



Faculty of Economics and Business

Rural Tourism Destination Competitiveness: Hard Measures versus Soft Measures and Moderating Role of Knowledge Sharing

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Rural Tourism Destination Competitiveness: Hard Measures versus Soft
Measures and Moderating Role of Knowledge Sharing

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Except where due acknowledgements have been made, the work is that of the author alone. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.



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ABSTRACT

Within the tourism literature, there has been a growing interest in the notion of destination competitiveness and there is an increasing trend showing more authors have been taking initiatives investigating the concept of destination competitiveness in the rural tourism context. Realising the fact that the tourism sector was one of the world's largest growth industries before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the relevance of rural tourism post the pandemic, rural tourism activities are therefore seen to play an essential role in contributing towards rural economic and social welfare, and indirectly, to the country's economic growth. Therefore, in the review of the current relevant literature in tourism and rural tourism destination, gaps of the literature have been identified and a research model was proposed by the researcher. There is a need to examine and identify factors contributing to the enhancement and development of rural tourism destination competitiveness because these critical factors could provide considerable help to the rural tourism industry. This study intends to investigate the impact of hard measures (i.e., destination appeal and tourism infrastructure) and soft measures (i.e., service quality and destination image) on rural tourism destination competitiveness (i.e., sustainable management, destination marketing efforts, as well as a comparative and competitive advantage). Also, knowledge sharing was adopted as the moderator variable to testify its moderating impact in enhancing the relationship among the four predictors to rural tourism destination competitiveness. Three underlying theories were used to underpin the research framework, namely, Competitiveness Theory, Stakeholder Theory and the Social Exchange Theory. This study took place in six of the rural tourism destinations in Sarawak. A quantitative approach and survey questionnaires were used as the research instruments for data collection. 390 rows of data were used, comprising of respondents from both the international and domestic tourists visited the study sites. The

WarpPLS (version 6.0) was used to perform the PLS-SEM analysis to assess the research model. The findings of this study show that ten of the direct relationship hypotheses tested were supported. Interestingly, three of the moderating hypotheses were supported as well. Knowledge sharing was found to have a positive moderating impact on service quality and sustainable management. Also, knowledge sharing was found to positively moderated the relationship between service quality to comparative and competitive advantage. Knowledge sharing was found to have a positive moderating impact on destination image to sustainable management. To summarize, this study significantly enhanced both scholars' and practitioners' understanding of the impact on both hard (i.e., destination appeal and tourism infrastructure) and soft (i.e., service quality and destination image) measures on the development of rural tourism destination competitiveness (i.e., sustainable management, destination marketing efforts and comparative as well as a competitive advantage) with tourist's knowledge sharing as the moderators that enhanced the relationship among the predictors and dependent variables. This study provides a basis for future researchers interested in the field of rural tourism studies to further investigate the relationship among the constructs.

Keywords: Hard and soft measures, destination competitiveness, moderator, rural tourism, Sarawak

Daya Saing Destinasi Pelancongan Luar Bandar: Faktor-Faktor Keras Berbanding Faktor-Faktor Lembut dan Menyederhanakan Peranan Berkongsi Pengetahuan

ABSTRAK

Pada lingkungan sastera pelancongan, terdapat peningkatan pada segi minat terhadap persepsi tujuan daya saing dan pertambahan pada pola menunjukkan banyak sasterawan mengambil inisiatif penyelidikan terhadap konsep tujuan daya saing dalam konteks pelancongan luar bandar. Kesedaran bahawa sektor pelancongan merupakan salah satu industri pertumbuhan terbesar di dunia sebelum wabak pandemik dan kesesuaian pelancongan luar bandar di pasca covid-19, aktiviti pelancongan luar bandar memainkan peranan penting dalam perkembangan ekonomi luar bandar dan kesejahteraan sosial serta secara tidak langsung memberi impak terhadap kemajuan ekonomi negara. Oleh itu, dalam kajian sastera yang berkaitan pada masa kini dalam destinasi pelancongan luar bandar, jurang sastera telah dikenal pasti dan model kajian telah dicadangkan oleh penyelidik. Terdapat keperluan untuk meneliti dan mengenal pasti faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada peningkatan dan pengembangan daya saing destinasi pelancongan luar bandar kerana faktor-faktor ini dapat memberikan banyak bantuan kepada industri pelancongan luar bandar. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki kesan faktor-faktor keras (misalnya, daya tarikan destinasi dan infrastruktur pelancongan) dan factor-faktor lembut (iaitu, kualiti perkhidmatan dan imej destinasi) terhadap daya saing destinasi pelancongan luar bandar (iaitu, pengurusan lestari, usaha pemasaran destinasi, serta kelebihan perbandingan dan daya saing). Juga, perkongsian pengetahuan diadaptasi sebagai pemboleh ubah moderator untuk membuktikan kesannya yang sederhana dalam meningkatkan hubungan antara empat peramal dengan daya saing destinasi pelancongan luar bandar. Tiga teori asas digunakan untuk menyokong kerangka penyelidikan, iaitu Teori

Daya Saing, Teori Pemangku Kepentingan dan Teori Pertukaran Sosial. Kajian ini dilakukan di enam destinasi pelancongan luar bandar di Sarawak. Pendekatan kuantitatif dan soal selidik tinjauan digunakan sebagai instrumen kajian untuk pengumpulan data. 390 baris data digunakan, terdiri daripada responden dari pelancong antarabangsa dan domestik yang mengunjungi lokasi kajian. WarpPLS (versi 6.0) digunakan untuk melakukan analisis PLS-SEM untuk menilai model kajian. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa sepuluh hubungan hipotesis secara langsung dan tiga hipotesis moderasi yang diuji telah disokong. Perkongsian pengetahuan didapati memberi kesan positif yang sederhana terhadap kualiti perkhidmatan dan pengurusan lestari. Juga, perkongsian pengetahuan didapati secara positif menyederhanakan hubungan antara kualiti perkhidmatan dengan kelebihan perbandingan dan daya saing. Perkongsian pengetahuan memberi kesan positif yang sederhana terhadap imej destinasi kepada pengurusan lestari. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini secara signifikan telah meningkatkan pemahaman para sarjana dan pengamal mengenai kesan terhadap factor-faktor keras dan factor-faktor lembut terhadap peningkatan daya saing destinasi pelancongan luar bandar (iaitu pengurusan lestari, usaha pemasaran destinasi dan perbandingan serta kelebihan daya saing) dengan perkongsian pengetahuan pelancong sebagai penyederhana yang meningkatkan hubungan antara peramal dan pemboleh ubah bersandar. Kajian ini memberi asas kepada penyelidik pada masa depan yang berminat dalam bidang kajian pelancongan luar bandar untuk mengkaji lebih jauh hubungan antara konstruk.

Kata kunci: *Faktor-faktor yang keras dan lembut, daya saing destinasi, penyederhana, pelancongan luar bandar, Sarawak*

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