HOW DID MALAYSIA MANAGE ITS POSITION AS TOP 10 WORLD TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN UNWTO RANKING IN 2012?

Nor'Ain Othman
Hassnah Wee
Razip Hassan

ABSTRACT

There are many reasons contributing to the achievement of Malaysia for being rank as top 10 most visited destinations in the world for the last four years. Among the factors are structures, resources, strategy, policy and leadership. In order to identify how Malaysia manage to be at this rank, a study was carried out on destination branding of Malaysian tourism from destination marketers' perspectives. The objectives are to identify tourism marketing messages that influence international tourists desire to visit Malaysia and to examine destination marketing agencies attitude towards building "Brand Malaysia" in tourism products. The subject of this research is the most recent promotion involving a new brand entitled "Malaysia Truly Asia" and examines the initiative within the framework of the country's destination branding and destination image development strategies. An assessment of the part played by destination branding in Malaysian tourism industry at large forms the wider context for the study and conclusions of more general relevance are drawn from the particularities of the case. A quantitative research method is used to examine the attitude of destination marketers towards the awareness on marketing mix used in creating "Brand Malaysia" tourism branding. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to travel agencies based on purposive convenient sampling.

Keywords: Tourism Marketing, Destination Branding, Awareness, Image

JEL Classification: M310

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry in Malaysia is relatively well established, structured and focused. This started with the restructuring of Tourist Development Corporation (TDC) which was enacted in 1972 to become Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (Tourism Malaysia) in 1992 to focus on promotion. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism formed in 1986 was restructured as the Ministry of Tourism in 2004. Then it was restructured again as Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MOCAT) in 2013. This strong set-up of both the Ministry and Tourism Malaysia has contributed into better and effective planning, implementation and improving of programmes and activities, in particular with overseas and domestic promotions. As a result of the intensive efforts made in changing the structures of Malaysian tourism authorities and agencies in promoting tourist destination, Malaysia has been ranked as top 10 most visited destinations in the world for the last four years. It was ranked as 9th position (2009-2011) and 10th (2012) based on the United Nations

World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), barometer. In 2012, Tourism Malaysia reported a total of 25 million tourist arrivals, an increase of 1.3% compared to 24.7 million in 2011. This brought in tourist receipts of RM60.6 billion, an increase of 3.8 % from RM58.3 billion in 2011. This is reflected in its top ten performers namely Singapore (13,014,268), Indonesia (2,382,606), China (1,558.785), Thailand (1,263, 024), Brunei (1,258,070), the Philippines (508,744), Australia (5-7,948), Japan (470,008) and the UK (402,207). This remarkable achievement has also made Malaysia as the only destination in Asia after China enjoys this privilege (Ministry of Tourism, 2012).

To further increase Malaysia visibility and position in overseas as top and attractive tourist destination, it has strong presence of Tourism Malaysia overseas offices and marketing representatives in key generating and potential markets. This is complimented with domestic offices in all 13 states in Malaysia. Not only that, Malaysia has a very supportive towards tourism from local governments, statutory bodies and regional development authorities. In other words, having fundamental and well organised national tourism organisation is paramount important to plan, execute and improving all policies, strategies and results in promoting the destination.

In view of the importance of tourism promotion, this study was carried out with the purpose of identifying the importance of tourism marketing messages that influence international tourists desire to visit Malaysia and investigate the travel agencies attitude toward the awareness of "Brand Malaysia" development of destination branding. This paper explores strategies for branding Malaysian tourism from the perspective of destination marketers, in helping to position Malaysia as an appealing destination in the traveller's mind. For that purpose, it reviews the importance of tourism marketing messages, destination attributes that establish the awareness and desire among the international tourists to travel to Malaysian destination, and as well as attitude towards branding work undertaken by the Tourism Malaysia in order to capture the relevant elements in branding Malaysia as a tourism destination. The Malaysian tourism brand has to include what Malaysian tourism aspires to be, a unique set of brand associations, and brand awareness to build as much brand equity as possible. The importance of networking between Malaysian Tourism authorities and destination marketers (travel agencies) is highlighted to ensure the "Brand Malaysia" positioning in both international and local market are focused holistically between both parties.

