

**DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES THAT ATTRACT
INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS TO VISIT PANGKOR ISLAND**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify Pangkor Island's important destination attributes. This study also examine how and to what extent Pangkor Island's important destination attributes impact on international tourists' decision on choosing Pangkor Island as their destination. A model adapted from Nguyen Cong Tien (2008) and Lichen Zhou (2005) was established to express how these important attributes impact on the selection of destination, destination image variable and through the perceived satisfaction with important attributes, affect the intention of international tourists to revisit Pangkor Island in the future. Data was collected from 180 international tourists who travelled to Pangkor Island. The result of this empirical study identified 9 important attributes of Pangkor Island from the analysis of quantitative data using the statistical techniques. Eight of these nine important attributes and destination image of Pangkor Island were found significantly important to destination selection of international tourists. The results also show that, the eight Pangkor Island's attributes revealed different importance levels in influencing tourists' destination decision making, formation of Pangkor Island's overall image, and the tourists' satisfaction level with their trip to Pangkor Island. This study presents a clear picture of the destination attributes that attract international tourists to visit Pangkor Island. Some recommendations are proposed to the Pangkor Island authorities relating to tourism promoting programs of Pangkor Island.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini dijalankan adalah untuk mengenalpasti ciri-ciri penting destinasi penting bagi Pulau Pangkor. Kajian ini juga menilai bagaimana dan sejauh mana ciri-ciri penting destinasi Pulau Pangkor member kesan kepada pelancong antarabangsa dalam memilih Pulau Pangkor sebagai destinasi pilihan percutian. Satu model yang diadaptasi daripada Nguyen Cong Tien (2008) and Lichen Zhou (2005) telah diwujudkan bagi menyatakan bagaimana ciri-ciri penting destinasi memberi kesan di dalam pemilihan sesebuah destinasi percutian, pembolehubah imej destinasi serta melalui kepuasan penerimaan mengenai ciri-ciri penting destinasi yang memberi kesan terhadap pemilihan Pulau Pangkor sebagai destinasi percutian pada masa hadapan. Data yang diperolehi diambil daripada 180 orang pelancong antarabangsa yang telah melancong ke Pulau Pangkor. Hasil kajian empirikal ini telah mengenalpasti 9 ciri-ciri penting Pulau Pangkor daripada analisis data kuantitatif dengan menggunakan teknik statistik. Lapan daripada sembilan ciri-ciri penting dan imej destinasi Pulau Pangkor telah dikenalpasti penting secara jelas signifikasinya sebagai destinasi pilihan bagi pelancong antarabangsa. Keputusan itu juga menunjukkan lapan ciri-ciri Pulau Pangkor mendedahkan tahap kepentingan yang berbeza dalam mempengaruhi pelancong membuat keputusan pemilihan destinasi percutian, pembentukan imej keseluruhan Pulau Pangkor, dan tahap kepuasan percutian ke Pulau Pangkor. Kajian ini menerangkan gambaran yang jelas tentang ciri-ciri destinasi yang dapat menarik pelancong antarabangsa ke Pulau Pangkor. Beberapa cadangan diusulkan kepada pihak berwajib Pulau Pangkor mengenai program promosi pelancongan Pulau Pangkor.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The increasing growth of tourism industry is widely recognized for its contribution to the economic development of regions and nations all around the world. For many destinations, visitor expenditure on accommodation, food and drink, local transport, entertainment, shopping, and others is an important pillar of their economies, creating much needed employment and opportunities for development. In 2010, international tourism receipts are estimated to have reached US\$ 919 billion worldwide (693 billion Euros), up from US\$ 851 billion (610 billion Euros) in 2009. Worldwide, international tourist arrivals surpassed 124 million in the first two months of 2011, up from 119 million in the same period of 2010. Asia and the Pacific, the region with one of the fastest growth rates in 2010, saw its pace of growth slow down (+6%), although from a very strong performance the previous year. Results were better than expected for Europe (+6%), boosted by the recovery of Central and Eastern Europe, and the temporary redistribution of travel to destinations in Southern and Mediterranean Europe due to developments in North Africa (-9%) and the Middle East (-10%). The Americas

(+5%) was in line with the world average, with strong results for South America and the Caribbean, but rather weaker growth in North and Central America (World Tourism Organization – UNWTO).

