

## FROM HUNTING TO ADVENTURE WITH NATURE: ANALYSING THE REPRESENTATION OF NATURAL TOURISM ATTRACTIONS IN MALAYSIA (DARI MEMBURU KE KEMBARA ALAM: ANALISIS REPRESENTASI TARIKAN PELANCONGAN BERASASKAN ALAM SEMULA JADI DI MALAYSIA)

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**Abstract:** Although nature-based tourism is frequently presented as a sustainable form of tourism, there are claims that many destination marketers have often exploited this type of tourism in order to attract tourists and make profits. Despite the fact that many past works have investigated aspects related to nature especially ecotourism, very few studies explored on how natural resources have been marketed by the tourism promotional organisations. Owing to this reason, this paper analyses how nature-based attractions have been incorporated and presented to visitors in the promotional brochures using content analysis method. The content analysis of the brochures published from 1962 to 2016 found that natural resources have been incorporated extensively. Three categories of nature-based attractions represented widely in tourism brochures are national parks, islands and beaches, and mountains and hills. On the other hand, big game hunting was only marketed to tourists in the brochures published in the 1960s and 1970s, while types of natural resources promoted to tourists have expanded considerably from 1990s to 2016. Overall, findings of this paper shed light into the understanding on how natural attractions have been represented to tourists for 54 years. It is revealed that with the rising environmental awareness, the Malaysian tourism authorities have modified the way they presented nature-based attractions to some extent, from the image of exploiting natural resources for tourism purposes to environmental care and ethical travel in relatively recent promotional brochures. Yet, a few aspects and activities which contradict to the tourism sustainable practices are still traceable. This paper concludes that natural resources are among the primary attractions for the country's tourism until today and these attributes have been utilised significantly in tourism promotional materials to attract tourists.

**Keywords:** Nature-based tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, tourism promotion.

**Abstrak:** Walaupun pelancongan berasaskan alam semula jadi selalunya dipaparkan sebagai satu bentuk pelancongan lestari, terdapat banyak dakwaan bahawa pihak pemarkar telah mengeksploitasi bentuk pelancongan ini untuk menarik pelancong dan mendapatkan keuntungan. Meskipun terdapat banyak kajian lepas yang telah melihat aspek berkaitan dengan alam semula jadi terutamanya ekopelancongan, namun tidak banyak penyelidikan yang mengkaji bagaimana sumber alam semula jadi telah dipasarkan oleh organisasi promosi pelancongan. Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini telah menganalisis bagaimana tarikan pelancongan berasaskan alam semula jadi telah dimasukkan dan dipaparkan di dalam brosur promosi pelancongan dengan menggunakan kaedah analisis kandungan. Analisis kandungan ke atas brosur yang diterbitkan dari tahun 1962 sehingga 2016 mendapati bahawa sumber alam semula jadi telah digunakan secara meluas. Tiga kategori tarikan alam semula jadi yang banyak dipaparkan dalam tempoh 54 tahun adalah taman negara, pulau dan pantai serta gunung dan bukit-bukau. Sementara itu, aktiviti memburu terutamanya binatang yang agak besar hanya dipaparkan di dalam brosur pelancongan pada tahun 1960-an dan 1970-an, manakala jenis pelancongan alam semula jadi yang dipromosikan kepada pelancong telah diperluaskan sejak tahun 1990-an hingga 2016. Secara keseluruhannya, dapatan kajian ini mampu memberikan pemahaman bagaimana tarikan alam semula jadi telah dipersembahkan kepada pelancong untuk tempoh 54 tahun. Adalah dikenal pasti dengan peningkatan tahap kesedaran terhadap alam sekitar, pihak berkuasa

*pelancongan telah melakukan sedikit perubahan dalam memaparkan tarikan berasaskan alam semula jadi daripada imej yang menggambarkan eksploitasi terhadap sumber alam untuk tujuan pelancongan kepada penjagaan alam semula jadi dan perjalanan yang beretika di dalam brosur yang terkini. Namun, terdapat beberapa aspek dan aktiviti yang tidak selari dengan amalan pelancongan lestari masih dapat dikesan. Kesimpulan kertas kerja ini adalah sumber alam semula jadi masih lagi menjadi antara tarikan utama bagi industri pelancongan di negara ini sehingga kini dan sumber-sumber ini telah digunakan sebagai aset penting di dalam bahan promosi pelancongan untuk menarik pelancong.*

*Kata kunci: Pelancongan berasaskan alam semula jadi, ekopelancongan, pelancongan berasaskan cabaran, promosi pelancongan.*

