



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA
TOURISM IMAGES OF HIGHLAND DESTINATIONS IN PAHANG,
MALAYSIA

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**TOURISM IMAGES OF HIGHLAND DESTINATIONS IN PAHANG,
MALAYSIA**

By

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**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
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Science**

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fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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The highland is one of the tourism destinations for people to travel to, other than the beach, wilderness, historical site, lake, city and others. Each of these destinations has their own images that differentiate them from other destinations. The value of understanding the images people have of a destination is important since it affects the individual's subjective perception and subsequent behaviour and destination choice. In order to investigate the image of highland destinations, a self-administered survey was used to collect data from 1200 respondents both from local and international tourists visiting Cameron Highlands, Fraser's Hill and Genting Highlands during November and December 2007.



Based on the findings, six factors of the tourism image for these highlands as perceived by the tourists were identified namely; 1) "service and infrastructure", 2) "local attractions and facilities", 3) "general mood and vacation atmosphere", 4) "leisure and recreational activities", 5) "natural surroundings", and 6) "nature and family-oriented". All those factors were significantly different among the three highlands except for one factor, namely "services and infrastructures". Genting Highlands strong points are "services and infrastructures" and "leisure and recreational activities" factors. Meanwhile, Fraser's Hill came out strongly in terms of "general mood and vacation atmosphere", "natural surroundings", and "nature and family-oriented". Cameron Highlands, on the other hand, had a strong point of "local attractions and facilities" factor. Moreover, the results of the study found significant relationship between tourists' destination choice and the five image factors which were; 1) "local attractions and facilities", 2) "general mood and vacation atmosphere", 3) "leisure and recreational activities", 4) "natural surroundings" and 5) "nature and family-oriented".

The findings of the study provided theoretical and practical implications for the tourism authorities of Malaysia specifically in the highland area in order to guide them in formulating more precise future marketing strategies.

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

IMEJ PELANCONGAN DESTINASI TANAH TINGGI PAHANG, MALAYSIA

Oleh

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Tanah tinggi merupakan salah satu daripada destinasi pelancongan bagi seseorang individu untuk dilawati selain daripada pantai, hutan lipur, tempat bersejarah, tasik, bandar dan lain-lain. Setiap destinasi ini memiliki imejnya yang tersendiri yang membezakan ia daripada destinasi-destinasi yang lain. Kepentingan memahami imej yang dimiliki oleh individu terhadap sesebuah destinasi adalah bernilai kerana ia mempengaruhi pandangan, tingkahlaku serta destinasi pilhan mereka. Bagi mengkaji imej destinasi tanah tinggi, satu kaji selidik telah dijalankan bagi mengumpul data daripada pelancong-pelancong tempatan dan luar negara yang mengunjungi Cameron Highlands, Fraser's Hill dan Genting Highlands sepanjang bulan November dan Disember 2007.



Berdasarkan hasil kajian, enam faktor imej pelancongan bagi tanah tinggi tersebut daripada sudut pandangan pelancong dikenalpasti iaitu; 1) "perkhidmatan dan infrastruktur", 2) "tarikan tempatan dan fasiliti", 3) "perasaan umum dan suasana percutian", 4) "aktiviti rekreasi dan masa senggang", 5) "keadaan persekitaran semulajadi", dan 6) "alam semulajadi dan berorientasi keluarga". Kesemua faktor tersebut didapati mempunyai perbezaan yang signifikan diantara tiga destinasi tanah tinggi kecuali faktor "perkhidmatan dan infrastruktur". Genting Highlands memiliki kekuatan posisi bagi faktor "perkhidmatan dan infrastruktur" dan "aktiviti rekreasi dan masa senggang". Fraser's Hill pula memiliki kekuatan posisi bagi faktor "perasaan umum dan suasana percutian", "keadaan persekitaran semulajadi", dan "alam semulajadi dan berorientasi keluarga". Manakala Cameron Highlands memiliki kekuatan posisi bagi faktor "tarikan tempatan dan fasiliti". Selain itu, hasil kajian juga mendapati terdapat hubungan yang signifikan diantara pilihan destinasi pelancong dan lima faktor imej iaitu 1) "tarikan tempatan dan fasiliti", 2) "perasaan umum dan suasana percutian", 3) "aktiviti rekreasi dan masa senggang", 4) "persekitaran semulajadi", dan 5) "alam semulajadi dan berorientasi keluarga".

