

AN ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss the tourism industry of Brunei Darussalam which is one of the industries employed by the government for diversifying the economy. This is done as a preemptive move in case the oil and nature gas sources are a drainer. Although Brunei is a small country, it has many products and tourist spots, either man-made or natural. However, Brunei faces various problems in the development of its tourism industry even beforehand. This paper is based on the field work done from 2005 till 2007 under the research project "East ASEAN grown (BIMP-EAGA): Between Hope and Reality".

Keywords: tourism industry, assessment, development, diversification, economy, Brunei Darussalam

Introduction

This paper discusses the tourism industry of Brunei Darussalam, one of the industries employed by the government for economical diversification of the country. This is done as a preemptive move in case the oil and nature gas sources are a drainer. Though being a small country, Brunei has many products and tourist spots, either man-made or natural. The efforts of developing the tourism industry are hampered by various problems, and earlier the country had faced problems of defining tourism itself.

Background of Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam is located at the northwestern part of Borneo, with longitude 114° 04' to 11° 23' to the east and latitude 4° 00' to 5° 05' to the north. The total area of Brunei is 5,765 km², with the coastline facing the South China Sea of approximately 161 km. The South China Sea marks the northern border of Brunei; there are two parts of Brunei bordering Sarawak, on the east Temburong and the west Brunei Muara, Tutong and Belait.

Bandar Seri Begawan, located at the Brunei river bank, is the capital of Brunei Darussalam. The city is 16 km², and the population, including Kampung Ayer, is about 28,000 people, according to a census conducted in 2001. There are other smaller towns, like Muara, located 41km northeast of Bandar Seri Begawan, where the main port is located; Seria, an oil and gas industrial area, and also Kuala Belait, Tutong town, and Bangar which act as administrative centres for Belait, Tutong, and Temburong.

In 2005, Brunei had a population of 370,100. The largest ethnic group is Malay, which consists of 246,900 or 66.71% of the population, followed by Chinese which consists of 11.19%, and other ethnic groups consist of 81,800 or 22.10% of the population (*Brunei Darussalam Key Indicators 2005, 2006*, p. 1). Malay here refers to Bruneian Malays and Malays from other states. According to the Brunei National Act 1961, Bruneian Malays officially include Belait, Bisaya, Brunei, Dusun, Kadayan, Murut and Tutong. The Brunei or Muara district is the most populous, having 255,600 or 69.06% of the population; this is followed by the Belait district, which consists of 61,800 or 16.70%, then Tutong district which has 43,200 or 11.67%; and the Temburong district is the least populated, having 9,500 or 2.57% of the population (*Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook 2005, 2005*, p. 1).

Since 1932 Brunei has been well known as a gas and petroleum exporter. In 2005, the average raw petroleum export was 201 barrels a day (*Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook 2005, 2005*, p. 137). The average of the gas export for the same year was 33 cubic metre daily; with most of the liquid natural gas is exported to Japan and South Korea. In 2005, petroleum and natural gas contributed 66.4% of the GDP (*Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook 2005, 2005*, p. 77). With the petroleum production of 10540.5 million BND a year (2005), Brunei has become the richest Southeast Asian country (*Brunei Darussalam Statistical Yearbook 2005, 2005*, p. 78). However, recently Brunei tries to reduce its dependency on petroleum and natural gas by diversifying the economy by developing other industries, like manufacturing, agriculture,

banking, transportation, communication, and tourism. Tourism in Brunei is rather new, and the economy of the country is depicted as below:

[w]ith a total GDP of around US\$6.5 billion and per capita GDP of around US\$18.3 thousand (2002), Brunei resource-rich (oil and natural gas) economy afford its population high living standards...Brunei main export consists of three- crude oil, petroleum product, and liquefied natural gas – making it a significant player in the regional economy. The government is currently working towards economic diversification- in which tourism player an important role- as well as encouraging foreign investment, and developing education and human resource. (*The Green Heart of Borneo Brunei Kingdom of Unexpected Treasures*, n.d., p. 1)

These actions are initial plans of the country to face future challenges so that the people of Brunei can maintain current living standard even when petroleum and natural gas of the country are depleted.

Current situation of the tourism industry in Brunei

A *World Tourism Organization* (WTO) report shows that in 2000, 25% of the world's tourists visited Southeast Asian countries and the number is increasing, and this means Brunei faces tough competition with other Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia (*Brunei Darussalam: The Impact of Travel & Tourism on Jobs and the Economy*, 2006).

