

Entertainment Facilities and the Tourism Industry: The Limbang, Sarawak Context

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The entertainment industry has always contributed to the regeneration and economic development of cities. The purpose of this research is to ascertain the need of entertainment facilities in Limbang for tourists and residents and to determine their impact on the local economy. The methodology for this research includes field observations and collecting primary data through interviews involving the local and state authorities, residents and tourists in Limbang. A considerable amount of information supporting this study is based on literature review and secondary data sources. This research indicated that the entertainment facilities are essential in developing the tourism industry and improving the lifestyle of the locals. Besides, the study also helps decision-makers and town planners to understand how entertainment activities can regenerate decaying parts of cities and improve the socio-economic environment. One of the objectives of the Sarawak government is to transform Limbang into a tourist destination. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the process of allocating, planning, designing and developing entertainment facilities. The outcomes of this study revealed that Limbang could serve as a tourism destination, mainly targeting the citizens and foreign ex-pats of neighbouring Brunei.

Keywords: Entertainment Facilities, Tourism Industry, Socio Culture and Economic, Limbang

1. INTRODUCTION

Entertainment has always been an essential component of tourist destinations. It is one of the main factors determining the appearance of the target and contributing to increasing the satisfaction of tourists. Based on literature review tourists, while on holidays and business trips, are willing to spend money on entertainment. Amusement and leisure events not only offer an attraction to the tourists but also constitute a business platform for the entertainment and tourism industry as well as for the community (Bates & Ferri, 2010; Loi, 2009, Bosshart & Macconi, 1998). This research is focusing on the entertainment industry facilities in cities/towns with a population of 250 000 people or less. In the tourism industry, based on the consumer perspective, entertainment activities are a part of

the tourism experience and can provide a lot of benefits to the urban area. These benefits include improvement of the urban environment, increased attractiveness of the public places, business opportunities for local entrepreneurs, enhanced competitiveness concerning other tourism destinations.

In Malaysia, there is a significant number of smaller cities and towns that have the potential to become a tourism destination. The only problem in Malaysia is some of these towns/cities do not provide any entertainment facilities and serve only as transit places. However, transit towns can also benefit from the provision of entertainment activities and offer some attraction to the passing by drivers. The provision of limited entertainment attractions could prevent small transit cities and towns from total decline. Some states in Malaysia

have strict guidelines and regulations regarding entertainment activities. However, Sarawak had always a liberal approach to entertainment and leisure. The main problem for local authorities in Sarawak is a strict budget imposed by the state government. However, there are a few cities in Sarawak that have a well-developed entertainment industry. For example, in Miri, entertainment is an important magnet encouraging tourists to revisit the city. The information above implies that entertainment will not just be an essential source for attracting tourists for the short term. Still, it will also be more useful in encouraging them to stay for a more extended period.

The case study for this research is the district of Limbang, Sarawak. Limbang is currently bounded on the western and eastern sides by Brunei, on the northern side by South China and the southern side by Sarawak. However, physical access to the Limbang by land can be only through Brunei. The southern part of Limbang is a mountainous region with no direct physical access to the other parts of Sarawak. This unique geographical phenomenon is a result of a historical event that happened in 1885 when the residents of Limbang, who were under the rule of the Sultanate of Brunei rebelled against increased taxes imposed by Sultan Hashim Jalilul Alam Aqamaddin. Although the rebellion was suppressed with the help of the British, Raja Charles Brook of Sarawak persuaded the Sultan to succeed the Limbang district to Sarawak (Triposo 2020). A map of the district of Limbang in the Borneo context is shown in Figure 1.

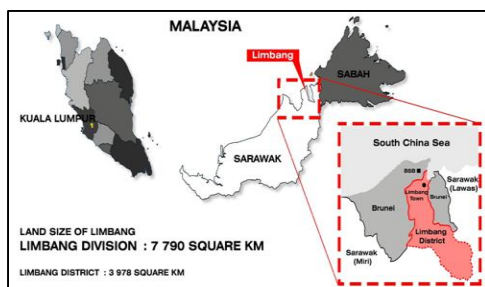


Figure 1: Map of Limbang concerning Sabah and Sarawak.