## **Introduction**

Nature-based tourism is one of the main research areas in the field of tourism (Hall & Boyd, 2005; Roxana, 2015) during the past decades. This category of tourism is often cited as the segment that is well-known and rising quickly (Balmford, Beresford, Green, Naidoo, Walpole & Manica, 2009; Kalfe, 2014; Poudel & Nyaupane, 2015). It is claimed that nature-based tourism which is also known as NBT has grown from one niche area to a more significant standing in the tourism industry presently and as one of the sectors with the highest growth rate (Jones & Ohsawa, 2016). Besides, the increasing emphasis on conservation effort is attributed to the steady development of nature-based tourism (Balmford *et al.*, 2009). Nature serves several important functions in tourism as it can act as a trigger for people to travel and as the settings in which many touristic actions and events take place (Edward-Benediktsson, 2013; cited in Kalfe, 2014). Academically, it is reflected in the work by Hall and Boyd (2005) that studies in the area of nature-based tourism have been expanded over the years from investigating the links between tourism and the physical environment to examine aspects related to the growth of natural resources from perspectives of social, economic and politics. In general, this type of tourism is well-accepted in many parts of the globe as it can contribute economically, promote nature conservation and encourage sustainable community development (Lee, 2013; cited in Lee, 2013). One of the factors which contribute towards the increasing interest in nature-based tourism today is that societies living in urban areas nowadays do not have sufficient opportunities to interact with natural

environment due to the modern style of living and urbanisation (Chen, Prebensen, Chen & Kim, 2013). Due to this reason, more and more people are interested in nature-based tourism as it provides them space and opportunity to experience the nature.

However, tourism based on natural resources can cause tensions on the attributes of nature they depend on (Kuenzi & McNeely, 2008). As more tourists are travelling to experience attractions and sites associated with nature, negative environmental impacts keep on intensifying due to the increasing volume of visitors (Marzuki, Hussin, Mohamed, Othman & Mat Som, 2011). For example, tourism can cause negative impacts to water quality, air, wildlife and other natural resources. As such, to reduce the negative impacts and promote sustainability of the environment and tourist destinations, it is suggested that visitors and tourists should be informed of the desired general and specific behaviour known as Environmentally Responsible Behaviour (ERB) (Lee, Jan & Yang, 2013; cited in Lee, 2013). Natural resources can be under stress from tourist visitation and marketing should be used in dealing with demand from them (Kern, 2006). Despite the proliferation of studies in the area of ecotourism and sustainable tourism, there are not many works which have carried out investigations from the perspectives of marketing and promotion in the context of Malaysia. As one way to protect natural resources is through appropriate marketing effort, it is therefore important to explore how these resources have been presented and marketed to tourists by the Malaysian national tourism promotional bodies over the years.

## Literature Review

### *Nature-Based Tourism*

Tourism associated with nature has been referred to by various names such as nature tourism, ecotourism, green tourism, natural history tourism, rural tourism and adventure tourism (Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism, 1996). Although several of these concepts have been defined precisely, some of them have overlapped with other related terms. From review of the literature, it was observed that there are numerous definitions of the term nature-based tourism developed by academicians in the field. Some scholars defined the term fairly broadly while others offered more extensive definitions of the concept. For example, Weaver (2001) described the term as “any type of tourism that relies on attractions directly related to the natural environment” (p.16). Fluker and Richardson (2004) claimed that nature-based tourism is a general term to define tourism activities which are connected to natural resources (cited in Kern, 2006, p.1). However, the definition mentioned by Hall and Boyd (2005) is more specific. They claimed that “nature-based tourism includes tourism in natural settings (e.g. adventure tourism), tourism that focuses on specific elements of the natural environment (e.g. safari and wildlife tourism, nature tourism, marine tourism) and tourism that is developed in order to conserve or protect natural areas (e.g. ecotourism, national parks)” (p.3). In general, many definitions described ‘nature-based tourism’ as encompassing type of tourism which includes elements of natural resources or tourism activities which take place in the settings of nature. Although it is claimed that some types of nature tourism are not considered as environmental friendly (Kuenzi & McNeely, 2008), some scholars such as Hall and Boyd (2005) incorporated conservation and protection aspects into the definition of nature-based tourism.

