

# Issues of Safety and Security: New Challenging to Malaysia Tourism Industry

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**Abstract.** The safety and security issues nowadays become one of the forces causing changes in tourism industry in era of millennium. The main concern of this issues more focus on crime rates, terrorism, food safety, health issues and natural disaster. This topic gained the popularity in tourism research after 9/11 tragedy and since then the academicians and practitioners started seeking the best solution in ways to mitigate these negative impacts. For Malaysia, the image as safety and secure destination was tarnished a few years lately and new unfortunates incident in this year bring more damage to Malaysia image. Healthy issues, terrorism, Lahad Datu intrusion, repeated kidnapping and shooting in Sabah, twin airlines incident, riot and illegal demonstration and false reporting by international media brings new challenging to Malaysia. Although some incident may be had short-term impact to Malaysia tourism industry, but it's still gave the big impact to Malaysia branding process. Many travellers and Malaysian itself still believe that Malaysia is a one of safer destination and country to visit and stayed in, but more outstanding efforts was require to make sure Malaysia tourism industry was capable to recover from this negative impact as soon as possible.

## 1 Introduction

Tourism is one of largest, dynamic and attractive tool for economic development specifically in the developing countries. In many developing countries, tourism has assisted them to move away from a dependency on agriculture and manufacturing sector [1]; with high growth and development rates, massive volumes of foreign currency inflows; development of infrastructure and facilities; and the introduction of new management and educational experience affect various sectors of economy. It is positively contributes to the social and economic development of the country as a whole [2].

In Malaysia, tourism sector emerged in the 1960s as one of the new forces for economic development but the growth was slow. But today, tourism industries become as one of main contributor to Malaysia's incomes. In Tenth Malaysia Plan 2011-2015, tourism industry recognized as one of the 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs). Through this plan, Malaysia targets to grow business tourism arrivals to 2.9 million by year 2020 which it expected to contributes RM3.9 billion to incremental Gross National Income (IGN) and generate 16,700 additional jobs to nation [3].

## 2 Safety and security in tourism industries

Nowadays, the issues of safety and security are ever more important not only for the community at the larger, but also always been indispensable condition for travel and tourism as well. The issues of safety and security in tourism industry also has been recognized as one of the forces causing changes in the tourism sector in the new millennium which the crime, terrorism, food safety, health issues and natural disasters as the main of concern [4-7]. When dealing with this scope, there are three concepts are being used but the most frequently used was safety and security. However, some authors tended to using single word surety which it was emerged from combination of concepts safety and security [7].

The safety and security issues in travel and tourism industries became the front by the evolution of mass tourism in beginning of the 1950s. There a few reasons determining this evolution process are enumerated hereinafter. Firstly, travel and tourism is not anymore as activities for narrow social stratum; secondly, scope of tourism covers more and more countries and regions in the world since is a part of their economic development strategy; and finally is caused by the rapid and scenic development of transport. Due of this reasons, the issues of safety and security gained a bigger and bigger importance as the tourism itself [8].

Over the past few years, the tourism industry has been seriously undermined by the growing lack of safety and security factor. This issues gain more visibility after the September 11th event. Tourism professionals started to wonder if they are incorrect when trying to avoid speaking about tourism security issues. September 11, 2011 may be also considered the date when the travel and tourism industry lost its innocence and along with much of the world's economy, this industry suffered. Since then, more and more tourism scholars started to analyze the relation between tourism with safety [4, 7, 9, 10-13].

Finding the past research shown, tourist felt wary to go countries which had high crime rates, healthy issues, terrorism, natural disaster, and so on. Regarding to research by George in 2002, shown visitors to Cape Town have reasonably positive perceptions but they also claimed felt wary of going out after dark and making use of the city's public transportation. Finding from this study are consistent with other empirical studies which (1) tourist limit their activities at destinations because fear of crime; (2) tourists who have encountered a crime incident during holiday more felt less safe; and (3) tourist generally felt wary to going out after dark [14].

While research by Neumayer in 2004, concluded that political violence including terrorism incident, human rights violation and bank's violent events consistently has a negative impact on tourism arrivals since tourist naturally are sensitive to events of political violence in their holiday destination because such event jeopardize a relaxed and unconcerned holiday [15].