Table 1 shows the number of tourists to Brunei from 1998 to 2005, and it is clear that the number of tourists has decreased from 964,080 in the year 1998 to 815,054 in 2005.

The table also indicates that most of the tourists in Brunei are from Malaysia, especially from Sabah, Sarawak, and Labuan. Averagely Malaysia contributes about 78.99% of the tourists, 29 times of the tourists from the United Kingdom, which accounted for 2.7% of the total tourist number.

The question is, are these Malaysians tourists? Official statistics show that many of them came from the land borders and usually leave on the same day. Fieldwork observation shows that many of them are residents of Limbang province, Lawas, and Miri in Sarawak. Other than that, there are also residents from Sepitang province, Beuford, and Weston of Sabah. Historically, they have a very close relationship with each other, and some of them even have a

kinship with the Bruneians. They often visit Brunei during the weekends and Malaysian school holidays.

Analysis from official data shows that among the total number of Malaysian visitors in Brunei, 2.79% of them are for business purposes; 5.43% for transit; 2.76% for sightseeing; 29.08% visiting friends and relatives, and the rest of 59.94% for other reasons. This shows that there are only quite a small number of Malaysians who go to Brunei as tourists in the truest sense.

Tourism Products in Brunei

The national philosophy of Brunei is *Melayu Islam Beraja*, or Malay Islamic Monarchy, where Malay values are blended with the teaching of Islam to create a harmonious lifestyle between the people and the king (*Borneo Bulletin Brunei Yearbook 2007*, 2007, pp. 76-104). The development of tourism is based on this philosophy, and anything contradicts with this philosophy would be avoided, even if it brought progress and development in the tourism industry of other countries.

Holding to this philosophy, Brunei produces some of the unique tourism products that cannot be found in other Southeast Asian countries (*Explore Brunei*, n.d.).

Table 1: The Number of Tourists in Brunei, 1998-2005

Country	1998	1999	2000	2001	2005
ASEAN					
Cambodia	17	145	105	103	64
Indonesia	30062	37732	38325	40217	43421
Laos	115	157	81	142	102
Malaysia	769093	757588	756026	654104	667692
Myanmar	952	621	381	366	327
Filipina	30751	37559	48878	39524	46853
Singapore	23718	23226	21966	15230	8109
Thailand	8751	8898	9857	9239	6759
Vietnam	235	923	381	483	198
Total	863,712	866,849	876,000	759,408	773,525
AMERICAS					
Canada	4379	4108	4305	3259	1362
United States	5805	4643	5164	3149	1951
Others	-	-	-	-	217
Total	10,184	8,751	9,469	6,408	3,530
EAST ASIA					
China	707	1438	6209	6369	4505
Hong Kong	458	557	618	415	263
Japan	6639	3172	3968	2844	1607

Rep. Korea	1633	1544	1741	1051	1123
Taiwan	4984	6608	9449	6324	834
Others	-	-	-	5	4097
Total	14,421	13,319	21,985	16,652	12,429
ASIA PACIFIC					
Australia	10464	13176	11962	7916	3360
New Zealand	4027	3736	2801	2169	1876
Others	-	-	-	-	-
Total	14,491	16,914	14,763	10,083	5,236
SOUTH ASIA					
Bangladesh	658	617	1230	1666	-
India	4868	5724	6237	6389	5211
Nepal	5939	4316	7120	5242	-
Pakistan	994	1228	1053	1290	-
Sri Lanka	641	616	528	362	-
Others	-	-	-	-	-
Total	13,100	12,501	16,168	14,949	5,211
EUROPE					
Austria	199	192	187	98	86
Belgium	205	238	197	222	119
Denmark	340	348	191	229	71
Finland	53	70	53	79	41
France	2129	1768	1394	857	481
Germany	2871	3031	4175	1937	1339
Rep. Of Ireland	476	454	299	217	169
Italy	338	203	232	313	193
Netherlands	3357	3547	3250	2730	897
Norway	326	354	349	291	107
Russia	-	-	-	88	53
Spain	104	63	136	104	80
Sweden	385	384	349	323	231
Switzerland	386	420	383	261	159
United Kingdom	31500	33793	30533	22726	10129
Others	-	-	-	19	274
Total	42,669	44,865	41,728	30,494	14,428
MIDDLE EAST					
Bahrain	-	-	-	18	4
Oman	-	886	781	431	90
Saudi Arabia	-	-	-	183	54
United Arab Emirates	-	-	-	104	52
Kuwait	-	-	-	63	5
Qatar	-	-	-	-	-
Unknown	20	-	-	-	259
Others	5483	2599	3199	1479	231
Total	5,503	3,485	3,980	2,278	695
Grand Total	964,080	966,684	984,093	804,272	815,054

Source: Data collected from Immigration & National Department, Ministry of Home Affairs, Brunei Darussalam.

