UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF LOCAL AND FOREIGN TOURIST PREFERENCES TOWARDS SELECTED VISUAL IMAGES OF MALAYSIAN LANDSCAPES

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By

HAMIMAH TALIB

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

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DEDICATION

This research study is dedicated to all individuals who have contributed in making this study possible, to those who put interest in this study, and to those who are going to use the finding of this research.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

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Chairman : **Associate Professor Mustafa Kamal Mohd. Shariff, PhD**

Faculty : **Design and Architecture**

Image has been supported as one of the primary factors in deciding where to travel. The great stride in tourism industry has brought up the interest in investigating what people like in the environment. This study compares the preferences for visual images of Malaysian landscapes among the local and foreign tourists in Malaysia. There were 120 local and 74 foreign tourists sampled in this study. The settings consisted of 60 colour photographs of four categories: beach, highland, rural, and landmark structure. Two phases were involved in the study. In the first phase, Category-Identifying Methodology (CIM) (Kaplans,1989) was used to measure people's reaction to landscapes, where participants were exposed to the set of 60 colour photographs. The participants rated each of the scene on a seven-point rating scale, for their preference and reasons for their preference were recorded. The second phase involved a focus group of selected panels from different fields to get their opinions on the content of the preferred images and the economic values in terms of their willingness to pay for the images.

This study has identified significant differences in the preferences of local and foreign tourists for highland and beach category. Comparison of preference shows that the local tourists prefer landscape images with *"dense, green vegetation with few elements; prospect and refuge"* characteristics; the British and Japanese both prefer the *"Isolated, unpolluted, beach and sea; coastal forest"* landscape images and the Chinese prefers images with *"skyline, tall buildings, and greens, blue sky or water and white clouds; modern architecture "*. A Content Analysis for reasons of preferences reveals that images with more 'natural', 'peaceful', 'beautiful', 'colourful' and the presence of 'water' elements are more preferred. Willingness To Pay (WTP) analysis finds that a single one time donation that was agreed upon by the panellists to preserve the landscape resources is RM466.67 (mean), while the maximum amount per year that they are willing to pay to enjoy the resources is RM314.44 (mean).

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

PERBANDINGAN LINTAS BUDAYA CITARASA PELANCONG TEMPATAN DAN ASING TERHADAP IMEJ VISUAL LANDSKAP MALAYSIA

Oleh

HAMIMAH TALIB

November 2005

Pengerusi   : **Profesor Madya Mustafa Kamal Mohd. Shariff, PhD**

Fakulti   : **Rekabentuk dan Senibina**

Imej merupakan salah satu faktor utama dalam menentukan pilihan destinasi pelancongan. Kepesatan dalam industri pelancongan telah menarik minat dalam pengkajian tentang apa yang menarik minat seseorang dalam sesuatu persekitaran. Kajian ini membandingkan citarasa terhadap imej visual landskap Malaysia di antara pelancong tempatan dan asing di Malaysia. Seramai 120 orang pelancong tempatan dan 74 orang pelancong asing telah mengambil bahagian sebagai sampel dalam kajian ini. Set 60 gambar berwarna daripada empat kategori iaitu: pantai, tanah tinggi, luar bandar dan struktur mercu tanda, telah digunakan dalam kajian ini. Kajian ini telah dijalankan dalam dua fasa. Dalam fasa pertama, *Category-Identifying Methodology (CIM)* (Kaplans,1989) telah digunakan untuk mengukur reaksi terhadap landskap, di mana responden telah didedahkan kepada 60 gambar berwarna tersebut. Para responden telah memberi setiap gambar tersebut ukuran mengikut skala tujuh-*point*, dan penyebab untuk citarasa tersebut

dicatatkan. Fasa yang kedua melibatkan satu kumpulan panel pakar yang telah dipilih dari beberapa bidang yang berlainan untuk mendapatkan pendapat mereka berkenaan kandungan imej-imej yang disukai dan nilai ekonomi landskap tersebut dari segi kesanggupan membayar.

Kajian ini telah mengenalpasti perbezaan yang signifikan dalam citarasa pelancong tempatan dan asing untuk kategori pantai dan tanah tinggi. Perbandingan citarasa menunjukkan bahawa pelancong tempatan menyukai imej landskap dengan ciri-ciri "tumbuhan hijau, padat, dengan sedikit elemen; *prospect and refuge*"; Pelancong British dan Jepun menyukai "pantai dan laut yang tidak tercemar, jauh dari gangguan; hutan tepi pantai", dan pelancong Cina menyukai imej dengan ciri-ciri "garisan langit, bangunan tinggi, kehijauan, langit atau air biru, awan putih; ciri akitek moden". Analisis kandungan untuk penyebab citarasa menemui bahawa imej dengan ciri 'semulajadi', 'tenang/damai', 'cantik', 'berwarna-warni' dan kehadiran elemen 'air', adalah lebih disukai oleh pelancong-pelancong secara keseluruhan. Analisis Kesanggupan Membayar (WTP) menemui bahawa sumbangan sekali secara menyeluruh yang dipersetujui oleh para panel untuk memulihara dan melindungi sumber landskap yang diwakili oleh imej-imej yang paling disukai adalah RM466.67 (purata), manakala jumlah maksimum yang sanggup dibayar untuk setahun untuk menikmati sumber tersebut adalah RM314.44 (purata).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIM   Content Identifying Methodology / Category Identifying Methodology