Besides that, out-break disease like dengue, pandemic flu, SARS, Chikungunya and latest Ebola also give the significant impact to tourism industries in endemic countries. According to Mavalankar, Puwar, Murtola and Vasani (2009), chikungunya and dengue fever give the negative impact to Gujarat, Malaysia and Thailand tourism industries when this study finding estimated tourism revenues in this three destination decline 4 percent; at least US\$8 million for Gujarat, US\$65 million for Malaysia and US\$363 million for Thailand [16].

Today, out-break the Ebola virus disease also reported started to slowing the tourist flow to Africa countries although only cases reported happen in West Africa [17]. Generally, world tourism faces a myriad of global challenges in the event of a world pandemic; among of these are the increasing of the possibility of location quarantines; fear to use airports and other center of mass gatherings, fear or not knowing what to do in case of illness in foreign countries; the need for cross-border medical insurance and others [18].

Resulted from other past research also shown that natural disaster had a significant impact to tourism industries. According to Vincent (2013), natural disaster bring to mind images of destruction, death and tragedy [19]. Zhang (2005) concluded that natural disaster causes the declination of tourist arrivals in effected area and created the negative image to the visitor and pushing them away from the destination [20].

This natural forces also physically damages the destination, even after the tragedy occurred, its physical damages are strongly felt. Tsunami in Japan, Aceh and other Asian countries, earthquake in Napa (California), Rome and Turkey, typhoon struck in Philippines, Taiwan and China; and others natural disaster give the negative impact to tourist arrival and also destination attraction. It destroys valuable properties, tourist sites, houses and infrastructures which could cost of million dollars to recover or rebuilt [21].

Security issues in tourism primarily refer to the personal safety of tourist and their property, but it includes an ability to become oriented in an alien environment, understand the local system of signs, indications and social conventions, and finally the security of shopping and consumer services [7]. Compare to other economic activity, the success and of failure of any tourism destination depends on its credibility to provide a safe and secure environment to the visitors [22].

Sometimes there are some cities with highly attractive features do not achieve the high tourism rates due of the non-manipulation of negative factors by the decision-making bodies. Safety and security factors become one of vital aspect in providing more quality in tourism and the ability to ensure the safety of tourist at any time will help to improve image of the destinations [23-24].

### **3 Malaysian Tourism Industry**

Tourism industry in Malaysia started in 1970's when Malaysia government developed tourism as one of development forces with several objective such as increasing foreign exchange earnings, increasing employment and income and foresting regional development. In earlier age of Malaysia tourism industry, government focused on promoting tourism in the private sector with incentives given to private sector to develop accommodation, facilities of visitor center and encourage more participation of Bumiputera [25-26].

During the Fifth Five Year Plan started from 1986 until 1990, tourism industry in Malaysia given more focus on development of coastal resort in ways to developing more principal tourist destination such as Kuala Lumpur and Penang [27, 26]. Meanwhile, the marketing and promotion of Malaysia as a relatively and safe tourist destination become main focus since the Seventh Five-Year Plan (1996-2000) [28].

Tourism industry in Malaysia had been traditionally concentrated and promoted towards international market since its infancy stage in 1960s [29]. In facts, international tourism is the world's largest export earner. According to World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), receipts of foreign currency from international tourism reached US\$ 1 trillion in 2011 and its continued growth to US\$1.4 trillion in 2013 [30]. Until 2013, international tourist arrivals in Malaysia rose to 25.73 million compare just 5.56 million on 1998 with receipts growth over than RM56 billion during the times (Table 1).

Malaysia known as one among the top countries in the region which receives a high number of tourist arrival. This country has been voted as one of the top ten must-visit global destination in 2014 by Lonely Planet which is the popular travel publication. Meanwhile in 2012& 2013, Kuala Lumpur voted as the world's fourth best shopping destination by CNN travel survey. The same survey also listed the three of our island and beaches as among the Top 50 Beaches of the World's 100 Best Beaches which is a Perhentian Kecil Island, Terengganu, Juara Beach, Pulau Tioman and Tanjung Rhu, Langkawi. Our country also has been voted as 10th Most Friendliest Country in the world by Forbes Online through HSBC Expat Explorer Survey in 2012. Besides that, according to World Bank's Doing Business Report 2013 edition, Malaysia placed as 12th Most Competitive Economy in the world for doing business [31].

