

Sustainability of Shoreline Tourism in Regional Development Setting: The Challenge of Product Integration

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Abstract: Shoreline and coastal areas have long been recognised as a magnet of tourist travels due to their magnificent landscapes and unique recreational activities. Yet as they are being developed these areas are faced with numerous social, economic, environment and spatial issues and challenges. While many aspects of these problems have been studied, little work, however, has been done with regard to the particular problems and challenges of shoreline tourism in regional development contexts. To contribute to the narrowing of this research gap, this article enquires into the state of shoreline tourism in Malaysia's Iskandar regional development area with the purpose of identifying the main issues currently besetting the progress of shoreline tourism there. The methods comprised analyses of primary data gathered from a workshop involving stakeholders responsible for the planning and development of the shoreline areas and from a field survey of 26 observation points. The results showed that many of the existing economic, social and environmental issues in the area's shoreline tourism were closely related to its lack of product integration. In line with the context of regional development, the study recommended that the authorities stimulate and foster inter connectivity in and within the region in order to ensure the sustainability of its shoreline tourism.

Key words: Shoreline Tourism • Globalising Region • Tourism Assets • Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

Tourism had been as much accepted as a key sector of economic growth as it was a concern for social and environmental sustainability in developed and developing countries alike [1, 2]. One of the most favoured destinations was the coastal and shoreline area. While benefiting from numerous nature and man-made attractions, shoreline tourism providers, however, had to deal with several pressing issues, ranging from natural hazards and ecological problems to changes in land policies and human interferences [3-5]. In developing countries, this situation was certainly not helped by the fact that the shoreline ecosystems had not been well understood within the context of regional development.

In contrast, research on shorelines in developed countries had advanced and moved away from piecemeal responses to erosion problems at the local level to more holistic perspectives based upon an understanding of the natural processes that transcend local authority boundaries [3-4]. In the mean time, new ventures were

also emerging and these included sustainable shoreline managements [3-5] and delimiting boundaries of International Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) initiatives based not on a specific problem, but on the overall geo-environmental, socio-economic and jurisdictional characteristics of the management area [6].

What cannot escape notice is the fact that whether in developed or developing countries shoreline and coastal tourism was prone to hazards and environmental degradation [5, 6, 7] prompting stakeholders to resort to integrated management plans of shoreline areas [4, 6-10]. The environmental problems however did not get resolved simply because of the very complexity of managerial and jurisdiction functions implicating multi-stakeholders of the shorelines resources [5, 7, 8, 9], the local public [10, 11] and inter-connectivity aspects of these areas with their hinterlands [12].

At least four main issues may be identified as challenging contemporary coastal tourism and shoreline management *viz.* the changing nature of tourist-related pressures at the coast; advances in shoreline management

approaches including the adoption of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) principles; the geomorphologic behaviour of coastal systems; and projections of near-future climate and associated sea-level change [13]. There were views that shoreline management must involve several tasks such as compromising between conservation and people, acknowledging the local population's accessibility to services and management of natural resources, preventing profits from leaking out of the community, conserving natural biodiversity and heritage and revitalising ecosystem processes [14]. Despite all these new ways of looking at coastline tourism management, efforts at integrating coastline tourism into the mainstream economy had mainly seen the marginalisation of the coastline areas [14-15].

Nevertheless in Malaysia there seemed to have been a rise in efforts at integrating coastal or shoreline tourism management with the country's mainstream economic development [17-19]. Experiences of such initiatives in the country's states of Sabah, Penang and Pahang had proved that conflicting issues could be minimal [17-19]. In a state like Johor where there is a wide range of shoreline areas amidst regional development settings,

it is not difficult to see how vital it is for there to be a close relationship between tourism at the peripheral shoreline areas and the respective centre of regional development there. This article analyses the existing state of shoreline tourism in the state's newly minted Iskandar Region and identify the integration challenges it has to face.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Study Area: Johor is the southeastern state of Peninsular Malaysia which vision is to be a developed economy by the year 2020. Tourism is one of the major economic sectors of this gateway state. Johor aims to attract 46 million international tourist arrivals in year 2020, with an increase of 3.0 days stay compared to the 1.5 days in 2000 [20].

