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THE FUTURE OF SPORT TOURISM IN SARAWAK

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By

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**A project paper presented to the
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2003/04**

ABSTRACT

THE FUTURE OF SPORT TOURISM IN SARAWAK

BY

BONG NYAT NEE

Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the tourism industry. In Sarawak, the sport-based tourism is being considered as a new phenomenon and it is still an untapped product. This study aims to find out the future potential of the sport-based tourism to be promoted as an attraction in Sarawak's tourism industry. This study only focuses on the demand side of the industry. Nonprobability sampling in term of convenience sampling was chosen to carry out this research. The results gained were in the positive manner, in where there was a positive perception, responds, and insights towards the sport tourism in Sarawak. The type of sport seeked by the respondents, the preferred media sources, the preferred time and duration of the event has been identified as well as the motivation and determinant to involve in sporting events. The results suggested that Sarawak may have potential to be promoted and developed as a sport-based tourism destination in the future.

ABSTRAK

PELUANG PELANCONGAN SUKAN DI SARAWAK

OLEH

BONG NYAT NEE

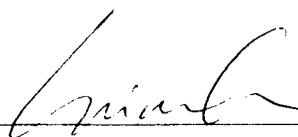
Pelancongan sukan merupakan satu sektor yang berkembang pesat dalam industri pelancongan. Di Sarawak, pelancongan berasaskan sukan masih merupakan satu fenomena yang baru dan belum diterokai sepenuhnya lagi. Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji tentang potensi dan peluang pelancongan berasaskan sukan di Sarawak pada masa hadapan. Kajian ini hanya fokus dari segi permintaan dalam industri pelancongan sukan sahaja. "Convenience Sampling" telah dipilih untuk menjalankan kajian ini. Keputusan yang diperolehi adalah positif di mana terdapat pandangan, persepsi dan permintaan yang positif dan menggalakkan terhadap pelancongan sukan di Sarawak. Keputusan tentang jenis-jenis sukan yang diminati oleh responden, media massa yang dipilih, masa dan tempoh yang sesuai pada para responden, motivasi dan penentu-penentu kehadiran ke sesuatu acara sukan telah diperolehi. Secara keseluruhan, keputusan yang telah diperolehi menggambarkan Sarawak mempunyai potensi atau peluang yang cerah untuk dibangunkan atau dijadikan sebagai satu destinasi pelancongan berasaskan sukan pada masa hadapan.

APPROVAL SHEET

This project paper attached hereto, entitled "THE FUTURE OF SPORT TOURISM IN SARAWAK" prepared and submitted by BONG NYAT NEE (6329) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Bachelor of Economics and Business with Honours (Tourism and Hospitality Management) is hereby accepted.

5/4/04.

5 April 2004



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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will give an overview in the tourism sector and sport tourism industry, both in Malaysia and Sarawak. Besides, this chapter also includes the problem statement of the study topic, the objective to be achieved at the end of the study, and also the rational or the significant of this research.

1.1 Overview

In recent decades, tourism has become somewhat established and has transformed into the fastest growing industry in the worldwide. It has provided an economic significance and employment benefits to the overall community. According to World Tourism Organization (WTO) (1996), tourism is a massive and growing phenomenon, with worldwide consequences. It provides vast benefit, both direct and indirectly. The major contributions of the tourism industry are through the creation of employment, tax revenue and income, cultural understanding and respect for heritage, and appreciation for the natural environment.

According to World Travel and Tourism Council, the travel and tourism industry is estimated to contribute US\$92.7 billion or 8.2 per cent to Southeast Asia's GDP in 2002, both directly and indirectly (Economic Survey of Singapore, 2002). This contribution is likely to rise to US\$224.7 billion or 8.9 per cent of Southeast Asia's GDP by 2012. Six ASEAN countries, which consists of Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Brunei have monopolize 61 per cent or US\$56.5 billion of the 2002 Southeast Asia's GDP.

In term of employment, 7.3 per cent of total employment in Southeast Asia in 2002, or 1 in every 13.7 jobs, is contributed by the travel-and-tourism sector (Economic Survey of Singapore, 2002). By 2012, it is forecasted to rise to 7.6 per cent of total employment, totaling 23 million jobs or 1 in every 13.2 jobs (Economic Survey of Singapore, 2002). The employment growth is estimated to grow at an annual rate of 2.9 per cent from year 2002 to 2012 (Economic Survey of Singapore, 2002).

