
Amran Harun

Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia

Amat Obong

Universiti Malaysia Sabah

Abdul Wahid Mohd Kassim

Universiti Malaysia Sabah

Jaratin Lily

Universiti Malaysia Sabah

The Effects of Destination Image and Perceived Risk on Revisit Intention: A Study in the South Eastern Coast of Sabah, Malaysia

This study investigated the effects of destination image and perceived risk on revisit intention in the South Eastern Coast of Sabah, Malaysia. A total of 171 questionnaires were collected from international tourists through a self-administered questionnaire. The result of this study identified that three dimensions of destination image (travel environment, natural attraction, entertainment, and events) had significant effects on revisit intention. However, perceived risk was not important to the tourists' revisit intention. The findings have implications on the tourism industry, especially for key players such as the tourism board and travel companies. It also serves as a reference to destinations with a similar risk background.

Keywords: Destination Image, Perceived Risk, Revisit Intention, Sabah, Malaysia

Amran Harun

Associate Professor of Marketing, Faculty of Technology Management and Business,
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia

Email: amranh@uthm.edu.my

Amat Obong

Postgraduate Student, Faculty of Business, Economics, and Accountancy,
Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

Abdul Wahid Mohd Kassim

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Business, Economics, and Accountancy,
Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

Email: abdulwah@ums.edu.my

Jaratin Lily (Corresponding author)

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia
Sabah, Jalan UMS, 88400, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

Email: jaratin@ums.edu.my

Amran Harun (PhD.) is an Associate Professor in Marketing at Faculty of Technology Management and Business, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia. His areas of research interest are Brand Management, Agricultural Marketing, and Tourism Marketing. He has published academic papers in both local and international journals. He has supervised some MBA, MBus and Ph.D. students in the field of marketing.

Amat Obong is a postgraduate student at Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia.

Abdul Wahid Mohd Kassim is a senior lecturer at Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Malaysia. His teaching and research interests lie in Business Management and Accounting.

Jaratin Lily is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Malaysia. His research interests are International Business and International Finance.

Introduction

The success of business tourism depends heavily on tourists' satisfaction and their intention to revisit the destination since they would represent themselves as advertising agents through positive word-of-mouth to other travellers and potential consumers (Zhang et al., 2014). The revisit intentions of loyal consumers change over time and are usually affected by the physical and service quality of the tourist destination providers. Business industries can generate profit growth of 25-95% by increasing 5% in customer retention among loyal customers through positive word-of-mouth (Zhang et al., 2014; Jang & Feng, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008). Hence, destination image information is crucial in determining the revisit of tourists to the same destination (Sun et al., 2013). Many studies examined the relationship between destination images and tourist loyalty and the findings were positively significant (Chi & Qu, 2008; Assaker et al., 2011; Veasna et al., 2013).

Besides that, numerous studies examined perceived risk about tourist destination images that led to revisit intention (e.g., Fuchs & Reichel, 2011; Chew & Jahari, 2014; George, 2010; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). Customers' complaints of the tourist destination can lead to lower post-purchase behaviour because what they desired was not realised (Campo-Martínez et al., 2010). Recent tourist kidnappings in the Southern coast of East Sabah, Malaysia such as in Tawau, Semporna, Lahad Datu and Kunak shocked the world. Therefore, a study on perceived risk is essential to understand the security and safety aspects of tourists, especially for international tourists. This study is important since the awareness of crime safety differs between local and international tourists (George 2010).

Understanding revisits intention among tourists is important for both academics and the tourism industries to develop effective marketing strategies to create a competitive advantage that enables them to gain a good market share (Shirazi & Mat Som, 2013). To this end, this study investigates the effects of destination image (infrastructure, travel

environment, natural attraction, and entertainment and events) and perceived risk on revisit intention.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Previous studies revealed several determinants of revisit intention. Studies (e.g., Zhang et al., 2014; Jalilvand et al. 2012; Byon and Zhang 2010) revealed that destination images are related directly to revisit intention. Perceived value also influenced revisit intention (Fuchs and Reichel, 2011; Chew and Jahari, 2013). Below is a brief overview of the interrelationships of the variables in the current study.

