



Tourism attractions and development of Pangkor Island: A study of foreign tourists' perceptions

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Abstract

Island tourism is fast becoming popular among tourists, and for Malaysia this provides a fertile avenue for further extension of her tourism industry. This study examined the attractions and development of tourism in Pangkor Island, Perak as perceived by international tourists. A total of 125 male and female international tourists was administered with questionnaires to provide primary data for the study. The findings revealed the beaches as the main attraction features (53.9%) followed by water recreational activities (5.8%), local food (4.5%), wildlife (3.9%), and low-cost, good accommodation and weather (1.9%, respectively). On the minus side, 36.25% of the respondents pointed to garbage and dirty coastal environment as major problems of Pangkor, besides the lack of beach facilities (21.3%). Nevertheless, field observations of foreign tourists' activities in Pangkor showed that generally the foreign tourists were satisfied with the island's tourism development as depicted by their snorkelling, banana boat ride, island hopping, sun bathing and trail hiking activities.

Keywords: foreign tourists, island tourism, Pangkor Island, perception study, tourist attraction, tourism development

Introduction

Tourism plays an important role in the development of a country. The tourism industry is often regarded as a tool for advancing the national economy and the development of an area (Dahles & Bras, 1999). In fact the system of tourism involves a combination of travel, destination and marketing, which lead to a process of its cultural dimension (Paul, 2013). Tourism is an important sector of the Malaysian economy, with over 57.1 million domestic tourists generating RM37.4 billion (US\$11 billion) in tourist receipts in 2014, and attracting 27,437,315 international tourist arrivals, a growth of 6.7% compared to 2013. Total international tourist receipts increased by 3.9% to RM60.6 billion (US\$19 billion) in 2014. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) listed Malaysia as the 10th most visited country in 2012 (UNWTO, 2014). According to Ahmad Puad and Fatemeh (2010), the policy thrust in the Eighth and Ninth Malaysia Plan is to achieve rapid growth on a sustainable basis. Greater efforts have been undertaken to provide a wider variety of quality tourism products to stimulate tourism demand both internationally and domestically. Attractive destinations are vital in the development of the tourism sector (Basri, 2014). One of the factors contributing to this performance is because Malaysia has several outstandingly beautiful islands in the world in addition to the variety of fish species, coral reefs and other marine life. Among the islands that attract tourists' interest to visit Malaysia are Redang, Langkawi, Tioman, Kapas, Perhentian, Sipadan and Pangkor. Therefore, this article will discuss the perceptions of foreign tourists towards the features of the attractions and tourism development in Pangkor Island. It is

based on the experiences of tourists and their interaction with the island community including the other stakeholders such as travel agencies, entrepreneurs and resort operators.

Island tourism and maritime tourism

Island tourism

Island tourism is a type of tourism which is increasingly popular among tourists. In Malaysia, islands are among the major tourist attractions besides the uniqueness of the society's cultures namely multi-ethnicity, gastronomy, festivals and shopping malls (Hofmann, 1979). The history of island tourism in Malaysia dates back to the Dutch colonization of Malaya in the 16th century. The Langkawi Island archipelago consisting of 99 islands served as a resting place for treating injuries and sickness for their military who served in the coastline of Southeast Asia in 1642 (Kadir Din, 1993: 330).

Island tourism destinations were not emphasized in the Second Malaysia Plan (1971 -1975). However, the Third Malaysia Plan (1976 - 1980) allocated funds to promote and develop tourism in the archipelago on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia in an effort to divert tourists from Kuala Lumpur and Penang (Malaysia, 1975). Next, Langkawi Island and Tioman Island were chosen in the island tourism development strategy in the Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986 - 1990) (Malaysia, 1985: 406-407). In fact, Langkawi Island, Pangkor Island and Tioman Island also benefitted from the efforts to upgrade the infrastructures related to the tourism sector, such as roads, ports and bridges in the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991 - 1995) (Malaysia, 1991: 244).

According to Wong (1993), island tourism development in Malaysia can be areally divided into several zones. The east coast of Peninsular Malaysia can be split into two archipelagos of islands namely the north region for example Perhentian, Redang and Kapas, while the southern region includes Tioman, Rawa, Tengah, Babi Besar, Sibul, Pemanggil and Aur. On the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia, tourism development stretches from the north to the south including the islands of Langkawi, Penang, Pangkor and Besar. In Sabah, the island archipelago which have the potential for tourism development are found in the three coastal areas namely (i) Gaya, Manukan, Mamutik, Sapi and Sulug (known as Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park) and Layang-Layang in the South China Sea, (ii) Selingan in the Sulu Sea and (iii) Sipadan, Mabul, Kapalai, Ligitan and Pandanan in the Sulawesi Sea (Jabil, 1999).

