ISSN 1855-931X

THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISTS BEHAVIOUR

WHAT MALAYSIA AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES NEED

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Abstract

Malaysia is increasingly realizing the potential of its cultural and heritage resources in tourism. However, this realization must be accompanied by accepting the importance of understanding cultural heritage tourist behaviours, if it wants to increase tourist visitation to those culture and heritage sites. Understanding the psychology of cultural heritage tourist

could be beneficial in planning for sustainable cultural heritage tourism market, as well as creation of an effective marketing plan. Our discussion on cultural heritage tourism will emphasize its definitions, types of tourists, and their demographic and psychographic characteristics. We will also briefly examine the importance of cultural heritage tourist behaviour specifically to tourists themselves, public sector managers, and business interests. Finally, this paper also offers recommendations that may help the cultural heritage tourism planners and marketers in Malaysia or any other developing countries with greater insights for the development of effective marketing plans for cultural heritage sites and events.

Keywords: cultural heritage, cultural heritage tourism, cultural heritage tourist, tourist behaviour, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has grown phenomenally in the past few decades. Greater numbers of people worldwide are travelling nationally and internationally (Travel Industry Association, 1999). In line with the growth in tourism, there is a booming interest in history, heritage, and culture.

Not only domestic tourists are interested in their own history and culture, but international tourists are interested in visiting historical sites, museums, and culture events (Cook, 2000).

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) estimates that cultural heritage tourism accounts for 37 percent of all international trips undertaken (McKercher and du Cros, 2002; Timothy and Boyd, 2003). According to Travel Industry Association (TIA) statistics, the cultural heritage tourism market increased by 10 percent from 1996 to 2000 and accounted for 14 percent of all tourism activities in the United States during that period. TIA statistics also indicate that two-thirds of US adult travellers included culture and heritage on a trip in 2001 and millions of travellers lengthened their trips because of culture and heritage (Nyaupane *et al.*, 2006). In addition, Antolovic (1999 - in McKercher and du Cros, 2002) reports that 70 percent of all Americans travelling to Europe seek a cultural heritage experience and about 67 percent of all visitors to the United Kingdom are seeking a cultural heritage tourism experience as part of their trip, but not necessarily as the main reason to visit the United Kingdom. In relation to that, reviews of trends in visitor numbers suggest that demand has been declining over a number of years (McDonnell and Burton, 2005). In Australia, the percentage of the population visiting museums in 1995 was reported as 27.8 percent and for art galleries 22.3 percent (ABS, 1997). More recent figures suggest a dramatic downward trend, particularly for museums, which reported attendance in 1999 at 19.9 percent and art galleries at 21.2 percent. Furthermore, there is some evidence that suggests an overall downward trend in Britain, Germany, and other parts of Europe (Richards, 1996).

The same situation affects Malaysia, where the numbers of tourists to cultural and heritage sites are found to be lower than anticipated. In line with these trends, it is important that culture and heritage tourism marketers strategize their marketing effort. Target marketing i.e. designing marketing efforts based on understanding of the market characteristics becomes more and more important. However, marketers need to know – what are the behaviour traits of culture and heritage tourists.

This paper reviews the literature in order to provide answers to this question and be able to offer some viable theoretical and managerial suggestions on the above issue. More specifically, this paper's objectives are to search the existing literature on cultural heritage

tourism; to analyze the typology of cultural heritage tourists; and to investigate their behaviour. Based on secondary research mostly, it is aiming to offer practical recommendations to tourism strategy makers in developing countries like Malaysia; it also provides a comprehensive model of the major parties interested in tourist behaviour. As this is a conceptual attempt, no methodology will be offered. Instead, this conceptual paper will use the literature to justify its discussion on definitions, types of tourists, and their demographic and psychographic characteristics of cultural heritage tourists. It will also examine the importance of cultural heritage tourists' behaviour specifically to tourists themselves, public sector managers, and business interests. Finally, it will provide recommendations for cultural heritage tourism planners and marketers who are attempting to design effective marketing plans for cultural heritage sites and events.