Revisit Intention

Revisit intention is defined as the behaviour of tourists to repeat patronage to a destination (Chen and Tsai 2007; Oppermann 2000). Hughes (1991) defined customer loyalty as behaviour including continued patronage and recommendations. Oppermann (2000) divided customer loyalty into revisit intention and recommendations to others. From these definitions, revisit intention is a part of customer loyalty and the will to revisit the destination in the future. Revisit intention is an individual's behaviour influenced by favourable and unfavourable decisions toward revisiting in the future. This leads to economic profit or losses to tourism.

Destination Image

Baloglu and McCleary (1999) defined the destination image as an individual's mental representation of knowledge, feelings and global impressions about a destination. This definition was supported by Kim and Richardson (2003), and Campo-Martínez et al. (2010). Thus, it can be summarised that the destination image is a person's perception and impression

of a destination. Destination image has five basic elements; cognitive image, affective image, overall image, competitive-affective joint image and self-congruity image (Zhang et al. 2014). According to Zhang et al., two images used commonly by researchers are cognitive and effective images. The cognitive image is represented by the destination attributes such as attractions, infrastructure, environment and service quality. On the other hand, affective image is based on emotional experience such as happiness and excitement of tourist.

Researchers have used cognitive and affective images and added a unique image to represent the overall image of destination branding. Unique image is used as a competitive advantage to attract more tourists to the destination as it was not possessed by other tourist destinations. Many previous researchers studied destination image using cognitive images. Although researchers have used different terms to refer to the same element, they share similar meanings. Shirazi and Mat Som (2013), Sukiman et al. (2013) and Qu et al. (2011) used tourist attraction and attraction whereas Chi and Qu (2008) used natural attraction to refer to the same thing. This present study adopted four dimensions of destination image, namely infrastructure, travel environment, natural attraction, entertainment, and event. These dimensions were adopted from Chi and Qu's destination image model. The dimensions were adopted because they represent the complete image of tourist destinations in the Southern Eastern Coast of Sabah.

Infrastructure

Khadaroo and Seetanah (2008) defined infrastructure as a physical macro-environment (ecosystem) of a destination which can enhance tourists' experiences. The researchers focused on transport infrastructure and found that without roads, electricity, and water, airport and harbour, the destination will not be competitive. More importantly, Sukiman et al. (2013) showed that there was a significant relationship between satisfaction

and destination accessibility among local tourists. Contrary to the previous study, Arasli and Baradarani (2014) found that infrastructure and transportation facilities were insignificant in their effects on satisfaction, especially among European tourists travelling to Amman, Jordan. This finding might be based on the fact that the European tourists preferred adventure travelling. Therefore, the following hypothesis was formed:

H1: There is a positive and significant effect of infrastructure on revisit intention.

Travel Environment

Travel environment is perceived as the environmental characteristics such as a pleasant climate, clean waters and secure surrounding that appeal or attract tourists to a destination (Tang, 2015). Govers et al. (2008) defined travel environment as a physical place that is unique. Pleasant climate, clean and secure environment are crucial elements taken into account when deciding to revisit the particular tourist destination as these environmental characteristics can enhance their travel experience (Chi & Qu, 2008). As an example, a destination with a poor image of cleanliness can be negatively perceived by international tourists and will ultimately hamper the tourism industry. This was proven through a study by Shirazi and Mat Som (2013) when they investigated Penang Island as a tourist destination. Therefore, it was hypothesised that:

H2: There is a positive and significant effect of travel environment on revisit intention.

Natural Attraction

Natural attraction is characterised by physical (tangible) factors and intangible factors including fauna, flora, mountains, water and geologic features and islands and parks (Deng, King & Bauer, 2002). Priskin (2001) categorised natural attraction into floral diversity, scenic diversity, bay or inland water body, rocky coastlines, sandy beaches and geologic features

that are usually used as tourist attractions. Several elements in natural attractions were found to have a significant influence on revisit intention. Hence, this study proposed that:

H3: There is a positive and significant effect of natural attraction on revisit intention.