Basically, tourism industry is a dynamic and competitive industry, which always exposed to the quick changes and challenges in the regions and globally. The challenges range from the natural disaster to some short term changes such as instability in the market.

1.1.1 Tourism Industry in Malaysia

In Malaysia, tourism sector is also considered as the fastest growing industry compared to other sectors such as agriculture sector. It has become the second most important sector after the manufacturing sector. The tourism industry in Malaysia has provided or offers plenty of employment opportunities to the Malaysian community and helps to raise our standard of living.

Besides, tourism industry has generated a vast number of benefits especially to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), foreign exchanges, improvement or development of the local amenities and infrastructure. Apart from the money value that can help to raise the quality of life and our standard of living, tourism industry is also playing a vital role in the effort to preserve and conserve the Malaysian natural and cultural heritage. The preservation and conservation towards the national heritage such as

the endangered animals and the historical building is crucial, as otherwise it will be sacrificed for the economic development.

The international tourist arrivals in Malaysia has increased from 10, 222,000 persons in 2000 to 12,775,000 persons in 2001 (WTO, 2002). In addition, Malaysia has experienced growth in the market share from 9.4% (2000) to 11.1% (2001) even though the growth rate has been decrease from 28.9% (1999/2000) to 25.0% (2000/2001) (WTO, 2002). In term of the international receipts, Malaysia has gained US4936 millions in 2000, experienced 39.4% of the growth rate in 1999/2000 (WTO, 2002). Furthermore, Malaysia has experienced the strong growth with the market share of 6.0% in 2000 (WTO, 2002).

1.1.2 New Tourism Market

In recent years, Malaysia is trying to diversify its tourism market and seeks for other new tourism related product. Thus, sport-based attraction, or sport tourism has started to gain a major focus from the Ministry of Art, Culture and Tourism Malaysia. Basically, sport tourism is the merger of the sport industry with the tourism industry.

Today, the sport-based tourism has grown considerably around the world. Realizing the significance of the sport tourism segment in bringing important opportunities to the country's tourism sector, the first world conference on Sports and Tourism had been organized by the International Olympic Committee and the World Tourism Organization in Barcelona, Spain on the year 2000. The conference had concluded that sport tourism is the faster growing sector in the worldwide tourism industry and countries must incorporate sport in their tourism industry (Crook, 2003).

In an effort to develop the sport-based tourism, Malaysia has become a member of the Sports Tourism International Council. The purpose of the Council is to establish a professional association for sport tourism, to foster research on the role of sport tourism and to interlink sport industry and tourism industry which will later become a sports tourism industry.

The concept of sport related tourism has becoming more prominent in the last few years both as an academic field and an increasingly popular tourism product (Gibson, 1998). In Malaysia, the sport related tourism is still being considered as a new phenomenon in the tourism industry and it has not been fully developed yet. A lot of illustrations and examples have been reported to support the growing of the industry.

Nowadays, the traditional tourism attractions that based on sun, sea, and beach (e.g. sightseeing) are no longer the most important criteria for the tourists when they are seeking travel destination. Some of tourists are now more concern with the activities that will bring them enjoyment, experience and achievements. Traditionally, tourism has been associated with the concepts of rest, relaxation and finding relief from the stresses of daily life. But for the same reasons also, sedentary lifestyles in developed countries have led to a proliferation of gyms and health clubs. More and more tourism products are including the physical and sporting activities. Thus, most of the sports related activities may fulfill these changing interest and preferences (NST, 2003a).

The sports and recreation activities are becoming the popular part of in the Malaysian tourism industry because the sport events can bring a lot of direct and indirect benefits to the country. As an illustration, the 1998 Malaysia Commonwealth Games had generated lots of economic benefits to the country. A study by the research division of the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board during the 1998 Commonwealth Games has revealed that a single international tourist that came for the event has spent an average of RM 307.64 per day or RM 3845.50 for the duration of 12.5 nights stay in Malaysia (Mohd, 1999). Besides, it also helped to raise the country's image in holding large sports events.