There are wide implications for scholars as well as for practitioners as the tourist behaviour matters – in general – to tourism analysts and researchers: especially to assist in the analysis of business performance, to understand socio-cultural and environmental concerns, and ultimately to consider tourism as a social institution in contemporary life.

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM

Cultural and heritage are two interrelated forms of tourism. Heritage focus on the past, while culture focus on the present way of the life of a visited community (Faulkner *et al.,* 2000). Timothy and Boyd (2003) summarize the meaning of heritage by stating that 'heritage is not simply the past, but the modern-day use of elements of the past'. Within the tourism field, heritage has been used in both natural and cultural contexts (Chhabra *et al.,* 2003; Garrod and Fyall, 2000; Timothy and Boyd, 2006). However, as heritage tourism typically falls under the purview of cultural tourism (and vice versa), it is almost impossible to ascribe absolute parameters either to the resources used or to the tourist using them. They all share common sets of resources, management issues, and desired aspirational outcomes (McKercher and du Cros, 2002). Therefore, in all jurisdictions, cultural heritage tourism is more widely a recognized term rather than used as a separate entity when referring to types of tourism and form of travel (Pearson and Sullivan, 1995; Macintosh, 1999).

Definitions of cultural heritage tourism are highly varied. Smith (1978) defined cultural heritage tourism by listing the sites and activities that characterize them. Heritage tourism includes "the museum-cathedral circuit" and guided tours of monuments and ruins. On the other hand, cultural tourism includes meals, performances and festivals. Thus it can conclude that cultural heritage tourism is a form of tourism in which participants seek to learn about and experience the past and present cultures of themselves and others.

According to Christou (2005), the term cultural heritage tourism refers to the segment of the tourism industry that places special emphasis on heritage and cultural attractions. These attractions are varied, and include performances, museums, displays, archaeological sites and the like. In developed areas, cultural and heritage attractions include art museums, plays, and orchestral and other musical performances. Tourists may travel to specific sites to see a famous museum or to hear a special musical performance. In less developed areas, heritage and cultural attractions may include traditional religious practices, handicrafts and cultural performances (Christou, 2005). Likewise, Cultural heritage refers to tangibles such as historic buildings and structures, monuments and architectural remnants, as well as intangibles such as philosophies, traditions, values, ceremonies and art forms (Nuryanti, 1996; Prentice, 1993). However, in regard to what cultural heritage tourism means, one of

the most sharp and concise definitions comes from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (Real, 2000: 291): "*Cultural or heritage tourism is travel directed towards experiencing the heritage, arts and special character of a place in an exciting, and informative way.*" This definition captures several of the key points of cultural heritage tourism. This tourism is oriented towards encountering those components of a destination that make it unique. These components could be largely historical, in which case people typically use the term "heritage tourism", or they could be more arts-focused, hence prompting the term "cultural tourism". (For ease of reading, the terms "cultural heritage tourism/tourist" will be used throughout this paper to refer to tourism/tourist that includes visiting cultural and/or heritage attractions or events).

Cultural heritage tourism is important for various reasons; it has a positive economic and social impact, it establishes and reinforces identity, and it helps preserve the cultural heritage. With culture as an instrument, it facilitates harmony and understanding among people, and it supports culture and helps renew tourism (Richards, 1996).

According to Weiler and Hall (1992), culture, heritage and the arts have long contributed to appeal of tourist destination. However, in recent years 'culture' has been rediscovered as an important marketing tool to attract those travellers with special interests in heritage and arts. This is supported by Encyclopaedia Wikipedia (Cultural heritage, 2007) which states that cultural heritage tourism is the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry because there is a trend toward an increased specialization among tourist. This trend is evident in the rise of the volume of tourists who seek adventure, culture, history, archaeology and interaction with local people.