Maritime tourism

Maritime tourism began with 'dipping in the sea' for health purposes in 1754 in Brighton, United Kingdom. Richard Russell who was a British physician then encouraged his patients to use a form of water therapy that involves diving or bathing and drinking sea water (Takeo, 2011). The concept of international maritime tourism involves tourism, recreation and leisure activities that occur in the marine environment. Maritime tourism is a special form of tourism where tourists decide to spend most of the vacation time on board ships, including accommodation and engage in boat recreational activities. Maritime tourism activities include sailing and yacht vacation, beach activities such as observing marine life, a walk by the sea, surfing, scuba diving, swimming and visits to maritime parks (Diakomihalis, 2007). Thus, if the definition of the concept is expanded, it may be referred to the "individual provisional travel in a short time to a destination outside the regular environment and involving various activities related to the sea". Maritime tourism activities including sea transportation, beaches, water sports and recreation (Mohd Nizam, 1997).

Diakomihalis (2007) stated that maritime tourism is the fastest growing sector in the tourism industry because of the demand from tourists. This is proven by the desire of tourists to try the exciting maritime tourism activities such as scuba diving, snorkelling, fishing and so on. According to Li Ching Lim (1998), the development of a maritime tourism destination is accentuated by the beauty of nature and the existence

of marine life such as coral reefs. Maritime tourism is a visit by tourists who are interested in marine life, water sports recreational activities, islands and beaches.

Area of study

Pangkor Island is located in the state of Perak, in the Malacca Straits at latitude 4 ° 12' 50" North and longitude 100° 34' 30" East. The total size of the area is 2,200 hectares or 22 km² (including Pangkor Laut with an area of 1.3 km²). Only one-tenth of the island is inhabited while the rest are forests and highland. Pangkor Island is a major tourism attraction in Perak and is currently being developed as a world class tourism centre. Pangkor Island is endowed with rich natural resources. Not only are the forests rich in flora and fauna but they also pose a challenging environment for outdoor enthusiasts; even the sea bed is rich with coral reefs and exotic marine life that are unique. Various species of coral reefs and marine life are found along the coasts, and it is claimed that the coral species are more numerous than those found in Sabah waters. Pangkor Island can be explored on foot or by using vehicles and the surrounding sea is ideal for sea activities such as swimming, scuba diving, snorkelling, kayaking and fishing. It is surrounded by nine smaller islands, namely Pangkor Laut (Pan Sea), Sembilan Islands Archipelago, Giam, Mentagor, Tukun, Terendak, Jarak, Dua and Batu Orang Tua. Nipah Bay is the centre for marine tourism activities such as kayaking and snorkelling as coral reefs and marine life are found in the nearby Mentangor and Giam islands.

