

COMPLETION REPORT

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Mahathir's Look East Policy 2.0: Exploring The Possibility of Creating a Bond in Tourism Development between Malaysia and Japan

Based on our finding, we show that there is a large difference in governance structure of the external tourism agency between Japan (JTA) and Malaysia (Tourism Malaysia). JTA controls four sub-divisions responsible for different scopes, and it also governs two departments responsible for regional and international tourism. Besides, a non-profit statutory organization (the JNTO) is responsible for liaising with international convention and exchange program. We highlight on the need of reform in Tourism Malaysia in conjunction with LEP 2.0 in terms of task divisions.

Second, we find that JTA involves in making regulation act related to tourism policies. For example, JTA amend the Licensed Guide Interpreters Act and Travel Agency Act that takes measures to create a registration system for service providers in tourism and train the professional licensed guide intrepreters to boost international tourism demand. Through the Act amendment, JTA abolishes business monopoly by changing the Licensed Guide Interpreters from a business exclusive qualification to individual exclusive qualification in parallel with prevailing Gig economy.

Besides, JTA involves in communication with various stakeholders not limited to private agency and tourists. We find that JTA works with numerous ministries in improving the efficiency of tourism development. Other than that, JTA creates a registration system for hotels so that they can keep record of the hotels' accommodation facilities, and trace the functions of those facilities according to the needs of tourists. Registration of hotels is mandated by formation of the Act on Development of Hotels for Inbound Tourists under the amendment of JTA. A special legal exemption is offering to the registered hotels and inns which provide facilities' investments geared towards promoting international visitor stays. Furthermore, JTA implements Travel Agency Act to maintain fairness in transactions for international tourists. From here, we can see that JTA understands the issues faced by international tourists and they solve the issues by working with public and private sectors. This spirit of planning and development is worth highlighted and incorporated into the education proposed under LEP 2.0.

Lastly, we find that Malaysians prefer to travel to Japan more than Japanese tourists traveling to Malaysia. The biggest issue from our survey questionnaire shows that Japanese tourists could not understand English. The second issue is that Japanese tourists do not share the same appetite with Malaysian foods. Still, Japanese tourists like to search for Japanese foods in Malaysia. However, Japanese tourists satisfy with the pricing level in Malaysia, and secondly they thumb-up on the quality of accommodations with reasonable price.

Based on our questionnaire survey, we propose that Malaysia and Japan can collaborate by exchanging talents for boosting international tourism demand in conjunction with LEP 2.0. First, we suggest Malaysian government provides guidance on establishing Halal food markets in Japan. Second, we suggest Japanese government provide low-cost training to Malaysian tourism service providers on Japanese languages and cultural knowledge. In conjunction with annual Bon-Odori festival, and the recently held Nihon Matsuri, Malaysian government should continue to add Japanese cultures into its tourism portfolio.

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