

Tourism Industry in Malaysia

THE tourism industry in Malaysia has undergone rapid development over the past years. The industry has grown from strength to strength to become a leading revenue generator as well as making a significant contributor to the nation's economic growth.

As a tourist destination, Malaysia has been attracting millions of visitors over the years. In terms of numbers, 1999 was indeed the best year with 7.93 million tourists, surpassed all time high of 7.43 in 1995 as a result of the "Visit Malaysia Year" campaign. As for the tourism receipts, Malaysia earned some RM 13.0 billion in 1999, an increase of 44.7% over the previous year.

The target set for 2000 is to draw some 8.5 million tourists and 9.0 million in 2001. To achieve this Malaysia has embarked on a number of specialised campaign and hosting of selected major world class events.

Through the support of the Government and the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism, Tourism Malaysia, a marketing arm for tourism in Malaysia will continue to seek new market niches, promote and market Malaysia aggressively as an attractive tourism destination, expand various tourism events and programmes and seriously concentrate on the incentive and convention market. All these efforts will certainly expose Malaysia's tourism potential to new dimensions and will complement the efforts of the private and public sectors in accelerating and spurring the

growth of the tourism industry.

The Tourism : Industry Since 1987-1996

For the period of 1987-1996, the tourism industry recorded an impressive growth in tourist arrivals from 3.3 million in 1987 to 7.1 million in 1996. Over the same period, tourism receipts also increased markedly from RM 1.8 billion to RM 10.3 billion in 1996. The most significant growth was achieved in 1990 and 1994 due to the intensive efforts of the government in mounting the "Visit Malaysia Year" campaign for both years.

Tourism Industry Today (1997-1999)

The 1997-98 period has been a difficult year for Malaysia. The weak performance by the industry, stemmed from few principle events that helped shaped the scenario for 1997. Chronologically, the year started off with plugging diseases like dengue that hit Penang followed by Cocksackie B viral epidemic which killed more than 30 children in Sarawak and cholera in Sabah. As the epidemic diseases subsided, Malaysia came face to face with the biggest problem ever, threatening the country's economic credibility.

The Asia Economic Crisis was felt as early as July 1997 soon after Thai bath floated, as result of vicious attacks from currency speculators. The Kuala Lumpur stock exchange was not spared either, as the shares tumbled more than a third of its



The Sultan Abdul Samad building with its moorish architecture still enthralls the many visitors who come to the city.

original value. At the same time, due to uncontrolled open burning of forests, haze began to envelop and blanket the country and most other ASEAN region. In fact, on 31 July of the same year, haze was classified as a national disaster.

As a result of the contagion effect of Asia Economic Crisis, Malaysia recorded a corresponding decline of tourist arrivals and receipts in 1997 and 1998 respectively.

Infact, the global tourism industry recorded a slowdown of inter and intra regional travel during the same period.

