

Understanding the Factors Influencing Formation of Tourist Friendly Destination Concept

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Received: January 4, 2012 Accepted: January 29, 2012 Published: March 1, 2012

doi:10.5539/jms.v2n1p106 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jms.v2n1p106>

The research is financed by Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi MARA and National University of Malaysia.

Abstract

The tourist friendly destination is a concept, which satisfies the tourists through utilization and the relationship between elements of activity, space and product without any interruption and difficulties starting from the resident to the preferred of tourism destination. It has been seen as a customer-oriented concept where the tourists regarded as the customers at the tourist friendly destination. However, studies that of such initiatives are quite limited and sector based, thus leaving a gap of knowledge and misunderstanding what makes constitutes a tourist friendly destination. Therefore, this study is a concept paper with the aim of identifying the factors underlying and influencing the formation of tourist friendly destination at a macro level perspective. Through this study, it is found that five factors influencing the formation of tourist friendly destination. The implication of this study provides better insight into the factors, which influenced the formation of tourist friendly destination and its significance as a picture of those responsible for tourism destination development, as part to follow the

demand and need of tourist as a customer, the basic practice in the tourist friendly destination concept.

Keywords: Customer oriented branding, Factor influencing, Tourist friendly destination, Macro level

1. Introduction

Tourism is the world's largest industry. It expands after the decline of other industries like the manufacturing industry and others industry, which monopolized by the world economic and social system (Iversen & Wren, 1998; Mc Intosh et al., 2000; Badaruddin, 2005). The tourism industry has benefited a country in terms of its economic development. This has seen through the movement of international tourists as well as the domestic tourists, which have caused the development of the tourism destination in a country. Although in Malaysia have many tourism destinations that offering a high quality of activity, space and product, however still have a few tourism destinations wherein failed to give a good outcome to the tourists. This is due to the lacking of planning aspect in the tourism development and therefore it fails in fulfilling the demands and needs of the tourists. The competition between tourism destinations will be increasing apparently in future years (Lipman, 2007) as they are more focused to the development of the tourism market (Navickas & Malakauskaite, 2009). Therefore, tourism destinations need to be more creative and unique in offering niche tourism or more importantly a customer-oriented branding. For this reason, the stakeholder who involved in managing and promoting of their respective tourism destinations has been using the tourist friendly destination concept. For example, the Kuala Lumpur City Hall as the local authority proposed the friendly destination concept to use in Kuala Lumpur City as a Friendly City Tourism through planning concept in KL City Plan 2020 (DBKL, 2011). In addition, according to a study conducted by HSBC Bank, Malaysia was ninth place out of ten friendliest countries in the world after Canada, Bermuda, South Africa, the USA, Australia, Spain, France and Britain (Berita Harian, 2011). Therefore, the tourist friendly destination concept has been used by the relevant stakeholders to enhance the competition between each other, but the question is what are the main factors underlying and influencing the formation of friendly destination. Although there are many studies focusing on tourism destination such as a destination image (Milman & Pizam, 1995), location (Gartner, 1989; Chako, 1997; Walmsley & Young, 1998; Botha et al., 1999), branding (Morgan et al., 2003), and competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Navickas & Malakauskaite, 2009), however study on a tourist friendly destination concept is quite limited and leaving a gap of knowledge. Since there are no specific theories, concepts, frameworks and indicators in tourist friendly destination usage, thus create misunderstanding what constitutes a tourist friendly destination. The tourism providers will therefore offer what they assumed to be friendly while on the other hand, the tourists and the local community feel it may be not. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to identify at a macro level, the main factor influencing the formation of tourist friendly destination concept.