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

2.1. Destination Branding

The seriousness in tourism marketing of destination has resulted in a study on destination branding, image, communication and awareness. During the past years, the characteristics of the brand mentioned by Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) are repeated in the destination branding literature. Brands have been connotations of clear image, promotional tools used by destination marketers to gain distinctiveness and competitive advantage (Morgan *et al.* 2002), and are seen as acting an expression of a relationship between the customer and product (Hankinson, 2005). The brand creates the memorable and emotional bond between preferred travel markets and the destination (Morgan *et al.*, 2002; Williams *et al.*, 2004). According to Hanlan and Kelly (2005), a brand promise and a travel experience that live up to the promise are valuable elements of destination branding. Perhaps a more comprehensive destination branding definition was established by Blain *et al.* (2005:337):

> *"Destination Branding is the set of marketing activities that (1) support the creation of name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates destination and*

(2) consistently convey the expectation of memorably travel experienced that is uniquely associated with the destination; (3) serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and that (4) reduce consumer search cost and perceived risk. Collectively these activities serve to create destination image that positively influence consumer destination choice."

2.2. Destination Image

The concept of destination image is multidimensional, with cognitive and effective spheres, and has been defined as an amalgam of knowledge, feelings, beliefs, opinions, ideas, expectations, and impressions that people have about a named location (Hosany *et al.*, 2006). It has been the subject of considerable discussion, but there is a consensus that destinations with clearly delineated and appealing images are better positioned than those about which little is known or which seem unattractive for various reasons (Ekinci *et al.*, 2007). It is not just the images of the travelling public which are significant, but also those of investors and managers of tourism businesses like tour operators, hotel companies and airlines whose decisions impact on individual travel opportunities and the pays of tourism development. Ecthner and Ritchie (1991, 1993), on the other hand, posit that the following questions are essential when determine how brand image established: i) what comes to mind when a destination is mentioned?; how clear of an image does the brand has of the destination?; how much do you like the brand after watching an advertisement containing it?; how favourable is the brand image?; how well does the brand message communicate the essence of tourism destination?; What does the brand stand for in the minds of customers?.

In the whole body of destination image studies, Echtner and Ritchie (1991:11) proposed a somewhat unique conceptualization of the destination image construct based on an extensive review of the literature on destination image research for the period of 1975–1990:

"Destination image should be envisioned as consisting of two main components; those that are attribute-based and those that are holistic. Each of these components of destination image contains functional, or more tangible, and psychological, or more abstract, characteristics. Images of destinations can also range from those based on "common" functional and psychological traits to those based on more distinctive or even unique features, events, feelings or auras".

Altogether, the holistic component is positioned as a mental picture, or overall representation, of the destination, and, as such, resembles the overall component of the destination image. The holistic component is important for understanding how a particular destination is categorized in the minds of consumers, and what prevailing images and stereotypes are associated with a given destination. Echtner and Ritchie (1993) posit that a conceptual framework for operationalization of all specified components of destination image, as well as proposed a convenient format for visual representation of image components. In designing the scale for measuring the attribute-based items, Echtner and Ritchie (1993) showed the framework for marketing studies. The steps specifies the domain of the image construct, generating a sample of items, purifying the measures using Cronbach's alpha as an indicator, and iterative factor analysis were conducted. Thus, the issues of content validity, dimensionality, and internal consistency reliability of the proposed scale were addressed by the researchers.

2.3. Brand Communication

Marketing communication is the brand's weapon. It alone can unveil what is invisible; reveal the basic differences hidden by the packaging which often looks the same among competitors. It alone can sustain the attachment to the brand, by promoting intangible values, even if this loyalty is eroded by many promotions (Kapferer, 2004). The organization must carefully blend the promotion tools into a coordinated promotion mix that will achieve its advertising

and marketing objectives. Organizations within the same industry differ greatly in how they design their promotion mixes of advertising, sales promotion, and public relations (Kotler *et al.*, 2003).

2.4. Destination Awareness
Destination awareness reflects both the knowledge and the salience of the destination in the customer's mind. Awareness can be measured on different levels including the following: recognition, recall, top of mind, brand dominance, brand familiarity, and brand knowledge or salience (David and Joachimsthaler, 2000). Therefore, destination marketers should always focus on the kind of destination branding establish by their tourism authorities and agencies in order to capture tourist demand from time to time. The changes in destination branding strategy by national or state tourism authorities normally as an effort to build a new destination concept to attract tourists to travel to the destination.