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia is increasingly realizing the potential of its cultural and heritage resources in tourism. With UNESCO's recognition of several new cultural and heritage sites such as Georgetown in Penang and Geopark in Langkawi, the country is set to use this type of resources to generate more tourism activities. While several of these sites have been successful in attracting foreign tourists (for example Batu Caves during the Deepavali festival), others have not (for example Bujang Valley which houses the oldest trading port in Malaysia). Thus marketing planners of those sites need to understand the importance of target marketing and try to understand tourist behaviours when they are in the context of cultural heritage tourism.

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISTS

Although the potential of cultural heritage tourism had captured the interest of some arts and tourism leaders, many were still not convinced of the significance of this market. Seeking to better understand these travellers, a research has been undertaken in the United States to identify cultural heritage tourists (TIA, 1997). Based on the research data conducted in 1997, for the first time reliable statistics that compared the demographics and behaviours of travellers partaking in cultural heritage activities with U.S. travellers in general were available (Real, 2000).

The terms 'tourist', 'visitor', 'traveller' have been used by many people within the context of the tourism industry. Unfortunately, there is still confusion over these very basic definitions. Even within the same country such as the United States and Malaysia, for example, different states may use different definitions for data gathering and statistical purposes. Based on The

World Tourism Organization (WTO, 1985) definitions and classifications the concepts of tourist, visitor, and traveller as follows:

- Tourist - (overnight visitor) visitor staying at least one night in a collective or private accommodation in the place visited;
- Visitor – any person travelling to a place other than that of his/her usual environment for less than 12 consecutive months and whose main purpose of travel is not to work for pay in the place visited; and
- Traveller – any person on a trip between two or more locations.

However, for the purpose of this paper, the terms will be used interchangeably which generally refers to cultural heritage tourists.

In the tourism industry every tourist has his/her own characteristics while going for travel. Consequently, it is common for managers and marketers to divide the market for their cultural heritages' products and services based on the three visitor characteristics: demographic, geographic and psychographic characteristics (Hall and Arthur, 1998).

Demographic characteristics are important to know for understanding the types of people who participate in cultural heritage tourism. Level of education, gender, age, income level and employment types are among the most important visitor attributes for cultural heritage managers to understand. It is commonly accepted that this knowledge will help managers and marketers determine people's desires and needs based on generalized patterns. High levels of education are the most important characteristics possessed by cultural heritage visitors. On average, the cultural heritage tourists are more educated than the general public. According to a study involving 6400 respondents (Richards, 1996), more than 80% of heritage or cultural tourists in Europe had tertiary (university/college/trade school) education, and nearly a quarter had postgraduate education. Thus, education is seen as a mechanism for broadening people's interest in, and knowledge about, times, places, people and events, which draw them to culture and heritage places.

Closely related to education is socio-economic status and employment. Since the cultural heritage public is better educated, it is also reasonable that they are better off financially than the average citizen and have better-paying jobs (Silberberg, 1995; TIA, 1997). In terms of gender, there is some evidence that more women than man visit historic sites. In facts, the general tendency or cultural activities attract more women than men. While the age of visitors who tend to involve in cultural heritage tourism are older and majority of them fall into the 25–54 age range. The reason is most of the teenagers are less interested in historical sites and they are more likely to choose the more "entertaining" dimensions of tourism (Balcar and Pearce, 1996; Prideaux and Kininmont, 1999; Richards, 1996). Silberberg (1995) states that, collectively, studies of cultural heritage tourists show that they are older, more educated, more likely to be female, spend more, and stay longer.

Geographic segmentation has traditionally been dominated by a classification based on where the tourists live, although some observers argue that this can be misleading, as many people do not travel directly from their home environments to cultural heritage properties. Instead, they might be travelling from other places they are visiting on holiday or from the homes of friends and relatives. Another aspect of geographic segmentation is where the tourist travels to. It would be helpful for managers to understand the spatial or geographical patterns of behaviour, travel and visitation once tourists are in a destination or a specific

heritage region. The geographic origins of cultural heritage tourists, whether international or domestic, are closely related to the scale of an individual heritage attraction. Places of international fame will bring in large numbers of visitors on their own merit, while smaller regional sites will draw more domestic tourists and local recreationists, although some international tourists may visit in conjunction with larger package tours and because they are already near the site for other reasons. For instance, Taj Mahal in Agra, India always attracts the international tourists to visit the site - while the smaller regional sites such as Lembah Bujang in Kedah, Malaysia usually attract more domestic tourists and local people. Usually, the local people who live near the sites will be the same day visitors to the cultural heritage sites, and the domestic tourists will stay overnight, whereas the international tourists are desired to spend enough time by spending more nights. These are important factors in supporting to all scales of cultural heritage sites.