Entertainment and Events

In the context of tourism products, especially restaurants, entertainment is perceived to be crucial to providing consumers/travellers with fun, pleasure, enjoyment and enhance positive emotions toward the restaurant's image (Teng & Chang, 2013). Teng and Chang highlighted that entertainment is a critical factor for tourism products because entertainment stimulates and motivates tourists to revisit the destination. Also, Chi and Qu (2008) identified several elements of entertainment and events that were crucial to motivate and entertain tourists such as cultural events, shows, fun music and nightlife. Therefore, it was hypothesised that:

H4: There is a positive and significant effect of entertainment and events on revisit intention.

Perceived Risk

Perceived risk refers to the individual's perception of uncertainty and negative consequences of buying a product or service (George, 2010). Quintal and Polczynski (2010) stated that perceived risk also includes financial and social losses as well as psychological and physical risks to the tourists. Based on these definitions, perceived risk is consumer perception of losses. This perception will influence their decisions (Chew & Jahari, 2013). According to Fuchs and Reichel (2011), there are six dimensions of perceived risk, namely human-induced risk, financial risk, service quality risk, socio-psychological risk, car accident risk and foods safety problem and weather. For the current study, one dimension of perceived

risk, namely human-induced risk related to terrorism and crimes was examined because Sabah had experienced kidnappings. This led us to hypothesise:

H5: There is a positive and significant effect of perceived risk on revisit intention.

Methodology

Instrument

This study investigates the effects of destination image (infrastructure, travel environment, natural attraction, entertainment, and events) and perceived risk on revisit intention. A self-administered questionnaire consisting of five sections was developed to acquire the required data. The first section captured the tourists' experience in the South Eastern Coast of Sabah (Tawau, Semporna, Lahad Datu and Kunak). The second section captured the respondents' perceptions of the destination image. The four dimensions of destination image are infrastructure, travel environment, natural attraction, and entertainment and event. The third section measured perceived risk, while revisit intention was measured in the fourth section. The last section of the survey collected respondents' demographic information. Respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement and disagreement with a statement for the measurement of constructs according to a five-point Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) for destination image, perceived risk and revisit intention. The questionnaire also contained three filtering questions to identify whether the respondents (1) were aged 18 and above; (2) were tourists from outside Sabah; and (3) had visited Tawau, Semporna, Lahad Datu and Kunak.

Measurements for infrastructure, travel environment, natural attraction, and entertainment and event were adopted mainly from Chi and Qu (2008) because these dimensions represent the complete image of tourist destinations in the Southern Eastern Coast of Sabah. Meanwhile. The design of the questions for perceived risk was mainly based on

Fuchs and Reichel (2011). For the current study, one dimension of perceived risk, namely human-induced risk which is related to terrorism and crime was examined because Sabah has recorded several kidnappings in recent years. Meanwhile, revisit intention measurements were adopted and adapted from several studies such as Kim et al. (2009), Ferns and Walls (2012) and Quadri-Felitti and Fiore (2013) because these studies discussed revisit intention in tourist destinations.

Sample and Data Collection

This is a cross-sectional study using a quantitative survey approach. The target population was international tourists as well as tourists from West Malaysia. These respondents must be aged 18 years and above with an intention to visit Tawau, Semporna, Lahad Datu and Kunak located at the Southern East Coast of Sabah. These destinations were selected because there are many natural and scenic views as well as few abduction incidents involving local and international tourists.

Data were collected through self-administrated questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed to target respondents using non-probability sampling at Tawau International Airport. The venue was chosen as the airport is the point of entry and exit for international tourists in Sabah. The departure hall was suitable to approach respondents since they would have ample time to answer the questionnaires after they vacationed in Sabah. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed. However, only 171 questionnaires were returned and valid for data analysis. The percentage of nationality showed that international tourists from China gave the highest response with 34.5% (n=34). This was followed by Malaysian tourists from West Malaysia with a total of 29.2% (n=50). Tourists from Australia accounted for 12.3% (n=21), followed by international tourists from Italy with 5.8% (n=10). Respondents from France and Sweden amounted to 4.7% (n=8). Meanwhile, 1.2% (n=2) were from Britain,

Czech, Russia, and Canada, while respondents from Korea, Denmark and Thailand accounted for 0.6% (n=6) which represented the smallest number of respondents.