### *Ecotourism and Adventure Tourism*

Nature tourism is connected to two other forms of tourism namely ecotourism and

adventure tourism. “Ecotourism” is regarded as a significant type of tourism in promoting sustainability (Mohd Rusli Yacob, Alias Radam & Khairil Wahidin Awang, 2008). Not only that, ecotourism “has been hailed as a panacea” which can cure various problems and offer numerous benefits such as protection of the ecosystems, encourage growth in developing countries and promote peace around the globe (Honey, 1999, p.4). In reviewing the origin of ‘ecotourism’ concept, it can be said that scholars in the field have conflicting views regarding the first introduction of the term, either it started in the 1970s or 1980s (Fennel, 2003). However, although many claimed that Ceballos-Lascurain was the first person to use the concept in the early 1980s, practice of the idea surrounding “ecotourism” has started a long time ago (Fennel, 2003). One of the most cited definitions of the term ‘ecotourism’ was proposed by Ceballos-Lascurain. In 1987, he defined the term as “travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas” (cited in Isa, Hasbullah & Mohd Nasir, 2015, p.6). Presently, ‘ecotourism’ is defined by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES, 2015) as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people and involves interpretation and education”. Thus, it is demonstrated through these two definitions that ecotourism involves more than travelling to places and sites which offer attractions associated with natural and cultural resources. It must also incorporate elements of environmental care, learning and education and maintain way of life of the locals as well.

Nature-based and ecotourism experiences can also include adventurous activities which sometimes are sought out by tourists visiting natural environment (Chiranjeev, 2008). This is because various natural resources such as mountains, lakes, oceans and jungles offer gateway sites for the visitors to experience the

feelings of thrill, stimulation and excitement (Beedie, 2003). Adventure tourism is a concept which combines the act of travelling, sporting activities and outdoor recreation (Beedie, 2003). In the context of adventure tour, this type of tourism can be described as outdoor activities that form the main motive for tourist visits. These activities depend on attributes associated with natural environment which are mostly specialised in sport and the use of tools and provide excitement to participants (Buckley, 2006). Several main characteristics commonly associated with adventure tourism are the involvement of elements of risks and thrills either physically or mentally, pursuit of unique and stimulating activities and at times participation in adventure for individual growth and to gain respect (Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie & Pomfret, 2003). Adventure tourism can be summarised as the type of travel to natural areas in order to engage in risky and stimulating activities which can contribute to the wellbeing of participant's body and mind.

### ***Marketing and Promotion of Nature-Based Tourism***

Without marketing, potential visitors are not aware of the products and services offered by destinations, sites and attractions. However, it is worth noting that marketing in the context of tourism is different as this industry is characterised with intangibility, service performances and assessment of experiences and these aspects are not easy to imagine (Page & Dowling, 2002). In fact, Honey (1999) argued that tourism promotional materials which have been created to market nature-based tourism and ecotourism are mainly designed in a specific way in order to focus on experiences rather than tangible products. Textual descriptions and visuals represented in the tourism brochures are used strategically in portraying and convincing potential visitors despite of the destinations, sites or activities offered could be risky, strange and tough, elements of protection, familiarity and comfort are included as well (Honey, 1999). In the analysis of tourist brochures targeted for the British market and how people have been

represented, Dann (1996) found that the majority of promotional material contained no people in order to signify escapism. Nevertheless, number of pictures which only featured tourists are higher than images showing either locals or locals and tourists together.

Nowadays, more consumers are paying closer attention to environmental protection including when they are on their holidays. As a result of the growing inclination towards environmental consciousness, marketers are incorporating eco-friendly and green elements in drawing potential tourists to buy specific tour packages, visiting particular destinations and sites and joining certain tourist activities and events. This trend is apparent in the observation made by Buckley (2009) that there are operators in travel and tourism industry whose adoption of ecotourism brand is for the purpose of increasing sales and projecting positive image to potential customers. Academically, it is reflected through a number of previous works (e.g. Page & Dowling, 2002; Shamsuddoha, 2005; Koeman, 1998) that the terms 'green' and 'ecotourism' have been exploited by some destination marketers around the world to lure visitations and make profits. According to Page and Dowling (2002), a lot of visitors and tourism operators do not have correct understanding of ecotourism or green tourism concepts. They often used appealing catchphrases or words in order to advertise nature-based attractions and sites such as "take only photos, leave only footprints", eco, clean, green, pure and unspoiled (Honey, 1999, p.48). From a consumer perspective, Sarkar (2012) claimed that majority of people consider green marketing only involves advertising products that have environmental features. Similarly, a study conducted by Shamsuddoha (2005) revealed that majority of Bangladeshi people perceived green marketing as merely the promotion of products and services with ecological attributes. The discussions in this section reveal that despite rising awareness of environment protection and responsible travel over the past decades, there are tour operators and tourists who do not have accurate understanding of these concepts.



