FOREIGN TOURISTS’ EVALUATION ON ATTRACTIVENESS OF RECREATIONAL FORESTS IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA AS ECOTOURISM DESTINATIONS

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FH 2014 6
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By

NUR HAFIZAH BINTI IDRIS

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of Requirement for the Degree of Master of Science

January 2014
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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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January 2014

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As noted in the National Key Economic Area, ecotourism has been identified as an important niche area for Malaysian tourism, effectively differentiating itself from other competing destinations in the region. Conventionally, ecotourism products are developed based on existing cultural and natural attractions. In Malaysia, recreational forests have the potential to be developed and marketed as ecotourism destinations since our forests are endowed with diverse flora and fauna, as well as other natural attractions. There are currently a total of 124 recreational forests in Peninsular Malaysia which receive mostly local visitors and only a handful foreigner. Thus, the principal purpose of this study was to measure the attractiveness of recreational forests as perceived by foreign tourist as ecotourism site.

The conceptual framework in this study was constructed based on the model of attitude towards object (ATO), while the attributes listed are based on hierarchy of determinant on attractiveness of forest recreations as presented in several past studies. From the review, 20 characteristics were chosen as representing recreational forest important attributes. Total number of 222 foreign tourists have completed the questionnaire distributed. The main analysis used in this study is mean multiplicative score and importance-performance analysis (IPA). Overall, foreign tourists evaluated recreational forests in Peninsular Malaysia as not quite attractive. From the IPA result, it was found that the most attractiveness attribute is ‘environmental scenery’ while ‘special event’ was identified as the weakest attractiveness attribute for Malaysian recreational forests. The findings also showed that most of the foreign tourists had not visited recreational forest in Peninsular Malaysia before. Moreover, those who had visited the forests before are less than two times within the previous 12
month. Some said that these forests are not promoted properly and does not perform well in persuading tourists to visit the areas.

In general, the findings from this study have provided us an insight on how foreign tourists evaluate the importance and availability of recreational forests in peninsular Malaysia for ecotourism experience. This information is valuable for forest department and tourism agencies for promoting and introducing recreational forests as a new ecotourism product in Malaysia. It is hoped that once the recreational forests were to be developed and promoted as ecotourism sites, they can help to diversify our tourism profile and adding the unique dimension into our ecotourism appeal.
Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

PENILAIAN PELANCONG ASING TERHADAP DAYA TARIKAN HUTAN LIPUR DI SEMENANJUNG MALAYSIA SEBAGAI DESTINASI EKOPELANCONGAN

Oleh

NUR HAFIZAH BINTI IDRIS

Januari 2014

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Konsep kajian ini telah dibina berasaskan model attitude towards object (ATO), manakala sifat-sifat yang disenaraikan adalah berdasarkan kepada hierarki penentu daya tarikan hutan lipur, seperti yang ditunjukkan oleh beberapa kajian terdahulu. Daripada kajian tersebut, 20 ciri-ciri telah dipilih sebagai mewakili sifat yang perlu ada dalam hutan lipur. Seramai 222 pelancong asing telah menjawab boring soal selidik yang diberikan. Analisis utama yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah kiraan mean multiplicative dan importance-performance analysis (IPA). Secara keseluruhaninya, pelancong asing berpendapat bahawa hutan lipur di Semenanjung Malaysia tidak menarik. Daripada hasil keputusan IPA pula, didapati bahawa sifat daya penarik yang paling kuat adalah environment scenery manakala special event telah dikenal pasti sebagai sifat daya penarik paling lemah bagi hutan lipur. Hasil kajian juga mendapati
bahawa kebanyakan pelancong asing tidak pernah melawat hutan lipur di Semenanjung Malaysia sebelum ini. Selain itu, bagi yang telah melawat sebelum ini hanya melawat kurang dua kali sepanjang 12 bulan yang lalu. Ada yang mengatakan bahawa hutan ini tidak dipromosikan dan tidak menunjukkan prestasi yang baik dalam menarik minat pelancong asing untuk datang melawat.

Secara umum, hasil daripada kajian ini telah memberikan gambaran mengenai bagaimana pelancong asing menilai kepentingan dan ketersediaan hutan lipur di Semenanjung Malaysia. Maklumat ini sangat berharga untuk jabatan hutan dan agensi-agensi pelancongan dalam mempromosi dan memperkenalkan hutan lipur sebagai produk ekopelancongan baru di Malaysia. Adalah diharapkan sekiranya hutan lipur berjaya dibangunkan dan dipromosikan sebagai kawasan ekopelancongan, ianya boleh membantu dalam mempelbagaikan profil pelancongan dan menambah dimensi yang unik ke dalam struktur ekopelancongan di negara kita.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the name of Allah, Most Benevolent and Most Merciful. Alhamdulillah, with His help and will, I finally was able to complete the study.

First of all I would like to express my special gratitude and sincere thanks to Associate Prof. Dr Azlizam Aziz as the Chairman of the Supervisory Committee for his assistance guidance and advice in completing my thesis. My deepest appreciation to Associate Prof. Dr. Zaiton Samdin as the Committee Member for all the advice and support rendered throughout the study.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the examiners committee, Associate Prof. Dr. Manohar Mariapan as the Chairman, Associate Prof. Dr. Sridar Ramachandran, Associate Prof. Dr. Shukri Mohamed and Associate Prof. Md. Amin Md. Taiff for their constructive criticism and comments.

A special note of thanks to staffs at Forest Department of Peninsular Malaysia, Perak State Forest Department, Pahang State Forest Department and Kedah State Forest Department for giving such valuable information to me especially for helping me during the survey.

My friends, Nurul Nasyitah Shukor, Nur Fairuz Fauzi, Mohd Ifrathshim, Siti Nora Yosoff, Mohd Zulfazli Zakaria, Mohd Hakim Mohd Khairudin, Evy Madehah Dziauddin, Nooradilah Kamaruddin, Siti Nursyadiq Anuar, Gerald Ulok, Evelyn Lim Ai Lin, Jane Abi, Kambiz Yousefi, Marzieh Falah, Nur Farhana Ahmad, Nurul Nasreeni Abd Manap, Nur Farhana Abd Rahman and Sharifah Nur Hidayah who have always inspired me and give moral support throughout the study duration.

Not forgetting too, my beloved family especially my parents, Idris Johari and Hamidah Razali, my sisters, Nur Hazanah and Nur Hanisah and my fiancée, Abdul Hadi Ruslan who did inspired me and thousand thanks for their unending support and understanding.

Last but not least, I would like to thank to those who were involved directly or indirectly in conducting my study, thank you and may Allah bless you.
This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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DECLARATION

Declaration by graduate student

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