Data Analysis

With the aid of SPSS, factor analysis, Cronbach's alpha reliability test, and multiple regression analysis were conducted on the data collected from the questionnaire to prove the hypotheses and obtain research objectives.

Results

Tourism Experience of Respondents

The tourist experience was represented by a series of questions such as recently visited destination, travel arrangement, travel companion, time of visit, the influencer of visit, and duration of the visit in a destination. These questions were important and treated as screening questions to ensure the approached respondents were only tourists who had visited the tourist destinations in the South Eastern Coast of Sabah (Tawau, Semporna, Lahad Datu and Kunak). In other words, only the tourists who had engaged in tourism activities in the destinations were able to express their evaluations. The profile is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that 94.2% of respondents had visited tourist destinations in Semporna, while 4.7% had visited tourist destinations in Tawau. The third most visited destination was Lahad Datu with 1.2%. None of them had visited Kunak. A total of 81.9% had chosen free, independent travel (FIT) to get to the destination, while 18.1% used travel agents. The highest travel companion was with spouse/family/children, which amounted to 43.9%, while travelling with friends/relatives was the second highest travel companion with 42.1% and travelling alone accounted for 8.2% of the total respondents. The lowest was travelling with tour groups with 5.8%. For the time of travel, holidays were the highest variable with 65.5%, followed by the all-year-round variable with 26.3%.

The third variable with 6.4% was summer only, and the least variable was vacation leave with 1.8%. The most influential variable for a first visit was personal reference with 43.9% followed by friends with 37.4%. Family member with 9.9% was the second lowest influencer, and social media was the lowest at 8.8%. Most tourists tended to stay for one week at the destination with 50.3%. Meanwhile, 43.3% of the respondents tended to stay 3-5 days while 3.5% were likely to stay for 1-2 days. The lowest variable was more than one week with 2.9%.

Table 1: Tourism Experience of Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Recently Visited Destination	Tawau	8	4.7
	Semporna	161	94.2
	Lahad Datu	2	1.2
	Kunak	0	0
Travel arrangement	FIT	140	81.9
	Travel Agent	31	18.1
Travel Companion	Alone	14	8.2
	With Friends/Relatives	72	42.1
	With spouse/family/children	75	43.9
	With tour group	10	5.8
Time of visit	All year-round	45	26.5
	Summer only	11	6.4
	Vacation leaves	3	1.8
	Holidays	112	65.5
Influencer of Visit	Personal reference	75	43.9
	Friends	64	37.4
	Family member	17	9.9
	Social Media	15	8.8
Duration of Stay	1-2 days	6	3.5
	3-5 days	74	43.3
	One week	86	50.3
	More than one week	5	2.9

N=171

Factor Analysis

Destination image in this study is a multi-dimensional construct. There were 25 items divided into four dimensions; infrastructure, travel environment, natural attraction and entertainment and event. Promax rotation was used to reduce a large number of variables into a manageable number of factors. The results of factor analysis on destination image variables are shown in Table 2. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .686 with Bartlett’s sphericity test at 936.023 significance with the value of 0.000. The eigenvalue for all items was above one, and the anti-image correlation for the yielded value was above .50. The total variance was achieved at 66.17%.

Table 2: Factor Analysis for Destination Image

Items	F1	F2	F3	F4
Factor 1: Entertainment and Events				
1. Wide variety of entertainment	.875			
2. Excellent quality and fun music	.822			
3. Wide arrays of show/entertainment	.808			
4. Colourful nightlife	.778			
5. Tempting cultural events and festival	.731			
Factor 2: Natural Attraction				
1 Scenery/natural wonders		.881		
2 Breathing scenery and natural attraction		.757		
3 Scenic of places		.712		
4 Unspoilt wilderness and fascinating wildlife		.487		
Factor 3: Travel Environment				
1. Safe and secure environment			.836	
2. Clean and tidy environment			.790	
3. Friendly and helpful local people			.643	
Factor 4: Infrastructure				
1. Easy access to the area				.929
2. Availability of travel information				.898
Eigenvalues	3.44	1.32	2.75	1.94
% of variance explained	21.51	17.16	12.10	8.27
Total variance explained				66.17
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)				.686
Barlett’s Test of Sphericity				936.023
Significance				.000

Table 3 shows the factor analysis for the perceived risk variable that was performed in one run. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure was valued at .815 which exceeded 0.50. The Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant at the value of .000. Anti-image correlation matrixes for all items were above 0.50. The eigenvalue was above one, and the percentage of total variance was 70.11% with one factor.