**Table 1.** Tourist Arrivals & Receipts to Malaysia

Year	Arrivals (Million)	Receipts (RM)
2013	25.72	65.44 Billion
2012	25.03	60.6 Billion
2011	24.71	58.3 Billion
2010	24.58	56.5 Billion
2009	23.65	53.4 Billion
2008	22.05	49.6 Billion
2007	20.97	46.1 Billion
2006	17.55	36.3 Billion
2005	16.43	32 Billion
2004	15.7	29.7 Billion
2003	10.58	21.3 Billion
2002	13.29	25.8 Billion
2001	12.78	24.2 Billion
2000	10.22	17.3 Billion
1999	7.93	12.3 Billion
1998	5.56	8.6 Billion

Malaysia was also ranked as The Most Popular Destination by the Top 10 magazine and world's top Muslim-Friendly Holiday Destination according to survey by Crescentrating, Singapore-based Muslim travel consultancy released on Jan 16, 2013. This country also ranked third for 2013 World's Top Retirement Heavens by Internationalliving.com and takes seventh spot on the top 10 Meetings Destination in Asia Pacific by ICCA. Malaysia also won the first prize for the UNWTO 2012 Ulysses Award for Innovation in Public Policy and Government for the Homestay Experience Programme [32]. Though the Most Visited Countries rank compiled by UNWTO in 2012, Malaysia was ranked as one of the world's top 10 tourist destination, making it the only South-East Asian country to make the list compared in 14th placed in 2007 with only 17.6 million of international tourist arrivals. However, Malaysia ranked was dropped to 11th in 2013 behind Thailand (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Malaysia Rank in Most Visited Countries

Year	Rank	International Tourist Arrivals
2013	11	25.7 million
2012	10	25.5 million
2011	10	24.7 million
2010	9	24.58 million
2009	9	23.6 million
2008	-	22.1 million
2007	14	17.5 million

Source: UNWTO World Tourism Barometer [33]

## 4 New challenging in Malaysia tourism safety and security

According to Malaysia Ninth Plan (2006-2010), several strategies have been taken to ensure that tourism industry will strengthen Malaysia's position as most preferred destination for tourist. Among of that, there are had a strategies to ensuring comfort, safety and welfare the tourist who come to Malaysia. This strategies shown how Malaysia committed and gave the high priority to the safety issues. This element are vital to providing quality in tourism and more than other economic activities, the successful of tourism destination depends on being able to provide a safe and secure environment to the visitor [34].

However, lately reputation Malaysia as a safe and secure destination has been tarnished in many unfair ways and incident. Regarding to [35-36] there a several episode that represent potential shock to international tourist arrivals in Malaysia; (1) Asian Financial Crisis; (2) Tension between Malaysia and Singapore; (3) Health scares; (4) Burning of forest in Indonesia; (5) Threat of terrorism; (6) Natural disasters; (7) Travel advisories issued by foreign government and (8) Media reports. When travelling internationally, tourist often experience a great degree of anxiety and scholars have found that risk perception significantly influence the intention to travel [37].

For Malaysia, majority of international tourist are from relatively low-yield neighbouring markets. Singapore is the largest source market accounting for over 50 percent of Malaysia international tourist arrivals followed by Indonesia and Thailand. In lately years, China also become the important market for tourism industry in Malaysia, the total tourist from this country rose from only 0.79 million in 2007 to 1.56 million in 2012. Meanwhile United Kingdom is one of major long-haul markets for this country (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Malaysia Tourist Arrivals by Country of Nationality 2007-2012 (Million)

Market	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Singapore	10.49	11.00	12.73	13.04	13.37	13.01
Indonesia	1.81	2.43	2.41	2.51	2.13	2.38
Thailand	1.63	1.49	1.45	1.46	1.44	1.26
Brunei	1.17	1.09	1.06	1.12	1.24	1.25
China	0.79	0.95	1.02	1.13	1.25	1.56
India	0.42	0.55	0.59	0.69	0.69	0.69
Japan	0.37	0.43	0.40	0.42	0.39	0.47
Australia	0.32	0.43	0.53	0.58	0.58	0.50
Philippines	0.33	0.40	0.45	0.49	0.36	0.51
United Kingdom	0.28	0.37	0.44	0.43	0.40	0.40