CVM   Contingent Valuation Method

DENR   Department of Environmental and Nature Resources

MTPB   Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board

RM   Ringgit Malaysia

SPSS   Statistical Package for Social Sciences

UK   United Kingdom

UPM   Universiti Putra Malaysia

VFR   Visiting Friends/Relatives

WTP   Willingness To pay

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background to the Research

Malaysia is actively promoting tourism as a major potential money earner for the country. Promotional materials such as brochures, leaflets, posters and other advertising media for vacation destinations use images of Malaysian landscapes to attract visitors. Major attractions, which Malaysia can offer tourists include natural resources such as beaches, highlands, and islands as well as cultural resources including landmarks, places of worships, historical places, and others. These are to compliment various other promotions and incentives that have also been offered to entice local as well as foreign tourists to visit the various destinations offered.

Image is the essence of tourism (Mackay and Fessenmaier, 1995). Image has also been identified as a primary factor in deciding where to travel (Gartner,1986; Hunt, 1975; Kent,1984; Mackay and Fessenmaier, 1995). This includes "image" as advertised and promoted visually or that of as the beliefs and expectations of consumers. As choices for potential travellers increase, destination marketing organizations are also striving to create image and provide information through advertisements, brochures, videos, and other promotional tools that will introduce and attract tourists and subsequently persuade the tourists to the promoted destinations.

Visuals are paramount in tourist destination promotion and image creation. With the goal for the promoted and perceived images to match the potential travellers expectations to the greatest extent possible, destination marketers seek to establish, reinforce or change images. Picture simulation is a new thing in destination promotion or travel business. With improved computer graphic it is possible to create or modify certain features in images of settings, to create desired images. The interest in the simulation of landscapes with the sole purpose to predict tourists' preferences is gaining importance by potential tourists. Studies on landscape simulation are gaining researches' attention (Suzuki and Chikatsu, 2001; Ulbricht, 1994).

Photographic and video technologies have recently dominated the communication and perception of destination images. A significant amount of promotional materials for vacation destinations use visuals focusing on natural sceneries. Although the promotion of destination images is namely conveyed through multiple channels, such as verbal messages and managerial practices, this study concentrates only on visual aspect.

In landscape preference perspective, it is the visual aspect rather than other senses, that has been given much emphasis as the primary factor of destination preference (Herzog, 1985; Kaplan, 1987; Herzog, 1989; Zube *et al.*, 1993). Studies on the content of certain visual landscape sceneries became important as some landscapes sceneries are more preferred than others. Researchers are keen to investigate the reasons for these differences in preferences, from the aspect of specific content of those sceneries (Kaplan, Kaplan &

Brown, 1989; Balling and Falk, 1982; Kent, 1989; Herzog,1989). There are evidences from previous studies indicating that there are similarities in landscape preferences among people even from different cultural background. Most researches indicate that natural, verdant, or open landscapes are more preferred as compared to urban, dry, or enclosed landscapes (Hull and Revell, 1989a; Yang and Kaplan, 1989; Kaplan and Talbot, 1988).

There are also evidences from previous researches that landscape preference is dependent upon meanings assigned to landscape features, which in turn implies that scenic beauty is, to some extent, learned (Zube and Pitt, 1981; Hull and Revell, 1989a; Tips and Savasdisara, 1986; Kaplan and Herbert, 1987; Kaplan and Talbot, 1988). Hence, the cultural background of the observer becomes an important subject to be investigated.

Cross-cultural landscape preference studies whether people of different cultures share a common preference for the same environment or how much they differ from one culture to another, have received much attention by many researchers (Zube and Pit, 1981; Kaplan and Herbert, 1987; Yang and Kaplan, 1990; Mustafa Kamal, 1994; Herzog *et al.*, 2000;). However, only a few researchers have investigated the cross-cultural preferences of tourist for landscape images of a tourist destination. One of these is the one conducted by Hull and Revell (1989), which was an evaluation on the scenic beauty preferences by the foreign tourists as compared to the local community in Bali. In Malaysia, studies on landscape preferences have not yet been given much attention. However, with the

increasing interest in eco-tourism and scenic visual resource conservation, this issue is becoming more prominent.

