

Feedback notes by the Sarawak Heritage Society on the Inception Reports
of the Tourism Master Plan 2020-2035 study

General comments (further to the meeting the consultants and a member of EPU had with representatives of SHS on 9 July and to the Inception Reports - several of these points were mentioned at the meeting).

- SHS's core belief is that heritage conservation initiatives ought to be meant above all for the benefit of Sarawak people, and not guided *primarily* as instruments of tourism promotion. We believe that the economic benefit of such approach can be higher than 'heritage for tourists' approaches, and that it is more sustainable.
- Sarawak's investment needs associated to culture/heritage tourism will be for a large part determined by the choice to be made between a 'numbers' or a 'yield' tourism development strategy, as hinted in the Inception Report A. This is difficult issue that requires a candid, careful and independent analysis of the State's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and assessment of the expected impacts of the available policy options, with a long term view, avoiding pre-set ideas or proposals. A well designed visitors survey (what makes people want to visit Sarawak, their expectations, their perceptions of positive / negative aspects; by duration, age, spending power etc.) could in this respect deliver precious insights, but may perhaps not be very practicable in the very short term.
- Culture and Heritage are undoubtedly key, powerful assets for Sarawak tourism, in addition to 'Nature' and 'Adventure'. For this Culture/Heritage potential to be better unleashed, there is a need for strengthened public management of cultural and heritage assets. The sector faces currently a number of challenges. Some, mentioned by SHS reps at the meeting, have not found their way into the inception reports. Much more discussion needs to be focused on developing historical and heritage assets, and thus Heritage Tourism. It is hoped that the issue will be discussed in more depth in the upcoming workshops.
- We believe that Sarawak can significantly develop its market for cultural tourism. This market can be leveraged if the branding includes, at the same time, a 'green tourism' dimension: due to their educated background, cultural tourists appear to be for a large part also nature lovers (in this respect the '18 pillars' segmentation carries some risk of over-segmentation).
- Cultural/Heritage tourism is likely to point to the 'yield', rather than 'numbers' approach. It requires a good quality infrastructure. (It also appears to include a lively 'backpackers' segment which contributes not insignificantly to the economic activity and appears, in a medium / long term perspective, to act as a good promoter of cultural/heritage tourism, by 'spreading the word').
- Beyond lively, gentle, cultures and well maintained and explained heritage, what cultural tourists seek above all is *authenticity*. Some beautification or 'disneylandification' initiatives can in this respect be counterproductive.

Specific comments on Inception Report B

Slide 25: for better clarity, use ":" instead of "-" as it may be misread as minus.

Slide 31: 'Digital Natives' vs 'Digital Immigrants' : under Digital Tourism, has a Digital Concierge for Visitors been considered? A Digital Concierge is a personalised information service that allows a visitor a one-stop access to tourism-related content and services through his mobile device and other channels. It will also allow

him to purchase products and services. The Digital Concierge will offer services at all points of a trip - before, during and after.

Don't ignore the elder but generally wealthier travellers who may not be as digitally fluent

Slides 34-37: it may be worth to look at the potentials offered by key ICT tools of the 21st century - Big Data, AI, IoT, Cybersecurity, VR/AR and Blockchain - and imagine how they can impact the Digital Tourism platform being discussed.

Slide 57: Pillar 16 Heritage Tourism

The message which is missing here is that Sarawak needs do more work to protect, maintain, upgrade and apply more innovation to its historic and heritage assets/sites if it wants to fully benefit from Heritage Tourism.

Slide 60: looking at (16) Heritage Tourism, there appear several solid circles, esp. against 11, 12 and 13 meaning it is matured/market ready. This is not certain. There still appears to be much undeveloped potential ("money left on the table!")

Or another interpretation - (16) is closely related to 11, 12, 13 ... in which case MoTC might consider developing them in tandem, rather than in silos. Lots of cross-synergies.