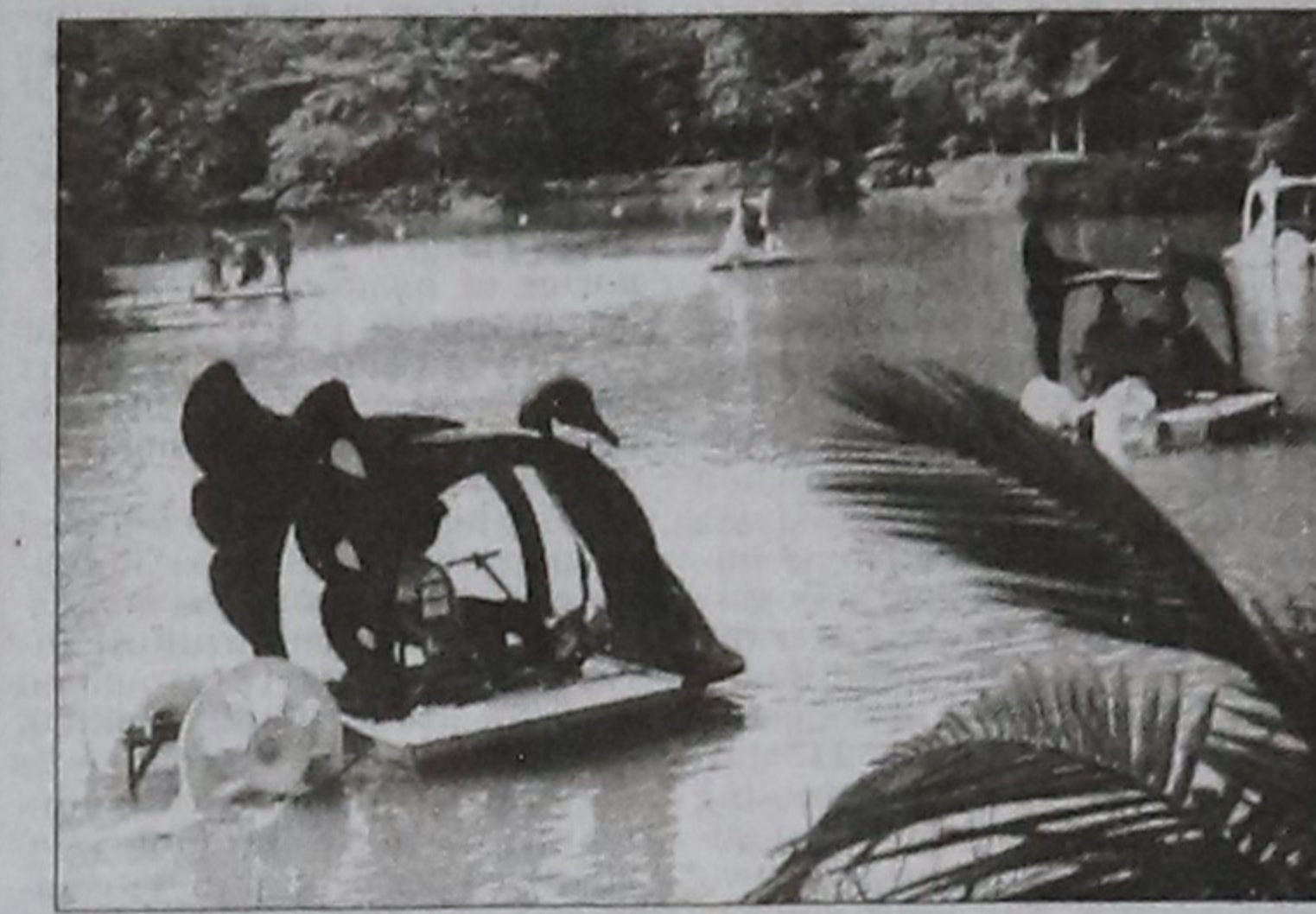
Total tourist arrivals to Malaysia fell 10.6% from 6.21 million (1997) to 5.55 million (1998). The decline had affected income from tourism resources, which dropped - 11.5% from RM 9.69 billion (1997) as against 8.58 billion (1998).

1999 was the turning point. For many countries in Asia, there were signs of returning confidence to the region and tourism was once again poised for a dramatic recovery.

For Malaysia, 1999 is the best year with 7.93 million tourists visited this country. The 1999 achievement constitute and a hefty 42.9% increase over that of 1998. Traditionally Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia ranked the top three contributors with Singapore having more than 50% of total market share of tourist arrivals to Malaysia.

What contribute to the success? The economic crisis presented a timely opportunity for Malaysia to carefully evaluate the way the industry has been managed and promoted. Critical issues and holistic approaches to manage the industry have been identified and implemented since then.

The National Economic Action Committee (NEAC) set up by the Government to find ways to jumpstart the Malaysia economy after the Asian Economic Crisis has identified tourism as a sector that can



The 111-year-old Taman Tasik Perdana is the oldest park in the country. Within its 104 hectares is a man-made lake, jogging tracks, a playground, an amphitheatre, a physical fitness system circuit, an orb garden, a bibiscus garden, a bird park, a deer park and a butterfly park.

