

An examination of the challenges faced in economic socio-cultural and environmental aspects of transport development and tourism in Malaysia

Abstract

As the world experiences a downturn in every one of its traditional industries, a systematic analysis of why so many destinations have fallen on hard times and recommendations on what can be done to revitalize it may be one of the solutions. Tourism has eclipsed traditional industries and livelihood options in many parts of the world and has emerged as the second most important industry in Malaysia. This research paper reports on the findings of a two-year study which examined the challenges faced in the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development and tourism. Although tourism as an industry will never be completely sustainable, as every industry has its impacts, it can work towards being more sustainable in many ways. As Malaysia develops its tourism industry, it produces significant impacts on natural resources, consumption patterns, pollution and social systems. Sustainable tourism is about refocusing and re-adapting. Key issues identified include the need for responsible planning and management, where a balance must be found between limits and usage so that changes are monitored. Hence, proper management is required for the long-term, and recognition that changes is often cumulative, gradual and irreversible. Economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development must include the collective interest of all stakeholders. A qualitative approach to in-depth interviews was conducted with policy makers, tour and travel agents, non-government organisations, and residents in Malaysia. The empirical evidence has shown that it is imperative that all stakeholders must act together to address not only economical, but also social and environmental concerns, through policies and practices, if the industry intends to survive as a whole.