3. PROMOTING MALAYSIA AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

3.1. Tourism Resources, Products and Services
Tourism is one of the top three sectors contributing into foreign exchange for Malaysia. It has qualified and experienced professionals and practitioners that would accelerate the industry in efficient and effective way. Combining resources of public and private sectors in terms of experience, expertise, product development, service delivery, marketing and promotions as well as destination management, Malaysia is indeed on the track to move at greater height. This is evidenced with the introduction of new programmes, policy and activity, particularly in tourism courses offered from apprentice to doctorate levels. As destination, Malaysia never rest at its laurel, thus, in responding to market trend and demand, it has studied the market to match with relatively right products and services. Among others are family oriented products like theme parks, eco-tourism, medical tourism, education tourism. In terms of product strategy, Malaysia has given special emphasis into high value for high end market. These include by introducing special packages in conjunction with revenue-based hallmark events like Formula One Grand Prix, Mega Sales and MotoGP. In consideration of the importance of having more quality events, Malaysia has introduced innovative events namely Malaysia International Shoe Festival (MISF), 1Malaysia Contemporary Art Tourism Festival (1-MCAT), Parks and Gardens and Fabulous Food 1Malaysia (FF1M). Malaysia has also introduced Homestay Programme and Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) programme to attract niche and long-stay tourists (Malaysia Tourism Report, 2012).

3.2. Malaysia Destination Brand Image and National Policy
Tourism is one of the 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEA) to drive the nation's economic growth under Malaysia's Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) with a target of 2020:36:168 to be achieved through the implementation of 12 strategic Entry Point Projects (EPPs). Popularly known as Malaysia Tourism Transformation Plan (MTTP) it has five major themes upholding the agenda of the destination. These are: i) Affordable Luxury focusing on shopping; ii) Family Fun – integrated resorts and theme parks; iii) Events, Spa & Sports; iv) Business Tourism – as leading MICE market; v) Nature Adventure (Economic Transformation Programme, Annual Report 2012).

Consistency in pursuing and promoting its destination brand has positioned Malaysia strongly in the market place. It strongly believed in its world renowned brand of **Malaysia Truly Asia** since was launched in 1999. This has contributed significantly in tourists' perception both foreign and local towards Malaysia.

3.3. Tourism Malaysia Promotional Strategy

In consistence with MTTP, Malaysia is embarking to become a high-value tourism destination by concentrating on selected high-yield segments. At the same time, it still gives emphasis towards producing and potential markets from ASEAN, medium-haul and long haul. To further strengthen Malaysia position in the market, it continuous working with partners in the industry like airlines, attractions management companies (AMCs), destination management companies (DMCs), hotels and private sectors. Malaysia continues participating in major international and regional travel fairs like ITB, ATM, WTM as well as local shows through its overseas offices. The combination of Advertising and Publicity campaign initiated globally has also played very important role in making Malaysia as preferred destination. Capitalising on Malaysia Truly Asia brand, Malaysia through Tourism Malaysia uses an integrated media platforms consisting of above the line and below the line. These include TV, Radio, Print, out-of-home (OOH) like billboards, transit advertising, cinema) and online. It is common to see commercials on Malaysia in well-known networks such as CNN, BBC and Al Jazeera.

Embracing new technology in marketing is proven to be effective for Malaysia to reach the target segments including Gen Y. It is more than corporate websites. It has launched its digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Web TV and YouTube Channel. At the same time, the importance of continuous learning among travel trade and media about Malaysia as top tourist destination has never been neglected. It has introduced its travel familiarisation brand known as *Malaysia Mega Familiarisation Tour Programme* or in short *MEGA FAM* since 2000 to educate international travel fraternity and media with first-hand information and experience of various destinations, services and products.

Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) was formed in 2009 to look after the importance of business tourism business sector. It has secured many big conventions business for 2012 such as 81st Annual Scientific Congress of Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, 9th World Congress of Chinese Medicine, 43rd Union World Congress on Lung Health and 8th Design & Health World Congress and Exhibition.

3.4. Accolades

Malaysia receives many accolades in 2012 from international institutions that further demonstrate Malaysia strong brand as destination both for tourist and business (Malaysia Tourism Report 2012). Among are:

- 1st Prize UNWTO Ulysses Award 2012 – for innovative in Public Policy and Governance for Malaysia Homestay Experience Programme
- Kuala Lumpur as 4th Best Shopping City in the World by CNN (2012) after New York, Tokyo and London.
- 2nd Best Shopping Destination in Asia Pacific by Globe Shopper Index
- 10th World's Friendliest Countries by Forbes Online based on HSBC's Expat Explorer Survey
- 12th most competitive economy in the world for doing business by World Bank's Doing Business Report
- No. 7 Top 10 Meetings Destination in Asia Pacific by ICCA
- Asia's Leading Sports Tourism Destination and Asia's Leading City Destination at World Travel Awards 2011
- One of the world's top ten countries for 2010 by Lonely Planet

As destination, Malaysia has much to offer to foreign visitors and among the attributes are: value for money, well-developed infrastructure and amenities, great diversity of culture and natural attractions, state of the art facilities in transportation and communications, safe destination, stable government, peace and harmony, equal distance of many attractions, etc.