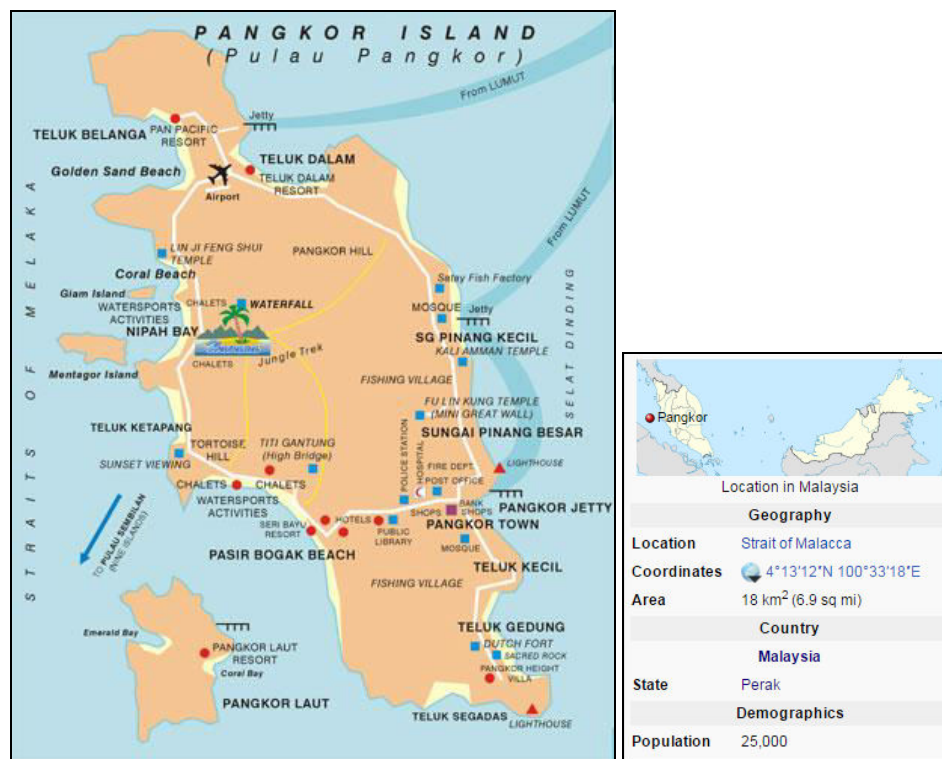


Figure 1. Pangkor Island

Accordingly, foreign tourist arrivals to Pangkor Island has increased from 2004 to 2007 (Table 1). The total number of tourists is expected to rise continuously every year after 2009. This can be envisaged with the presence of planning undertaken by local authorities such as the Manjung City Council and state

government which have organized activities to attract more tourists, such as the Visit Perak 2012 and the Sea Festival of Pangkor and Lumut 2012.

Table 1. Foreign tourist arrivals to Pangkor Island

Year	Foreign Tourists
2004	232,262
2005	274,863
2006	304,544
2007	467,035
2008	328,520
2009 (Jan – Sept)	158,677

Source: Tourism Malaysia (2010)

Methodology

This study uses primary data obtained from the questionnaires. The respondents were chosen through simple non-probability sampling. Respondents encountered during the fieldwork were selected but the researchers also pre-set the numbers of respondents for each location in the study area. Most importantly the selected sample must truly reflect the population. A small sample size that is selected properly is more acceptable than a large sample size that is selected carelessly (Neill, 2003). In this study, a sample of 125 foreign tourists visiting Pangkor was selected. The instruments used in the study were questionnaires and an interview session. The questions in the survey are in the form of closed-ended questions and open-ended questions. It consists of four sections, namely Part A: Demographic profile of respondents, Section B: Characteristics of tourists' visit, Part C: Characteristics of attractions and Part D: Recommendations for improving tourism development in Pangkor Island.

Results and discussion

This section presents the findings of the study on tourists' perceptions towards the development and environments in Pangkor Island which include the tourists' background, the characteristics of tourists' visits, their perceptions of the problems and suggestions to improve the development of tourism in Pangkor Island.

Pangkor Island can be said to be a major tourism destination for foreign tourists from all over the world. Table 2 shows the highest number of respondents originated from the countries of Continental Europe (65.6%). Next are tourists from West Asia (12.8%), East Asia (12.0%), Southeast Asia (4.0%) and South Asia (3.2%). This clearly shows the development of tourism in Pangkor Island is well-known not only in Malaysia, but that the destination is increasingly popular in Europe and East Asia.

The expansion of tourism development in Pangkor has resulted in a diversity of foreign tourists to the island. The existence of the three elements of sand, sea and sun form the main reason why international tourists choose Pangkor as their tourism destination (Tan & Teh, 2001). The rapid development of tourism in Pangkor Island will make the island into a tourism destination that can compete with other islands worldwide.

Table 2. Tourists by country of origin

Origin Country	Frequency	Percentage
EUROPE		
Britain	14	
France	13	
Holland	11	
Sweden	7	
Germany	6	
Denmark	6	
Ireland	5	65.6%
Finland	4	
Czech Republic	4	
Spain	3	
Austria	2	
Russia	2	
Belgium	1	
Azerbaijan	1	
Canada	1	
Norway	1	
Andorra	1	
WEST ASIA		
UAE	9	
Iran	6	12.8%
Lebanon	1	
EAST ASIA		
China	6	
Korea	4	12.0%
Taiwan	3	
Japan	2	
SOUTH EAST ASIA		
Indonesia	5	4.0%
SOUTH ASIA		
Pakistan	4	3.2%
SOUTH AMERICA		
Argentina	1	0.8%
AUSTRALIA		
	1	0.8%
AFRICA		
	1	0.8%
Total	125	100