Source: *Tourism Malaysia* [38]

International tourist become more anxious about the safety and security while there holiday rather than domestic tourist since there not belong to country they visit. From a CNN global study in 2013, 67 percent of respondents more worries about the safety and security of a destination rather than its cost and reputation. In major view, tourist across the world already made up their mind about travelling to certain destination, improve the safety and security your cities or country or we won't come to you. There are many industry watchers believe this was represents a major shift from the anxiety of affordability to the paranoid. It was simples as in today's terrorism and violent crime-hit the tourism industries and tourism destination would have to do more to ensure tourist safety and security while their spend their leisure time on your town or cities or it will scare away visitors for good [39].

In lately years, Malaysia facing a few unfortunate event that gave impact to Malaysia image as safe and secure destination to visit. From the several event, health issues become one of main concern. Started with out-break of dengue fever struck Penang in mid-1997, outbreak of Coxsackie B virus in Sabah and Sarawak, cholera epidemic, SARS and bird flu in this region give the big impact to tourism industry in Malaysia. China government in 2003, ordered travel agencies to stop Chinese tour groups to Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand because of the SARS [36]. According to the Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry, total of tourist arrivals from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan have fallen some 80 percent because of outbreak of SARS [40]. In 2003, tourist arrivals in Malaysia decline to 10.58 million compared 13.29 in 2012 and government lose an income around RM 4.5 billion results of fears arising from SARS and bird flu epidemics in this region [41]. Regarding to The Minister for Tourism, Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir is reported as stating the effects of SARS on Malaysia tourism were worse than the 9/11 attacks or the Bali bombings [36].

Besides that, the threat of terrorism also gave the some effect to Malaysia. In 1998, after bombing in Kenya and Tanzania; United States listed Malaysia as one of the countries where terrorism may happen and issues a safety directive to its citizen to be extra careful in Malaysia. In some reason, this warnings may have frightened off some tourist from attending the Commonwealth Games that was stage in Kuala Lumpur in same year [26]. In 2000, kidnapping incident in Sipadan Island, Sabah also brings new threat to Malaysia image. The Abu Sayyaf group took 21 hostages including 10 tourist from Europe and Middle East and 11 workers and there were taken to Abu Sayyaf base in Jolo, Sulu [42]. Following year, tragedy of 9/11 created more fears about the threat of terrorism in Malaysia. Since the incident, Malaysia reported detained more than 100 Islamic militant suspects, many of them of whom are alleged members of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) [36]. And international media intention of JI presence in Malaysia brings a negative impact on tourism.

In February, 2013, Malaysia faced new crisis when more than 100 of armed group that suspects as the militant have landed in Lahad Datu. Known as Royal Army of Sulu Sultanate, this group claimed Sabah as their own country and this intrusion claim nearly hundred lives of militant, and 10 Malaysia's officer which eight was policeman and two are army [43]. Regarding to MATTA Sabah chapter chairmen J.L Tan, several foreign countries have advised their citizens to avoid coming to Sabah without taking into account that the intrusion occurred only in a remote area. This events had a negative impact on tourism, with hotels and tour agencies receiving cancellations from holidaymakers [44]. The repeated kidnapping and shooting incidents in Sabah in this few years also bring negative impact on tourism industry in this countries especially in Sabah.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), advise against all but essential travel to all island off the coast of eastern Sabah from Kudat to Tawau, including (but not limited to) Lankayan, Mabul, Pom Pom, Kapalai, Ligigan, Sipadan dan Matakang. This area is a general treat from terrorism and frequented visited by expatriates and foreign travellers. There are several of series of foreigners of kidnapping and criminality on the eastern coast of Sabah and in particular the island close to the Sulu Archipelago [45]. Besides that, Taiwan Foreign Affairs Ministry (MOFA) also has issued a travel advisory, which warning its citizens to avoid travelling to Sabah. MOFA issued an 'orange warning' which is the second-highest on Taiwan's four-color advisory system after the shooting incident that killed a Taiwanese tourist on Pom Pom Island off Semporna on November, 2013 [46]. US, China, Australia, Canada and others foreign government also warnings there citizen about coast of eastern Sabah because of several kidnapping and shooting incident on that areas.