The most distinctive destination in Malaysia that have been recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites and Cities are Melaka, George Town, Kinabalu Park in Sabah, and Lenggong in Perak.

4. METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research method is used to examine the attitude of destination marketers towards the awareness on marketing mix used in creating "Brand Malaysia" tourism branding. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to travel agencies located within Selangor state and 202 (67.3% respond rate) returned. The respondents were chosen based on purposive convenient sampling as the questionnaire was distributed to travel agencies located in major town in Selangor namely Shah Alam, Klang, Subang Jaya, Petaling Jaya, Kelana Jaya, Puchong, Seri Kembangan, Sepang, Bangi, and Ampang. A drop and collect approach was used as means in data collection as the respondents were given 7 days to answer the questionnaire. A courtesy phone call to remind the respondent on the questionnaire was done on day 6. The ample time given to the respondent to complete the questionnaire is important because most of respondents were the manager of the travel agency and were busy with their daily routine job. Moreover, they have to obtain information based on year 2011 company report as required in Section A in the questionnaire. Data analysis is carried out using SPSS software in order to establish the findings from this study. Since the research approach is exploratory in nature, data has been analyzed based on descriptive report findings that summarized the outcome in the form of standardized statistical features, namely percentage, mean and standard deviation.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The business profile of the travel agencies is categorized based on return on investment (ROI), their type of licenses owned and total of visitors send abroad in 2011. There are several marketing activities carried out by travel agencies either for local or international market. For local market, travel agencies involved in carried out campaign and promotional activities in the form of advertisement (90.0%) followed by brochure/pamphlet (80.7%), social media (77.7%), MATTA Fair (73.8%), direct selling (66.8%), magazine (44.6%) and sales coupon (31.7%). Thus, it can be said that most travel agencies still choose advertisement as their major promotional tools in marketing their tourism product locally. On top of advertisement, brochure/pamphlet and social media are their important promotional tools in their marketing activities. On the contrary for the international market, there are few differences in marketing strategies carried out by travel agencies namely in the form of sales calls, fax broadcasts, sales incentives, distribution of sales brochures, e-marketing, advertisement and public relations.

   Among the top three marketing strategies undertake for international market are e-Marketing (86.1%), advertisement (72.9%), and sales calls (68.0%). Advertisement is considered the major marketing strategies for both local and international market undertake by travel agencies to promote their tourism products, even though e-Marketing is the top focus in marketing activities for international market. However, travel agencies do established promotional collaboration with hotels, airlines, transportation companies, theme park, government bodies, MATTA/IATA as well as with universities. The top four promotional collaborations are with MATTA/IATA (81.7%), hotels (77.7%), airlines (64.9%), and government bodies (61.4%).

The travel agencies in Selangor have rated South East Asia (mean 2.1548) countries as the most important market for their tourism products, followed by Middle East (mean 2.7206), Australia (mean 2.7953), Europe (mean 2.8051), America (mean 4.0110), Russia (mean 4.3529) and lastly the Antarctic (mean 5.8194) countries. Thus, this ranking of importance (scale 1(highest) to 7 (lowest), indicates that travel agencies are focusing their marketing strategies towards the top four countries namely South East Asia, Middle East, Australia and America.

The travel agencies agree that it is important to have various types of messages, such as corporate brand messages, individual property/attraction features messages and destination messages when developing marketing activities for Malaysian market. Destination messages is the most important type of messages in developing marketing activities for Malaysian market, followed by corporate brand messages (85%), and individual property/attraction features messages (82.1%). Therefore, travel agencies should include all the three type of messages into their marketing activities to attract Malaysian market in promoting the local tourism products.

Most travel agencies agree that all three types of messages identify Malaysia, state in Malaysia, or city or local region as identification as important messages in their marketing strategies. Travel agencies regard tourism products with Malaysia or aspect of Malaysia features (98.2%) followed by the city or local region in which the travel agency office located (97.5%), and tourism products with the state of Malaysia in which it is located (80.4%). Having these three types of tourism products messages in travel agencies marketing activities will provide more varieties in developing their marketing strategies in promoting travel destination in Malaysia.