Hasil keputusan daripada kajian ini dapat menyumbang terhadap implikasi secara teori dan praktikal kepada badan pelancongan di Malaysia khususnya kawasan tanah tinggi bagi memberikan mereka panduan dalam memformulasi strategi pemasaran yang lebih tepat pada masa hadapan.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 12th January 2009 to conduct the final examination of Nurul Amirah binti Zainol on her thesis entitled "Tourism Images of Highland Destinations in Pahang, Malaysia" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the degree of Master of Science.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

NURUL AMIRAH BINTI ZAINOL

Date: 2 April 2009



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDA	Awareness, Interest, Desire and Action
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
ATO	Attitude-Toward-Object
EDA	Exploratory Data Analysis
FHDC	Fraser's Hill Development Corporation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IPA	Importance-Performance Analysis
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
MANOVA	Multivariate Analysis of Variance
MDS	Multidimensional Scaling Technique
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Program
WTO	World Tourism Organization
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Tourism has become one of the largest income contributors, representing 9.9% of world GDP and bringing into existence of more than 238 million jobs worldwide (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2008). With this increased monetary success, the market has expanded and grown into a intensely competitive arena with tourism destination marketing organizations spanning the globe to attract customers to their respective destinations (Sirgy and Su, 2000). Tsotsou and Vasioti (2006) points out, "Tourism is expected to continue to grow due to the increase in leisure time, the rise of income and life expectancy" (p. 71). Thus, competition will be intensified in the tourism sector and marketing strategies will become increasingly important.

Azlizam (2002) comments, "The tourism industry has been strongly promoted in Malaysia as a means of creating new employment opportunities, reducing the deficit in the balance of foreign earnings, and diversifying its economic base" (p. 2). It is also expected that the tourism sectors will generate up to 14% to the Malaysia's GDP by the year 2018 (Malaysia Travel and Tourism, 2008). "Visit



Malaysia Year 2007" and "ZOOM! Malaysia" were of the efforts by the Malaysia's government in order to enhance the country's tourism development and to promote the image of Malaysia in the eyes of the world.

Image is generally defined as a mental construct developed by the consumer on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions (William, 1965). Tourists as consumers develop images of every experience at a destination. However, tourists also form 'selected impressions', in that they consider to the information that is most closely tied to their own personal interests (Ahmed, 1991). It is not what tourists as consumers know as objective fact, but what they 'think' or 'feel' subjectively about a vacation destination, i.e. its tourism resources, its touristy services, the hospitality of its host, and its socio-cultural norms, which affects their consumer behaviour (Ahmed, 1991).

Extant literature has shown that a destination image is a valuable concept when investigating the destination selection process (Bigne, Sanchez and Sanchez, 2001; Chen and Tsai, 2006). Destination image also has been shown to be a significant factor in determining visitor choice (Lee, Lee and Lee, 2005). In attracting more tourists, the tourism destination managers therefore, must know the image that they project in order to have elements allowing them to make strategic marketing decisions (Lucio, Maria, Miguel and Javier, 2006).



Thus, a strong and clear tourist destination image can enhance consumer confidence in its tourist attractions and consumer influence to visit them. Discovering existing perceptions about a destination may provide worth insights to destination marketing strategists, particularly if perceptual differences exist. Recognition of existing images can help identify factors contributing to the success or failure of product positioning efforts as pointed out by Ahmed (1991). The destinations can reposition themselves to improve or change touristy products in their respective target markets in order to increase their competitive edge if the images are thoroughly investigated.

