

SECURITY TRAINING NEEDS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: THE WAY FORWARD

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best tourism
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INTRODUCTION

A familiar description of tourism development in Malaysia often refers to the beginning of tourism development by citing the three landmark events namely, the 1972 PATA conference, the establishment of the Cabinet Committee on Tourism (1985) and the Visit Malaysia Year 1990. Each date offers a "watershed" descriptor but the signifier will always be the number of tourist arrival. Thus, tourism has always been presented as a steadily expanding industry which attracted 725,883 tourists in 1972, growing to 2,906,331 in 1985, 7,445,908 in 1990 and 23,650,000 in 2009. Foreign exchange earnings from tourism in 2008 amounted to RM49.5 billion which now places tourism as a second largest source of export earnings after manufacturing contributing RM50.2 billion to the GDP. If we remove the outlier variance for 1970-1971, the average growth rate of visitor arrival since the late 1960s would exceed 10 percent per annum, which is more than twice that of the world—an impressive performance indeed.

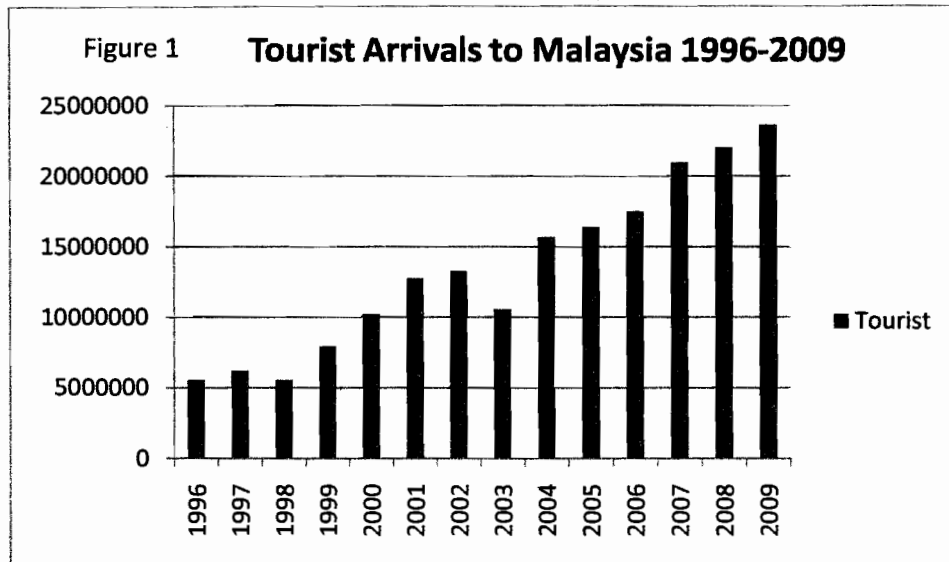
In terms of employment, tourism was expected to provide 886,000 jobs in 2008 which was less than five percent of total employment. The usual economic rhetoric rests on the claim that tourism requires low capital input but is capable of generating a large number of employment opportunities. To encourage investment the rhetoric further claims that tourism not only promises high returns on investment but also reassures that the investor can enjoy tax rebates during the early years of operation. This authority-defined destination in tourism development promotes an image of Malaysia as a top destination in Asia in the near future in terms of economic impacts.

Indeed, fresh figures indicate that Malaysia experienced a high growth rate of 7.2 percent in 2009 despite a worldwide economic recession affecting most major destinations (WTTC, 2010, p. 8). It is now in the league of the top ten destinations of the world surpassing its immediate rival (i.e. Mexico) which experienced a 6 percent dip in visitor arrival in the same year. Even Kuala Lumpur which was described as the least friendly city to strangers among 28 cities surveyed a decade ago, have made a comeback and is now ranked respectably high as the thirty-first preferred world city by the *New York Times* (*Harian Metro* 29 January, 2010).