Table 3: Factor Analysis of Perceive Risk

Items	Factor Loadings
Perceive Risk	
1. Exposed to violence	.914
2. Exposed to pick-pocket	.856
3. Exposed to life-threatening	.850
4. Exposed to terrorism	.841
5. Exposed to kidnapping and serious crime	.714
Eigenvalue	3.51
Total Variance Explained	70.11
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	.815
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	529.44
Significance	0.000

Table 4 shows a factor analysis for the revisit intention variable that was performed in one run. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure was valued a t.746 which exceeded 0.50. The Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant at the value of .000. Anti-image correlation matrixes for all items were above 0.50. The eigenvalue was above one, and the percentage of total variance was 54.31% with one factor.

Table 4: Factor Analysis of Revisit Intention

Items	Factor Loadings
Revisit Intention	
1. I would say positive things about this destination to other people	.806
2. I will encourage others to visit	.759
3. I have a strong intention to visit this destination	.748
4. I will visit this destination rather than any other tourism destination	.701
5. I will visit this destination in the next 12 months	.664
Eigenvalue	2.72
Total Variance Explained	54.31
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	.746
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	249.115
Significance	0.000

Table 5 shows the reliability analysis of three constructs with two independent variables; destination images and perceived risk and the dependent variable; revisit intention. It shows that the Cronbach's alpha value for two variables, entertainment and event, and infrastructure, were above 0.70. Two variables had a Cronbach's alpha above 0.60, namely natural attraction with the value of 0.670 and travel environment with the value of 0.657. Perceived risk and revisit intention has a Cronbach's alpha above 0.70.

Table 5: Reliability Analysis of Variables

Construct	Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Destination images	Entertainment and events	5	.864
	Natural attraction	4	.670
	Travel environment	3	.657
	Infrastructure	2	.826
Perceive Risk		5	.891
Revisit Intention		5	.766

Multiple regression analysis was used to examine whether destination image had a positive relationship with revisit intention. Table 6 shows that 15% of variances in revisit intention can be explained by the destination image ($R^2=.147$, $p<0.01$). From the results of the analysis, entertainment and events ($r=.188$, $p<0.05$) and natural attraction ($r=.256$, $p<0.01$) had significant relationships with revisit intention. The findings also indicated that travel environment and infrastructure were not significant with revisit intention ($p > 0.01$). Thus, hypotheses H3 and H4 were supported while H1 and H2 were not.

Table 6: Regression Analysis of Destination Image and Revisit Intention

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Standard Coefficient Beta (β)
Revisit Intention	Destination Image	
	Entertainment and events	.188***
	Natural attraction	.256***
	Travel environment	.076
	Infrastructure	.128
R ²		.147
Adjust R ²		.126
Sig. F		7.144***

Notes: *** Regression is significant at the 0.01 level ($p<0.01$)

The fifth hypothesis (H5) examined the positive and significant effects of perceived risk on revisit intention. Table 7 showed that only 3% of the variance in revisit intention could be explained by human-induced risk ($R^2=.003$, $P<0.01$). The results also indicated that human-induced risk had no relationship with revisit intention ($r=.055$, $p>0.01$). Thus, hypothesis H5 was not supported.

Table 7: Regression Analysis of Perceive Risk and Revisit Intention

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Standard Coefficient Beta (β)
Revisit Intention	Perceive Risk:	
	Human-induced risk	.055
R ²		.003
Adjust R ²		-.003
Sig. F		.517

Notes: *** Regression is significant at the 0.01 level ($p<0.01$)

Discussion

Two dimensions of destination image (entertainment and events, and natural attraction) had positive relationships with revisit intention in the context of destination images. The findings of this study concurred with a previous study which examined Chinese tourists in Korea (Lee et al., 2011). The study indicated that Chinese tourists had a higher expectancy of destination quality which involved good and more entertainment that led to the intention to revisit. Entertainment and events were important factors to influence tourists, particularly Oceania tourists. Entertainment was a stimulant for revisiting the destination amongst Oceania tourists while accommodation and food were significant especially for Northern American tourists. The attraction was significant to European tourists in Singapore (Hui et al., 2007). Also, Chi and Qu (2008) found that entertainment and events had significant and positive effects on the revisit intention to Eureka Springs.