Monarchical Tourist Spots

As a Southeast Asian country that retains the monarchy, Brunei has made some places with the monarchical concept as tourist spots, such as:

Royal Ceremonial Hall & Parliament House. This is where the Sultan was coroneted in 1st August 1968 and is still the place where traditional royal ceremonies are held.

Istana Nurul Iman. This is the official residence of the Sultan of Brunei, and the largest palace in the world. Beautifully and lavishly built, commoners and guests are allowed to enter the palace during Hari Raya Aidilfitri to convey their regards to the Sultan.

Istana Mangalela. This is the palace where the Sultan resides when he visits Belait, well known for the petroleum and natural gas production.

The Royal Regalia Building. This building contains royal regalia gallery, royal gallery, silver jubilee gallery, historical exhibition gallery and the constitutional development gallery.

Brunei History Centre. Built in 1982, this place is the research centre of the history of Brunei and stores the genealogy of the Sultan and the royal household.

Tomb of Sultan Bolkiah. This tomb is the burial place of a famous Sultan of Brunei, well known as a sailor and martial artist who brought Brunei to its golden age. This Sultan is still well-loved and revered by the Bruneians.

Silver Jubilee Park. This park is located at Belait. It covers an area of 2,679 hectares, and it was a gift of the people of Brunei to the Sultan in his 25th regnal year. The park contains exhibition pavilion, playground, picnic zone, and gateways that exhibit the philosophy of Malay Islamic Monarchy.

Islamic tourist spots

As proclaimed in the Constitutions, Islam is the official religion of Brunei, and Sunni, the sect practised by the majority of Muslims in Brunei, plays an important role in the daily life of the Bruneians as well as the administration of the country. The Sultan is the head of the religion and the country. Though Islam is the national religion, other religions are freely practised. To spread the Islamic religion, the *masjids*, or mosques has indirectly become tourism products. Some of the better-known *masjids* are:

Masjid Omar Saifuddin

The Green Heart of Borneo Brunei Kingdom of Unexpected Treasures (n.d.) describes Masjid Omar Saifuddin that is located at Bandar Seri Begawan as follows:

This gleaming white and gold edifice in Brunei's most iconic mosque, featuring Italian marble and granite floors, stained glass, and chandeliers, and surrounded by a tranquil lagoon where a replica of the royal barge rests. It is a place of quiet contemplation, reflection, and tranquillity and is devoutly respected by Brunei people. (p. 6)

Masjid Jame' Asr Hassanal Bolkiah

According to *the Green Heart of Borneo Brunei Kingdom of Unexpected Treasures* (n.d.):

Towering over the skyline of the capital, a constant reminder of the important of Islam to the Brunei people stands this stunning mosque, often called the greatest example of Islamic architecture in Southeast Asia. Twenty- nine golden domes skimmer in opulence, while intricately ornamented minarets and landscaped garden make this one of Brunei most unforgettable and revered cultural landmark. (p. 6)

Malay Tourist Spots

As mentioned before, Malays are the main ethnic group in Brunei. Therefore it is natural that there would be tourism products that exhibit the history, culture, customs, traditions, beliefs, arts and other aspect of the Malay community. However, there are spaces provided to other ethnic groups like Chinese and the natives as well.

Art and Handicrafts Centre (Pusat Seni dan Kerja Tangan)

This centre showcases Bruneian artworks in making boats, as well as gold, silver and bronze wares. There are also woven artworks like mattress and baskets. Visitors can see Malay weapons, traditional toys, musical instruments, *silat* martial arts and female accessories too.

Kampung Ayer

This is the settlement of nearly 30,000 people, and it has existed since the 5th century. There is a Kampung Ayer Mini Museum here, which showcases how Bruneians make boats and brocade fabrics.