### ***Nature-Based Tourism in Malaysia***

Malaysia is one of the countries which rely quite heavily on natural resources in its tourism growth and development. Besides Malaysia, many other developing countries opted to use their natural resources in tourism during their early tourism development. This is because majority of these countries lack other resources to stimulate their tourism growth especially in 1960s and 1970s. In general, Malaysia is blessed with a variety of natural resources such as tropical rainforests, mountains, hills, islands, beaches and wildlife. In fact, the uniqueness of natural resources which can be discovered in Malaysia act as a strong pulling factor for the foreign tourists to visit this country (Marzuki, Rofe & Mohd Hashim, 2014). In terms of tourism products available in this country, it is mentioned that nature-based tourism is the leading segment and ecotourism is another profitable sector (Marzuki *et al.*, 2011). Attributes of natural resources such as national parks and wildlife protected areas were created in Peninsular Malaysia since 1925 (Moste, 1998; cited in Yacob, Radam & Awang, 2008). There are 54 protected areas which cover around 4.5 percent of the land surface of Malaysia (Marzuki *et al.*, 2011). However, only in the early 1980s did the protection of natural marine parks which started with Redang Island in Terengganu were classified as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) for the waters within 8km surrounding the island is protected (Department of Fisheries, 1996; cited in Yacob *et al.*, 2008). The drafting of the National Ecotourism Plan in 1996 demonstrated the fact that Malaysian government was serious in the development and protection of natural resources. This plan was designed to guide tourism growth in a sustainable way and to identify the ecotourism assets which have good potential to be developed.

Topics related to nature-based tourism and ecotourism have been investigated by a number of scholars at selected sites in Malaysia thus far. A study by Marzuki *et al.* (2011) analysed the potential of nature-based attractions in south Kelantan by examining 15 sites. The evaluation was done based on three categories of attributes:

i) physical, ii) infrastructure and iii) accessibility. It was found that only three places have very good prospects in terms of all these criteria. These sites are Taman Negara Kuala Koh, Air Terjun Gunung Stong and Taman Etnobotani. Problems such as lack of accessibility and infrastructure make other natural areas in south Kelantan less attractive. Besides south Kelantan, the potentials and problems facing the development of nature tourism in Perlis, the northern state of Malaysia was investigated by Marzuki *et al.*, (2014). These scholars discussed strengths and challenges in the development of Perlis as a nature-based tourism destination. Perlis has good potential due to its strategic location and the presence of unique and diverse natural resources. However, Perlis faces certain challenges in form of operational budget constraint, organisational structure in managing natural resources and flaws in policy implementation (Marzuki *et al.*, 2014).

A study by Chin, Moore, Wallington and Dowling (2000) investigated the environmental impacts and the management of ecotourism from the perspectives of visitors at Bako National Park. Among the significant impacts observed by visitors include rubbish, harmful effect to plants, destruction to walkways and the state of wildlife. Findings of this research also revealed that these significant impacts can reduce the visitors' positive ecotourism experiences at the park. More importantly, it was forecasted by these scholars that ecological and social impacts to the park would be even worse in the future without appropriate management approach of the park. In analysing Malaysia as an ecotourism destination, Marker, Blanco, Lokanathan and Verma (2008) maintained that this country does not really practice ecotourism in real sense as Malaysia only offers nature-based tourism without incorporating the ethical aspects. They suggested that in order for Malaysia to be a successful ecotourism destination, this country has to broaden ecotourism products offered to visitors, put more emphasis on responsible travel and educate its citizens on the value of environmental protection.

## Method

In order to analyse the portrayal of nature-based attractions in tourism brochures, a content analysis method was used. According to Stroud and Higgins (2011), content analysis is a method utilised to examine communication contents projected in several forms such as textual, visual and sound. This method has been applied for exploring wide range of textual documents in the fields of social research and medicine such as interview transcripts, films, television programmes and promotional contents included in the newspapers and magazines (Macnamara, 2005). It is commonly employed to examine “words, phrases or in-text relationships” and “texts can be broadly classified to include printed matter, images, maps, art, sounds, signs, or symbols” (Boettger & Palmer, 2010, p.346). In general, it is reflected through past works (e.g. Bengtsson, 2016; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Stepchenkova, Kirilenko & Morrison, 2009) that content analysis is a versatile research tool which can be adopted to explore communication contents in the forms of quantitative, qualitative or a combination of both. Similarly, Smith (2017) claims that it is a technique which can be used to investigate both the empirical or subjective components of messages. The quantitative or empirical approach is mostly employed to code and count the presence of elements that the researchers wanted to study while the qualitative concentrates on description or stories through more flexible ways to document data. Both of these approaches are important in order to capture specific types of information and they can complement each other in order to understand particular issues comprehensively (Kort-Butler, 2016). The application of this technique requires the researchers to perform more than just watching or reading, that is researchers have to conduct their analysis in systematic manners, analytical and probe for in-depth messages underneath, not just on the surface (Kort-Butler, 2016). It is clear that, over time, content analysis has been expanded to analyse the hidden component of messages as well. Overall, both parts of the communication content, manifest and latent perform vital

roles in representing the messages and can add significantly in supplying more extensive and deeper insight of the media content.

