



The Moderating Impact of Local Communities' Attitudes on Tourism Attributes towards Destination Competitiveness of Cat Museum in Kuching

Jason, Lim, May Chiun, Lo, Abang Azlan, Mohamad

Faculty of Economics and Business, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Email: limweijason@gmail.com, mclo@unimas.my, maazlan@unimas.my

Wan Hashim Wan, Ibrahim

Chancellery, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Email: wiwhashim@unimas.my

Abstract

Tourism attributes such as destination image, tourists' satisfaction and tourists' perceived values are nothing new in the research study on destination competitiveness. These are considered as factors that affect the competitiveness of a destination, however local communities' attitudes (LCA) have yet to be tested whether it has an influence on the relationships on all these three attributes against competitiveness. Hence, Cat Museum in Kuching has been selected as a research site to be tested on, as this site carries its own unique selling proposition and believed to be able to satisfy tourists and given an utmost distinguished value in their travel. This study has introduced the local communities' attitudes into the framework as moderator to test out whether local communities have an influence on these attributes that eventually affect destination competitiveness. For this study, 150 sets of questionnaires in total were collected. Both Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0 and Smart PLS (version 3.2.7) were used for analyzing the data collected. The findings revealed that destination image, tourists' satisfaction and tourists' perceived values were significantly impacting on destination competitiveness and were proven as positively affecting the destination competitiveness. The implications of the study were further discussed.

Keywords: Destination Image, Tourists' Satisfaction, Tourists' Perceived Values, Destination Competitiveness, Cat Museum

Introduction

A growing trend of travel can be seen throughout the world economy and due to the great value of tourism to the economies, there is a need to focus on tourism sector as it generates lucrative revenues for the economy. As supported by Tang and Tang (2015) and Tugcu (2014), many authors

quoted that the existence of a causal relationship between tourism development and economic expansion. This has portrayed that income has greatly affected by the development. Malaysia's economy was boosted with a total of RM84.1 billion in tourist receipts from the expenditure of 25, 832,354 international tourists who visited Malaysia throughout 2018 (Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, 2019). The statistics has shown that growth rate of tourism has significantly impact to the economy, this situation has been mentioned by Adinegara (2018) and Haarhoff and De Klerk (2019). Many countries, like Malaysia are giving great attention towards tourism industry too. Simultaneously, the research in the field of tourism specifically destination image, tourists' perception on values, and tourists' satisfaction are getting relatively more important. There are many factors which can make a destination performing and successful. In overall world markets, the competitiveness of a destination as compared to other alternative destinations makes a tourism destination successful (Dwyer, Forsyth, & Rao, 2000) and as such, the main task of destination management is to focus on enhancing and maintaining the destination competitiveness. Thongma, Leelapattana, and Hung (2012) proposed that the participation of local communities are imperative towards tourism development as communities are instrumental in ensuring that the success of tourism destination sites. Moreover, local communities are vital as they have the ability to impress on visitors with regards to attractions at the destination sites. Therefore, local communities' involvement and support are important in stimulating tourism sites to ensure their success in the long run.

In order to understand, comprehend and further study on destination competitiveness, few attributes have been selected to study on the destination competitiveness of Cat Museum in Kuching, Sarawak. The three identified attributes are Destination Image, Tourists' Satisfaction and Perceived Values. Destination Image is an important factor in tourism destination success (Bigné, Sánchez & Sánchez, 2001; Court and Lupton, 1997). Esch *et al.* (2006) and Ha (2004) have quoted that visitors' satisfaction and trust will have an impact on destination. McDougall and Levesque (2000) indicated that perceived values are crucial in determining the success of tourist destination. Twining-Ward and Butler (2002) also mentioned that supportive attitude of local community is essential and it does contribute for a good experience by tourists. As such, local community perception is important to the success of tourist destination (Cottrell & Vaske, 2006), failing which the destination will not be able to achieve its objectives and goals. Therefore, the aim of this study is to test the impact of local communities' attitudes involvement as a moderator to tourism attributes (destination image, tourists' satisfaction & tourists' perceived values) towards destination competitiveness of a selected site - Cat Museum in Kuching. It is regarded as the world's first museum on cats and is devoted to all things connected to the feline. Visitors to Cat Musuem will be able to explore exhibits, photos, art and souvenirs related to cats.

Literature Review

Destination Competitiveness

With reference to findings from Novais *et al.* (2018), the three distinct concepts of destination competitiveness are hierarchically related, it reveals that destination competitiveness as perceptions of a destination, it is as performance and it is a long-term process. In the view of macro perspective in tourism context, competitiveness is the key and also the ultimate goal to improving community's real income in the national concern (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). As such, destination competitiveness is a broad construct to encompass all environmental, social, cultural and economic variables that leads