Demographic profile of respondents

Table 3 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Generally, most of the foreign tourists are in the middle ages. This is evident as 48% of the respondents are aged 21 to 30 years old followed by another 20% aged 31 to 40 years old. The percentage of single respondents (64.8%) is higher than the married respondents (28.8%). In terms of occupation, the biggest share of respondents are students (27.2%) followed by private sector employees (20%) while the smallest are retirees (3.2%). Tourists visiting Pangkor come from a variety of educational backgrounds. Those with higher education constitute the highest number of 90 persons (72%). There are also respondents with secondary education (23.2%), primary education (4%) while two respondents had no formal education.

Table 3. Demographic profile of respondents

Respondents' profile	Percentage (n=125)
Gender	
Male	52.8
Female	47.2
Age	
Below 20 years old	8.8
21 to 30 years old	48.0
31 to 40 years old	20.0
41 to 50 years old	10.4
50 years old and above	12.8
Marriage status	
Single	64.8
Married	28.8
and others	6.4
Occupation	
Public sector employees	5.6
Private sector employees	20.0
Entrepreneur/businessmen	11.2
Self-employed	9.6
Students	27.2
Retirees	3.2
Others	15.2
Education	
Tertiary education	72.0
Secondary education	23.2
Primary education	3.2
No formal education	1.6

The characteristics of respondents' visit

First time visitors to Pangkor (78.4%) vastly outnumber those who have been to the island multiple times (21.6%) (Table 4). The frequency of international tourists re-visiting Pangkor is quite high. Tourists are attracted to the environment and water recreational activities offered in the island such as snorkelling, banana boat rides, island hopping and other water sports.

Table 4. Frequency of tourists' visits

Frequency of visitation	Frequency	Percentage
First time	98	78.4
More than once	27	21.6
Total	125	100

The subsequent table displays the categories of tourist groups visiting Pangkor. The highest percentage of tourists are those who travel in groups (40.8%) followed by those who tour with their families 33.6% (Table 5). Another 25.6% of the tourists travel alone. Those in the group category exceed other forms of travel as tourists often utilise the advantages of holiday packages offered by travel agencies as the majority are first time visitors unfamiliar with the destination.

Table 5. Types of visitation

Types of visitation	Frequency	Percentage
Individual	32	25.6
In groups	51	40.8
With family	42	33.6
Total	125	100

Table 6 shows the type of accommodation preferred by foreign tourists during their visit to Pangkor. A variety of accommodation facilities are available in Pangkor such as hotels, motels, guesthouses, hostels, house of friends or relatives and so on. The results indicated that the hotel is the most popular form of accommodation with a percentage of 46.4% followed by motel (20%). The accommodation type with the lowest percentage is lodging in the houses of friends or relatives (7.2%), a situation that is expected as few foreign tourists have relatives or acquaintances in Pangkor. Guesthouses and hostels fall in the middle range with each recording 14.4% and 9.6% respectively. Most respondents prefer to stay in hotels because foreign tourists are more concerned with the comfort of their stay.

Table 6. Tourists' accommodation

Accommodation	Frequency	Percentage
Hotels	58	46.4
Motels	20	16
Guesthouse	18	14.4
Hostels	12	9.6
Houses of friends / relatives	9	7.2
Others	8	8
Total	125	100

When the length of stay is examined, 21.6% of the respondents said they only stayed only one night in Pangkor (Table 7). The next highest percentages of tourists stayed for three nights and four nights with scores of 17.6% and 18.4% respectively. The lowest number of eight tourists claimed that they stayed only for two nights. The greatest number of tourists stayed one night only as most of the respondents are adventure tourists (backpackers) who may regard Pangkor as a stopover destination during their trip to the country. Additionally, the short distance between the island and the mainland and the lack of island attractions are also contributory factors to the short length of stay.

Table 7. Length of stay

Length of stay	Frequency	Percentage
1 night	27	21.6
2 nights	8	6.4
3 nights	22	17.6
4 nights	23	18.4
5 nights	15	12
6 nights	16	16
Over a week	14	11.2
Total	125	100

The main tourists' sources of information on Pangkor are through newspapers, magazines and books, accounting for 33.6% of the total respondents (Table 8). These tourists stated that there are numerous publications produced by the Ministry of Tourism Malaysia to promote tourism in the country in addition to advertisements and write-ups in the media. Tourists also obtain tourism information on Pangkor

through friends and relatives (28%) and websites (21.6%). Only 10 foreign tourists sourced their information from travel agencies and another 5 people from brochures.