In tourism field, many types of communication or promotional contents have been studied using this research method. The projections of messages via tourism brochures, magazines, on-line brochures, websites, videos, and posters have been analysed using content analysis. Therefore, as it is perceived as one of the reliable means to investigate communication and promotional messages, the analysis undertaken in this paper has also used this method. As tourist brochure is one of the primary promotional tools utilised by the Malaysian national authorities in marketing Malaysia as a tourist destination for many years, it is selected to be investigated in this paper. Tourist promotional brochures either in the forms of print or online are perceived as a standard communication tool frequently used by the national tourism promotional bodies around the world. In the assessment carried out in this paper, all the brochures published from 1962 until September 2016 by the Malaysian national promotional bodies were included in the sample for analysis. The printed and online brochures containing natural resources and nature-based attractions were examined in this paper. Both textual and visuals associated with natural resources were also studied from the perspectives of manifest and latent contents.

In the process of conducting content analysis, several steps were adopted. The first step involves choosing suitable material for analysis, appropriate to the research objective of this paper, to be precise tourist brochures. The second step was to identify the unit of analysis fitting to the objective of this paper, the representation of natural tourism attractions in tourist promotional brochures. Hence, both descriptions and visual images associated with nature-based attractions were examined. The next step involves sorting and selecting the brochures which are suitable to be used in the assessment. Only brochures published by the Malaysian national tourist promotional bodies containing the date of publication were chosen as this paper also delves into how the representation

of natural tourism changes over time. After the brochures have been organised, the next step entailed identifying those brochures that featured nature-based attractions either in the forms of textual or images. During the data collection stage, all the brochures previously published by the Malaysian national promotional bodies were collected and digitally stored for further analysis from the library of Tourism Malaysia. However, the latest promotional brochures were collected from Tourism Malaysia offices around Malaysia and also downloaded from Tourism Malaysia website. The most recent brochures used in this paper were the ones published either in printed version or online form via Tourism Malaysia website until December 2016. Overall, 415 brochures published for 54 years were assessed in this paper.

The analysis carried out in this paper includes quantitative and qualitative examinations. Firstly, the quantitative assessment was carried out in order to identify the number of tourist brochures which featured natural resources and categories of nature-based tourism commonly projected. Besides, the quantitative approach is helpful in the identification of the alterations of natural tourism features portrayed in tourist brochures for 54 years. After the quantitative assessment was done, textual and visual images associated with nature were analysed qualitatively to uncover the themes and values reflected as part of the representation of nature-based tourism attributes. The analysis also looked at how the representation of nature based tourism fits into the overall promotion of Malaysia as a tourist destination and their importance in the context of Malaysian tourism.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The analysis undertaken in this paper observed that natural resources have been included significantly in the promotional brochures published by the Malaysian tourism bodies for nearly 54 years. Out of 415 brochures published from 1962 to 2016, almost all brochures incorporated some attributes of natural resources. In fact, many of the Malaysian

brochures featured natural resources rather extensively either as attractions or to project the green background or settings. Among the natural resources promoted as tourist attractions in the brochures published in 1960s are islands and beaches and flora and fauna. One of the aspects clearly apparent in the brochures published during the early days of 1960s and 1970s was the abundance of natural resources enjoyed by locals and tourists. Images such as fishermen with bountiful of seafood catches, seashores lined with coconut trees and wildlife particularly turtles are mostly represented in the brochures of east coast states. On the other hand, images of vast paddy fields and domestic animals such as cows and buffalos are included in the brochures promoting the northern states of Malaysia. Based on the descriptions and images included, it is evident that not only plenty of natural resources still available in the country during the 1960s and 1970s, but the local people's strong dependence on nature and their life and recreational activities take place around sites of natural resources as well. This finding is parallel with the claim made by Marzuki *et al.*, (2011) that natural resources are among the main attractions for the country's tourism in attracting international tourists. Therefore, needless to say, various natural resources have been featured prominently in the Malaysian tourism promotional materials especially those published earlier.