There are also other success examples of the sport tourism in Malaysia. The Asian X-game, which is the largest extreme sports event outside the United States, was organized successfully in Kuala Lumpur on January 20-26, 2003 (Khairul, 2003). The Merdeka Run in 1999 had raised RM 50,000 for the chamber's scholarship and welfare trust fund and had been increased to RM 70,000 in the year 2000. As mentioned by the organizing Chairman Shahidan Md Noor, the objective of the run was to contribute towards sports development, promote sport tourism and raise money for the charity fund (NST, 2000a). In addition, the inaugural Malaysian Toughest Man or Women Quest, that was held at the Seremban Animal Park on July 27 2003, was another effort to promote the sport based tourism. The event that was open to both Malaysian and foreigners also help to promote the natural attraction of the parks to the participants (NST, 2003b).

Hosting the international sporting events such as Commonwealth Games, Formula one Malaysian Grand Prix and the Golf World Cup can help to raise the Malaysia's image and ability in offering or organizing excellent international sport events. Additionally, the

sport events at the same time can also help to promote the country's other tourist attractions. For instance, the Le Tour de Langkawi (LTDL), the biggest cycling tour outside of Europe, which covered 10 states, can help to promote the whole country (Khairul, 2003). As mentioned by the Minister of Culture, Art and Tourism Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, the staging of more international sporting events would promote the Malaysia's capability to host such events and at the same time it can help to promote the country's unique selling points – its diverse cultures, nature and history (Mohd, 1999).

In an effort to develop and promote the sport based tourism, Malaysia Sports Tourism Council (MSTC) has been established. According to the Council's Vice-President, Ahmad Kamil Mohamad, the center's main role is to promote Malaysian sports and recreation activities and events (Melan, 2001). Ahmad Kamil Mohamad also added that *“sports events have become a multi-billion ringgit industry in its own right either directly or indirectly”*. Under the council, sports travel services center and websites has been set up. The web site will give an opportunity to the people around the world to access the information such as news, current events, upcoming calendar of events, and other features. In promoting the sport tourism industry, the council has identified more than 80 types of sports and recreational activities in Malaysia such as bamboo rafting, boating, golf, cycling, go-kart and many more to better meet the sport tourists' needs and wants (Melan, 2001).

Besides, the sport tourism industry has gained a tremendous support from the related sectors. For example, the travel fraternity, such as hotel has giving their overwhelming support for the events that help to promote the sport based tourism. The sponsorships are

from various aspects such as offering packages to the sport tourists to stay at the hotel or resort during the Malaysian Formula One Grand Prix season (Jamaludin, 2001).

In brief, sports tourism is a significant phenomenon as it includes not only the participants, but the spectators, fans and officials. It can act as a catalyst for other economic sectors such as telecommunications, transportation, hospitality, travel as well as the media industries. For example, the world-class sporting events would lead to spillover benefits to the tourism industry, which would increase the tourism earnings apart from giving Malaysia greater exposure and recognition.

1.1.3 Tourism in Sarawak

In Sarawak, the tourism industry is experiencing rapid growth over the last decades. However, the Sarawak's tourism industry is still at an infancy stage. In fact, Sarawak still has plenty of tourism resources to offer such as nature, culture based resources which have yet to be fully explored. The tourism industry has been recognized as a significant contributor to the state's economy toward generating foreign exchanges and provides employment opportunities. This sector has a big or huge potential to continue to become a major contributor and the driving force of Sarawak's economy in the future, if the state can fully develop the tourism industry. This can be achieved through the development and exploration of more new tourism market.

For the period from 1990 to 1997, Sarawak has experienced healthy economic growth of 8.2 per cent per annum (Immigration Department Sarawak, 2003). Even though the East Asian financial crisis in 1997 resulted in declining of the total foreign arrivals in Sarawak

by 6.8% compared to 210, 430 foreign tourists in 1996, the total arrivals into Sarawak had increased 5.30% in 1997 (Immigration Department Sarawak, 2003). In 2001, there were 3492,315 visitors arrived in Sarawak while in 2002 the total arrivals recorded 3,673,835 persons or experienced a growth at 5.20% (Immigration Department Sarawak, 2003).

The establishment of Ministry of Tourism (MOT) Sarawak in 1995 has reflected the important role of the tourism sector in Sarawak. The main responsibility of the MOT is to deal with the policies and acts as a coordinating body in policy implementation. Meanwhile, the Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) is an agency that helps to promote and market Sarawak as a tourist destination. Additionally, it also provides tourism services and act as an advisory body.