Brunei Museum

This museum has six galleries, and these galleries are Islamic Art, Oil and Gas, Natural History, Traditional Culture, Archeology and History and Temporary Exhibition galleries.

This museum exhibits the daily lives of Bruneian Malays in the past, which are vastly different from the Malays of the present time. The museum also showcases Malay art of crafting boats, weapons, as well as making gold, silver, bronze wares, woven carpets and baskets, textiles and others. There is also a traditional Malay architecture display.

Tamu

Tamu is a traditional morning market selling local food, fruits, vegetables, and handicrafts. Inherited from the past, forest products from the hinterland can be found in the *tamu*. *Tamu* has now become a tourist attraction, especially for the tourists who wish to know the local commercial activities. Famous *tamus* in Brunei include Tamu Kianggeh, Tamu Tutong Kampung Serambungan, Tamu Hujung Minggu, Tamu Sungai Mahu, Tamu Seria and Tamu Kuala Belait (*Majalah BiG*, 2007a, pp. 13-16).

Labi Long House

This Iban Mandaram long house is situated in Belait, is inhabited by 12 families which comprise about 100 persons.

Traditional Kuala Balai Long House

This long house exhibits architecture (rattan mattress) as well as traditional culture and life style of Belait Malays. There one can see medical herbs as well. *Ambuyat*, a well-known traditional food is served there. There is also a case full of skulls, believed to be the enemies of the Belait Malays.

Taman Batang Duri

A long house inhabited by the indigenous people can be seen here. The indigenous people still practice shifting agriculture here. The longhouse is located at the Sungai Temburong river bank.

Sungai Basong Recreation Park

Other than functioning as a recreational place, one can find the Culture House where the life styles of the five ethnic groups in the Tutong district are on display.

Natural Tourist Spots

Other than Malay Islamic Monarchy tourism products, there are also natural products like forests, beach, lake, waterfall, river, and others. Various activities can be conducted in these places, like camping, mountain biking, whitewater rafting, rock climbing, sports fishing, wrack and reef diving, and jungle hiking.

Tropical Rain Forest

Rain Forests cover 4,532 km² or 75% of Brunei. Out of this, 375 or 2,120 sq mi is the national reserved forest areas (Mohammad Deli Bin Ahmad, 1997, p. 41). This forest is one of the ecotourism products that have the potential to attract tourists, especially international tourists (*Peluang-peluang Pelaburan di Sektor Pelancongan dan Layanan*, n.d.). One of the best locations is Ulu Temburong National Park. The park has been established since 1991 and is a forestry research area acting as low impact ecotourism place. This park is a tropical rain forest that has various species of giant *dipterocarp*; some grow up to 50 metres. Visitors can experience *temuai*, or traditional Iban long boat ride. To get closer to nature, visitors may camp in the park as well. Other than experiencing walking in the forest at night, visitors can bath in the river and waterfall, and get to know various plants and traditional herbs used in traditional medicine and cooking. There are 40 species of *Nepenthes pitcher* in this forest, out of 80 species of the plant in the world. Rain forest exploration can be done at Kuala Belalong Field Studies Centre as well.

To have a brief understanding of forestry, visitors can go to recreation parks of Sungai Liang, Luangan Lalak, Bukit Syahbandar, Berakas, and Paradayan.

Peat Swamp Forest

Other than a tropical rain forest, Brunei has a number of peat swamp forests where lipstick palms (*Cyrttustachys Renda*) grow. The swamp forests are habitats for sun bears, Bornean gibbons, leopards and eight types of hornbills.

Mangrove

Other than the forests listed above, there are also mangroves in Brunei. Pulau Selirong Mangrove is one of the mangroves that has become tourist spots in the country. The mangrove covers an area as large as 2,566 hectares, and one may find species like *Rhizophora apiculata*, *Rhizophora mucronata*, *Xylocarpus granatum*, *Nypa fruticans* and *Bruguiera parviflora*. Tourists can enjoy the beauty of flora and fauna here. This mangrove is the habitat for *Proboscis* monkeys, flying squirrels, and mangrove snakes. There are also *lotorinim* snails, mudskippers, mangrove crabs and long-tailed Mocaques (*Macaca Fascicularis*). There are also more than 40 species of birds, ten species of mammals, eight species of reptiles and various species of insects in the mangrove.

Waterfalls

Other than forests, beaches and waterfalls are tourist attractions as well. There are quite a few of waterfalls in Brunei that have become tourist spots for picnicking in the weekend, like the waterfalls of Wasai Wong Kadir, Wasai Kandal, Wasai Mandaram and Wasai Teraja.