Several categories of nature-based attractions are presented in one of the earliest brochures titled "Magnificent Malaya" published in 1962. Even in the brochure introductory section 'Introducing Malaya', it is mentioned that "Malaya is a tropical wonderland. Within this greenery, there are clean and well-planned cities, a network of roads which is one of the finest in Asia, modern air, rail and motor transport, luxury hotels and an unbelievable variety of shopping centres." It is reflected in this quote that many places in Malaya including tourist sites and places during this time were still green and filled with trees such as the seaside and mountains. It is revealed through descriptions and visuals featured in the brochures that

nature and modern cities coexisted in Malaya during 1960s. This demonstrates that despite how nature-based tourism is the prominent product, other attractions including cities such as Kuala Lumpur and Penang have also been promoted. Besides, this finding is a reflection of the binary projection between exoticism and modernism. As Malaya is a faraway destination, the promotion of modern attractions including cities, developed transportation modes and shopping malls can portray element familiarisation to Western tourists. This finding also supported the statement made by Honey (1999) that tourism brochures play a smart role in projecting appealing attractions which offered adventure but at the same time promise safety and security to the potential tourists.

Another interesting aspect included in this particular brochure is the promotion of hunting. It is stated in this brochure that “Hunting animals in Malaya is difficult owing to the nature of its tropical forests. State Game Wardens, however, will be in a position to render advice and assistance wherever possible.” There are several aspects related to the Big Game Hunting offered in Malaya which are presented in the brochures. For example, aspects included are the list of animals which could be hunted by visitors, which animals required license in order for visitors to hunt and the charges for different types of license. It is stated that

“Selangor charges a licence fee of M\$100 per head of tigers, leopards or clouded leopards and Malacca charges M\$25 to shoot tigers, leopards or panthers” (Magnificent Malaya Brochure, 1962). Two ways of shooting animals in this country suggested in the brochures include sitting over a kill and organising a tiger drive. Descriptions about the Game Reserve were published in 1972 and 1979 in the brochures titled East Coast Road Adventure. However, the textual descriptions included in these brochures are relatively brief.

The longitudinal analysis identified that several categories of natural resources have been presented and marketed to tourists from 1960s to fairly recent brochures. These mainly include islands and beaches, hills and mountains and national parks. In fact, since 1970s, specific brochures featuring attractions based on these themes have been published which demonstrate the importance of these categories of natural attractions to Malaysia. Although no specific brochure featuring natural tourism was published during the 1960s, attractions associated with islands and beaches and hill resorts were advertised in the general and city brochures. However, since 1970s, brochures dedicated to selected natural resources have been published. There are three categories of natural resources which have been advertised using specialised brochures namely National Parks,

Table 1: Summary of nature-based tourism attributes represented in the Malaysian tourism brochures published from 1962 to 2016

Stages of Brochure Publications and Tourism Promotion						
	1962-1969	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-2000	2000-2009	2010-2016
<b>Key Nature-Based Attributes</b>	-Big game hunting					
			- Flora and fauna			
			-Islands and beaches			
			-Hill and mountains			
			-National parks			
	-Green background widely reflected in visual images					
	-Bountiful of natural resources			-Number of national parks expanded		
					-Expansion of adventure with nature attributes	
					-Inclusion of marine parks as part of national parks	



Beach Resorts and Hill Resorts (nature-based attributes promoted over 54 years are illustrated in Table 1). Among activities offered in some of the national parks are angling, swimming, boating, bird watching and mountain climbing, photographing big game, exploring limestone caves and camping. However, over time, the number of national parks listed in the brochures expanded.

Among the new aspects presented in tourist brochures are statements to support sustainable approach of tourism development. For example, in the promotion of Malaysian National Parks, it is stated that “Here, within the awesome splendor of our virgin rainforests, one comes to realise that “conservation” is not a mere concept but a way of life – that bio-diversity is here to stay! ... Even as early 1939, conservation was of primary concern. The park was established for the sole purpose of protecting and preserving the flora and fauna indigenous to the area” (National Park Brochure, 1996). The inclusion of these statements demonstrates to potential tourists that tourism authority is serious about environmental protection since the early days. Starting from 1990s, parks’ rules and regulations to ensure sustainability of the resources have been added. It is found that the brochures produced earlier only focused on the aspects related to visitor’s safety and security such as appropriate attire and behaviours. However, fairly recent brochures incorporated both aspects. For example, it is clearly manifested in the description of the Turtle Islands Park that the park was established with the mission of protecting natural environment particularly “sea turtles, the coral reefs and other marine life”. Therefore, the visitors have to adhere to the strict rules and regulations. Some of the forbidden acts are: i) disturbing the turtle during the nesting process by coming too close or crowding around her. Instead, visitors are advised to watch the nesting process from a distance, ii) under any circumstances, ride on the turtle, pull her flippers, turn her over, jump on her or injure her physically (National Park Brochures, 1996; 2003). Such acts of abuse may have adverse effects on future nesting returns. It is obvious that this enactment was established

in order to safeguard the flora and fauna found within this park.