As a result of this historical event at the end of the 19th century, Limbang became a district of Sarawak landlocked on both sides by the Sultanate of Brunei. For the past 135 years, the only way to travel by land from the main part of Brunei with its capital Bandar Seri Begawan to its eastern district Temburong was through Limbang.

As a result, Limbang became a physical link between two parts of a neighbouring country and its main urban centre Bandar Limbang (Limbang Town) a transit town catering for the passing by commuters. However, this status quo is about to change with the construction of a 30 km long bridge linking the Brunei-Muara district in the western part of Brunei with Temburong. The bridge is scheduled to be opened in 2020. Because of this new bridge, the Limbang district will lose its transit clientele which no doubt will have a profound impact on its local economy.

Currently, Sarawak has one of the most liberal regulations regarding entertainment and alcohol consumption in Malaysia. In contrast, Brunei established Sharia Law in 2014, imposing a 'red-light' on most of the entertainment activities. Alcohol consumption has been forbidden in public places in Brunei since the late 1980s. The local entrepreneurs in Limbang took advantage of the strict religious laws in Brunei and established a duty-free zone at the Brunei/Sarawak border crossing in Kuala Lurah. The duty-free zone comprises temporary structures serving as shops, cafes and eating outlets with most of them selling alcohol. In terms of the visual aspects, the duty-free zone is an 'eye-saw' featuring temporary stalls and sheds all built in an uncoordinated manner. However, it is extremely popular with non-Muslim Bruneians and foreign ex-pats working in Brunei. The duty-free zone in Kuala Lurah has a detrimental impact on the local economy of Bandar Limbang as a large proportion of the trips from Brunei terminate at the border crossing. Because of the establishment of the duty-free zone in Kuala Lurah entertainment activities have never flourished in Bandar Limbang. Images of the duty-free zone in Kuala Lurah with the temporary structures are shown in Figure 2.





Figure 2: Current temporary commercial structures in Kuala Lurah at the border with Brunei

Apart from capitalising on entertainment activities, Limbang could also benefit from its proximity to Sarawak's national parks and the Indonesian province of Kalimantan. The construction of a road in the southern part of Limbang linking to other parts of Sarawak could open Limbang to renowned tourism attractions including the UNESCO listed Gunung Mulu Cave area. With the decision by the Indonesian government to relocate its national capital from Jakarta to Borneo (200 km from the current Limbang border) there is potential to provide direct access between Brunei and the new Indonesian capital running directly through Limbang. There are also opportunities to improve the waterway linkages to the Federal Territory of Labuan and Bandar Seri Begawan.

Despite the understanding of the importance of entertainment facilities, very few studies have been conducted on how entertainment can rejuvenate declining small cities and towns in Sarawak. This study addresses this knowledge gap. The main aim of this study is to investigate the entertainment industry as a potential tool to regenerate a declining town centre. Thus, the research focuses on two research questions which are: how entertainment precincts improve the local economy? And how does the entertainment precinct attract tourists? This will broaden the understanding of the role, scope and character of entertainment facilities and help to identify the most suitable location within the urban environment. The study also emphasises the importance of architecture in designing and developing entertainment complexes. This study also elaborates on the interlinks between entertainment activities and tourism. The information deriving from this study can help the state and local government in the planning of

tourism industry and improving the local economy of small cities and towns.

The research is conducted using qualitative methods. This data collection includes the use of internet sources, journal references, secondary data sources and primary data sources such as interviews and observations. This approach helps in achieving reliability and validity since qualitative research involves people directly in the research process. The next steps of this study examine the definition of entertainment and its relevance and importance in the tourism industry. Furthermore, a few benchmark examples of entertainment towns which became successful tourism destinations are discussed.