1.2   Malaysian Tourism Industry

The tourism sector in Malaysia has developed rapidly and is already making a significant contribution to the Malaysian economy. Total tourist receipts from tourists expenditure for the last five years has increased from RM8,580.4 million in 1998 up to RM 29,651.4 million in 2004 (Table 1).

Table 1: Tourist Receipts (Year 1998 – 2004)

Year	Tourist Arrivals (Million)	Total Tourist Expenditure (RM Million)
1998	5.55	8,580.4
1999	7.93	12,321.3
2000	10.22	17,335.4
2001	12.78	24,221.5
2002	13.29	25,781.1
2003	10.58	21,291.1
2004	15.70	29,651.4

Source: Tourism Malaysia (Retrieved March 2005, online)

Studies by Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) reported that the purpose of visits by most of the visitors to this country was leisure vacations and sightseeing as major activities sought by tourists (Malaysia Tourism Policy Study, 1999).

Table 2: Top Ten Tourist Arrivals in Malaysia 2001-2002

#	Country of Residence	2001 (Jan-Dec)	2002 (Jan-Dec)	2001/2002 Change (%)
1.	SINGAPORE	6,951,594	7,547,761	8.6
2.	THAILAND	1,018,797	1,166,937	14.5
3.	INDONESIA	777,449	769,128	-1.1
4.	CHINA	453,246	557,647	23
5.	JAPAN	397,639	354,563	-10.8
6.	BRUNEI DARUSSALAM	309,529	256,952	-17
7.	UNITED KINGDOM	262,423	239,294	-8.8
8.	TAIWAN	249,811	209,706	-16.1
9.	AUSTRALIA	222,340	193,794	-12.8
10.	INDIA	143,513	183,360	27.8
	GRAND TOTAL	12,775,073	13,292,010	4.0

Source: Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) (Retrieved July 2003, online)

As until 2002, top tourist generating markets for Malaysia are Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, China, Japan, Brunei Darusallam, United Kingdom, Taiwan, Australia, India,

United States, Hong Kong, Germany, and Western Asia, respectively. Table 2 shows the top ten tourist generating market for Malaysia for the year 2001 and 2002.

As can be seen in Table 2, the top three tourist generating market for Malaysia were from neighbouring countries like Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia. However, for the purpose of this study, these neighbouring countries are assumed to have almost the same culture characteristics as Malaysian. Therefore, only tourist generating markets which are located far from Malaysia, such as China, Japan, and the United Kingdom were chosen to be sampled for the purpose of this study.

Table 3: Top Ten Tourist Arrivals in Malaysia 2003-2004

#	Country of Residence	2003 (Jan-Dec)	2004 (Jan-Dec)	2003/2004 Change (%)
1.	SINGAPORE	5,922,306	9,520,306	60.8
2.	THAILAND	1,152,296	1,518,452	31.8
3.	INDONESIA	621,651	789,925	27.1
4.	BRUNEI	215,634	453,664	110.4
5.	CHINA	350,597	550,241	56.9
6.	JAPAN	213,527	301,429	41.2
7.	TAIWAN	137,419	190,083	38.3
8.	HONG KONG	72,027	80,326	11.5
9.	SOUTH KOREA	46,246	91,270	97.4
10.	INDIA	145,153	172,966	19.2
	GRAND TOTAL	**8,876,856.0**	**13,668,662.0**	**494.6**

Source: Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) (Retrieved March 2005, online)

Table 3 shows the top ten tourists generating market for Malaysia for 2003 and 2004. The above table shows that the top three tourist generating market for Malaysia is still Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia. There was an obvious decrease in the number of tourist in 2003, however, there was also a great increase in 2004. Compared with year 2001 and 2002 (Table 2), tourist groups from the United Kingdom and Australia were no more listed in the top ten tourists generating market in 2003 and 2004. The two new groups which have made it to the top ten list were Japan and South Korea. In a glance, it is apparent that the top ten tourist to Malaysia were from Asian countries. There has been a decrease in the tourist arrival from the western countries. This might have been caused by safety factors percieved by the western tourists. However, without a proper research on this matter, the assumption on why the number of western tourist decreased and why the number of Asian tourists increased, will remain an assumption.

1.3   Statement of Problem

Image plays a very important role in determining which destination a potential tourist choose to visit. In this aspect, images of local landscapes can contribute towards attracting tourists to visit Malaysia. However, there has been no research to date that investigates what kind of landscape images are preferred by local and foreign tourists. The main problem here was the absence of information on the preference of tourists for Malaysian landscapes. Promotion and advertising in terms of visual images have been

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