The state is blessed with vast tourism resources-ranging from the most unspoiled islands and mangrove ecosystems to the most modern, high skilled and high culture tourism. The state's long and varied shoreline certainly stands up as one of the vital tourism resources starting from Kukup Island in the west to the shorelines of Kg. Sg. Berangan in the east (Figure 1).

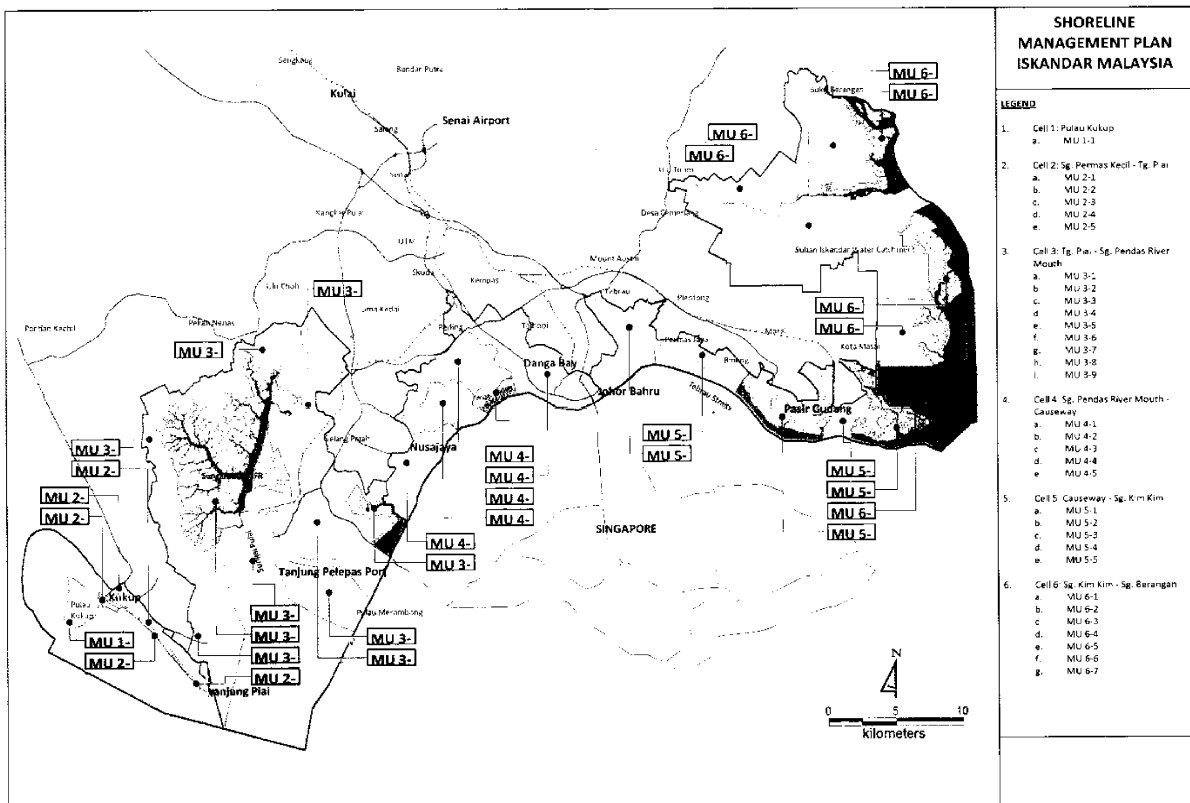


Fig. 1: Management Cells in Iskandar Malaysia (Source, IRDA, 21)