Year	Tourist Arrivals	% change	Total Receipts (RM Million)	% change
1987	3,358,983	+4.4	1,795	+7.5
1988	3,623,636	+7.9	2,012	+12.1
1989	4,846,320	+33.7	2,803	+39.3
1990	7,445,908	+53.6	4,500	+60.3
1991	5,847,213	-21.5	4,283	-4.8
1992	6,016,209	+2.9	4,595	+7.3
1993	6,503,860	+8.1	5,066	+10.2
1994	7,197,229	+10.7	8,298	+63.8
1995	7,468,749	+3.8	9,175	+10.6
1996	7,138,452	-4.4	10,354	+12.9

help boost the nation's recovery in a short term.

Under the NEAC recommendations, an additional of RM 150 million is allocated to promote Malaysia as a premier tourist destination. Promotions are intensified especially in the area of improving the country's image due to problems arising mainly from the economic crisis in the region. Negative reports from foreign media on haze, widespread of virus diseases such as "Cocksackie" disease and cholera.

The priorities for tourism in Malaysia is to increase tourist arrivals over the short term period through intensified target marketing in key regional markets besides reinforcing and expanding on the image of the country as a top of mind desirable holiday destination.

Intensified promotional

efforts in international markets is based on the concept of contrast and unique selling point of selected destinations. Malaysia will, under its year 2000 Marketing Plan, diversify its tourism markets by increasing the market share from other medium and long haul markets in Asia, Middle East, Europe and Australia and gradually reducing Malaysia's dependence on regional markets such as Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia.

The year ahead is crucial for Malaysian tourism. The tourism strategic action plans for the coming years will include the following:

To reposition Malaysia as top-mind destination in all regional and international markets through an aggressive Brand Imaging campaign under a new

tagline:

"Malaysia Truly Asia"

As a destination, Malaysia is the Melting Pot of the whole of Asia. Malaysia is the only country where one can witness the amalgam of three (3) of the Asia's oldest civilizations - the Malays with its Arabic influence, the Chinese and the Indian or Hindu civilization. Then again, one can also witness the assimilation of other cultures into the fabric of our society - the ethnic cultures of Sabah and Sarawak, the influence of the Dutch, the Portuguese, the British and to a certain extent, the Thai in the northern states of Peninsular Malaysia. All these make us truly as the only place where one can see the healthy and unique blending of the whole of Asia in one country.

Malaysia is the essence of Asia. This is the USP or Unique Selling Proposition and will be reflected in all our international tourism marketing campaign from now and in the years to come.

To embark on an aggressive tactical campaign directed at getting the best possible return within the shortest possible period by concentrating our efforts in markets that are not affected by the economic downturn e.g. Middle East, Europe (UK, Germany, France, The Netherlands, Scandinavia etc) To undertake Niche Marketing i.e. maximising tourism benefits through the hosting of major world events namely the F1 Grand Prix and World Cup Golf to further enhance and expand Malaysia's international image.

To maximise the benefits of tourism through the lengthening of visitors' stay. Thus, besides the various initiatives undertaken by the states, Malaysia has drawn up a comprehensive calendar of events for the year 2000 for the benefit of travellers to its shores. Such events include organising of 3 large-scale Shopping Carnivals (in March, August and

December), the Colours of Malaysia Festival (a month - long festivities whereby foreign travellers to Malaysia will have the experience of being ac-

corded the warm traditional welcome and hospitality that we are known for), a nationwide Water Festival and Fruits Fiesta.

Malaysia is fortunate to have been endowed with so many touristic assets and attractions to suit the taste and preference of every visitor to the country. From our cool mountain resorts of Genting Highlands to the serenity of our countryside. From the bustling cities of Kuala Lumpur, Kota Kinabalu, Kuching, Johor Bharu and Penang to the island paradise of Langkawi, Labuan, Tioman and Pangkor. These are just but a sampling of the kind of attractions that await visitors to Malaysia.

In addition, Malaysia have some of the finest hotels and resorts, all offering five-star comfort at prices which you will never dream of getting anywhere else in the world. Currently, Malaysia has over 1,400 hotels of different classes throughout the country with a total of 115,000 rooms. By the year 2000, eleven new hotel properties would come on-line offering an additional 5,000 rooms.