1.2 Problem Statement

In the tropical countries i.e. Malaysia, highland areas are great recreational retreats especially for city dwellers. The highlands are attractive as they are equipped with accessible nature trails, greenery and a cool climate (Lim, 1995). The similarity of the highlands to temperate regions of the world has attracted some tourism there. It is reported that more than 600,000 tourists visit Malaysia's highlands every year, and the revenue generated contributes significantly to our national economy (Puan, 2005). In line with the national objective of promoting Malaysia as a 'Truly Asia' destination, the Pahang State Government is very keen to attract the tourism investment into potential areas that have been assigned throughout the state (Kam, 2008).



Highland tourism destinations in Malaysia such as Cameron Highlands, Fraser's Hill and Genting Highlands are competing among themselves in order to attract as many visitors as possible from both local and international sources. These areas are not only competing among themselves but also with the other tourism areas like the wilderness, beaches, historical sites and city areas. A study by Rosmalina (2005) at Pahang National Park have shown that most of the tourists chose the beach (35.2%) followed by wilderness areas (25.4%) and the highlands (20.8%) as their main holiday destination choice.

Another study by Norhizaliney (2006) also showed that the highland has become as the third choice for holiday destination by the Malaysia's residence after the city/ historical/ theme park and island/ beaches. This obviously implies that highland destinations in Malaysia are currently behind the other types of tourism destination as the foremost tourist choice to visit. Thus, the pull factor which is based on the image is still perceived low by the current visitors. The perceptions generated by the image of highland destinations in Malaysia can be improved if a study is done.

In addition, studies on this matter are scarce in Malaysia. The previous destination image study being reviewed (i.e. Bigne, Sanchez and Sanchez, 2001; Haahti, 2004; Chen and Hsu, 2000; Hosany, Ekinci and Uysal, 2006) used Spanish, Lapp, Korean and British samples, thus, this study examines the current



situation here in Malaysia. The majority of the other destination image studies also measure the perceptions of only one destination, without a frame of reference to any competing destinations. Moreover, there is lack of highland destination image studies since the most popular type of destination of interest are countries followed by states, cities, resort areas and provinces (Pike, 2002). In an increasingly competitive tourism market, such a study is needed to seek a fuller understanding of the nature of images held by tourists in order to build up more favourable images and thereby enhance a destination's attractiveness and economic development (Hankinson, 2004).

Hence, this study was conducted at three highland destinations in Pahang, Malaysia namely Cameron Highlands, Fraser's Hill and Genting Highlands in order to answer these questions:

- 1) What images tourists hold and associate with each of these destinations?
- 2) Is there any relationship between image and destination chosen for vacations?
- 3) What are the strengths and weaknesses of these destinations from the perspective of tourism?

1.3 Objectives

The main objective of the study is to investigate the destination images for highland tourism areas in Pahang, specifically Cameron Highlands, Fraser's Hill and Genting Highlands. The specific objectives of the current study are;



- a) To identify and compare tourists trip characteristics of the three highland destinations.
- b) To identify and compare the tourism image factors of the three highland destinations.
- c) To determine the strengths and weaknesses of the image factors for the three highland destinations.
- d) To determine highland destination image factors influencing destination choice.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is considered from two perspectives: (1) its contribution to the body of knowledge about travel and tourism, and (2) practical contributions for tourism marketing and planning, especially in the context of Malaysian highland tourism industry.

Firstly, an important theoretical contribution of this study is to enhance the understanding of the role played by image towards choosing a destination in a tourist's travel choice process. In this study, image of a destination is represented by visitors' perceptions of a destination and the importance they assign to each attribute influencing their visitation. The conceptual framework used in this study provided new insights into the image of highland destinations. It is also confirmed the concept as suggested by Echtner and Ritchie (2003) that