

Singapore tourism vulnerable to climate change



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Conclusion

The overall aim of this research is to understand the ways in which tourism in Singapore is vulnerable to climate change. Predicting climate change is complex but even more complex is predicting how people will respond to that change (Perry, 2005, 94). Therefore, tourists, who are major players in this tourism business, are exceptionally crucial. This study employs tourists' perceptions and opinions as well as statistical data from government sources in understanding how tourism in Singapore may be affected under predicted climate change scenarios in the coming decades. Three research objectives were developed for addressing this aim as mentioned in the introduction. In this concluding chapter, summary of the results for each of these objectives would be highlighted.

Objective one: To document the nature climate as a resource for tourism in Singapore

Atmospheric weather conditions may impact tourist demand, participation, experiences and satisfaction (de Freitas, 2003; Yu et al, 2009). Singapore's "hot and sunny" weather condition and all-year-round sunshine acts as a huge impetus attracting tourists. The significance of climate among other factors was revealed in the survey and confirmed the findings by Hamilton, et al (2005) that weather and climate can act as both push and pull factors.

Despite acknowledging that climate is an important resource for tourism in Singapore, this study made an interesting finding that weather did not prove to be the ultimate choice affecting tourist's decision to Sentosa. Attractions in the destination was consistently ranked first when respondents were asked the importance of factors relevant to their visit to a country for

tourism as well as the most important factor affecting their decision in visiting Sentosa.

With attractions being the most important factor affecting tourists' choice to Sentosa, there is high possibility that Sentosa may be chosen in spite of the likely bad weather. Tourists indicate that they would likely substitute beach tourism for other activities such as indoor sightseeing attractions within Sentosa which are not weather dependent. Hence visitation to Sentosa is unlikely to be affected because of the diverse types of attractions Sentosa provides. This indirectly points to a bigger picture that for destinations attracting mostly day visitors, climate change may have smaller implications, since potential visitors are more likely to change plans or adapt to the on-site weather conditions (Aylen et al., 2005).

Objective two: To estimate future effects and risks on the tourism sector under direct predicted climate change scenarios

The tourism sector in Singapore generates more than S\$12 billion in tourism receipts yearly and employs about 60% of the workforce in Singapore (MOM, 2009; MTI, 2009). Given the increasing importance of the tourism industry to the economy, it is critical to understand the implications of climate change for the industry.

Climate change has the potential modify tourist demand and travel patterns (Scott et al., 2004). Although climate change may bring about new opportunities for some countries, Singapore would most likely be faced with more challenges. Firstly, with global warming, Singapore may become too hot and humid for comfort. Secondly, with the climate of other regions and <https://assignbuster.com/singapore-tourism-vulnerable-to-climate-change/>

countries changing for the better, the need for a winter escape to warm climate countries diminishes.

In addition, the study investigated the reactions of tourists' behaviour to the possible direct impact of climate change that might most probably impact Singapore in the coming years. Increasing rainfall days would most likely result in a decrease in days of stay with tourists indicating that they would still choose to come to Singapore but avoiding that heavy rainfall periods. On the other hand, in the case of an increase in temperature or rainfall events which are highly unpredictable, it seems that tourists would more likely accept and plan their activities to suit these random weather conditions.

These fairly negative results demonstrate the need for the sector to look into ways that can improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of Singapore as a tourist destination. Studies have shown that tourists are capable of adapting and changing their travel behaviours when facing uncertainties and unexpected factors. Stewart & Vogt (1999) suggest that tourism plans often were changed, especially regarding on-site activities. Therefore, what is most important is the initial motivation of attracting tourists to Singapore.

Singapore must prove herself as a worthy destination with many alternative activities that is available for visitors facing extreme hot weather or sudden rainfall due to the changing climate. With Singapore's tourism industry being highly diversified without favouring any particular type of tourism, there is a balance of both indoor and outdoor attractions to provide visitors satisfactory tourism experiences even under uncertain weather conditions. In addition, statistics show that shopping, is one of the main motives of tourists coming

to Singapore as well as a high revenue earning sector, with Orchard Road being the most visited site in Singapore. Thus, if shopping which is non-weather dependent, is one of the main attractions motivating tourists to Singapore, it seem possible that climate change may have little impact in changing tourists' minds about visiting Singapore.

Objective three: To discuss mitigation policies employed or suggested by the UNWTO access the consequences of employing these strategies in Singapore

Two mitigation strategies are reviewed: encouraging short-haul destinations and market climate policy instruments which includes taxation. Singapore is a small island state with only the Southeast Asian region being within its short-haul destination. Thus, promoting short-haul destination as a mitigation strategy may lead to detrimental economic consequences for Singapore as a result of vast lost of a significant potential share of tourists.

Between the two strategies reviewed, the latter seems to be a more desirable. This is reflected in 75% of respondents expressing willingness to increase their spending on green facilities which includes fuel efficient aeroplane. They believe that it is their social and environmental responsibility to spend a little more for the sake of the environment.

Although mitigation strategies for the tourism industry may not be welcomed by both tourism operators and tourists as they are likely to result in an increase in cost of travel or inconvenience, thus reducing competitiveness, they are deemed essential. Unlike natural disasters or terrorist attacks, climate change is not just a short-term effect that could then be quickly forgotten. As King concludes aptly “ In my view, climate change is the most

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severe problem we are facing today, more serious even than the threat of terrorism” (2004: 176). Therefore, the need for mitigation strategies in Singapore to reduce the trend of future climate change impacts is a pressing necessity.