Table 8. Tourists' source of information on Pangkor Island

Source of information	Frequency	Percentage
Newspaper, magazines and books	42	33.6
Friends / relatives	35	28.0
Website	27	21.6
Travel agencies	10	8.0
Brochures	5	4.0
TV and radio	0	0
Others	6	4.8
Total	125	100

Table 9 shows the main purpose of tourists visiting Pangkor Island. The majority of the foreign tourists, namely 89.6% stated vacation, recreation and leisure activities as their main purpose for visit the island. This is because Pangkor is renowned for its island tourism which has aspects related to individual attractions. Attractions such as sand, sea and sun are factors enticing tourists to visit Pangkor. Some foreign tourists (7.2%) cited visiting friends or relatives in Pangkor as the purpose of their visit (7.2%). Only one person stated that the purpose of the visit is for medical recovery. From the information obtained, it is evident that holidaying in Pangkor constitutes the major reason for visiting.

Table 9. Main purpose of tourists' visit

Main purpose of the visit	Numbers	Percentage
Vacation, recreation, and leisure activities	112	89.6
Visit friends / relatives	9	7.2
Health treatment	1	0.8
Professional business / entrepreneurship	0	0
Religious activities	0	0
Others	3	2.4
Total	125	100

The main attraction of respondents' visits

Table 10 shows the characteristics of the main attractions of international tourists to Pangkor Island. It is clearly seen that the main features of the attractions that determined tourists' choice of Pangkor is the

Table 10. Main attractions of respondents' visit in Pangkor Island

Features of attractions	Percentage	
Physical environment attraction	Sea and beach	56.5
	Island	7.14
	Beautiful nature	7.14
	Wildlife	5.8
	Calm environment	5.2
	Weather	1.9
Human environment attraction	Water recreational activities	5.8
	Local food	5.8
	Cheap cost	2.6
Facilities	Accommodation	2.6
	Transportation	0.6

physical environment such as the sea and the beach with 56.5% of the 125 respondents surveyed citing this. According to Basri (2014), the characteristics of tourist attractions can be classified as natural or man-made. This research findings are similar to that of Zaimah et al. (2015) in Melaka, which shows that the quality of the tourism environment and the natural scenery are among the four destination images which are rated highest on the satisfaction level by tourists while visiting the state.

The results of this study strong reflects the findings of a previous study by Ghazali (2010). The three features of the destination listed in order of importance are (i) natural beauty, (ii) suitable atmosphere to relax and rest and (iii) easy accessibility to the location. Other features of the attractions are considered as less important as the percentages are less than 10%. Thus, this clearly shows that the main priority of foreign tourists visiting Pangkor is to enjoy the beauty of the coastal environment there. They are more concerned with the aspects of satisfaction and beauty in their vacation. Weather is not a main feature attracting tourists to Pangkor. Foreign tourists are aware that the climate in Malaysia is an equatorial one. Attractive tourist destinations are made up of a variety of locations which possess various attractions which provide enjoyable experiences to visitors (Bottia et al., 2008).

Foreign tourists' perception towards tourism development in Pangkor Island

One of the key aspects in tourism planning is to consider the perceptions of tourists towards the destination attributes. Tourists' perception will reflect on the strengths of the destination that have to be maintained or the shortages that have to be overcome (Tan, 2000). In this study, the researcher had to use open-ended questions to find out the problems faced by tourists while staying in Pangkor Island. Such open questions give foreign tourists the opportunity to express the own problems that they encountered during their visit to this island. Table 11 shows the perceptions of foreign tourists to the problems found in Pangkor on their visit. Of the 125 respondents, only 80 people responded.