Generally travel agencies agreed that pop culture, word of mouth, travel media, travel advertising and travel intermediaries are considered important factors in generating awareness, desires and actually get international tourists to visit Malaysia as destination for vacation. However, Travel Advertising (Tourism Malaysia major campaign – TV/Magazine/Newspaper/ Destination Brochure/MAS and Air Asia Airline advertising/other travel advertising/Travel product brochures) play a significant important role (98.5%) among all factors in generating awareness among international tourists to choose Malaysia as their holiday destination. On the contrary, factors in generating desires of international tourists to choose Malaysia as holiday destination is the pop culture (91.4%), but Travel Media (Travel guides/ Newspaper – travel stories/ Magazine – travel stories/Online travel guidelines) is the most important factor (98.4.%) in getting international tourists to actually visit Malaysia compared to other factors. Thus, these three most important factors play very influential roles in marketing strategies as perceived by travel agencies.

Malaysian travel products should present a "uniform" message about Malaysia when selling internationally given the highest score of 76.6% as agreed by travel agencies as they perceived this is the most important strategy in promotion activities. Travel agencies also consider two other promotional activities as important to help establish brand Malaysia: (1) The Malaysian National Tourist Organization should provide guidelines in presenting Malaysia in overseas market (75.7%); (2) The success of my sales (travel agency) and marketing in the international level is closely tied to the success of the promotion of Malaysia as a vacation destination (74.2%).

Travel agencies are aware that there are specific initiatives that have been carried out to establish Brand Malaysia in tourism industry such as:
 • Ministry of Tourism has developed a branding strategy for Tourism Malaysia (58.7%);
 • Key design components of the Brand Malaysia (58.5%);
 • Key copy points of Brand Malaysia (55.7%).

Nevertheless, 59.2 percent of travel agencies agree that they are also aware on the effectiveness of brand activity in the international market, besides having aware of the availability of related branding initiatives that been carried out by Ministry of Tourism Malaysia.

There are several benefits of the outcome of "Brand Malaysia" marketing strategies that promote for tourism product selling to the international market. The following are the type of benefits as agreed by travel agencies based on the percentage of response:

- Brand Malaysia allows Malaysia tourism product to charge "price" premium (68.5%);
- Increased business as a direct result of participation in Tourism Malaysia campaign (68%);
- Brand Malaysia marketing makes it easier to convert "sales" to Malaysia (67%);
- Easier introduction of product in the international market because of brand Malaysia marketing (66%);
- Increased business as an indirect result of campaigns (62.5%);
- Ability to focus on product sales knowing "destination message" has been covered (59.5%).

Based on this findings, the 'Brand Malaysia" marketing strategies that have been implemented by tourism authorities and agencies in Malaysia do provide significant benefits to travel agencies business, thus helping them to market Malaysia tourism products at international market.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Malaysian tourism brand should be built and implemented with the cooperation and support of other tourism partners, especially destination marketers, and namely travel agencies who are in contact with visitors on the front line, and consequently able to create a synergetic effect. It is absolutely important to train personnel in the tourism industry since the tourism services and experiences eventually depend on the people, and Malaysia must also improve its service quality, enhancing the value of the Malaysian tourism brand. This is in line with Szondi (2006) statement that destination branding is concerned with the promotion of the tourism of a country, and accordingly Anholt (2009) posits that destination branding contributes to the improvement of the overall image and to the creation of a strong brand. As such, the Malaysian tourism authority namely the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism (MOCAT) and Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board (Tourism Malaysia) should alert to the trends of tourism environment and visitors to give the new brand more meaning, and in this ever more competitive tourism market, to sustain itself. For that purpose, sophisticated research to grasp and understand visitors' intrinsic motives and how satisfactorily they experience Malaysian tourism is required to strengthen Malaysian tourism brand and image especially in creating the "Brand Malaysia" in tourism products. As reaffirmed by D'Astous and Boujbel (2007) that authorities are urged to formulate a 'brand identity' for the nation that supports tourism, including a tourism brand. This holistic branding venture are still relatively uncommon, although nearly all government strives to depict themselves and their territories in the most flattering light to the international community.