Beaches

Tourists have their picnics at beaches as well, like the beaches of Pantai Muara, Pantai Meragang (also known as Pantai Buaya), Pantai Serasa, Pantai Seri Kenangan, Pantai Jerudung, and Pantai Lumut. Activities like scuba diving, sailing, and various water sports are popular at these beaches. Some tourists, particularly those from European countries and Australia prefer diving, to see sunken boats in the locations like Cement Wreck, Blue Water Wreck, American Wreck and Australian Wreck

Lakes

Marimbu is the largest lake in Brunei. It was certified as an ASEAN National Heritage in 1984. It covers an area as wide as 7,800 hectares. The lake has primary and secondary forests, as well as mangroves. It is known for its biodiversity and as the habitat of Borneo gibbons, maroon langurs, crocodiles, birds and more than 40 species of dragonflies. There are also various species of plants and orchids there (Awang Kasim Bin Ismail, 2006, pp. 8-18).

Other Tourist Spots

Jerudong Theme Park is 57 hectares wide and it has a roller coaster, roller skating rink, go-kart track, video arcade and shooting gallery. This park was once a park for the royal household, and now it is open to the public.

Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Shopping Complex is the largest shopping complex in Brunei, and the **Mall** is the latest mall in the country (*Majalah BIG*, 2006b, pp. 12-16).

The Oil and Gas Discovery Centre (OGDC) - located at Seria of the Belait district, the centre has been a recreational and educational place. There are seven galleries that display how gas and oil are produced in scientific and technical details. Oil and gas have been produced commercially in the country since 1932.

Golf- There are five international quality standard golf courses in Brunei; these are Royal Brunei Golf & Country Club designed by Ronald Fream, Royal Brunei Airlines Golf Club designed by Max Wexler, The Empire Golf & Country Club, Pantai Mentiri Golf Club, and Penaga Golf Club (*Majalah BIG*, 2007b, pp. 18-19).

The Billionth Barrel Monument- This is a monument that combines contemporary arch design with Islamic tile design, symbolising the life of Bruneian people today. This monument is built to commemorate petroleum production of the country, which is a source of the economy of the country.

Bubongan Duabelas is a house built in 1906 as the official residence of the British Resident, then of the British High Commissioner in Brunei (Watson, 1982, pp. 37-104). This is one of the oldest surviving houses in Brunei, and now it is made into a gallery to showcase history and relationship between Brunei and the United Kingdom (*Majalah BIG*, 2006a, p. 4).

These are some of the tourist spots that can be found in Brunei. Most of these tourist spots are located in the Muara district, especially in Bandar Seri Begawan, where as natural tourist spots are mostly in the district of Temburong.

Although Brunei has a number of tourism products, some products still fail to attract tourists, especially international tourists. In 1966, the University of Brunei Darussalam has conducted a research and found out these are the places mostly visited by the tourists: Jerudong Park (53.3%), Kampung Ayer (49.8%), Masjid Jame' Asr Hassanal Bolkiah (46.9%), Masjid Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin (42.3%), Museum of Brunei (31.6%), Museum of Royal Regalia (29.6%) and Temburong National Park (9.4%). Other attractions only successfully attracted a very small percentage of tourists.

Slow Development of Tourism in Negara Brunei Darussalam

As mentioned above, Brunei has just started to involve in the tourism industry, after the government decided to diversify the economy. It has to compete with other Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Indonesian, and Singapore, where tourism has been long established. Brunei has to identify its weakness to develop its tourism industry. The challenges faced by Brunei are as below:

Domestic Tourism

The largest challenge is to change the perception of Bruneians on tourism. To most Bruneians, "tourism" means going to other countries for leisure trips, this is because being a small country Bruneians can go to any part of the country without spending a night there. Some researchers do not consider day trip as part of tourism, and if this is true, then tourism does not exist in Brunei. Therefore, this perception is obviously erroneous. There are some Bruneians choose to stay overnight in tourist locations like Temburong National Park.

However, most Bruneians do not prefer domestic tourism; most would prefer to go to other countries, at least to Sabah (Kota Kinabalu), Labuan, Sarawak (Kuching, Limbang, and Miri), Singapore, Malaysian Peninsula, Indonesia (Balik Papan, Banjar Masin, Pontianak) and Thailand. A number of them also prefer to go to Europe, the United States, Australia and other countries. Recently to promote domestic tourism, the Tourism Department of Brunei has introduced the campaign *Kenali Negara Kitani* (Know Our Country).