2. DEFINITION OF ENTERTAINMENT IN THE TOURISM CONTEXT

According to Bosshart & Macconi (1998), the definition of the entertainment industry in the tourism sector includes primary factors such as fun, friendly, simple, beautiful, without any requirement and demanding. Hughes, (2000) and Kirillova, Fu, Lehto, & Cai, (2014), describe similar characteristics on the idea of entertainment, but they broaden the definition to escapism. The authors see entertainment as clubs and bar, live performance, sports performance, watching television, playing computers games, and enjoying music. Entertainment seems to be based on the idea of escapism, relaxation, fun and joy. Based on the explanation from Swarbrooke (2003), leisure holidays are to know as enjoyment, self-expression and satisfaction. Bates & Ferri (2010) define tourism entertainment as appropriately designed and managed activities with the dancing show, performance, theme park, tour guides, and movie show exclusive for the visitor.

Further clarification of entertainment in tourism is provided by Vargho and Lusch (2004) where the definitions of the operand and operating sources are invisible and impalpable which gives impact when the action is carried out to produce the effect. For example, when beach entertainment activities are included in the holiday package, the sun, sea and sand are the operand resources and are the more attractive element of the package. Operating assets in this specific case could be defined as the entertainment talent and skills needed to carry out beach activities successfully.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENTERTAINMENT AND TOURISM

There is a strong interrelation between the tourism sector and the entertainment activities. As tourism providers, the tourism and entertainment industries are related to combined entertainment generating offering to enhance destination attractiveness, as shown in Figure 3.

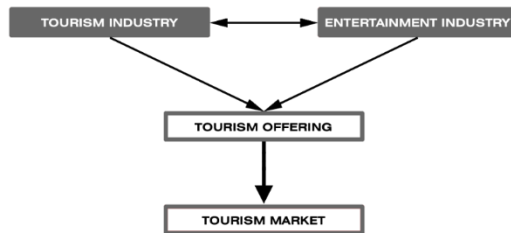


Figure 3: The relationship between tourism and entertainment.

(Source: Gb Gowreesunkar, V., & Sotiriadis, M., 2015)

The core tourism offering usually is translated into entertainment which enhances its appeal. For example, at the tourism heritage site, the operand source needs the support of operating sources such as documentaries or films to make it more appealing and marketable. According to Tenner (1997), entertainment has become the main focus of the tourism industry in Las Vegas and creates an example for other destinations. Besides that, the incorporation of leisure activities such as gambling also helps to improve the attractiveness of the tourism product. (D'Hauteserre, 2000). In India, cultural entertainment is used as a marketing purpose in its entirety. Tourism and entertainment function together as a significant part of the tourist entertainment industry. As tourism flourishes, a new avenue for entertainment facilities is provided since both sectors are interdependent in a mutually beneficial partnership.

4. THE RELEVANCE OF ENTERTAINMENT IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Tourism depends on any type of services and activities which provide a final offering to the

tourists. The entertainment industry plays a significant role in adding to the experience of tourism. It is essential for the tourism industry because it provides the essence of tourism compatible with entertainment, such as relaxation, leisure and escape (Hughes, 2000; Kirillova et al., 2014; Loi, 2009). Dwyer et al., (2004), argue that the absence of activities such as entertainment and shopping has a detrimental impact on the attractiveness of a tourism destination. As illustrated by G. Ritchie, J.R. Brent Ritchie, (2003), the role of entertainment as the perceived identity and attractiveness of the destination will have a significant impact on tourism experience.

For the following two reasons, entertainment is essential for the tourism industry in enhancing the sense of a city destination (Gowreesunkar & Sotiriadis, 2015):

- (i) Firstly, it adds diversification to the current tourism offering.
- (ii) Secondly, tourism is challenged by sustainability. However, the incorporation of entertainment into the tourism experience will help to preserve natural and cultural resources.

Based on studies conducted in Macau, Loi (2009) suggests that entertainment facilities are used in all types of tourism industry services and contribute to the tourism business.