Table 1: Point of Observations in the Study Area

Cell	Area	Point of Observation
Cell 1	Kukup Island	Kukup Island Forest Reserve
Cell 2	Kukup Town - Tanjung Piai	i) Ferry Terminal, ii) Kangkar Air Masin, iii) Kukup Town, iv) Tanjung Piai National Park
Cell 3a	Tanjung Piai - Pendas	i) Tanjung Piai Resort, ii) Tanjung Bin Power Plant,
Cell 3b		iii) Traditional Malay Kampung, iv) Cage Culture
Cell 4	Pendas - Tanjung Puteri	i) Kg. Sg. Pendas, ii) Tebing Runtuh, iii) Nusajaya, iv) Kg. Sungai Melayu, iv) Kg. Sungai Temon, v) Kg. Skudai Kiri, vi) Danga Bay and vii) City centre
Cell 5	Johor Causeway - Sg. Kim Kim	i) Stulang, ii) Kg. Senibong and Kg. Lunchu, iii) Kg. Jawa and Kg. Sungai Rekoh, iv) Kg. Masai, v) Pasir Gudang Port, vi) Kg. Pasir Putih, vii) Tanjung Puteri Golf Resort and Senibong Cove
Cell 6	Kg. Kong Kong to Kg. Pasir Salam	i) Kg. Perigi Acheh, ii) Tanjung Langsat, iii) Kg. Kong Kong and iv) Kg. Pasir Salam.

Altogether, the shoreline areas are divided into six cells, each exhibiting a distinct attraction. The benefit of this uniqueness, however, is not fully optimised since the development of the shoreline tourism in Johor is yet to be properly integrated into the state’s regional development setting.

Being the appointed administrator of Johor’s regional development the Iskandar Regional Development Authority (IRDA) has set seven strategic pillars of economic advancement in the region, tourism being one of the key sectors [20]. The coastal zone it oversees encompasses the waters and the three kilometre inland zone along the coastline of the Johor Straits which lie within the country’s territorial boundary.

This zone extends all the way into Pontian in the west and Kota Tinggi in the east where the Johor Straits waterway leads into the two open waters of the Straits of Malacca on the west and the South China Sea on the east.

Data Collection: This field study was conducted to observe the state of existing development happening as well as the problems and issues encountered at each designated cell of the Johor shoreline under the IRDA management. It commenced in December 2009 and ended in March 2010. The shorelines were divided into six cells each acting as a point of observation (Table 1).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Existing Tourism Assets along the IRDA Shorelines:

As mentioned earlier tourism resources in the shorelines are vast with each cell having its own attraction. The findings of the study confirmed this fact as shown in Table 2.

Based on the field survey, this study found that the range and scale of the available tourist attractions were unevenly distributed in the IRDA region. Cell 1, the Kukup Island, was a forest reserve offering low impact outdoor activities and where tourism facilities were satisfactory. The island faces severe natural erosion due to heavy vessel flows and the recent development of Tanjung Bin Port. In addition, Kukup was one of the 12 icons of Johor’s tourism. Being a tourist entry and exit point between Johor and Tanjung Balai, Indonesia, Kukup has several advantages with its proximity to Tanjung Piai, the southeastern most tip of Peninsular Malaysia and mainland Asia. The destination had received 146,000 visitors in 2009. The main factors that caused attracted the influx of tourists were seafood specialties, Chinese water villages and agro-tourism. Major issues of tourism standard still persisted there here. For example, the Kukup homestay programme was still regarded by Tourism Johor Malaysia as illegally operated signifying the fact that environmental, cleanliness and safety problems were overshadowing the programme’s potentials.

Cell 2 constituted areas from Kukup Town to Tanjung Piai. It offered unique tourism attractions where Pontian was planned to become the centre of cultural and rural tourism.