Price Competition

Brunei experiences difficulty in attracting visitors, and the reason is the price in Brunei is relatively high compares with other Southeast Asian tourist destinations like Bali in Indonesia or Phuket in Thailand.

Most of the ASEAN tourists like those from Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand would consider visiting Brunei is not as interesting as visiting other countries, since the plants, climate, and land of Brunei are rather similar with their own countries, yet if they were to visit the country they would have to spend more because of high exchange rate and the stability of Bruneian currency. For instance, on September 2007 1 Brunei Dollar is equal to RM2.30 Malaysian Ringgit.

Accommodation

Most of the hotels in Brunei are located in Bandar Seri Begawan and Gadong, and they are mostly for corporate needs and relatively not suitable for leisure;

only 10% to 20% of the hotel customers stays for leisure purpose. Table 2 below shows the percentage of hotel occupants in Brunei from 2005 to 2006. There is an increase in occupancy from 40.32% to 42.64%. Middle range hotels like Traders Inn, Terrace Hotel, and Riviera Hotel have a higher occupancy rate than luxurious and first-class hotels.

Table 2: Average Room Occupancy Rate in Brunei

HOTEL	2005	2006
Abdul Razak Hotel Apartment	15.75	22.65
Brunei Hotel	57.33	57.08
D'anggerik Service Apartment	68.83	77.04
Grand City Hotel	53.67	50.42
Halim Plaza Hotel (Tutong)	55.50	51.42
Hotel Ko perasi Seria	27.86	47.12
Jubilee Hotel	56.08	54.92
Lulut Intan GuestHouse Temburong	3.42	4.00
Nazira Guesthouse	1.61	19.75
Orchid Garden Hotel	30.50	37.36
Riviera Hotel	69.58	73.89
Rizqun hotel	-	29.61
Sea View Hotel	14.25	12.92
Sentosa Hotel	56.75	64.75
Sheraton Utama Hotel	26.53	34.61
Terrace Hotel	67.03	44.71
The Centrepoint Hotel	-	25.35
The Empire Hotel& Country Club	-	39.59
The Holiday Lodge	18.52	19.40
Traders Inn	59.17	75.39
Grand Total	40.32	42.64

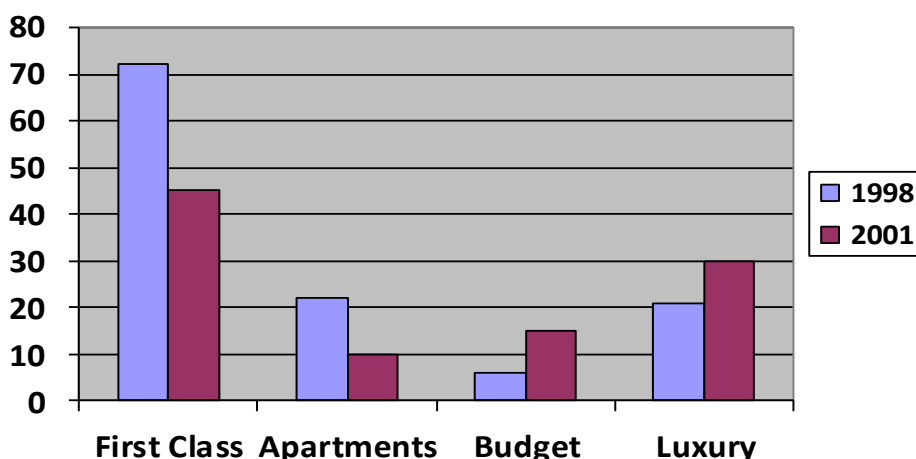
Source: Brunei Tourism, Ministry of Industry & Primary Resources, Brunei Darussalam.

Hotels in Brunei are seldom classified based on an international standard; this complicates international tour package operators to provide explanation and services to their clients. As shown in Chart 1 below, the classification of accommodation is divided into *First Class*, *Apartment*, *Budget*, and *Luxury*, not Stars as in other countries. The chart shows that budget accommodations are increasing to accommodate ASEAN tourists who perceive the cost of living in Brunei is expensive. There are also many old hotels in Brunei that should be renovated as well.

