

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND TOURISM IN MALAYSIA

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DECLARATION

"I, Fathilah Ismail, declare that the PhD thesis entitled The Development of Small Island Tourism in Malaysia is no more than 100,000 words in length, including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work."

Signature.....

Date..... 28.5.2009

PUBLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS THESIS

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ABSTRACT

In comparison to large islands and mainland destinations, economic development has often proven to be difficult for small island destinations due to common characteristics that include smallness in size, lack of resources (physical and human), isolated location, high transportation cost and limited capacity to earn export income. However, blessed with natural attractions, tourism has been acknowledged as the best alternative for economic growth and survival of small island communities. Despite the potential of tourism as a catalyst for economic development on small island destinations, tourism may also have considerable impacts on small island systems. Therefore, in order to ensure a continuous flow of economic benefits to small island destinations, tourism on small island destinations needs to be properly planned, developed and managed to develop positive interaction between tourism, environmental, socio-cultural and economic factors. As such, tourism development on small islands needs to be undertaken in a sustainable manner.

One important issue for sustainable development of tourism is knowledge of host and tourist needs and constraints. As tourism is now global, there is a need to study this issue from a cross-cultural context. This research investigates the cross-cultural exchange between hosts and guests, and the potential impacts of cultural differences on their perceptions of tourism impacts, mutual expectations and destination attributes. A cross-cultural approach has been undertaken by grouping the samples according to their language spoken; Malay, Chinese, English and non-English (Continental European). The study encompasses both domestic and international tourists. The inclusion of domestic tourists (Malay and Chinese) is important to allow for a comparison with international tourists. This study is quantitative in nature with survey data collected from three island destinations in Peninsular Malaysia, representing small islands (Perhentian and Redang) and a large island (Langkawi). The study locations have been divided in such a way to permit a meaningful comparison between island settings, and to identify unique criteria and issues for small island tourism. The Mann-Whitney U-test and Principal Components Analysis (PCA) have been utilised in analysing the data.

This study has demonstrated that hosts and guests from different cultural groups behave differently with regard to perceptions, expectations and destination attributes. The study contributes to the literature related to tourism impacts and consumer behaviour in a cross-cultural context. Additionally, the study contributes to the literature related to service quality and destination attributes, and outlines the importance of cultural differences in providing quality tourism services.