While demographic and geographic characteristics give us some insight, the psychographic characteristics were commonly utilized for cultural heritage tourist segmentation by the managers and marketers. The psychographic characteristics are based on the notion that people's attitude influence their behaviour, these attitudes come from aspects of their individual lives such as lifestyle, social class and personality (Middleton, 1994). On the other hand, psychographic approaches use values, interests, opinion, personality and other individual characteristics and traits for segmentation (Chandler and Costello, 2002). For example, active outdoors-oriented people, middle and upper classes, and workaholics are ways of segmenting the market according to psychographic characteristics. Plog's (2001) psychographic model has had significant impact on the travel and tourism industry and has been widely cited in tourism research (Chandler and Costello, 2002). Plog's model segmented tourists along a spectrum ranging from 'allocentric' (adventure-seeking, preferring the exotic) to 'psychocentric' (safety-seeking, preferring the familiar). In a similar way, psychographic model can be applied to cultural heritage tourism. For instance, in this modern day, cultural heritage tourists to Europe are displaying 'psychocentric' tendencies to visit the well-established urban tourism places. In contrast, tourists who visit the temples of Asia, the rainforests of Africa and South America are displaying 'allocentric' tendencies (McDonnell and Burton, 2005). However, in this new Grand Tour, there are more 'allocentric' tendencies have being portrayed in the tourism industry. In relation to that Plog (1987 - in Ross, 1998) has made the point that there are many uses for psychographics research. Examples of psycho-graphically relevant topics in travel/leisure research are said to include: destination development, product positioning, development of supporting services, advertising and promotion, packaging, and master planning.

While demographic, geographic and psychographic characteristics give us the view of the cultural heritage tourists, the selective appeal of cultural heritage places may explained by considering the needs and motivations of those people who visit, or who do not visit the cultural heritage sites or events (Light and Prentice, 1994). Fun, according to Hawley (1990), is secondary to learning for cultural heritage tourists because they travel to increase their knowledge of people, places and things, besides, to experience a sense of nostalgia for the past. Thomas (1989) supports his contention and suggests that an interest in learning has increased among cultural heritage tourists over the past 20 years. According to Weiler and Hall (1992), cultural heritage tourists are motivated "more by a search for cultural heritage experiences than by a detailed interest in factual history."

Thus, if we understand why and how tourists travel to cultural heritage destinations, we can market them effectively. An equally compelling argument, however, is that we as a society

are responsible for providing individuals with opportunities to learn about the past, both to understand the significance of physical remains and to place them in a social context. Understanding the behaviour of cultural heritage tourists will help us to do this (Confer and Kerstetter, 2000).

TYPES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISTS

The typology of cultural heritage tourists is of great interest for both academics and researchers in the field pertaining to the characteristics of the visitors of cultural heritage sites.

According to Peterson (1994) there are four different types of cultural heritage visitors. They fall on a continuum, with 'aficionados' being the most involved and 'casual visitors' being the least involved, and others are 'event visitors' which visit sites on special occasions; and 'tourist' who are away from home and visiting historic sites. Prentice (1993) stated that cultural heritage tourists and visitors could be divided into five predominant groups: (1) educated visitors; (2) professionals; (3) families or groups; (4) schoolchildren; and (5) nostalgia seekers. Likewise, McKercher and du Cros (2002) have identified five types of cultural heritage tourists based on the importance of cultural heritage tourism in the overall decision to visit a destination and depth of experience. The types are presented graphically in Figure 1. The horizontal axis reflects the centrality of cultural heritage tourism in the overall decision to visit a destination. The vertical dimension represents depth of experience. Combining the two dimensions produces five possible types of cultural heritage tourist as shown in Figure 1 (McKercher and du Cros, 2002):