2. Tourism destination and relationship in the formation of tourist friendly destination

Tourism destination has seen as unique via a complex combination in the tourism system includes services, resources (environment, nature, man-made: consists of sun, sea, landscape, culture and amenity), infrastructure, facilities and experience. Through previous study, clearly have a various perspectives related to the terminology of tourism destination based on the researcher's field. For example, Hall (2000) defines destination is related to geography like country, island or city, and this terminology is similar to Vukonic (1997) that described destination is the synonym to location, zone, district, state or city of tourism. According to Swarbrooke (1995), tourism destination is a large area that comprises of various attractions combined with the services required by the tourists, while Kim (1998) describes the destination is a package of tourism facilities and services, combined with attributes to identify the effectiveness and affects to tourists in tourism destination. However, Gunn (1994) explained the destination is a travel marketing area while Medlik (1993) described the destination is a place visited by tourists in whom the local people would utilize the amenities at the place and the tourists each year. In fact, tourism destination has been influenced by the three factors, which are attracting, amenities and transportation network wherein some researchers define it as a quality tourism destination (Medlik, 1993). Principally, the word of destination is taken from the Latin word *destinatio*, *onis* means place or the end of the journey (Vukonic, 1997). This terminology has been used a long time ago to present. Nevertheless, the terminology of destination frequently changes according to scientific research or a tourism development. Tourist prefers to travel at tourist friendly destination wherein the product, space and activity can be used without any hesitation when traveling to the tourism destination. Even with the changes of concept (mass tourism to alternative tourism) and development of tourism, tourists are considered as the customers and due to that, product, space and activity should be designed based on the customer preferences (customer oriented branding). According to Swarbrooke (1995), tourists have a tendency to respond a tourist friendly destination wherein the facilities and services are easily accessible. Friendly destination is a destination, which everything is easily accessible and time will be saved entirely without any interruption starts from the residence to the attraction to

setting off on the journey home (Swarbrooke, 1995). As a result, tourist friendly destination is a comprehensive tourism destination that gives full satisfaction to tourists through relationship and connection of three elements: activity, space and product without any interruption from the residence to the tourism destination.

3. The factors influencing the formation of tourist friendly destination

3.1 The shifting of tourism trend

Recently, the tourism industry has shown a rapid development and obvious change wherein tourism has brought in a large amount of income to the economy of a country. Changes and development have seen since in late of 90th and early twentieth century when the previous tourism only involved with the elites' classes, has shifted to the concept of mass tourism and alternative tourism, which are customer-oriented branding. It has been formed a new phenomenon in the development of hotels, infrastructure as well as other facilities, which are used by tourists (Rojek & Urry, 1997; Desmond, 1999; Gottdiener, 2000; Urry, 2002). Through previous studies has shown that the developments of tourism are resulted from the changes in the "mass tourism" concept whereby the rigid travel package which later moved to the "alternative tourism" concept which has led to more interesting and strong economic opportunities (Sleight, 1993; Weinstein, 1994; Buhalis, 2000). A concept of mass tourism is synonymous to a tourism area, which provided the facilities and infrastructure to meet the demands and needs of tourists. In other words, in mass tourism concept tourists are often more involved in passive activities like pampering themselves. According to Smith & Eadington (1995), mass tourism concept is a competitive industry monopolized by huge tourism operators, which are committed to a small tourism destination and does not utilize the local resources. This statement also agreed by Jafari (1989) who stated that negative impacts such as pollution, congestion and prostitution are associated to the mass tourism concept that promotes the movements of a large scale of tourism and insensitive towards the physical environment or even the socioeconomic structure of the local community. Thus, it formed a shape of thinking in the tourism development, which categorized as a cautionary platform and adaptancy platform wherein has proposed an alternative tourism concept which the concept of small-scale low impact (Jafari, 1989). Nevertheless, to cover the weaknesses as well as the negative image of mass tourism concept, the alternative tourism concept has been introduced in the 1980s through the Alternative Tourism Conference (Nash & Butler, 1990). Supporting to the adaptancy platform, a few researcher views that the sustainable in economic, environmental and social will be achieved through alternative tourism concept (Jafari, 1989). Consequently, through the alternative tourism concept there exists other concepts such as responsible tourism (Johnson, 1990), green tourism (Jones, 1987), nature tourism (Whelan, 1991), eco-tourism (Boo, 1990) and city tourism. In addition, Hamzah & Ismail (2003) stated that the alternative tourism concept promotes interaction between tourists and the local communities and respectful towards the environment. Therefore, through this factor has formed a tourist friendly destination concept based on the principle of alternative tourism concept whereby the elements of activity, space and product in the tourist friendly destination will be produced based on the demands and needs of tourists. Through the tourist friendly destination concept, the tourists are able to utilize the local resources and at the same time fostering a relationship between tourist and local community. Indirectly, awareness of tourists towards the ecosystem and ecology of the destination will be increasing and simultaneously widens the knowledge and experiences of the tourists. Therefore, a tourist friendly destination concept is a variation of alternative tourism concept, which enables tourists independently and feels an experience themselves as compared to the mass tourism (Smith & Eadington, 1995).