Many foreign tourists are not pleased that hotels in Brunei do not serve alcoholic drinks and do not provide entertainments. This is frequent heard from golf and resort tourists, as well as conference and exhibition tourists.

These tourists opine that there should be an alcohol drinking zone in Brunei, just like there are smoking zones. With no alcohol and no entertainment in the hotels and the resorts, it would be hard for Brunei to compete with Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia where these countries offer cheaper and better, even international quality services.

Chart 1: Types of Accommodation in Brunei



Source: Brunei Tourism, Ministry of Industry & Primary Resources, Brunei Darussalam.

Therefore, in the future, Brunei should not just concentrate on golf tourism, resort tourism and conferences and exhibition tourism. Golf tourism can have a negative impact on the environment too, as the water usage, pesticide and fertiliser used to beautify the gold course might damage the natural surroundings.

Prohibition on alcohol drinking and the absent of entertainment do not affect other tourists, like the stopover tourists or those who travel to Brunei as part of the greater "Borneo exploration trip." These tourists do not stay in Brunei for long. Therefore the impact is not felt, and they often have other interest in swimming, diving, bird watching or other ecotourism activities.

Other than the problems stated above, manpower in Brunei hotel industry is lacking. There is less orientation among Bruneians to involve in the hotel industry, and hotel industry training opportunity is scarce. Bruneians do not consider working in the hotel industry would provide much salary nor

benefits. Therefore foreign workers from the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia are usually employed.

Travel agencies

Demand for tourism products in Brunei is seasonal. There are more tourists at the end of the year around December and the beginning of the year in January, and far fewer tourists in other months. There are too many travel agencies competing for a limited number of tourists, especially outbound tourists. Table 3 shows the number of tourists handled by travel agents in Brunei from 2005 to 2006.

Table 3: The Number of Tourists Handled by Tour Operators and Travel Agents in Brunei from 2005 to 2006

Tour Operator / Travel Agents	2005	2006
Mas Sugara Travel Services Sdn. Bhd.	2,440	622
D.D.L Tour Operator Sdn. Bhd.	14	19
Century Travel Centre Sdn. Bhd.	436	358
Ken Travel & Trading Sdn. Bhd.	2	-
Pan Bright Travel Sdn. Bhd.	1,115	-
Jasra Horrisons Sdn. Bhd.	251	236
Sunshine Borneo Tours & Travel Sdn. Bhd.	15,314	13,309
Badan Pelancongan MPR Kg Bukit Udal	57	-
Southeast Cross Travel Agencies Sdn. Bhd.	977	-
Anthony Tours & Travel Agency Sdn. Bhd.	1,350	276
Frame Travel Services Sdn. Bhd.	15,034	12,908
Megaboemeo Marketing Services	5,005	3,205
Tenaga Travel Agency Sdn. Bhd.	246	-
Good Miles Sdn. Bhd.	3,116	8,931
Halim Tours And Travel Sdn. Bhd.	287	34
Hass Incentives Sdn. Bhd.	880	-
Naguina NQ Inbound Tours	898	-
PGGMB Travel Services	79	-
Straits Central Agencies (B) Sdn. Bhd.	251	249
Trandie Marine Resorts Sdn. Bhd.	1,403	1,765
HTH Travel Agency	42	-
Continental Yachting Sdn. Bhd.	-	118
Mona Florafauna Tours Enterprise	-	2,280
Monasi Holiday Management Services	-	2,899
Pronine Marketing Communications Sdn. Bhd.	-	1,481
Grand Total	49,207	48,690

Source: Brunei Tourism, Ministry of Industry & Primary Resources, Brunei Darussalam.

As in the hotel industry, travel agencies also face lack of well-trained work force; now more than 30% of the trained workers in travel agencies are migrant workers, most tour guides are foreign workers. This causes headhunting of qualified workers among competing for tour agencies.

There is no collaboration between Bruneian tour agencies and agencies from other countries, and this hampers the development of the promotion of tourism in Brunei and distribution of tourism products. There is not much of participation in tourism exhibition supposedly organised by the Department of Tourism, and this worsens the tourism industry in Brunei.

Transportation

Transportation is vital in developing tourism industry as the inefficiency of public transport can cause inconvenience to the tourists. In Brunei, taxi service is expensive, and usually, the drivers do not use the metre. Getting taxi service can be difficult, and one might need to call to get the service.