The case study for this research, Bandar Limbang (Limbang Town) has limited resources; however, through proper planning and management can contribute to the evolution of tourism by encouraging the development of entertainment facilities. However, there could be negative impacts of the entertainment industry. Cooper (2011), asserts that due to their diversity and fractured ownership structure, some entertainment attractions are doing poorly in this tourism industry. Besides, some tourist attraction provides valuable experience while providing affordable admission fees. Some services in tourism attraction are overpriced and overrated. Such appeal is usually classified as tourist traps and could jeopardize the contribution to this

industry, particularly in terms of entertainment and the image of the destination (Cooper 2011).

5. BENCHMARK CASE STUDIES

As previously mentioned, the district of Limbang is located next to the Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam a country which has banned a significant number of its entertainment activities. Examples of border towns/cities located in the proximity of countries with a limited entertainment sector can be traced around the world. Majority of these border towns/cities experience a visible surge in entertainment seeking tourists arriving across the border. This study discusses two such cities Van in Turkey and Manama in Bahrain.

Van is a city in eastern Turkey's Van Province and is located between the eastern shore of Lake Van and the Iranian border. The city has a long history and is also a major urban area. It has been a sizeable city since the first millennium BC. In the city, there is a significant number of historical buildings, old monument and incredible natural environments such as Mount Süphan which are all major tourism attractions. In 2012 the official population of Van was 370,000. Besides that, Van city is very popular with visitors from Iran. The Iranians go there by car, by train or by plane for shopping and nightlife activities as Van city is close to their country. The peak for Iranian visitors is during the Novruz holiday periodⁱ, which starts in mid-March and lasts until the beginning of April. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, there is a strict Sharia Law and regulations which prohibit any nightlife activities. As Van city has the advantage of allowing nightlife activities, it attracts Iranian to come over throughout the year. Apart from nightlife activities, the Iranians come to Van for shopping as prices in Turkey are competitive to the ones in Iran (The Economist 2019).

Bahrain's nightlife scene has something for everyone. The island is located off the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia, which makes Bahrain a hot spot for Americans, Europeans, and Middle Easterns travelling in the region. Saudi cities like Dhahran and Al-Khobar are located near the King Fahd Causeway that connects KSA to Bahrain, creating convenient access to the island. Manama is the second largest city of Bahrain, with an

approximate population of 157,000. Manama has busy nightlife activities in comparison with standards set for other Gulf countries. It is a traditional Muslim country but without strict Islamic rules and regulations. Alcohol is legal here, making the city very attractive to those who cannot drink legally in nearby Saudi Arabia. The country allows nightlife activities in the town which are also part of tourist attraction and product. As a result, it attracts a lot of Arab tourists and foreign ex-pats working in Saudi Arabia. The main entertainment districts are Adliya, Hoor, Juffair and Business District. Bahrain currency is the second-highest valued currency unit in the world. Since the late 20th century, Bahrain has heavily invested in banking and tourism development (Tripoto 2019).

6. ENTERTAINMENT AS A MOTIVATOR FOR REPEAT VISITATION

In this literature study, it is essential to identify why tourists travel and how they choose their holiday destination. This helps market researchers to understand which attraction or interest influences the choice made by tourists. According to Prayang and Hossany (2014), motivation is a significant driving force behind tourist interest. In articles describing the rules and management for places of public entertainment, it is acknowledged that aesthetic values can affect the tourist satisfaction and experience which will influence their decision in selecting a destination and also revisiting that chosen destination (Westminster City Council 2001, Baloglu et al., 2004, Lee et al., 2011). This implies that architectural and urban design can play an important role in luring tourists to a specific precinct. Iconic entertainment complexes featuring cutting edge innovative design supported by quality public spaces always act as magnets for the tourism sector and significantly contributing to the local economy.

Based on Ramakrishna Nallathiga (2006), entertainment is an essential strategy for attracting short-term tourists and encouraging them to stay longer. Therefore, it plays the primary role in determining tourist loyalty. A study has proven that the quality and type of entertainment offered by a specific location will determine tourist experience and satisfaction (Dwyer et al., 2004).

