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Perception of Tourists on the Responsible Tourism Concept In Langkawi, Malaysia: Are We Up To It?

Vikneswaran Nair1* and Reza Azmi2
1Taylor’s University College, Selangor, MALAYSIA; 2Wild Asia Sdn. Bhd, Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA

"Responsible Tourism" or "RT" in essence provides quality travel experience that promotes conservation of the natural environment and offers opportunities and benefits for local communities. RT is a tourism operation that is managed in such a way that it preserves the local environment and culture so that it can continue to deliver the benefits for years to come. Three important aspects of RT commitment are analysed in this research, namely the economic, socio-cultural and environmental responsibility. This research project was envisaged to provide support for an ongoing initiative to promote RT in Langkawi, one of the favourite tourist destinations in the northern part of Malaysia. The research focused on the tourist's perception of RT in Langkawi. This study proposes to initiate a preliminary survey of understanding the perception of tourists on the attractions of the island as a tourism destination. The main aim of this research project is to study the understanding of the concept of RT among the tourists visiting Langkawi. Generally, the majority of the respondents are aware of what is important in RT practices. Among these factors, the environment is the most important factor which both the Malaysian and non-Malaysian tourists are concerned about; followed by socio-cultural and economic factors. The respondents' perceptions of supporting RT is very favourable as the majority of the tourists are well aware of its importance but all these are merely "perceptions" and may not be their main intention of visiting Langkawi.

Key Words: responsible tourism, sustainable tourism, ecotourism, Langkawi

Introduction

Several changes have occurred in the last two decades in the evolution of the ecotourism industry. As indicated by Wall (1994), there has been growth in visits to many natural areas, particularly in developing countries. Many economic development professionals have increasingly viewed natural-area visitation as a tool for providing employment in regions that have experienced decline, or lack development of other industries. On the other hand, many conservation and resource management professionals increasingly have viewed these ecological explorations as an avenue for enhancing natural area finance and providing conservation-related benefits, particularly to residents living near these areas. There has been increasing attention paid to improving the sustainability of all tourism activities, including those occurring in natural areas.

* Email: vicky.nair@taylors.edu.my