There are only six bus routes; the bus service only caters for locals and low-income foreign workers and not tourists, especially the high-income tourists who are the targets of developing tourism industry of Brunei. Most buses do not reach tourist destinations, and there is not enough parking space for special buses that go to these destinations.

Bus services can be disrupted by a large number of tourists, as often happen when cruise ships arrived at Muara. Currently, the solution of the bus operators is renting more buses from Limbang and Miri, Sarawak. Brunei needs to face serious competition if it wants to take part in cruising, as the ports and terminals in other Southeast Asian countries are more developed.

As for air transportation, there is only limited international airline service in Brunei, as Brunei is a small country and has a small population; this causes Brunei to face difficulty to compete with other Southeast Asian cities that serve as transport hubs of the region, like Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok, well known internationally for quality facilities and services.

In 2007, Air Asia, the budget airline, was permitted to operate in Brunei. It is estimated that with Air Asia operating in Brunei, there will be more tourists, especially those from the Southeast Asian region in Brunei. The reverse could be true as well, where more Bruneians will travel to other Southeast Asian countries especially during long school holidays.

Restaurants

Restaurants in Brunei are mostly found in the city area, where Malay, Chinese and international cuisines are served. However, most of the restaurants that serve international cuisine are located in hotels. As there is a prohibition of alcohol, the revenue of the restaurants has reduced; therefore, it is hard to attract foreign investors to invest in the food and beverage industry in Brunei.

Since there is no entertainment facility, many tourists would not know what to do in the evening and at night.

Tour guides

Many visitors of Brunei feel that there are not enough tour guides in the country. There are very few explanations on attractions in Brunei, and the tourists would not be able to understand and appreciate the places visited. For instance, one who visited the tomb of Sultan Bolkiah would not be able to understand the personality of the sultan with the limited information available on the signboard.

Conclusion

In an international context, the tourism industry in Brunei is still new. At this moment the industry in the country is small and not well known internationally. Many actions should be taken to enable Brunei to compete with other countries, especially those of the Southeast Asian region. A careful, detailed plan should be devised to ensure the national heritage, belief system, culture and ways of living of Bruneians are not threatened by tourism.

Tourism planning in Brunei should be based on its own need because Brunei has its uniqueness and challenges. Brunei needs not to sacrifice the values of Malay Islamic Monarchy to develop tourism; if the image of Brunei is tarnished because of the ill effects of tourism, a large sum of money would be needed to clear the image of the country.

Brunei also needs to identify its target tourists. According to the *Master Plan Brunei Tourism*, these targets are high-income tourists, not budget tourists. Brunei has the advantage of being clean, safe and comfortable, well suited for all types of tourists. It is still not too late to plan for tourism development with minimum impact on the environment. Before this, Brunei has to take action to solve the identified problems in its tourism industry, like price competition, limited promotion, and marketing, lack of work force, excessive licensed tour agencies, inefficient public transport and efficiency of the tour guides.

The issue of serving alcohol in restaurants, hotels, and resorts needs to be thought of wisely. If the prohibition is lifted, then this would violate the philosophy of Malay Islamic Monarchy, as alcoholic drinks are considered as *haram* or forbidden in Islamic teaching. Many Southeast Asian countries now are involving in *halal* food business and products.

The meaning of the word "tourist" needs to be redefined. As we have seen, many Malaysians stay in Brunei in a short time, usually returning in the

same day to visit friends and relatives, or those who cross the borders like residents of Limbang, Sarawak passing Brunei to go to Sabah. Can they be defined as “tourists”? If not, how many “actual” tourists are there in Brunei?

“Know Our Country” is a campaign to encourage Bruneians to spend their holidays in their own country, much like the “Cuti-Cuti Malaysia” campaign in Malaysia. Brunei is a small country and tourists only need a short time to visit all the main attractions, and many of these attractions have been visited by Bruneians themselves when they were small. To develop tourism Brunei need not maintain traditional methods of tourism that only concentrates on the tourist attractions. Brunei can organise various activities at these spots like motivational camps, spirit building camps, short period courses, extreme sports, tracking and others. Building theme parks can be a way to encourage domestic tourism too.

Lastly, it should be noted that the tourism industry in Brunei is merely one of the efforts to diversify the economy and not the main source of income for the country. By identifying the existing problems and realising the competition, Brunei needs to understand that it is not necessary to sacrifice and to invest a lot to develop its tourism.

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