Tourism industry in Malaysia is the second largest contributor of the national economy. In 2005 Malaysia welcomed some 16.5 million tourists, representing an increase of more than 160% between 2000 and 2005. The number of international tourists to Malaysia in the year of 2008 is 22.0 million compare to 20.9 million in the year 2007. This situation helps in boosting up the tourism contribution in generating revenue of RM49 billion for the year 2008 (Tourism Malaysia, 2009).

Revenue from the tourism industry has almost doubled between year 2001 and 2005. Malaysia's advantage as a centre for conferences, event organization, sports facilities, exhibitions and conventions as well as its wealth in arts and crafts, shopping and recreation must be promoted aggressively. As such, the management of the Malaysian Tourism Board will adopt private sector business practices in order to become more dynamic. In addition, the main programs that will be implemented by the Government include enhancing access and facilities for tourist arrivals, and improvising as well as maintaining amenities and infrastructure. An expenditure of RM1 billion has been allocated for the purpose of maintenance. By the year 2010, our target is to attract 24.6 million tourists per annum (Dato Seri Abdullah Hj Ahmad Badawi, Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006 – 2010)

Pangkor Island is located in Perak Darul Ridzuan state under the authority of Manjung Municipal Council (MMC). It is located just off the coast of North West Malaysia and it is about 300 km north from the country capital Kuala Lumpur. Pangkor Island is about 200 km South of Penang and 70 km South-West of Perak's capital Ipoh. The island can be access from Lumut Town Jetty by the sea and from the mini airport located at Teluk Dalam by the air. The island is surrounded by the Dinding Straits Sea

and the Malacca Straits Sea. Its temperature ranges from 25-35°C and experiences a tropical climate with about 20,000 populations on the island itself (Manjung Municipal Council (MMC), 2010).

The local inhabitants believed that the island was protected by the spirits, so they called Pangkor Island the Spirit Island. Another name for Pangkor Island in the old days was Dinding, which means 'screen' or 'partition'. This was in reference to the position of the island as it protects the mainland's estuary. Over the years the island was frequently visited by pirates who were roaming the seas around the island. They robbed boats in the Straits of Malacca and hide themselves on the hills on the island. The names of Batu Lanun or Batu Perompak meaning Pirates' Rock echo the memory of the pirates (Manjung Municipal Council (MMC), 2010).

