DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM INDICATORS FOR CITY TOURISM IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to provide a comprehensive set of indicators to analyze sustainable city tourism development in Malaysia. The sustainable tourism indicators (STIs) relevance to SDGs, stakeholder groups, and both subjective and objective indicators are all taken into account. The study is conducted via a Delphi technique for objective indicators and scale development procedure for subjective indicators. This set of STIs can be used to monitor tourism development process at the urban level to achieve sustainability. The selected indicators are measurable and practical to provide a realistic picture of city destination performance.

Keywords: *Sustainable tourism indicators (STIs), urban destination, sustainable tourism, tourism impacts, delphi technique, scale development procedure*

INTRODUCTION

City tourism brings both positive and negative economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts to the destination. Moreover, the growth of city tourism has got the curiosity of scholars, who are now paying much closer attention to the issue (Hinch, 1996; Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007; Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017). Nevertheless, the growth of city tourism has posed substantial problems for tourism development (Maxim, 2019). Furthermore, Saviolidis et al. (2021) stated that the impacts of tourism vary depending on the level of development and the execution of planning and management schemes.

In recent years, sustainability has been widely recognized and attention as critical for long-term growth in many businesses, including tourism (Oriade et al., 2021). Destinations are also typically linked to sustainable tourism development and are considered a dominant paradigm (Deakin, 2001). However, according to Miller and Ward (2005), sustainable tourism is unsuccessful unless the current condition and progress toward sustainability can be assessed. Therefore, numerous indicator sets have been created to measure various dimensions of sustainability in tourism (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020).

Although prior attempts to develop sustainability indicators for tourism, a few studies have presented the urban sustainability indicator systems, particularly in Malaysia (Razali & Ismail, 2014). This diagnosis identifies the necessity for developing particular tourism indicators that may be integrated into the management of urban destinations. In addition, indicators can help tourism planners and managers make the decisions for sustainable tourism development (Lee & Hsieh, 2016). In 1995, United Nation World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO] (2004) provided critical sustainable tourism indicators, a helpful tool for sustainable tourism development.

Sustainable tourism indicators (STIs) can use as early warning systems, stimulating planning and managing strategies to prevent the negative impacts of tourism (UNWTO, 2005; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020). To develop STIs, Rasoolimanesh et al. (2020) suggested that researchers should consider the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the key stakeholders in tourism (e.g., resident, tourist, business, and government), and both subjective and objective indicators.

METHODOLOGY

Developing STIs for city tourism, this study applies the Delphi technique. This strategy integrates expert information and opinion to reach an informed group consensus on difficult issues (Donohoe & Needham, 2009). It is a very useful strategy that distributes questionnaires to a panel of experts unaware of their fellow panel members (Viljoen, 2007). It consists of several rounds, and questionnaires are distributed to experts until consensus is attained (Keeney et al., 2011).

Before selecting STIs, various articles and guidebooks were reviewed for positive and negative indicators for sustainable tourism in urban destinations. Besides, numerous academics and organizations came up with numerous indicators and selection criteria (Franzoni, 2015; Tanguay et al., 2013; Miller, 2001; Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2014; European Commission, 2016; UNWTO, 2004; GSTC, 2019). Additionally, indicators are selected based on measuring the phenomena under study (Miller, 2001). Torres-Delgado and Saarinen (2014) stated that the scenario determines the indicator type under investigation and the study's objective. Appropriate indicators were selected by considering research questions and objectives. Further, to offer new perspectives on tourism, this study considered economical, sociocultural, environmental, political, and technology dimensions. After reviewing the literature, indicators have been extracted from the literature and placed into different dimensions. Various experts suggested, three to four rounds of the debate are typically sufficient in a Delphi (Choi & Turk, 2011; Kim et al., 2021). Therefore, to finalize the objective indicators, 3-4 rounds of Delphi will be conducted. For subjective indicators for four groups of stakeholders, after literature review and first round of expert opinion via Delphi method, the scale development procedure (Churchill, 1979), will be followed. The quantitative data will be collected to validate scales for four groups of stakeholders as part of STI.

RESULTS

From the first round, in total, 335 indicators were classified to objective and subjective indicators. For objective indicators, 140 indicators were classified into five categories: economic, sociocultural, environmental, political, and technology dimensions. In addition, there were 195 subjective indicators by considering four groups of stakeholders (resident, tourist, business sector, and government) and classified into five categories (economic, sociocultural, environmental, political, and technology dimensions). Delphi method rounds are conducting and will be continuing to reach consensus for objective indicators, and the scale development procedure will be followed for subjective indicators to finalize the STI.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper attempted to develop STIs that could help to monitor tourism impacts, and provide a guideline for future tourism development. As the result, the findings have consequences for Malaysian tourism providers and government entities to plan, monitor, and regulate tourism development. It can also be the tool to provide strategic plans and to keep the city as a sustainable tourist attraction.

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