Table 11. Tourism problems in Pangkor Island

Problems in Pangkor	Frequency	Percentage
Garbage and dirty beach environment	29	36.25
Lack of facilities	17	21.25
Lack of safety	7	8.75
Food	6	7.5
Transportation (taxi & ferry)	5	6.25
Environment	3	3.75
Monsoon season	3	3.75
Lack of entertainment centre	3	3.75
Resorts and hotels	2	2.5
Exploited by local residents	2	2.5
Water pollution	2	2.5
High cost	1	1.25
Total	80	100

Of the total of 80 respondents, 29 of them (36.25%) highlighted that the main problems in Pangkor are the garbage and dirty beach environment. Foreign tourists are very disturbed by the aspect of uncleanliness in a particular tourism destination. This is followed by the lack of facilities which was cited by 21.25% of the respondents. Such facilities include garbage bin facilities in the beach areas, ATM facilities, pharmacies and so on. The problem of the lack of security was mentioned by another 8.75% of the respondents. Among issued related to this are jellyfish bites while swimming and attacks from wild animals such as dogs and monkeys. Another three foreign tourists alluded to the absence of entertainment centres as a problem for them. Such tourists had come with the dual purpose of appreciating the natural beauty in addition to seeking entertainment in the evenings. They are also of the opinion that it is difficult to obtain alcoholic beverages. The issue that tourists are least concerned about is related to cost as only

one respondent mentioned this problem. Thus, cost is not an obstacle to foreign tourists in visiting a particular tourism destination. It also reflects that the cost of a holiday in Pangkor is cheap and affordable.

An even smaller number of 56 respondents offered their suggestions in alleviating the problems they had cited earlier (Table 12). The largest percentage of the foreign tourists (17.86%) suggested that more trash cans should be provided in the beach area. Significant percentages also proposed improvements in the transportation system (14.4%), closer interaction with the local community (12.5%), beach cleaning activities (10.7%) and the employment of more workers to clean up the beach (10.7%). Other recommendations such as the improvement of facilities, control of water sports and providing a greater variety of restaurants solicited responses of 10% or less. The proposal to expand the number of resorts and hotels in Pangkor was supported by only 1.78% of the respondents, indicating that accommodation facilities are sufficient in terms of variety and numbers.

It is evident from the study that cleanliness is very much a priority among foreign tourists. The cleanliness of a tourism destinations will boost the number of incoming tourists. The paucity of interaction with the local community is also emphasized by foreign tourists. They found that in Pangkor, there is a lack of interaction between the residents and tourists; concomitantly they are unable to learn more about local culture. The findings of the study by Ghazali (2010) reinforced the results of this research. The dissatisfaction expressed by tourists can be ranked in the following order:- (i) limited trails for trekking, (ii) lack of shops / stalls, (iii) insufficient facilities for children, (iv) the state of hygiene and sanitation, (v) poor choice and availability of souvenirs in terms of quality and variety, (vi) poor disposal of waste, (vii) dearth of opportunities to learn local culture and (viii) shortage of toilet facilities. All these issues continue to plague the industry despite the early development of tourism in Pangkor since the 1970s and the construction of numerous hotels and resorts. For example in Teluk Nipah, the number of hotels and resorts has reached 28 units while another 9 units are located in Pasir Bogak.

Table 12. Recommendations to overcome problems encountered

Recommendations to overcome problems	Frequency	Percentage
Set up trash can on the beach	10	17.86
Transportation	8	14.3
Interaction with residents	7	12.5
Clean up the beach	6	10.7
Additional employees to clean the beach	6	10.7
Improvements in facilities	5	8.9
Provision of a variety of restaurants	5	8.9
The role of government	3	5.34
Control of water sports activities	3	5.34
Environmental education	2	3.57
Expansion of more hotels and resorts	1	1.78
Total	56	100

Conclusion

The tourism industry is perceived to be booming in Malaysia. This is consistent with the government's call to improve the tourism sector in line with the 10th Malaysia Plan where a target of 36 million tourists has been set. Island tourism including maritime attractions, water recreation and scuba diving are forms of alternative tourism which have gained increasing demand among foreign tourists. Thus, the results of this study can serve as inputs to the Ministry of Tourism Malaysia and to the Perak State Government in particular in developing strategies that are more proactive and effective in attracting more tourists to Pangkor. According to Er Ah Choy et al. (2014), the destination image is the factor that influences tourist satisfaction based on the findings of the research on heritage tourism in Malacca. An flux of tourists will not only enhance the country's economic income, but also boost cultural exchanges between the local

communities and foreign tourists. The local residents will then be able to learn the culture of foreigners and vice versa. Cultural diversity is a unique feature of the country and increased foreign - local interaction will result in a more positive image of tourism and strengthen the efforts to turn Malaysia into a premier world tourist destination.

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