

E-SCIENCE FUND PROJECT : 06-01-10-SF0031
Operating Small and Medium Sized Accommodation
Enterprises in Sabah

Project duration: December 2006 – November 2008

Research Output and Final Report

Project Head
Associate Professor Dr. Jennifer Chan Kim Lian
Tourism Management Program
School of Business and Economics
Universiti Malaysia Sabah

February 2009



3.1 Research Synopsis

The research project is a pioneering investigation into small and medium-sized accommodation enterprises in Sabah; a multidisciplinary research project comprising of four interrelated disciplines: accommodation business management, small and medium enterprises and business entrepreneurship and marketing /branding. The project aims to identify the characteristics and market segments of small and medium-sized ("SM") accommodation enterprises in Sabah; to identify the major management and operational aspects contributing towards value-added products and services of SM accommodation; and to formulate relevant strategies and actions for the improvement of SM accommodation in Sabah. Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were used to gather primary data via multi research methods - personal in-depth interviewing, questionnaire survey techniques and participation observation techniques. Sample size consists of 160 respondents of small and medium-sized accommodation units ranging from bed and breakfast, budget hotels, chalets and lodges in Sabah. Findings revealed that SM accommodation are often located in cities, towns or major tourist sites; they are mostly family-owned and operated, and are operating within niche markets. A significant number of operators/owners have limited knowledge and skills in hospitality and business operations and have limited access to financial capital, the international markets and information. Hence, they face difficulties in increasing their market share due to keen competition and an oversupply of accommodation properties, as well as their lack of business management knowledge and skills. The key factors contributing towards the growth of SM accommodation include market opportunities, personal and financial needs. The critical issues faced are related to human resource, financial accessibility, infrastructure (electricity and water supply) and competition due to oversupply. The research suggests that major management and operational aspects contribute towards value-added products and services via training and the giving of incentives and assistance to accommodation management. This includes the improvement on SM accommodation management via enhancing the knowledge and skills related to the use of ICT, business management, branding, service quality, human resource/staff retention and chain management in SMEs. Relevant strategies and recommendations are set to improve the performance and sustainable growth of SMEs in accommodation. These include training which are related to the use of ICT for marketing, service management and staff competency, safety, regulations and enforcement, and provision of capital and financial assistance. It suggests that the use of branding to create awareness and to add value to the accommodation property, and subsequently to create a differentiated identity, provides a range of benefits and enhances profitability, as well as forms an alternative marketing strategy and a means of communication.



Synopsis Penyelidikan

Projek penyelidikan ini merupakan penyelidikan perintis terhadap pengusaha penginapan kecil dan sederhana di Sabah. Ianya merupakan projek penyelidikan merentasi pelbagai disiplin (multi-disiplin) yang merangkumi empat disiplin yang saling-berkaitan – pengurusan perniagaan penginapan, keusahawanan perusahaan dan perniagaan kecil dan sederhana serta pemasaran/penjenamaan. Projek ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti ciri-ciri dan segmen pasaran perusahaan penginapan kecil dan sederhana di Sabah; untuk mengenalpasti aspek operasi dan pengurusan utama yang menyumbang terhadap nilai-tambah bagi produk dan perkhidmatan dalam penginapan kecil dan sederhana; dan untuk merangka strategi yang relevan dan tindakan bagi penambahbaikan penginapan kecil dan sederhana di Sabah. Di dalam proses pengumpulan data, kedua-dua pendekatan penyelidikan kuantitatif dan kualitatif digunakan melalui pelbagai kaedah penyelidikan – temuduga mendalam secara berhadapan, teknik tinjauan soal-selidik dan teknik pencerapan pemerhatian. Saiz sample merangkumi 160 responden yang terdiri daripada unit penginapan kecil dan sederhana seperti *bed and breakfast*, hotel bajet, *chalet* dan asrama di Sabah. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa penginapan kecil dan sederhana lazimnya didapati di bandar atau pekan dan tempat-tempat tarikan pelancong, kebanyakannya dimiliki dan dikendalikan oleh perusahaan keluarga dan beroperasi di dalam pasaran *niche*. Terdapat jumlah yang signifikan di kalangan pengusaha/pemilik yang mempunyai ilmu dan kemahiran yang terhad di dalam pengurusan perniagaan dan hospitaliti serta menghadapi masalah modal/kewangan terhad dan akses yang terhad bagi maklumat dan pasaran antarabangsa. Mereka juga menghadapi kesulitan bagi meningkatkan agihan pasaran ekoran daripada lambakan penawaran dan persaingan sengit sektor penginapan, juga kekurangan kemahiran dan ilmu dalam menguruskan perniagaan mereka. Faktor utama yang menyumbang terhadap perkembangan penginapan kecil dan sederhana merangkumi peluang pasaran, keperluan kewangan dan peribadi. Isu kritikal yang dihadapi adalah berkaitan dengan sumber manusia, kemudahan kewangan serta kemudahan prasarana (pembekalan air dan elektrik), persaingan ekoran daripada lambakan penawaran. Kajian ini mencadangkan aspek operasi dan pengurusan utama yang menyumbang terhadap nilai-tambah bagi produk dan perkhidmatan dalam penginapan kecil dan sederhana melalui latihan, insentif dan bantuan berkaitan dengan pengurusan penginapan. Ini termasuklah penambahbaikan bagi pengurusan penginapan kecil dan sederhana melalui peningkatan kemahiran dan pengetahuan berkaitan ICT, pengurusan perniagaan, penjenamaan, kualiti perkhidmatan, sumber manusia/pengekal staf dan pengurusan rantai bagi perusahaan kecil dan sederhana. Cadangan dan strategi yang relevan dikenalpasti bagi meningkatkan prestasi dan pembangunan mapan bagi penginapan kecil dan sederhana. Ianya merangkumi pelbagai latihan berkaitan dengan pengguna ICT bagi tujuan pemasaran, pengurusan perkhidmatan dan kecekapan staf, keselamatan, peraturan serta penguatkuasaan, penyediaan modal dan bantuan kewangan. Ia mencadangkan bahawa penggunaan penjenamaan bagi mewujudkan kesedaran dan bagi menambah-nilai penginapan, seterusnya mewujudkan identiti yang mempunyai perbezaan, menyediakan pelbagai kemudahan serta meningkatkan keuntungan malahan juga membentuk satu strategi alternatif bagi pemasaran dan wadah komunikasi.