3.2 The changes of tourists tastes

The changes of tourists' tastes are a factor due to the changes of tourist's character, attitude and lifestyle towards a tourism destination. This condition has been changed caused by the influence of elements activity, product and space at the tourism destination, which regarded as archaic, created a feeling bored and given negative perception. According to Jawardena (2002), a tourism destination would need to manage the changes in accordance with the changes in taste, needs, desires and wants of the tourists. While, according Lipman (2007) tourists would be boring if there are similarities in product, space and activity at the tourism destination. For instance, due to changes in tourists' tastes, many tour operators who are offering the 3S's concept (sun, sea and sand) had to change a marketing strategy to offer a new package which is more cheaper (Lipman, 2007), increased activities package and even change the whole concept totally in fulfilling the tourists' tastes (Jawardena, 2002). In fact, current tourist not just visiting monuments, buildings, others main attraction and takes photos only but they would like to get an experience and knowledge, which not have at their own place. According to Lipman (2007), tourism will be increased if it derived from willingness to learn, exploring new experience and adding significance to their life. He also believed that the change in tourists' tastes is an addition of the tourist intention, wherein is for resting, relaxing and rejuvenating (Lipman, 2007). Consequently, the existence of this factor will be enabled tourists enjoy and obtaining a new knowledge, skill and experience. This

factor will be influenced and expanding the usage of elements such as product, space and activity as a basic formation in the forming of tourist friendly destination.

3.3 The increasing of travel capabilities

According to Lipman (2007), this factor influenced by an increasing of tourist's personal income, an introduction of low-cost carrier, convenient transportation network to tourism destination and supported by the information technology network, which is cheaper and valuable. The increase of the personal income has been seen as a catalyst for the increasing tourist ability to travel. Supported by the low cost carrier and usage of information technology across borders enable the middle and low class tourists to travel in tourism destination which formerly this industry monopolized by the aristocracy and elite classes. In addition, the expansion of low cost carrier such as Air Asia, Air Asia X and Firefly in Malaysia, Jetstar Asia Airways in Singapore, Air Asia Indonesia, Batavia Air and Citilink Lion Air in Indonesia has enhancing the tourist's ability to travel. Thus, give a positive impact on the sub sectors in the tourism industry such as accommodation (hotels and apartments), entertainment and shopping (theme park, recreational park, and shopping centers), transportation (bus, taxi), tourist attraction (cultural and historical building) and others. The more products offered by the low cost carrier, the more significant changes in terms of product, activity and space that will be offered by the sub sectors. Moreover, the increase of the internet or information technology usage has also shown an increase of tourists' ability to travel. Tourists able to choose a tourism destination that offers their preferred activity, space and product easily through the information technology network. Through the existing of information technology network such as the internet as a mechanism for cost comparison, searching for affordable and reasonable prices will be easier. This is a transformation from the conventional approach to a modern approach. Through this transformation, Lipman (2007) stated that previously tourism industry monopolized by the stakeholder such as tour agent or travel agent, but currently it has changed to the tourists themselves. He also highlighted that the do-it-yourself (DIY) phenomenon has assisted the tourists' ability to travel starting from ticketing, selection of accommodation until the choice of activity, product and space at the tourism destination (Lipman, 2007). The effect can be seen through the reduction of commission charge and change in the cost of a transportation ticket such as the air tickets. As a result, this factor has been seen as a factor in the formation of tourist friendly destination wherein tourists are more propensities toward the price sensitivity and value for money when selecting the tourism destination including the usage of the product, space and activity.

3.4 The existence of public-private partnership

Partnership agreements between public and private sectors are necessities, thus, it is as a form of partnership to develop the tourism industry especially friendly destination. According to Lipman (2007), the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is required to increase the awareness through market-driven, researched basis and industry-led. As an example, the public sector contributes to the development of transportation such as transportation types of air, land and sea, to identify places of attractions such as a public park, building with cultural and historical characterization and finally to provide an infrastructure i.e. signage, lights, pedestrian walkway, landscape and many more. Meanwhile, the private sectors invest in the tourism destination itself through the provision of accommodation such as hotels, apartments, restaurants and lastly the shopping locations and entertainment places such as shopping malls, MICE and theme parks. In fact, it was agreed by the WTO (2011) stated that Public-Private Partnership is needed as both sectors play their respective roles, for instance the public sector allocates the budget for infrastructure, facilities and services while the private sector promotes and prepare the human resource's skill in the tourism industry. Therefore, through this partnership, the government expenses will be saved through public sector involvement. Due to that, the role of Public-Private Partnership has boosted the formation of tourist friendly destination wherein the elements of activity, product and space required to fulfill the supply and demand of tourist.