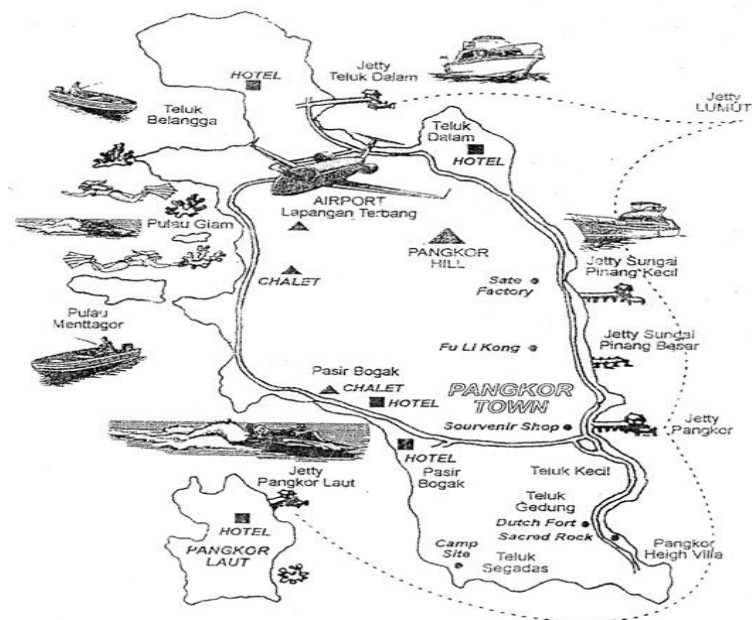


Figure 1.1.1: Map of Pangkor Island

1.2 Problem statement

The strength of the appeal of a destination to tourists is linked to the quality of attractions it can offer to the tourists. It is the attractions at a destination that stimulate an interest in visiting that country by providing the elements of development an image of the destination. The attraction at the tourists' destination also is the image that is used to attract the potential travelers to visit the destination. It is the attractions that provide the visitor with the essential motivation to choose a destination. In general, the demand for the other components of travel (transport, accommodation and so on) derives from the original stimulus that comes from the interest in experiencing the attractions.

There have been several definitions of destination. Leiper (1995) defines destination as "places towards which people travel and where they choose to stay for a while in order to experience certain features or characteristics a perceived attraction of some sort". On the other hand, according to Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, Shepherd and Wanhill (1998) destination is a focus of facilities and services designed to meet the needs of the tourists (Buhalis 2000: 98). For example, a country, city, town or an area could be called as a destination but also a cruise ship is accepted as a destination.

There are so many factors affecting destination choice process of a tourist. Generally, these factors are grouped into two categories called "push" and "pull" factors (Pikkemaat 2004: 88). Push factors indicate psychological factors; e.g values, motives and personality as well as social factors; e.g. age, education, marital status. Pull factors are destination related dimensions; these can contribute formation perceived attraction among tourists; e.g. distance, type of area, infrastructure, size of area, type of vegetation and activities in the destination (Lam and Hsu 2006: 590). Also, it is accepted that pull factors (attributes) could be grouped as tangible and intangible attributes (Pikkemaat 2004: 90; Lam and Hsu 2006: 591)

From the point of destination attributes, Nicolau and Mas (2004: 1-34) determine the factors affecting destination choice of the tourist. In the researches' data sets different operative variables were used to measure importance of destination attributes. These variables were surface area, price, natural attributes, infrastructure, accessibility, programmed activities, reputation of the destination, restrictions of navigation, population of species, time of journey, entry prices, hotel size and services, parking areas and shops.

On the other hand, Buhalis (2000: 98) pointed out that destinations comprised a core of some components. He categorized these components into six headings and called 6A's framework because of first letter of each heading. Attractions represent natural, hand-made, artificial buildings, special events. Accessibility refers entire transportation system, terminals and vehicles. Amenities refer accommodation, catering, retailing and other tourist services. Available packages mean pre-arranged packages by intermediaries and principals. Activities represent all the activities could be done by tourists while they are in the destination. Ancillary services refer to banking, telecommunications, posts and hospitals, etc.

Table 1.2.1: Statistic of visitor/tourist arrival to Malaysia by the year 2009 and 2010

YEAR	2009	2010
TOTAL TOURIST ARRIVAL	23,646,191	24,577,196

Source: Tourism Malaysia

Table 1.2.2: Statistic of visitor/tourist arrival to Pangkor Island for the year 2009 and 2010

YEAR	2009	2010
TOTAL TOURIST ARRIVAL	677,952	714,144

Source: Manjung Municipal Council

According to the Tourism Malaysia data, the number of tourist arrival to Malaysia for the year 2009 and 2010 recorded as the above Table 1.2.1. The number of tourist arrival visit Malaysia in the year 2009 recorded 23,646,191 tourists and by the year 2010 recorded 24,577,196 tourists. According to the Manjung Municipal Council, the number of tourist's arrival for Pangkor Island is shown in the Table 1.2.2. As shown in the Table 1.2.2, the number of tourist arrival to Pangkor Island by the year 2009 recorded 677,952 tourists and by the year 2010 the number increased to 714,144 tourists.