1. The purposeful cultural tourist – cultural heritage tourism is the primary motive for visiting a destination and the individual has a deep cultural and heritage experience.
2. The sightseeing cultural heritage tourist – cultural heritage tourism is a primary or major reason for visiting a destination, but the experience is shallower.
3. The serendipitous cultural heritage tourist – a tourist who does not travel for cultural heritage tourism reasons, but who, after participating, end up having a deep cultural heritage tourism experience.
4. The casual cultural heritage tourist – cultural heritage tourism is a weak motive for visiting a destination, and the resultant experience is shallow.
5. The incidental cultural heritage tourist – this tourist does not travel for cultural heritage tourism reasons but nonetheless participates in some activities and has shallow experiences.

Mckercher and du Cros (2002) further content that the recognition of the existence of different types of cultural heritage tourists has product development implications. For example, the purposeful and sightseeing cultural heritage tourists, those people who are motivated largely by cultural or heritage tourism reasons, will explore a destination area seeking experiences. But cultural heritage tourism represents only an adjunct to the trip for incidental, casual, and serendipitous cultural heritage tourists, who constitute the majority of participants. For them, consumption decisions will seek experiences in tourism nodes or in shopping precincts but will not venture widely for other experiences. Similarly, the majority of cultural heritage tourists seem to seek a fairly shallow, easy to consume experience. After all, they are on vacation and are looking for a break from their everyday routine. This means that products must be developed in an appropriate manner for the target audience.

Figure 1: The five possible types of cultural heritage tourist

Types of cultural heritage tourists		Importance of cultural tourism in the decision to visit a destination		
		Low ⟷ High		
Experience sought	Deep ↕ Shallow	SERENDIPITOUS cultural tourist		PURPOSEFUL cultural tourist
		INCIDENTAL cultural tourist	CASUAL cultural tourist	SIGHTSEEING cultural tourist

A case worth mentioning is the signage and brochures of Geopark Langkawi, langkawi Island, Kedah, Malaysia. Annotated observations by service providers indicate that not many tourists are interested to explore Geopark Langkawi because the lingo on signage and brochures used to promote the park use difficult terms more suitable for experts in geology and not the regular tourists.

Tourist Behaviour: To whom does it matter?

Tourists are not all alike. In fact, they are staggeringly diverge in age, motivation, level of affluence and preferred activities (Pearce, 2005). Therefore, it is important for the researchers, planners and marketers to understand the complexities of tourist behaviour which are multiple perspectives in realities. In relation to tourist behaviour in tourism settings, there are people who are concerned with tourists' life experience – what they do – and they like to understand it. Pearce (2005) pointed out that tourist themselves are very concerned with their own experiences and how to maximize each one, whether it be a short regional visit or an extended international holiday.

Next, tourist behaviour matters to people who are making decisions about tourists. They may be people in the public sector who provide permits for tour operators; they may be managers who let others go to the State Parks or white-water rafting, or climb up Mount Kinabalu which is the highest mountain in South East Asia. Thus, most decision-makers are concerned with tourist behaviour because job involves making an enabling decision or policy choice about tourist activities. There are public decision-makers who make either policy or management decisions about on-site behaviour. There are marketers in joint public-private cooperative endeavours whose interests include such factors as what will influence travellers to come to place A, B or C. There are also business decision makers concerned with the design and financial success of tourism products. These kinds of interest focus on what tourists will prefer and how they make their travel choices and purchases. Tourism industry lobby groups may also interested in select tourist behaviour issues, particularly topics such as user-pays fees and taxes on activities.