3.5 The selection of destination and tourist motivation

The importance in knowing the reason people to travel, the favorite tourism destination as well as the element affecting a selection of tourism destination is an essential before a friendly destination will be developed. In choosing a tourism destination, it is too complex to be elaborated because it involves the relationship in the process of travel decision making. According to Dellart et al. (1998), the process of choosing a tourism destination involves the psychological and non-psychological factors, while Um & Crompton (1990) stated that the process of choosing a tourism destination involves personnel (push factor), destination characteristics (pull factor) and limitation factor. Based on previous studies, the process of selection tourism destination was influenced by a few elements such as price and distance elements (Middleton, 1989; Nicolou & Mas, 2006), climate element (Elwin, 1989; Hamilton & Lau, 2004), quality and price elements (Goossens, 2000), push

element (such as economy, social, demographic, technology, political factor) and pull element (such as geography, accessibility, attraction, services, peace, policy) (Gunn, 1994); push element, pull element, exogenous element, traveling cost and time (Ulrich & Jarmila, 2002); natural environment element (such as location, geography, weather and scenery), artificial environment (such as infrastructure, transportation, supply towards recreation and entertainment services, accommodation), global market (Navickas & Malakauskaite, 2009), shopping elements (Hanqin & Lam, 1999; Sirakaya et al., 2003), destination image element (Telisman-Kosuta, 1989; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Milman & Pizam, 1995), food element (Ryan, 1997; Quan & Wang, 2004), security element (Middleton, 1989; Davidoff & Davidoff, 1994; Heung et al., 2001) including the element of accessibility (Middleton, 1989). Therefore, in the formation of tourist friendly destination, the stakeholder must take the elements in the selection of a tourism destination into consideration because each of these elements may indicate to the supply and demand as well as the tourist's motivation. This is because tourist's motivation also influences the formation of tourist friendly destination. Even, Beerli & Martin (2004) stated motivation was needed to convey tourists to a preferred tourism destination, which gives a satisfaction themselves. While according to Pizam et al. (1979), motivation defined as a set of desires that causes people to travel. In fact, the people would travel caused by social status, culture and spirituality (Goeldner et al., 2000). The demographic characteristics such as age, gender, gross annual income, education level, race, types of occupation and marital status affects the tourist's motivation. In previous studies, to measuring the tourist motivation, a typology which often used is the push factor and pull factor (Crompton, 1979). Even, there are also have a different typology in measuring the tourist's motivation such as internal and external factor (Uysal & Jurovski, 1994); intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Goodall, 1991); seeking for a safe place factor, seeking for culture, history and seeking for wealth factor (Oh et al., 1995); and lastly an enjoyment factor, friends and family priority, love for nature and benefit loving group (Loker & Purdue, 1992). While, Hsu et al. (2009) stated that factors affecting a tourist motivation can be grouped into several categories: push motivation consisting of internal (such as psychological, physical, social interaction, exploration) and external (such as tangible and intangible). Therefore, in the formation of a tourist friendly destination, the tourist motivation is needed through continuous research, thus the elements of activity, product and space will be developed into a tourist friendly destination and realize the tourists' desires.

4. Conclusion

The tourist friendly destination is a concept, which satisfies the tourists through utilization and the relationship between elements of activity, space and product without any interruption and difficulties starting from the resident to the chosen of tourism destination. The most interesting concerning tourist friendly destination is through the concept that gives a positive impact in terms of creating a traveling package at a reasonable prices, the distribution of development & use of infrastructure, facilities, accommodation, transportation up to the use of internet, marketing methods and easier marketing distribution, satisfying the demand & supply of tourists so that all experience and expectation are met and finally earned the right distribution to the target group of entrepreneur, such as the local community and the respective stakeholder. Accordingly, tourist friendly destination is a concept that has been used by the stakeholder to promote a tourism destination. Even though a tourist friendly destination study is quite limited, as no specific research has been done specifically in literature, theory, concept, frames and indicators in the utilization of a tourist friendly destination, thus leaving a gap of knowledge and confusion to the users. Although this research is a preliminary study, but needed as a preamble and exposure to the tourist friendly destination concept. In fact, the factors discussed in this paper were seen at the macro level but it is an important factor that contributing and give an affecting to the formation of tourist friendly destination through the relationship between the elements of activity, product and space in tourism, which is the basis of the tourist friendly destination concept. Meanwhile, although this research has not been tested through empirical research, the points from earlier studies illustrate that there is a relationship between those factors in the formation of tourist friendly destination (refer Figure 1). In addition, this article will continue as a basic medium that opens up more research concerning a tourist friendly destination and will be assisting the related stakeholder in managing a tourist friendly destination by combining the use of elemental activity, product and space to fulfill the tourist necessities as a practice for the tourist friendly destination concept.