The development of the tourists' attraction at the study area is important roles to be competitive in the tourism industry. Therefore, the identification of important attributes of Pangkor Island and a comprehensive evaluation of these attributes about their impacts on destination decisions of the international tourists would be of significant to the tourism planners of Pangkor Island and assist them in tourism product development and marketing strategies in the highly competitive international tourism market.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The aim of the study is to measure the destination attributes that attract international tourists to visit Pangkor Island:

1. To identify Pangkor Island important attributes and their degree of importance to the selection of Pangkor Island as tourists' destination.
2. To identify the degree of importance of Pangkor Island image to the selection of Pangkor Island as tourists' destination.
3. To examine the correlation between the degree of importance of each of attributes and pre-visit image of Pangkor Island.
4. To examine the correlation between the degree of tourists satisfaction with each of important attributes and their overall satisfaction with their trip to Pangkor Island.
5. To investigate the level of strength of destination attributes of Pangkor Island.

1.4 Research questions

As stated in the research objectives, this study will investigate and find out the study problem or issue that been studied. Therefore it focuses on the following questions:

1. What are the important attributes of destination and which of them play important role in attracting international tourists to visit Pangkor Island?
2. Does pre-visit image of Pangkor Island play an important role in attracting international tourists to visit Pangkor Island?
3. How and to what extent each of the important attribute has an effect on pre-visit image of Pangkor Island?
4. What are the strengths of destination attributes of Pangkor Island?

1.5 Hypothesis

Several hypotheses have been made towards this study in order to find out the choice of the international tourist to visit the study area for their holiday or vacation:

Hypothesis 1: Each of Pangkor Island important attributes is significantly important to destination selection of international tourists

Hypothesis 2: The higher the degree of importance of each of destination attributes, the stronger the tourist's wish to visit Pangkor Island would be.

Hypothesis 3: The destination image is significantly important to destination selection of international tourists.

Hypothesis 4: Tourist's satisfaction with each of important attributes has positive correlation with destination satisfaction.

Hypothesis 5: Tourists satisfaction with each of important attributes has positive relationship with overall satisfaction with the trip.

1.6 Scope of the study

The framework of this research is targeted on the international tourists who visit Pangkor Island with attempt to measure the attitude of the international tourists and important level of destination attributes of Pangkor Island affecting decisions and attitude of international tourists. The measurement of the study based on the expectation and perception of international tourists prior and during their visiting the Pangkor Island as their destination for holiday.

1.7 Operational definition

International tourist: non-Malaysian who visits Pangkor Island for holiday or vacation.

Pre-visitation: a status when international tourist who decided to visit Pangkor Island but not starting the trip yet.

Destination attribute: the feature or characteristic of Pangkor Island place which attracts international tourists to visit for leisure and holiday.

Destination image: awareness of an individual tourist about the place of Pangkor Island based on his/her perception and experience about Pangkor Island

1.8 Significance of the study

The significance of this study expects to bring in potential benefit to measure the destination attributes that attract the international tourist to visit Pangkor Island. This study also helps to investigate the level of strengths of destination attributes of Pangkor Island. According to the objectives of this study, multifaceted understanding of important attributes that attract international tourist to visit Pangkor Island will contribute as a supportive tool for the Manjung Municipal Council in development and improvement of these attributes. Multifaceted understanding of important attributes will contribute as guidance for tourism firms in Pangkor Island in particular and all over the country in general in offering Pangkor Island tour packages that most satisfy international tourist's expectation during their trips to Pangkor Island.

1.9 Limitation of the study

This section identifies the limitations of the present study.

1. The studies only focus on the international tourists rather than domestic tourists that visit Pangkor Island.
2. The study's model was tested in a specific setting and area that is Pangkor Island.
3. The study has utilized only the destination attributes in previous research, discussion with research supervisor and discussion with tourism officer from local authority. In other words, the destination

attributes identified in the questionnaire do not include all possible attributes of destination.