As for natural attraction, it was in line with the findings by Qu et al. (2011). Their study indicated that natural attractions were a factor that attracted visitors. The scenery,

natural wonders, and a relaxing atmosphere were amongst the major factors that led to the intention to revisit. In Semporna, the location of the present study is well-known for its natural attraction such as unspoilt sand and beaches and beautiful islands. This gives it a competitive advantage as a tourist destination. It is the most popular tourist destination amongst local and international tourists to Sabah. This natural tourism destination in Semporna should be sustained to enhance the destination image and customer value.

Travel environment had no significant effect on revisit intention. This result may be associated with an unsanitary environment and unimproved sports facilities in Semporna which resulted in unfavourable responses by the respondents in this study. It is strongly advised that the related authorities in Semporna take actions to improve its cleanliness and facilities (Chi & Qu, 2008). Moreover, Chi and Qu (2008) indicated that a wide variety of restaurants and shopping facilities were important factors that significantly influenced tourists to revisit a destination. In this study, poor facilities could be a factor for this insignificant result. Poor facilities in this context could also mean that they were provided to cater only for domestic tourists. Therefore, international tourists did not see these facilities as an advantage to the area of study. For example, in Semporna, tourist operators preferred to entertain domestic Chinese tourists because these tourists were willing to learn the history of their tourist destination. It was also noticed that a wide selection of food and shopping facilities were influenced by the Chinese ethnic culture which offered an ideal destination image for domestic Chinese tourists.

The findings also indicated that the dimension of perceived risk (human-induced risk) had no significant effect on revisit intention. Semporna experienced several abductions involving local and international tourists, yet it remained popular with tourists locally and internationally. Even though the relationship did not exist between perceived risk and revisit intention, the findings echoed the study conducted in the Table Mountain National Park, Cape

Town, South Africa (George, 2010). The study found that visitors of the park will still revisit the place even with high crime rates and terrorist activities. This finding highlighted that perceived risk did not have a significant effect on revisit intention (Quintal & Polczynski, 2010). However, Fuchs and Reichel (2011) found that first-time visitors to Israel were more concerned with human-induced risk than other risks. It was likely that tourists would gather more information about the chosen destination before they decided to visit.

Conclusion

This study provided empirical evidence examining the effects of destination image (entertainment and events, travel environment, natural attraction, and infrastructure) and perceived risk (human-induced risk) on revisiting intentions in the context of the tourism industry. The results of this study pointed highlight that two dimensions of destination image (natural attraction, entertainment, and events) had significant effects on revisit intention. Also, the perceived risk that was related to the recent series of kidnapping incidents in Semporna. It should be noted that perceived risk was essential to the tourists in deciding to visit a tourist destination. Surprisingly, even though there were a series of tourist abduction in Semporna, the perceived risk appeared not to be important to the tourists who went there.

Tourists rely more on the destination image when they are deciding a tourist destination. Hence, tour operators should double their effort regarding offering good quality and appropriate services as well as improved tourism products to ensure that tourists will gain valuable experiences during their stay. Destination images must constantly be improved to increase the quality of the tourists' experience. It is also advisable that the local authorities and related parties hold more cultural events to attract more tourists.

Natural wonders and attractions should be better preserved so that they are more appreciated by local and international tourists and nature lovers. Entrepreneurs and parties

concerned must work together to provide a variety of food at restaurants and other eating places in Semporna as well as more souvenir shops to offer unforgettable experiences to the tourists. Their experience will become a promotional tool for the destination image of Semporna. However, international tourists, particularly from Europe, the U.S.A, and China, are more motivated by entertainment and sports during their stay. Hence, tourism managers and entrepreneurs must work together by offering a wide variety of sports activities in the destination as tourism products. Sports such as beach soccer and volleyball could be included in the tour programmes to motivate tourists to revisit.

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