UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

PERCEIVED DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS AND INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS RESPONSE BEHAVIOR: A CASE OF LANGKAWI ISLAND, MALAYSIA

ZALIHA BT. ZAINUDDIN

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Hotel and Tourism Management

Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management

October 2018

ABSTRACT

Destination competitiveness has become a critical issue and creates an increasing challenge in the tourism market. A successful tourism destination should embrace an integrated approach toward many components of tourism system and the competitive advantage of a destination is closely related to the quality of the products offered that determine the quality experience provided by the destination. Researchers determine that the comparative advantage are mostly related to the resources of the tourist destination, tourism image, climate, the countryside, its cultural wealth and its distance from the countries of origin. Due to the different nature of destinations or the purpose/types of tourism activities, it's hard to measure, evaluate, and compare destinations, as in many cases they are unique in their features and cannot be considered identical. Therefore, in analysing the competitiveness of tourism destinations, it is necessary to include the level of satisfaction of visitors and the tourism image as a paradigm of destination competitiveness in the global tourism market. With that, this study investigates the relationship between perceived destination competitiveness attributes and the international tourists' response behavior which is mediated by the tourism images and satisfaction using Langkawi Island, Malaysia as study contextual setting. This study is structured through a self-administered questionnaire survey with the individual's international tourists who visited the Langkawi Island using Langkawi international airport as venue for data collection. A total 384 usable questionnaires were successfully collected. With the various statistical analyses ranging from frequency, descriptive, inferential and the Multivariate Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via Partial Least Square (PLS- SEM) used to answer the objectives, research questions and hypotheses, some useful insights pertaining to the issues investigated was significantly obtained. The results provide evidence that destination competitiveness attributes that are inherited, created and supporting resources influence the international tourists level of satisfaction. Inherited, created and supporting resources are also giving strong impact to or uplifting the tourism images that are destination, country and hotel image despite slightly influence the international tourists' response behaviour (revisit or word of mouth). In addition, the international tourist satisfaction and tourism images also positively giving impact to their response behaviour. These results without doubt expands the existing tourism destination competiveness studies and contributes to the academic and the managerial or practical perspectives. The academic aspect is generated through theoretical contributions whereas the empirical and practical contribution without an exception is closely connected to the destination local authority, hotel and tourism operators and related government authorities.

Keywords: Destination Competitiveness, Satisfaction, Tourism Image, Response Behaviour, Langkawi Island, Malaysia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1   Preamble

This chapter started with an introduction to the expansive aspects of Perceived Destination Competitiveness, Tourist Satisfaction, Tourism Image, and Response Behavior. This is followed by illustrating the research context and problem statement. The objectives, research questions, the study theoretical framework together with the hypotheses are then addressed this chapter. The last part displays the definitions of key terms and organization of the thesis relating to all chapters are underlined.

1.2   Background of The Study

Tourism is a vital driving force towards alleviating poverty and regional disparities, especially in emerging destinations through the enhancement of employment and national income (Mowforth & Munt, 2015; Risi, 2014). Furthermore, for most of the developing nations, the tourism industry has been identified as a significant income producer. In line with this fact, governments are continually enhancing their current tourism destinations and new destinations and products (Dwyer, Forsyth and Dwyer, 2010). Therefore, it is a prominent challenge for tourism destinations to maintain and strengthen their competitive positions in an ever-competitive global marketplace (World Economic Forum, 2014). For this reason, the measurement of destination competitiveness has become fundamental for strategic planning purposes (WEF, 2013). In other words, the evaluation of the competitiveness of the destinationcontributes decisively to the policies taken and the resources management.

In the recent years, competitiveness has become one of the familiar concepts employed to describe the sustainable development of the travel and tourism industry (Mendola & Volo, 2015). The competitiveness of tourist destinations becomes increasingly important to the countries that intend to control a significant share of the rapidly growing tourism market. That is of particular importance to the tourism-dependent countries, which heavily rely on the situation in tourism and travel industry