Destination performance is the crucial indicator of tourist satisfaction which stimulates their behaviour and motivates them in recommending and revisiting the place (Pritchard & Morgan, 2001; Pritchard, 2003). Therefore, it is essential to understand how entertainment influences the role of tourism offering. The form and quality of entertainment are included as part of the tourism package, which could impact the decision making by tourists. The tourist perception of the type of entertainment is based on their preferences, judgment, behaviour and destination selection (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2001). Tourists will then tend to select a place based on its quality and types of entertainment facilities. Entertainment which incorporates in tourism offering will gain tourist interest which will motivate them to revisit the destination they selected. According to Dwyer et al. (2004), the entertainment and the overall experience of a goal must be superior to other

alternative destinations to achieve a competitive advantage in the tourism sector. The more countries open their borders and introduce liberal policies; the more option is available in the global tourism marketplace. There will be an ongoing growing demand for entertainment activities by tourists all over the world. Apart from contributing to the growth of the tourism sector and boosting the local economy entertainment activities trigger a series of urban interventions such as urban revitalization and conservation and provide new employment opportunities.

7. ACTIVITIES FOR TOURISM ENTERTAINMENT

According to Loi (2009), the typology of entertainment is usually categorised into an adult, child, public, corporate and live entertainment, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Type of Entertainment Typology. (Source: Loi, 2009)

Entertainment	Typical examples / activities
Child	Children games, clowns, puppets, pantomimes, cartoons, theme parks.
Adult	Activities like music concerts, live sports, opera and also entertainment that arouse sexual desire by displays of eroticism. Examples are beach parties, night life, peep shows, striptease, massages, blue films and shows
Live	For all ages, a variety of activities labelled as live entertainment, e.g. music concerts, live TV shows, live sports, theatres, etc.
Public	It includes performances, singing, dancing, competitions, and painting
Corporate	It is mostly organised by entertainment providers and includes corporate events, private parties, ceremonies, product launches

As in the context of tourism, the entertainment typology in Table 1 in the entertainment tourism industry consists of numerous categories and forms. To provide entertainment facilities, it is imperative to identify and analyse the specific target group and their preferred entertainment activities. Only then it is possible to determine the type of entertainment activity suitable for the

particular location. Entertainment in tourism usually consists of three types of forms which are air-based, land-based and water-based. Besides that, in the development and growth of the technology era, there will be another category in entertainment which is the technology-based. Table 2 shows four types of standard forms of tourism entertainment.

Table 2: Type of Entertainment Typology (Source: Gb Gowreesunkar & Sotiriadis, 2015.)

Type of Form	Tourism Entertainment Activities/Event
LAND - BASED	Fairs and festivals, stage and road shows, magical shows, circus, theatres, architecture, monuments, heritage sites, cultural attractions and handicraft, theme museums, shopping and emporium, parks (theme and amusement), gastronomy, music, hotel indoor games and outdoors sports (biking, trekking, golf), casinos, sporting events, rituals and religious practices, nightlife (club, discos, bars).
WATER-BASED	Rafting, sailing, windsurfing, fishing, swimming, diving, snorkelling, undersea walk, submarine activities, whale watching, kayaking, cruising, yachting, speed-boating, lake activities, bathing and spa therapy, thalassotherapy, thermal springs.
AIR-BASED	Sky diving, para sailing, paragliding, hot ballooning, aeroplane and helicopter trip, scenic flight, flights on hang-glider, kite, Tyrolienne, canyoning, mountain jet
TECHNOLOGY-BASED	The 8th mass media like 3D, 4D games, online games, multiplayer online role-playing games (MPORGs), computer games, play stations, the 4th screen interactive virtual tours, 3D & 4D movies and shows, entertainment appliances, such as touch screen smart phone, tablets, e-books, I-pads, Web 2.0 (social media and blogs)

Table 2 lists types of entertainment activities which allow tourists to make their travel decisions. A small urban centre like Bandar Limbang should use similar methods and techniques to make their tourism offer more attractive and diversified. Besides these four types of forms, the other important element is accessibility. According to Banica and Camara (2011), when comparing two towns with similar tourism services, the tourists will select a destination which is easier to access. Good physical access by land, water and air is the key for a thriving tourism destination.