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Based on the tourism industry criteria which are focused on visitor arrival volume, Malaysia has succeeded in positioning itself as a premier destination in Asia, second only to China. However, if we reconsider this rapid growth in the context of societal development – nation building, environmental conservation and moral values affecting the character of the individuals as hosts and guests in the country – there is still room for improvement. As the Tourism Minister said, we still need improvement in terms of upgrading taxi services, providing better hotel rates and improving hospitality attitudes so that the rates charged are commensurate with the quality of services delivered (*Bernama*, January 9, 2010, p. 3). The government has taken some measures to respond to the UNWTO initiatives to promote pro-poor tourism (PPT) in the country with a view of making tourism a more equitable industry. The homestay programme is one example of such PPT initiatives (for insightful work on this see Kalsom 2008; Roslan 2008). It is possible in the future that the government will embrace the *social tourism* plans which are currently being discussed by the European Union which aims to promote access to travel as a basic need of the citizens. If this idea spreads to Malaysia it will make tourism more integrated to the host community, and more supportive of the idea of using tourism for nationbuilding.

As part of the rural tourism development master plan, homestay facilities, for instance, ran parallel with the initiatives to develop agrotourism, ecotourism and heritage tourism which were intended to spread the economic benefits of tourism to stakeholders in the rural areas. Much emphasis is given by the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Rural Development to human resource development, to the neglect of marketing needs. Until very recently, the rural non-resort tourism activities rarely appear as primary selling points in the destination image construction. This may have to do with the different statutory agencies that govern different stakeholder sections of the tourist industry. The mainstream narrative usually refers to travel and tourism statistics, highlighting growth trends which are only marred by external factors that are beyond the control of industry insiders. The three trends that are potentially threatening to tourism, according to the *Business Monitor International* are the apparent growth in Islamic influence in society, although less so in governance; “heavy-handed behavior” towards certain profiled foreigners; and the incessant ethnic tensions in the political sphere. I am not sure if there is any factual basis for such negative images, other than speculations based on who one talks to. At this moment of writing, based on public approval ratings of the Prime Minister and the 1Malaysia concept he is embracing, there seems to be more room for optimism.



But this does not mean that the rosy picture we project of Malaysia as a paradise for vacation, is always capable of avoiding the less salutary aspects. As in any other destination the image-makers do not wash linen in public, for example there has not been much report on tourist safety and security, beyond the letters sent to the media. Although the Ministry maintains a hotline for visitor complaints and praises, we read very little of the complaints, compared to what one can browse in the blogger's columns. The sad reality strikes only when one becomes the victim of a snatch thief, lose wallet to a pickpocket, or get hassled by impersonators of the police or immigration officers. This reality is well appreciated by foreigners who are aware of the less friendly aspects of Kuala Lumpur as the top tourist destination in the country, for examples the expatriate community in the city (Citrin, 2010) or the foreign affairs offices such as the official Canadian travel advisory which warns that "...there is a heightened threat of terrorism throughout Southeast Asia, including Malaysia. (...) Exercise caution, particularly in commercial public establishments (hotels, clubs, restaurants, bars, schools, places of worship, outdoor recreation events) and tourist areas frequented by foreigners". The advisory further alleged that in terms of credit card fraud, Malaysia is one of the highest source of credit card fraud in the world (Foreign Affairs & International Trade, Canada, 13 April, 2010).

Appendix 1 shows a steady growth trend between 1967-2009, punctuated only by destabilising political events and the occurrence of natural calamities such as the outbreak of epidemics and haze episodes. Malaysian tourism grew at a much faster pace compared to its neighbors in the ASEAN region. Since 1971 tourist arrival has grown steadily with an average growth rate of about 10.7 percent between 1971 to 2009 (cf. world growth was less than five percent per annum). But its expansion did not correspond

with the relatively lower average visitor expenditure in the country compared to arrivals in Singapore, Thailand and Bali.

Over 87 percent of the visitors to Malaysia are regional travellers who originate from the neighbouring countries, especially the immediate neighbours of Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and Burma. There is considerable cross-border travel for VFR and trade. This makes the border relatively porous, resulting in illegal activities such as smuggling, drug trafficking and illegal employment. Overstaying a visa is regarded as a crime which is often associated with the above activities.