However, a conflicting representation between textual description and an image included in this brochure is apparent. Although, the textual description included in this brochure promotes sustainability efforts through the incorporation of rules and regulations to guide visitors’ behaviours by stressing that they should not be too close to the turtles, the visual image which complements the description displays visitors watching a turtle laying eggs very close to the wildlife. The contradictory representation can be identified as the incorporation of sustainability aspects only started to be introduced in 1990s. Therefore, the producer of the brochure might still be using old photographs despite the change in the approach towards natural environment. The same image of foreign visitors looking at a turtle laying eggs is used in tourist brochures titled “National Parks” from 1996 to 2006. It is observed that, despite the incorporation of wildlife protection especially turtles have been presented explicitly in tourist promotional materials, this image has been presented in tourist brochures for 10 years. Furthermore, the promotion of an activity which can cause ecological damage to natural environment has been included in tourist brochures particularly those specialised in nature adventure. Off road driving has been advertised as one of the activities which can be experienced by the tourists. For example, 4x4 vehicles exploring natural sites such as forests and rivers are evident. Although environmentally responsible aspects are incorporated as part of the promotion of off road driving, in general this activity can lead to long term effect to the environment.

Islands and beaches are among natural resources advertised to visitors since 1960s to present day. However, the creation of brochures focusing on islands and beaches were first produced in 1974. Destinations such as Langkawi Island, Penang Island, Port Dickson and Tioman Island are among those included in the brochures published in the 1970s and 1980s. Images of beaches within these destinations appear less

busy and tranquil with very few visitors enjoying themselves with beach activities. The brochures Islands and Beaches published from 1990s to 2016 incorporated marine tourism as part of the attractions promoted to visitors. It is identified that the Malaysian government is very serious about protecting its marine parks. Every time, when marine parks are promoted to the visitors, related acts, rules and regulations are mentioned and highlighted as well (refers to Table 1). These are also represented in the brochure promoting diving sites around Malaysia in a relatively new brochure named “Dive in Paradise”. This brochure mostly contains spectacular images of underwater havens and divers enjoying Malaysian diving sites around the country. Images of Western tourists enjoying activities around diving sites are evident in the brochure. Probably, the main market for diving tourism in Malaysia is foreign tourists. Furthermore, as nature grows in its importance, attraction focusing on this particular attraction has become more important with the publication of its own brochure titled “Adventure with Nature”. It appears that attractions and sites associated with nature have expanded over time. For example, in the brochure “Adventure with Nature” published in 2007, it listed and described various nature-based activities which can be enjoyed by visitors. These include “jungle discoveries/camping, mountain climbing, rock climbing, cave exploration, river cruising, white water rafting, four wheel drive expeditions, mountain biking and wreck diving”. As adventure tour is gaining popularity around the world today, it can be said that Malaysia also takes this opportunity to promote this type of tourism. Adventure tourism is also promoted in the general brochure designed to market various destinations and categories of tourism.

Among the Malaysian states which feature nature-based attractions significantly, are Pahang and Sarawak. Pahang is showcased as having natural resources such as rainforests, exotic plants, elephant conservation, lakes and islands. In fact, a caption titled “A Gift of Nature” is adopted in the brochure Malaysia Travel Manual to highlight nature treasures located in the state. The state brochures of Sarawak also contain exotic and unusual natural heritage. For example, in state brochure published in 2003, numerous visual images of natural resources are presented. This brochure features more visual images of nature-based attractions rather than any other brochures which usually have more textual descriptions. It seems like these images can speak for themselves of the nature theme that the state would like to highlight to the potential visitors. Images of wildlife such as orang Utans, monkeys, hornbills, crocodiles and turtles are evident. It is also reflected in the brochure that indigenous communities in Sarawak still practice the traditional ways of life and rely strongly on natural environment. In the promotion of Sarawak as a tourist destination, brochures published in 1970s and 1980s employed a nature theme as its tagline. “Sarawak Land of the Hornbill” has been used as the state tourism slogan. Natural features such as mountains, marine life, coral reef and orang Utan are utilised extensively in the promotion of the state of Sabah. Over the years, other states such as Terengganu, Kedah and Kelantan also featured elements of nature particularly rural environment like paddy fields and coconut trees. In the context of Terengganu, its natural assets such as islands, lakes and turtles are presented quite widely in the brochures (refers to Table 2).