There are further groups who are also interested in tourist behaviour. For example, if tourists are creating certain kinds of impacts (maybe positive ones such as economics, or even negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts), the local community and then the media may find tourist behaviour noteworthy. However, generally, the individuals with the most

enduring and consistent interest in studying tourist behaviour are business analysts and academic researchers. Their work influences and considers the needs of the decision-makers as well as addressing the interests of the tourists themselves. A summary of these interested parties is presented in Figure 2. The diagram below shows that understanding cultural heritage tourist behaviour could ultimately assist managers in analyzing business performance, socio-cultural and environmental impact.

When the market is understood, targeting it becomes easier and more strategic. Similarly, understanding tourist behaviours can assist in addressing concern about increased visitation which result in degradation of heritage resources with the commoditisation of cultural and heritage resources (Howell, 1994) as well as concerns about the impacts that changing demographics (i.e. increase in retirees) might have on visitation (Martin *et al.,* 1998).

Figure 2: Scheme of the major parties interested in tourist behaviour (after Pearce, 2005: 7)
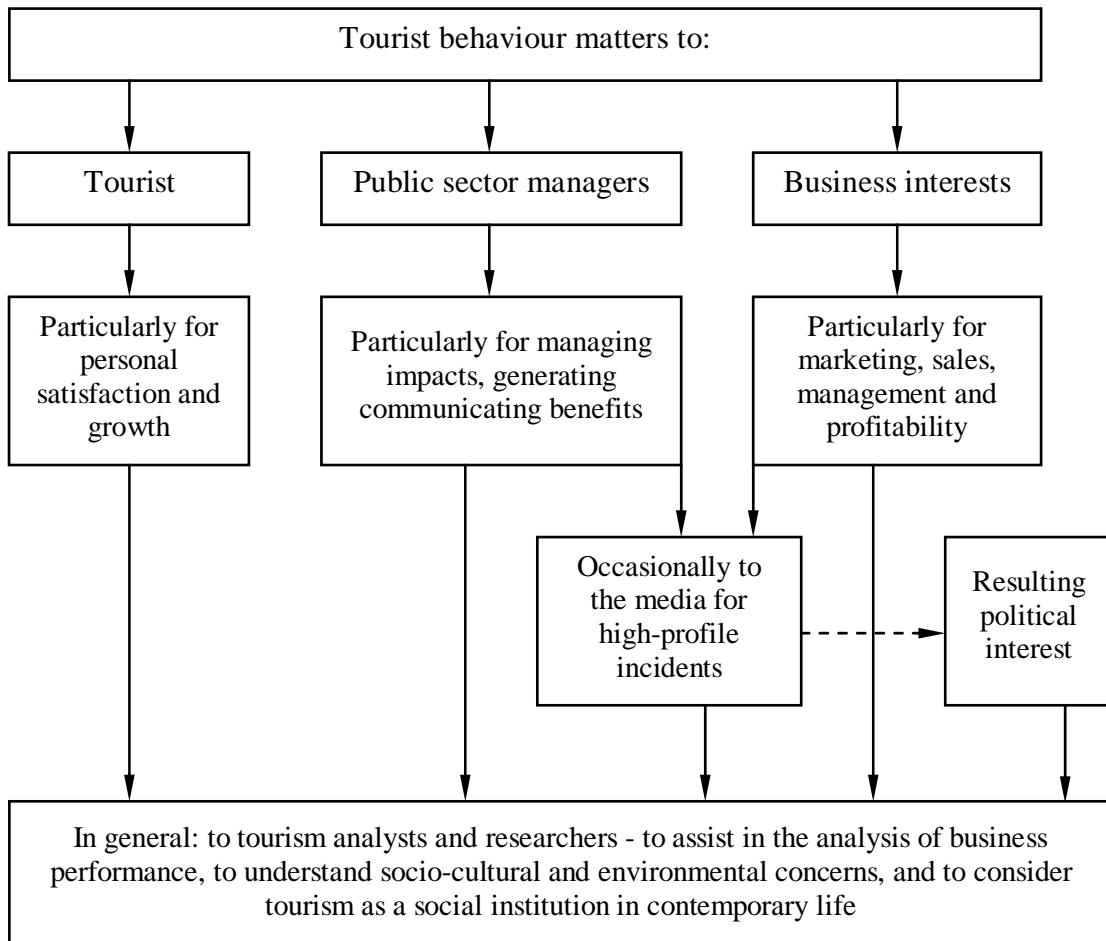
It will help in the planning for a sustainable cultural heritage tourism market, as well as creation of an effective marketing plan – all of which require accurate information about visitors. Only then a programme of product development that enhances the cultural and heritage products for visitors without negative consequences for the integrity of the organizations or institutions can be implemented (McDonnell and Burton, 2005).