Table 1. VISITORS TO MALAYSIA FROM TOP TEN SOURCES, 2009

Source	Arrival	Percentage
Singapore	12733082	53.8
Indonesia	2405360	10.2
Thailand	1449262	6.1
Brunei	1061357	4.5
China ¹	1019756	4.3
India	589838	2.5
Philippines	447470	1.9
Japan	395746	1.7
West Asia ²	284890	1.2
South Korea	227312	1.0
Subtotal	20614073	87.2
Total Arrival	23646191	100.0

Source: Tourism Malaysia, 2010.

¹ Includes Hong Kong and Macau.

² Includes Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iran.

IMAGES OF MALAYSIA AS A DESTINATION

Statistically speaking when the number of tourist increases, especially when the increase takes place at a rapid rate, there will be problems relating to adjustment and control of the impacts. Some of these are pathological such as the familiar negative impacts which includes crime against tourists or by tourists. In the earlier decades Malaya witnessed incidence of crime (robbery, thefts and gangsterism) perpetrated by

¹ Includes Hong Kong and Macau.
² Includes Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iran.

newcomers or intermediaries in the Straits Settlements. Gang robbery is still a common crime against tourists. To some extent such criminal growth patterns are to be expected, owing to a lack of capacity to control owing to the relatively slow growth in security institutions which are beefed up or created in response to the increase in crime. But by and large Malaysia managed to present itself as relatively safe and hospitable destination. As shown in Table 2, tourists repeatedly identify Malaysia as a safe and friendly destination, although looking at the 2007-2008 variance, it is losing some of this positive impressions as the number of tourists increases. In line with the images portrayed by the expatriates and western foreign missions cited earlier, Malaysia as a destination is becoming less safe, but perhaps this deterioration is focused more on the established destinations such as Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Langkawi.

Table 2: Images that Help Promote Malaysia

Features	2007 (%)	2008 (%)	Variance
Friendly People	23.2	20.1	-3.1
Beaches	12.6	18.9	6.3
Safe Destination	9.3	7.2	-2.1
Island Resorts	6.5	7.3	0.8
Multi-Racial Country	6.4	5.0	-1.4
Jungle Sport/Greenery	9.2	11.3	2.1
Shopping Facilities	4.9	3.5	-1.4
Modern City	10.2	7.4	-2.8
Historical Sites	1.6	1.6	0.0
Variety Goods	1.9	3.4	1.5
Hill Resorts	1.8	0.9	-0.9
Cultural & Festival Events	2.5	1.5	-1.0
Int. Sport and Event Organiser	0.4	0.2	-0.2
Health Facilities	2.6	1.0	-1.6

Source: Tourism Malaysia, 2008.

Tourist Crime Statistics

Information on the pathological aspects of tourism is difficult to obtain owing to the sensitivity of the subject especially among those whose are vested with the responsibility of promoting tourism. The basic idea in promotional approach is to project the destination as a luring paradise and not the image of an underground world infested with crime. For this reason there is precious little writing on the subject by academics or feature writers covering the relationship between tourism and crime. Statistics available for private use leans towards the concern of the expatriate community that crime against tourists are on the rise and their descriptions of the profile of crime and the modus operandi of criminals are also

consistent. In order of importance snatch theft is the most frequent incidents reported followed by robbery, pickpocket, embezzlement and impersonation of the security authority. The trend points to an increase in the categories of thefts, especially snatch thefts and thefts in the hotel. In view of this trend it is somewhat surprising that tourism training institutions have not responded to call for more awareness and professional knowledge in tourist crime prevention.

Table 3. Categories of Crime against tourists

Category of crime	2009	2010
Snatch theft	42.2	49.3
Non-hotel theft	22.4	23.3
Theft in the hotel	12.4	10.8
Robbery	7.9	4.5
Pickpocket	3.7	3.6
Impersonating Police	6.4	3.1
"Snake charmer"	3.7	3.1
Assault	1.1	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Crime Investigation Department Report, Bukit Aman.

In the following I shall describe the typical structure of the tourism and hospitality programme, exploring the position of the security and safety elements in the undergraduate programme in this academic specialty.