8. POTENTIAL TOURIST ACCESSIBILITY TO ENTERTAINMENT FACILITIES

Infrastructure networks are essential to ensure access for socio-economic sectors to various resources. Stratemeyer, 2008, indicates the change within the territory and transport planning from 'predict and provide' models to models centred on the planned local connectivity and improved quality of life. Entertainment facilities should regard accessibility as the capacity for connectivity that will affect the performance of the transport system (based on distance, cost and time) and connectivity.

Reducing distance-time and distance-cost could attract and promote the locations for the tourists. However, accessibility determines the majority of tourist travel decisions. The proximity of tourist accommodation to tourist attractions could attract waves of tourists. For example, Jonker Street in Malacca is located in proximity and within walking distance to all major tourist attractions, hotels and guest houses of the city, which is very convenient for the tourists. The interrelation between accessibility, location and the tourism market is shown in Figure 3.

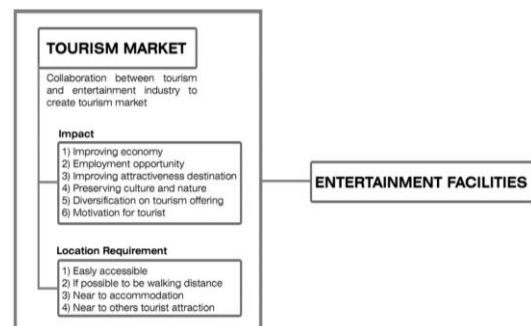


Figure 3: Interrelation between the tourism market location and accessibility.

9. CONCLUSION

The entertainment industry and tourism industry are the best combinations to improve the local economy of small cities/towns that have resources of culture and nature. It could give an opportunity in promoting economic growth, preserving and creating a culture of the town, and awareness in conserving natural resources. Entertainment facilities also act as the motivator in making the tourists stay and revisit the destination. However, entertainment facilities should be easily accessible, physically and visually linked to significant nodes of the city. The most suitable location should be in the town centre where most of tourists and passing by visitors congregate. Entertainment activities will help local businesses and provide more employment opportunities in the urban locality. The literature review revealed that entertainment facilities play a significant role in the tourism industry which can boost the economy and promote the social culture of the community. The implementation of entertainment facilities in Limbang town should be considered as a vital element of the future tourism sector. The best potential tourism target group for Limbang are the residents and ex-pats living and working in the Sultanate of Brunei. Limbang could offer visitors from Brunei a whole range of entertainment activities that are missing in the Sultanate. The most suitable tourism form and typology for Limbang are land-based activities comprising evening entertainment such as night clubs, eating places, bars and cafes and even massages parlours.

However, to attract visitors to Bandar Limbang (located 30 km from the Bruneian border), the Sarawak government should consider dismantling and relocating the current duty-free zone in Kuala Lurah. This duty-free zone in its current form is an 'eye-saw gateway' to Malaysia, and it encourages many travellers to discontinue their journey into Limbang. As a result, the duty-free zone has a detrimental impact on the local economy of Bandar Limbang. Relocating the activities of the duty-free zone from Kuala Lurah to a central location in Bandar Limbang could create a new entertainment activity node that would boost the local economy of the declining town. When creating a new entertainment activity node, it is essential to improve the accessibility of Bandar Limbang by upgrading the existing road network and reintroducing water transport to Brunei's capital Bandar Seri Begawan. Improving

air connections to other parts of Sarawak and Sabah and even Kalimantan, Indonesia could also be beneficial for the growth of tourism. Architecture could also play an essential role in attracting more visitors. Imposing innovative design guidelines and promoting tropical architecture featuring traditional building themes could create a catalyst flagship complex that could not only attract different types of tourist clientele but trigger the urban regeneration of the town centre.

Being located directly next to Brunei, a country deprived of the entertainment industry, Limbang has the great opportunity of becoming an entertainment and leisure destination for Bruneians and foreign ex-pats living and working in the Sultanate. The success of entertainment destinations such as Van in Turkey and Manama in Bahrain only reinforces the potential of Limbang.

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