With an average occupancy rate being just slightly over 50 per cent, Malaysia is therefore in a position to sustain any sudden increase in the inflow of tourist traffic now and in the immediate future.

As regards to Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) Industry, Malaysia is also positioning itself to gain good share of the business. Malaysia has a lot of experience in the hosting of big international events and this has been clearly demonstrated through the success conclusion of 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games and the 1998 APEC Summit Meeting. This year, Malaysia is hosting the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, which involve 56 countries. With such proven records, Malaysia is fully capable of hosting big international conferences and exhibitions.

Based on the strategic Action Plans as highlighted, Malaysia hope to be able to drive the industry to the glory of Yester Years.

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Government and the friendly People of
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Malaysia's Industrial Evolution

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ments in Malaysia, including a partnership with Petronas to build its first integrated manufacturing complex in the Asia-Pacific. According to the company, Malaysia provides in ideal manufacturing springboard to the ASEAN market and beyond.

Inception of Heavy Industries

Malaysia's entry into the heavy industry sector commenced during the early 80's with the establishment of the National Car Project, which ushered in Malaysia's entry into the automotive industry. It was also during this period that a number of major steel and cement plants were established throughout the country. The growth of heavy industries was planned with the view to expedite the country's industrialisation programme.

Transition Into High-Tech Era

Malaysia's climb up the industrial ladder brought about new challenges. The early 90's witnessed Malaysia facing the predicament of labour shortages not only in the construction and plantation sectors, but also in the manufacturing sector. Malaysia consequently had to refocus her industrial strategy to deepen, broaden and modernise the manufacturing sector through the growth of technology-based capital and skills intensive, high-value added industries. Emphasis was shifted from input-driven growth towards productivity-driven growth which is to be derived from the optimum of physical and human resources and higher levels of technology. Key areas were identified by the government to propel Malaysia into the high-tech era. Currently, high-tech products and activities promoted cover the following:

- Advanced electronics
- Equipment Instrumentation
- Biotechnology
- Automation and flexible manufacturing systems
- Electro-optics and non-linear optics
- Advanced materials
- Optoelectronics
- Software engineering
- Alternative energy sources
- Aerospace

In order to keep abreast with global industrial development and to map out the nation's industrial targets for the next decade, Malaysia charted its next phase of industrial development under the Second Industrial Master Plan (IMP2, 1996-2005). The current IMP2 focuses on the creation of a Manufacturing Plus-Plus economy and the development of key industrial clusters for the development and sustained growth of the manufacturing sector. Under this strategy, industries will be encouraged to

develop capabilities and engaged in higher value added activities including research and development, design and prototyping, product development, distribution and logistics and marketing. A host of incentives are provided for promoted products and activities.

Challenges Faced FDI promotion

With the advent of the new millennium, there will be significant challenges for Malaysia to maintain the momentum of FDI into the manufacturing sector. Challenges faced in the promotion of FDI will relate to:

- the entry of new and emerging economies vying intensely for investments from the major capital exporting countries of the world.
- regional and global development such as the realisation of AFTA and WTO which will dismantle trade and investment barriers amongst member countries.
- the need to maintain the nation's cost-competitive investment environment;

the need to ensure the availability of skilled and knowledgeable workers required for the high-tech and IT-related industries;

the need to ensure the availability of good supporting infrastructure, including strong and viable supporting industries and

intense competition for high quality investments even from among developed economies.

Vision of a Developed Nation

The government will continue to pursue liberal and pragmatic policies to further develop the manufacturing and related services sector. The industrialisation drive in the next millennium will continue to be a private sector led with the government acting as a catalyst in realising the nation's industrial goals for the twenty-first century. Malaysia's past track record and its ability to fulfill its industrial targets in the next millennium and contribute towards the vision of a developed economy by the year 2020.

Heartiest felicitations on the auspicious occasion of
43rd Malaysian National Day

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Malaysian Palm Oil Promotion Council

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