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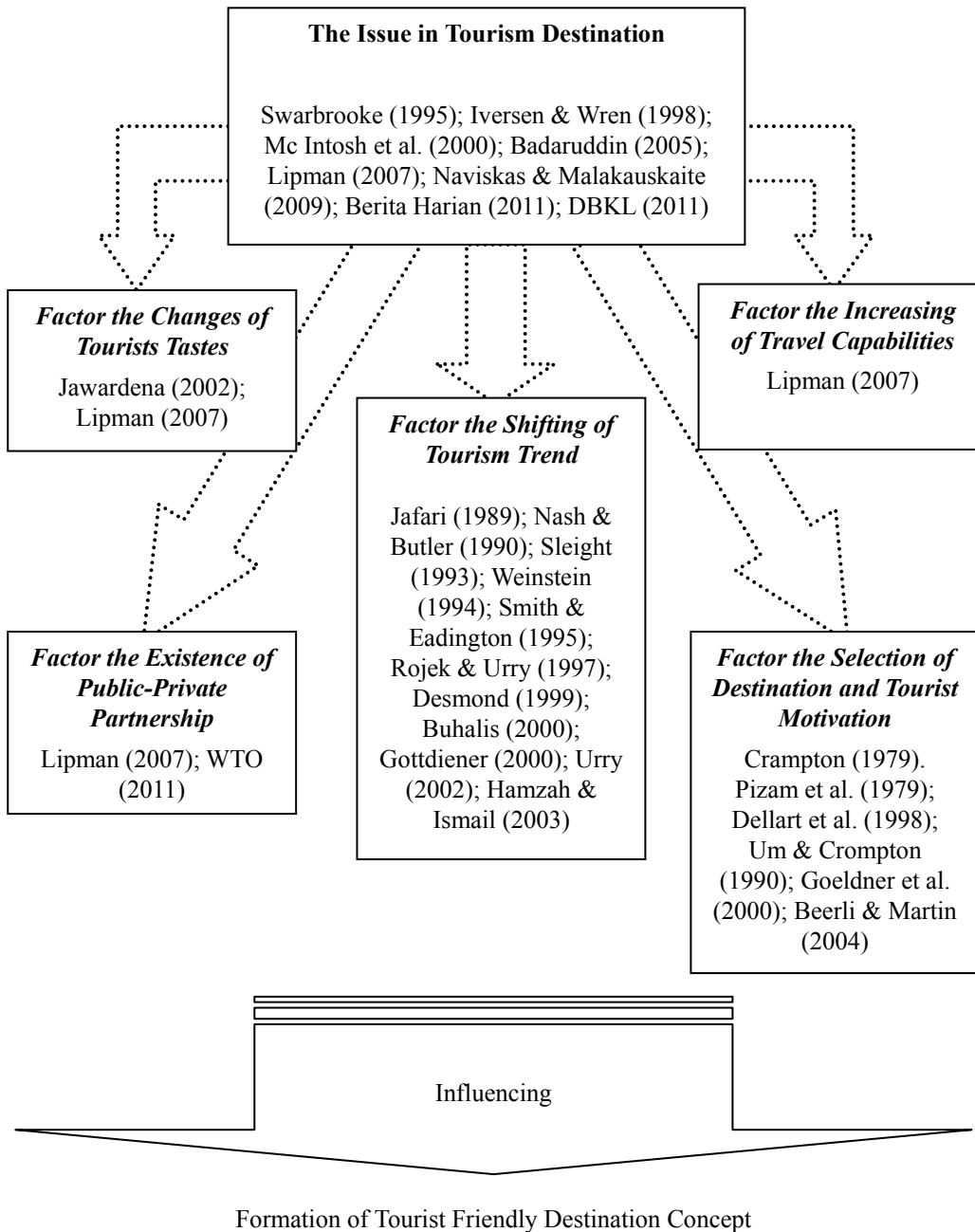


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for understanding the factors influencing formation of tourist friendly destination concept