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Not much research has been conducted to quantitatively profile the cultural heritage tourists. A few have focused on clustering heritage tourists according to motivation, experience, benefit, or socio-demographics (Martin *et al.,* 2004). However, many questions about cultural heritage tourists are still unanswered and results of the few quantitative studies are sometimes conflicting.

Currently, there are little quantitative data on the heritage and cultural tourist. According to Prentice (1993), "comparatively little is known in a systematic manner about the characteristics of cultural heritage tourists."

Most if not all of the data were collected through cross-sectional surveys that, while valuable, give us only a glimpse of cultural heritage tourists. To determine whether a true heritage tourist exists, more a longitudinal study need to be carried out by focusing on tourist behaviour related to cultural heritage tourism. Furthermore, in order to identify and rectify the differences among the tourists, it is recommended that more research should be undertaken by utilizing quantitative and qualitative approaches.

CONCLUSIONS

Implications and recommendations for the Malay cultural heritage tourism

This paper has highlighted the importance of understanding cultural heritage tourism by for both marketing and sustainability managers when planning and promoting cultural heritage tourism. Considering the fact that at the moment, most tourists profile are conducted within the context of mass tourism and ecotourism, this argument adds to knowledge as it addresses a previously often neglected issue.

It is worthwhile and important for the tourism managers and marketers to understand the demographics, geographic, psychographic characteristics and their behaviour differences in development of effective marketing plans for cultural heritage sites and events. Similarly, managers and marketers of cultural heritage of Malaysia can better achieve their marketing objective of increasing visitation by broadening their appeal to a scientifically determined (via research) target market that could be targeted in future marketing activities. Targeted promotional strategies that focus on promotion of the cultural heritage destination to a predetermined target market will ensure the effectiveness of marketing and lessening of budget wastage on generic and unproductive marketing activities. In sum, effective promotion of appropriate products that suits the needs and wants of the target market is essential if cultural and heritage attractions are to improve their market share of visitors to Malaysia.

There are important implications for both marketing and sustainability that need to be considered when planning and promoting cultural heritage tourism. These include the concern that increased visitation will result in degradation of heritage resources with the commoditization of cultural and heritage resources (Howell, 1994) as well as concerns about the impacts that changing demographics (i.e. increase in retirees) might have on visitation (Martin *et al.,* 1998). Thus, planning for a sustainable cultural heritage tourism market, as well as creation of an effective marketing plan, requires accurate information about visitors.

In relation to studies conducted in Europe, United States, and Australia, there was wider socioeconomic range of people visit cultural heritage attractions. Thus, by looking at the trends of the phenomenon is unlikely to occur among cultural heritage tourists in Malaysia. This would suggest that managers and marketers of cultural heritage of Malaysia organizations related to cultural heritage tourism can better achieve their marketing objective of increasing visits from tourists to Malaysia by broadening their appeal to a wider community rather than concentrate to well-educated, affluence middle class, and specifying age groupings tourists. A programme of products development that enhances the cultural and heritage products for visitors without negative consequences for the integrity of the organizations or institutions can be implemented (McDonnell and Burton, 2005). Promotional strategies should focus on local promotion rather than spend on offshore promotion. Effective promotion of appropriate products in Malaysia is therefore essential if cultural and heritage attractions are to improve their market share of visitors to Malaysia.

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