The twin incident of Malaysia Airlines System (MAS) flight in a period of four months have resulted in a huge drop in the tourist numbers for this country. In the coming days, tourism expert predict tourism sector in Malaysia will decline. The missing of MH370 with most of passenger on plane is Chinese, which tourist from China as a key source of visitor arrivals in Malaysia has pinned much its hopes for further development to this sector [47]. Due the disappearance of this flight, at least 30,000 potential tourist from China have cancelled their holiday packages to Malaysia until 2015 [48]. Regarding to Bridget Welsh, a Malaysia researcher at National Taiwan University, tragedy of MH17 which shot down in Ukraine on July are not put Malaysia's competency and governance under the spotlight to same degree as in MH370 and the effects not be serious as MH370 but overall was

negative [47]. Although the circumstances of the two incident are markedly distinct, but it expected to complicate efforts to repair Brand Malaysia's image since perception is a main key in branding.

Besides that, false reporting and act of some yellow journalism about Malaysia also should be consider as new threat to Malaysia image. The cover of the February 11, 2002 edition of Time Magazine shadowed a showy profile of Osama bin Laden superimposed on Malaysia flag. The article claimed that Malaysia was a hotbed for terrorism activities [36]. Public apologised by Times regarding this issued doesn't meaning anything at all since Malaysia image already hit by that article. False reporting about some incident in Islam countries including Malaysia also created more negative impact to our tourism industry. Regarding to Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir, Deputy Minister of International Trade and Industry; there are some foreign media who love and often writing some incident without based on actual facts. This situation developed more hesitant feeling among tourist to visit Islam countries including Malaysia. Besides that, Malaysia also faced some false reporting about some riot and illegal demonstration in this country [49]. Some website also claimed Kuala Lumpur as one of ten most dangerous cities in this world. The biases and false reporting by media in new era of technologies bring more damage to tourism industries rather than before.

Due of this several incident and new media roles in tourism, tourism expert assumed Malaysia tourism will faced the declination in next year. Tension between China and Malaysia regarding to disappearance of MH370 and repeated kidnapping incidents in Sabah twist the scenario of Malaysia tourism since China started to become dominant market for Malaysia tourism [50]. According to some index and survey, Malaysia rank already reflects to unfinished issues. Malaysia placed in Global Peace Index was dropped to 29th in 2013 compared in 20th place in 2012. Malaysia rank in Most Visited Countries also dropped in 2013 to 11th place compared in 10th in 2012. Many Malaysian itself feel the country is becoming a more dangerous place to live in. Though the Yahoo! Malaysia pool run on this subject in 2012, more than 80 percent of respondent said they felt the country was unsafe [51]. he Unisys Index resulted in 2014, also shown that Malaysian's citizen itself feel seriously concerned with their security in this countries and is the second highest index behind only Mexico [52].

## 5 Conclusion

A few unfortunates incident to Malaysia in lately years can consider as new challenging for Malaysia branding image. Malaysia image as safety destination tarnish by many factors especially by media roles. False reporting and speculation in media social bring more damage to image of destination since its plays main role in ways to create mental perception among the tourist. If tourist feel unsafe or threaded to go some destination, they can develop a negative impression of the destination. And as the result, tourism to the area show the declination.

Some parties claimed that a few incident in Malaysia in lately years doesn't effects Malaysia tourism at all, but in era of information in your fingertips, stories was spreading fast and uncontrolled. Although some incident may affect Malaysia in short-term but is will gain more efforts in rebuilt our reputation as one of safe tourist destination. May some tourist and Malaysian still confident Malaysia are safer place to travel and stayed, but in future more outstanding efforts was require in ways to maintain and upgrade Malaysia image as world class destination. Today, with the safety and security issues become one of forces causing the changes in tourism sector, Malaysia need to still alert and has a well preparation in face the more uncertain event in future.

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