Even though Malaysia is known as a country rich in historical, cultural and natural resources, further endeavours should be made to strengthen its competences. In particular, Malaysia's unique culture should be utilized as a vehicle to augment the future Malaysian tourism brand. It is required to nurture Malaysian culture strategically in conjunction with tourism. Malaysian advertising tag line "Malaysia Truly Asia" has created an identity with which customers can associate, and provide the experiences while holidaying in Malaysia.

The Malaysian tourism brand should be enriched, enforced, and monitored by delivering diverse tourism products and services, particularly memorable tourism experiences that have been developed through financial support and creative ideas from both public and private sponsorship. The future Malaysia tourism brand will provide a signal to guide the Malaysian tourism industry. In order to build a Malaysian tourism brand that converge Malaysian's attractions, Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism (MOCAT), Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board (Tourism Malaysia) and destination marketers' (travel agencies) aspirations, and visitors' expectations will be very strenuous, but it will bring a compelling and competitive edge to the Malaysian tourism industry. The new brand in the future "Brand Malaysia" definitely will play a key role in providing the Malaysian tourism industry with the focus to proceed and enforce its competitiveness in the future.

In view of the above findings on promotional activities and branding initiatives that are currently undertake by Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism (MOCAT) and Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board (Tourism Malaysia), there are still other marketing and branding strategies that may have been carried out by related Malaysian tourism authority and agencies that are not stated in this study. Thus, there are opportunities for researchers in future studies to look into such strategies so more comprehensive findings could be established.

REFERENCES

Anholt, S. (2009). *Places: Identity, Image and Reputation*. Palgrave Macmillan. New York.

Blain, C., Levy, S. and Ritchie, B. J. (2005). Destination Branding: Insights and Practices from Destination Management Organization. *Journal of Travel Research*. **43(4)**: 328-338.

D'Astous, A. and Boujbel, L. (2007). Positioning Countries on Personality Dimensions: Scale Development and Implications for Country Marketing. *Journal of Business Research*. **60(3)**: 231-239.

David, A. A. and Joachimsthaler, E. (2000). Brand *Leadership*. The Free Press. New York.

Economic Transformation Programme, Annual Report 2012, PEMANDU.

Ekinci, Y., Hosany, S. and Uysal, M. (2007). Destination Image and Destination Personality. *International Journal of Culture Tourism and Hospitality Research.* **1(1)**: 62-81.

Echtner, C.M. and Ritchie, J.R.B. (1991). The Meaning and Measurement of Destination Image. *The Journal of Tourism Studies.* **2**(2): 2-12.

Echtner, C. M. and Ritchie, J. R. B. (1993). The Measurement of Destination Image: An Empirical Assessment. *Journal of Travel Research*, **31(Spring)**: 3–13.

Hankinson, G. (2005). Destination Brand Images: A Business Tourism Perspective. *Journal of Services Marketing.* **19(1)**: 24-32.

Hanlan, J. and Kelly, S. (2005). Image Formation, Information Sources and an Iconic Australian Tourist Destination. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*. **11(2)**: 163-178.

Hosany, S., Ekinci, Y. and Uysal, M. (2006). Destination Image and Destination Personality: An Application of Branding Theories to Tourism Places. *Journal of Business Research*. **59(5)**: 638-642.

Kapferer, J.N. (2004). *The New Strategic Brand Management*, Kogan Page. London and New York.

Kotler, P., Bowen, J. and Makens J. (2003). *Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism*.3rd edition, Prentice Hall. Cloth.

Malaysia Tourism Report (2012). Acceded in march 2014, on the Website of: http://www.marketresearch.com/Business-Monitor-International-v304/Malaysia-Tourism-Q4-7176095/.

Ministry of Tourism (2012). *Malaysia Tourism Key Performance Indicators*. Tourism Malaysia.

Morgan N, Pritchard, A. and Pride, R. (2002). *Destination Branding*. Butterworth Heinemann. Oxford.

Ritchie, J.R.B. and Ritchie, R.J.B.(1998). The Branding of Tourism Destinations: Past Achievements and Future Challenges. In: P. Keller (ed.), *Proceedings of the 1998 Annual Congress of the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism, Destination Marketing: Scopes and Limitations* (pp. 89-116). International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism. Marrakech.

Szondi, G (2006). International Context of Public Relations. in R. Tench and L. Yeoman (eds.), *Exploring Public Relations*. FT/Prentice Hall. London.

Tourism Malaysia Annual Report, 2012.

Williams, P. W., Gill, A. M. and Chura, N. (2004). Branding Mountain Destinations: The Battle for "Peacefulness". *Tourism Review*. **59(1)**: 6-15.