Structure of the Tourism and Hospitality Programme at UUM

At the inception stage the structure of the undergraduate programme in tourism management at UUM was directed at equipping students with knowledge in business management with additional emphasis on hospitality and tourism specialties. Students were required to take at least a total of 121 credits comprising of the following courses:

Core University Courses (10 credits)

- Introduction to Islamic Civilization
- Evolution of Malaysian Society
- Management Ethics
- Scientific Thinking

Language Courses (15 credits)

- English for Business
- English for Business & Management I
- English for Business & Management II
- English for Business & Management III
- Report Writing
- Public Speaking

Malay (3 credits), to choose from one of the following:

- Language, Culture and Society
- Introduction to Writing
- Introduction to Translation
- Introduction to Linguistic Style

Co-curricular Courses (6 credits)

- ROTU (Reserve Officer Training Unit) 6 credits. Or choose any two of the following:
- Travel
- Mechanic
- Sports
- Paramedical
- Music
- Another course to the value of 3 credits from a different undergraduate programme

Research Methodology (3 credits)

Practicum (6 credits)

Quantitative Courses (9 credits)

- Mathematics for Management
- Introduction to Statistics
- Introduction to Information Technology

Economics Course (3 credits) – Economic Principles

Accounting Course (3 credits) – Introduction to Accounting

Core Programme (60 credits)

- **Introduction to Management**
- **Introduction to Marketing (removed to avoid duplicating tourism marketing)**
- **Introduction to Finance**
- **Business Communication (expanded to Business & Professional Communication)**
- **Company Law (replaced by Tourism & Hospitality Law)**
- **Organisational Behaviour**
- **Applied Economics (replaced by Economic Principles)**
- **Human Resource Management**
- **Introduction to Tourism**
- **Tourism Management**
- **Tourism Marketing**
- **Tourism Development**
- **Tourism Impacts**
- **Tourism Policy, Planning and Law**
- **Hospitality Management**
- **Travel Management**
- **Front Desk Management**
- **Air Transport Management**
- **Tourism Research and Forecasting**
- **Tourism Seminar**

Elective Courses (6 credits). Any other two courses to be approved by the Faculty.

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

- Malaysian tourism grew faster than most destinations, between 1967-2009 10+%
- There is a corresponding rise in crime against tourists. *creation of police - tourist*
- Tourist crimes affect mostly tourist centres.

APPENDIX 1: Growth in International Tourist Arrival in Malaysia 1967-2009

Year	International Tourist Arrival	Percentage Change
1967	42,775	-
1968	60,662	40.8
1969	53,229	-12.3 May 13 race riot in KL
1970	76,374	43.5 excluded arrival by land.
1971	765,232	902.0 includes arrival by land.
1972	725,883	-5.0
1973	869,559	19.8
1974	1,080,720	24.3
1975	1,183,016	9.5
1976	1,224,815	3.5
1977	1,546,866	26.3
1978	1,880,646	21.6
1979	2,039,165	8.3
1980	2,067,020	1.4
1981	2,344,933	13.4
1982	2,588,772	10.4
1983	2,750,397	6.2
1984	2,779,081	1.0
1985	2,906,331	4.6
1986	3,217,242	10.7
1987	3,358,983	4.4
1988	3,623,636	7.9
1989	4,846,320	33.7
1990	7,445,908	53.6 Visit Malaysia Year 1990.
1991	5,487,213	-26.3
1992	6,016,209	9.6
1993	6,503,860	8.1
1994	7,197,229	10.7
1995	7,468,749	3.8
1996	7,138,452	-4.4
1997	6,210,921	-13.0 Econ crisis, haze, coxsackie
1998	5,550,748	-10.6 Pol. crisis, J.E./Nipah virus
1999	7,931,149	42.9
2000	10,221,582	28.9
2001	12,775,073	25.0
2002	13,292,010	4.0
2003	10,576,915	-20.4 Outbreak of SARS
2004	15,703,406	48.5
2005	16,431,055	4.6
2006	17,546,863	6.8
2007	20,972,822	19.5 VMY 2007
2008	22,052,488	5.1
2009	23,650,000	7.2

Source: Compiled from TDC and Tourism Malaysia statistical records (1967-2009).