Cell 3 covered areas of Tanjung Piai to Sg. Pendas where Tanjung Piai Resort, Tanjung Bin Power Plant, Tg Pelepas Port, a traditional Malay village, a Pineapple Museum and cage culture were among the premier tourist attractions. The main constraint here was that Cell 3 had limited accommodation facilities as Tanjung Piai Resort was the only resort available. This underlined the cell’s failure to capture transit tourists who visited the National Park of Tanjung Piai. In fact,

Table 2: Tourism Attraction along the Johor's shoreline

Cell	Tourist Attraction
Cell 1 Kukup Island	Kukup Island Forest Reserve Taman Negara Kukup Island
Cell 2 Kukup Town - Tanjung Piai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ferry Terminal as entry point from Batam. ii. Kangkar Air Masin and Kukup Town offer Chinese water village homestay. iii. Tanjung Piai National Park Southern Most Tip of Mainland Asia; well managed park. iv. Kukup Golf Resort v. Bugis Gallery vi. Under-developed assets - Cage culture and Seafood restaurants, Traditional kampung – durian and banana orchards
Cell 3a	i. Tanjung Piai Resort as resort on the water.
Cell 3b Tanjung Piai - Pendas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Traditional Malay Kampung and scenic rural attraction. iii. Cage Culture and seafood restaurants.
Cell 4 Pendas – Tanjung Puteri	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Kg. Sg. Pendas as seafood restaurants and Tebing Runtuh for aquaculture; kampung. ii. Nusajaya as new administrative centre iii. Marina & ICQ – Gate way, Theme parks, Educity and MICE; iv. Kg. Sungai Melayu as attractive Malay kampung and v. Kg. Sungai Temon as Orang Asli settlement and seafood restaurants vi. Danga Bay and City centre for urban tourism vii. Waterfronts and urban park; water taxis from Nusajaya to Johor Bahru city and urban tourism.
Cell 5 Johor Causeway– Sg. Kim Kim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Stulang Laut as Ferry terminal, free duty shopping complex ii. Kg. Senibong and Kg. Lunchu offer Orang Asli floating market and seafood, fishing ponds iii. Kg. Jawa, Kg. Sungai Rekoh and Kg. Masai, Kg Pasir Putih for aquaculture, seafood and Orang Asli water settlement seafood restaurants and Malay traditional villages; iv. Marinas in Tanjung Puteri Golf Resort and Pasir Gudang v. Senibong Cove Golf tourism and resort tourism.
Cell 6 Kg. Kong Kong to Kg. Pasir Salam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kg Perigi Aceh offers crocodile park Tanjung Langsat as fishermen village; fishing jetty; seafood restaurants Kg Kong Kong offering seafood restaurants, fishing jetty; cage fishing activities; i. Batu Tanda Kosong Kg Pasir Salam houses Orang Asli Selandar settlement; aquaculture, water village homestays.

during the consultation process with the local leaders, tourism related problems were their major concerns. The proximity of the area with the iconic Tanjung Piai had not been fully leveraged as opportunities to expand the rural economy. The specialities of this area in the form of the *durian* fruits, honey, fishing and cottage industries were not promoted as tourism products. Based on the field observation there, roads with scenic rural ambiance had not been packaged or promoted for motoring or drive tourism.

Cell 4 covered areas from Sg Pendas to Tanjung Puteri. Here, several settlements portrayed diverse economic-based activities resulting in diversified tourist attractions from high and middle class culture tourism [new administrative centre; Nusajaya; marina; and ICQ (I seek you) gateway; theme parks; Educity, (education city); meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE); waterfronts and urban park; water taxis and urban tourism] to low culture, budget and backpackers tourism (seafood restaurants, aquaculture, attractive Malay kampongs, aboriginal settlement and cage culture).

Cell 5 stretched from Tanjung Puteri near the Johor Causeway to Kg.Sg. Kim Kim. The area comprised existing tourist attractions and high possibilities of clustered resort development. The attractions incorporated Stulang, Kg. Senibong, Kg. Kunchu, Kg. Jawa, Kg. Sungai Rekoh, Kg. Masai, Pasir Gudang Port, Kg. Pasir Putih and Tanjung Puteri Golf Resort.