Realizing the significance of the tourism industry, Sarawak is now in the effort to initiate tourism development to its fullest potential. This can be seen through the commitment from the state government and its relevant agencies, as well as the private tourism operators in supporting the tourism development in Sarawak. Much more promotional efforts and marketing strategies have been carried out by the tourism operator in order to better market its tourism attractions and destinations to the world. This involves sending representatives to the foreign countries for the purpose of introducing and promoting Sarawak. Besides, the government also invites the foreign reporters to come to the state in order to witness the uniqueness of the Sarawak's unique attractions. Then they will bring back the information and will help to promote it to the people in their countries. This practice is especially done during major festival and events such as Gawai Night.

Currently, it can be seen that most of the tourism products in Sarawak is based on culture and nature. Three major products have been identified to become main tourism strategy in Sarawak in its Second Tourism Master Plan. The strategy includes culture, nature and adventure (CAN). In addition to CAN, ecotourism has become one of the main selling points in Sarawak because of the high quality of its tropical rainforest resources. It has become the popular focus of the state government and much of the development in the tourism industry is based on it. Yet, the state's tourism players are also in the effort of diversifying its tourism products in order to give more choices to the visitors.

1.1.4 Sport Tourism in Sarawak

In Sarawak, the sport based tourism is also being considered as a new phenomenon and it is still an untapped tourism product or market. Most of the sport events were caters for the special interest segments only, which mean the sport events were normally a small sporting events. However, the state tourism operator is now eager to organize some sport events after realizing the contributions of the sport based tourism, especially in term of its direct economic benefits. The eagerness of the State tourism operator to explore the sport tourism industry can be observed through their planning to include the sport events in this Visit Sarawak Year 2003. Meanwhile, the cases of the sport events being successfully organized in peninsula Malaysia might give an encouragement or incentive to the state's tourism operators to organize or offer the sport-based events. For example, the World Junior Circuit Tennis Championship and Golf Tournament had been organized successfully in Kuching recently.

During the Visit Sarawak Year 2003, many sports activities has been planned and organized for the tourists' participation. However, most of the sports activities are based on nature (ecosports) and adventure and carried out in the natural setting such as Borneo Mountain Bike festival, Sarawak Regatta, Sarawak Safari, Jet Ski, Borneo X-Treme Games, and others. Some of the sport events have established their reputations and being organized as a yearly event such as Kapit Raft Safari and Sarawak Regatta as it has gained tremendous support from the tourists, both locally and abroad.

It is no doubt that Sarawak has incredible geographical diversity especially the natural surrounding or environment. The land of Sarawak is richly stream with wonders of the natural world. Two thirds of Sarawak is covered in rich green vegetation, mainly ancient rainforest. The network of rivers as well as the wonderful mountain range has enabled many sporting activities to be carried out. Most of the water-based sports have been carried out in national parks and these natural parks will be the most suitable place for the adventurous to pursue an adventure experience. Each year few of the rivers have become the routes for raft safaris events. Apart from rafting, the natural resources will also facilitate many others sporting activities such as mountain climbing, mountain biking, wall-climbing, water skiing, yachting and many others.

In term of built sport facilities, many sports infrastructure and facilities has been established in Sarawak in recent years. For example, a sports complex complete with an indoor stadium, an Astroturf field and an Olympic sized swimming pool have been built with the support from the state government. Other major sport facilities which can be found in the state include state football stadium, Sarawak State Stadium (Indoor Stadium)

and golf courses. Sarawak State stadium has seating capacity of 26, 000 and other facilities such as conference room, cafeteria and viewing gallery. It was officially declared open on 27 August 1983 and the total cost for the construction of this stadium in RM 22.6 million. The State Hockey Stadium was officially declared open on June 30 1991 with a capacity of about 1000 spectators. Meanwhile, New Outdoor Stadium (Stadium Sarawak) has a seating capacity of 40, 000 spectators and it cost about RM 160 millions. The sport facilities include football pitch and –lane synthetic running track as well as other ancillary facilities such as meeting hall and conference room.

Shortly, the attractive of the natural environment of Sarawak may facilitate the development of sport tourism, especially those sports that based on natural environment. In addition, the available of the sports facilities may also able to enhance the sport based events in the future in Sarawak.