractions in terms of tourism products, such as Kelantan for its *batik*. By rotating the organisation of annual festivals by different states will go a long way to boost the local economy, besides promoting national integration.