Overall, the analysis of this paper demonstrates that nature-based tourism

Table 2: Malaysian states featuring strong natural features in tourist brochures

States	Key Natural Features
Pahang	rainforests, wildlife, lakes and islands
Sarawak	wildlife, rainforests and tribal lifestyle and natural resources
Sabah	mountains, marine life, coral reef and Orang utan
Terengganu	rural environment, islands, lakes and turtles

attractions in Malaysia have expanded over time from featuring more destinations, sites and attractions under this theme to advertise diverse nature-based activities. The number of brochures promoting this category of tourism also increases in terms of number and attractions. Not only that, nature-based tourism products have broadened through the publishing of concentrated brochures produced fairly recently. Among the new nature-based tourism products marketed using specialised brochures include “Adventure with Nature”, “National and Marine Parks”, “Islands and Beaches” and “Diving in Paradise”. This is a reflection of observation made by Marker *et al.* (2008) that Malaysia has to diversify its nature-based tourism products in order to be a successful destination. One of the aspects reflected through longitudinal analysis is the transformation of nature-based tourism promoted in tourism brochures. In 1960s and 1970s, natural assets have been portrayed as more natural and depicted the real settings. However, starting from 1990s, the number of people which appeared at the natural sites and attractions has increased quite significantly. Partly, this finding mimics the observation made by Dann (1996) that tourist brochures like to feature tourists in their promotional effort. However, findings of this paper expanded previous work by Dann (1996) by showing that natural places are not only visited by adults, but people from different age groups. Images of families with children and couples experiencing and participating in various activities such as river cruising, bird watching, swimming and walking on canopy walkways are widely displayed in the brochures published during the past two decades. Based on the photographs included in tourist brochures, not only natural sites being projected as places for people to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life, but these spots have been presented for visitors to enjoy various events and activities including romantic pursuits. Nevertheless, visuals included in fairly recent brochures to some extent appeared to use the same actors and actresses to act as tourists. It seems that people especially foreign tourists, turn out to be the focus of natural sites and attractions. In fact,

some images used in the brochures to advertise national and marine parks seem to be crowded with people.

It is reflected in the brochures published relatively recent, environmental protection measures and educational components have been incorporated. This shows the efforts made by national tourism authorities in educating visitors of appropriate behaviours when visiting natural resources. This demonstrates that promotional material can play an important role in educating and conveying crucial messages to visitors. The inclusion of this information can portray positive images of the national tourism authorities of their efforts in protecting the natural environment. However, it is observed that in the promotion of Malaysia as a nature-based destination, the official bodies are quite cautious in using the term “ecotourism”. Some of the brochures which used this term did so in a subtle way. Actually, many brochures incorporated this concept in the textual description inside the brochures. The official bodies were most probably trying to be careful as some scholars such as Marker *et al.* (2008) argued that Malaysia does not really practise ecotourism, but is more to nature-based tourism. Besides, the research done by Chin *et al.* (2000) at the Bako National Park revealed that there are many harmful effects to the environment and wildlife which can be found in some national parks in Malaysia. Therefore, despite featuring aspects on responsible travel and environmental care, the Malaysian national promotional bodies are more focused on promoting this country as a nature-based tourism destination and products associated with this theme.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has examined the portrayal of natural tourism in Malaysia through content analysis of promotional brochures published for 54 years. Findings of this paper revealed that natural resources have been used extensively in tourism brochures since the early days of tourism development to the present day. Among categories of nature-based

attractions represented widely over the decades in tourism brochures are national parks, islands and beaches, and hills and mountains. Over time, more nature-based attractions, products and destinations have been added to tourism brochures. Many specific types of nature-based tourism have been developed and used in tourism promotion such as adventure and diving. It is apparent that rather than using natural resources to attract visitors and describing how they can consume these products as depicted in the early brochures via the promotion of big game hunting, elements of responsible tourism and educational components have been incorporated started from the 1990s to recent brochures. Overall, findings of this paper contribute to the understanding on how nature-based attractions have been represented and marketed to tourists for nearly 54 years in the context of Malaysia and these discoveries can guide future promotional strategies. Approaches on how tourist promotional brochures can be employed to educate tourists and boost sustainability of natural resources are also depicted via findings of this paper.

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