Finally, Cell 6 which straddled from Kg Kong Kong To Kg Tg. Pasir Salam, comprising the villages of Kg. Perigi Aceh, Kg. Tanjung Langsat, Kg. Kong-Kong and Kg. Tg. Pasir Salam and Tg. Langsat Industrial Areas. The main tourist attraction was Taman Buaya at Kg. Perigi Aceh. A large portion of this area, stretching from Kg. Kong-Kong up to Kg. Bukit Berangan, had been identified as ‘aquaculture zone’ in the Johor Bahru Local Plan, but promotional initiatives were still minimal.

Issues in Shoreline Tourism in Regional Development:

From the field observation of each tourism cell, this study found several critical issues that held back the integration of shoreline tourism with the mainstream economy of Johor's Iskandar region.

Firstly, the accessibility and connectivity problem of existing tourist spots in the IDRA region. It is clearly shown in Cells 1, 2 and 3 that the sites hardly had the opportunities to attract stopover tourists from Tanjung Piai. While there was sufficient highway in the state, connecting roads in areas within the shoreline areas were not efficiently developed. Therefore, it was quite a challenge for tourist operators to seek approaches to divert some of the tourists' flows to the new tourism sites in the region. Added to this, each of the shoreline cells had different levels of tourism standards. Cell 2, for instance, which housed the southernmost tip of Tanjung Piai had to bear with problems of illegally operated homestays.

Secondly, the over-dependency on Singapore tourists. Although neighbour Singapore's 4.2 million population and almost three times capita per capita GDP that of Malaysia provided a lucrative market for IRDA's tourism, over dependency on the Singapore tourists was certainly something to be guarded against. Yet not much proactive measures had been taken at IRDA to address this situation.

Thirdly, the lack of talented human capital in IRDA tourism and regional development. Even though high culture tourism seemed to have been well planned in IRDA, the issue was to what extent the region could ensure that there would always be enough human capital with the right talent to man tourism at the cell level. This problem could be worsening given that some cells were experiencing out-migration of working age population, leaving the older generation - less endowed physically and financially - to grapple with the tasks at hand.

Fourthly, the under-utilisation of the shorelines tourism assets of IRDA region. For instance, the cultural assets of the Seletar aborigines who dominated the shorelines in Cell 5 and Cell 6 had not been developed and staged as high culture tourism, whereas the aborigines' counterpart in the Singapore side had been quite successfully promoted as a cultural tourism product.

Finally, the lack of involvement of the local stakeholders in the IRDA's shoreline tourism economy. For instance, although there were huge and diversified opportunities for tourists to be attracted to Cell 4, the relative exclusion of the local aborigines was hardly resolved. It is obvious that pro-poor tourism had not been the principle of tourism businesses in the IRDA region as exemplified by the dissatisfaction expressed by those food stall operators in Kg. Melayu and Kg. Skudai Kiri who found it difficult to get their premises promoted

by the authorities. The state tourism agency certainly needed to do more than just typically justifying the exclusion of these locals' premises on the ground of their unsatisfactory state of cleanliness and safety.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study showed that while there were huge untapped tourism potentials in the study area's shorelines, ranging from nature to more sophisticated modern oriented tourism products, there were equally critical environmental, social and cultural issues which reflected various disconnects with the regional development setting. In other words, shoreline tourism in the study area suffered from a lack of product integration which should have been otherwise given the presence of a rigorous regional development programme there. The situation really called for a holistic approach to regional tourism wherein the more traditional and conventional tourism products were smartly packaged with the more sophisticated and modern ones to produce an integrated, well optimised circuit of shoreline tourism in the region. Towards this end, it is suggested that further work on shoreline tourism be conducted with a wider regional perspective and incorporating various stakeholder collaborations.

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