

Urban Sustainable Development in Tourism Industry Lead by Local Authority at Ipoh City, Perak, Malaysia

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Abstract: Dealing with urban sustainable development especially tourism industry needs proper planning and implementation by the local authorities. The aim of this article is to show that proper planning and good execution will achieve exponential growth of economy for the locals as well as the local authorities. The paper will explore the focal point in tourism taken by Ipoh City Council in relation to sustainable development. The findings reveal challenges and issues experienced by the local authorities with regards to setting the direction, development and management of tourism development. Conclusion is to ensure tourism development sustainability in the long term.

Keywords: Sustainable development, tourism industry, planning, implementation, local authorities, Ipoh City Council.

1. INTRODUCTION

A habitat city under the United Nation's programme is to promote socially, and sustainable towns and cities with the main goal of providing adequate shelter for all. ^[1] The programme comprised of conception component of a liveable city, a sustainable city, a safe city, a healthy city and many others. Basically all these will help in making the city a better place to live, work and socialize.

Many local governments have a strong, positive track record of promoting sustainable development. According to Sustainable Development Solutions Network, an urban sustainable development goal (SDG) will support these efforts and provide higher visibility with national governments, donors and private sector investors. An urban SDG will support local governments in making decisive action to implement multiple targets that cut across sectors and institutions with the support of national governments, international agencies, and most importantly local agents of change from the private and civil society sectors, universities and common citizens. ^[2]

2. BACKGROUND

Ipoh the capital city of Perak State, Malaysia is located at Kinta Valley. It covers an area of 643sq kilometres with a total population of 720,000. Ipoh used to be the world largest tin mine. Ipoh was officially proclaimed a city on 27th May 1998 and inaugural ceremony to commemorate the status was officiated by the ruler of Perak HRH the late Sultan Azlan Muhibuddin Shah Ibni Almarhum Sultan Yussuf Izzuddin Shah Ghafarullahu-Lah. Geographically, Ipoh is located in the valley surrounded by Titiwangsa Mountain range which runs to east of the city and Kledang Mountain range which stretches from the north to the west. The panoramic greenery terrains were upgraded and beautified as theme park, temples, recreational parks and gardens. The city of Ipoh houses some of the best limestone cave system in the country. The formation of these glistening stalactites and stalagmites took place over millions of years. Ipoh is surrounded by

clusters of towering limestone surmounted with lush greenery, and features natural caves, picturesque lake, waterfalls and geothermal hot springs that showcases Ipoh as the wonder of nature.

The city is still growing and developing while maintaining its beautiful natural surroundings and harmonious living. The city is one of the favourite tourist's destination in Peninsular Malaysia boasting of its colourful heritage, culture and nature. Ipoh was also selected by U.S News as the world's number 3 for the Most Affordable Places to Retire in 2014. Ipoh is an increasingly popular retirement haven amongst International and Malaysians, who claim its fresh air, clean water and relaxing lifestyle not only improve the quality of life but also promote longevity. Foreign retirees especially Japanese are beginning to stay in Ipoh under Long Stay Program and My Malaysian Second Home (MM2H). In 2016, Ipoh was ranked number 6 by Lonely Planet Magazine as one of the best cities to visit in Asia.

3. IPOH CITY COUNCIL

The Ipoh City Council is the local authority which administers the city of Ipoh in the state of Perak, Malaysia. This council was established after the city was officially granted city status on 27 May 1988.

The council consists of the mayor plus twenty-four councillors appointed to serve a one-year term by the Perak State Government. Ipoh City Council is responsible for public health and sanitation, waste removal and management, town planning, environmental protection and building control, social and economic development and general maintenance functions of urban infrastructure (Wikipedia). Ipoh is governed by City Council, led by a mayor.

The Ipoh City Council's tag line, "Clean, Green and Progressive" was chosen to portray the practice of good governance, cleanliness, progressive development and preservation of nature.

Ipoh City Council tag line, clean means that Ipoh City Council and the citizen of Ipoh make sure cleanliness of the city takes top priority. Ipoh City Council approach in terms of cleanliness not only focuses on the waste and garbage management, but also on the habitat control through the removal or reducing areas where mosquito vectors can easily breed such as stagnant water, old tires cans of plastic container. Ipoh City also practises good management through "Green Initiatives for food, production, building sectors and communities, non-government organisation (NGO) and public sectors. Ipoh City also promotes green city, the move is to plant more trees and to allocate open space for greening of Ipoh. Ipoh City Council require developers to provide 10% of their total development area for open space or green lung. More than 50% of Ipoh area is also permanently gazetted as green area, being forest reserves and it acts as a buffer and the main provider of oxygen to Ipoh.

In all developments in the city since 2011, Ipoh City Council put greater emphasis on the green building and energy by encouraging development project to practice green building and energy saving approaches. For example, the Uniform Building By-Laws of 1994 has recently been amended to require new buildings to implement the Rain Water Harvesting System. Steps have been taken to implement more green technology and green community practices in order to achieve a greener city. Ipoh City practice low carbon emission in the near future. At present the public is encouraged to lead healthy lifestyle and to further enhance the low carbon emissions concept.

Ipoh City council perspective of progressive development is branching out with emphasize towards sustainable or eco city. Even on the matter of tourism, the city and the state of Perak is now focusing more on ecotourism as the way forward. The Ipoh City Council also adopts Local Agenda 21 in the move to further enhance its effort with the commitment of local communities. The Ipoh City Council being the regulator for the city development considers the environmental impact, minimization of required consumption of energy, carbon-fuel, water and food, in order to produce a more non-polluting environment in the planning of space inhabited by people.

4. URBAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN IPOH CITY

Under the "The Ipoh City Local Plan 2020" and "The Ipoh City Special Area Plan", some of the things that Ipoh City Council is planning to do are the same things that many others are concerned with.

a) Balanced development and economic distribution on the urban areas. A major challenge we face globally is that cities are growing rapidly, with current forecasts indicating strong growth in the urban fringe well into the future (Cohen 2006). Ipoh City Council identifies viable small-size and medium-size companies which can operate from small towns. These companies are to work closely with the government to boost the economy of the respective areas especially in tourism industry.

b) Socio economic development. All over the world, small businesses contribute significantly to a nation's economy. In developed countries, they account for about half of the gross domestic product and employment opportunities (Longenecker et al., 2008). Ipoh City was declared as world's fifth Social Business City, where its residents will help solve social problems through financially self-sustainable initiatives. The announcement was made by Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus at the Pangkor International Development Dialogue 2016. Ipoh comes after Pistoia in Italy, Barcelona (Spain) Wiesbarden (Germany) and Fukuoka (Japan). Ipoh City Council with the cooperation of private sectors and various agencies to assist young entrepreneurs to start businesses especially in tourism industry while providing logistic in order to promote and to market the respective product and destination of interest to locals and international tourists.

c) Enhance tourism development; Definition of sustainable tourism by World Tourism Organization on Sustainable Development of Tourism are, "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" [3]. Ipoh City Council is always committed on implementing tourism development to ensure tourist arrival growth and to further strengthen the city's economy. Since 2007, federal government, state government, Ipoh City Council and private companies spend millions Ringgit Malaysian to invest in tourism industry in Ipoh with the commitment that the prospect of Ipoh to grow as one of the popular tourism cities in Malaysia as well in the world is achievable and viable.

5. CONCLUSION

Sustainable tourism development is the way forward in ensuring the continuity and enhancement of tourism industry to withstand continuous unchecked development that will tarnish the tourism industry. Strong commitment and participation of all relevant parties especially the government, developers, policy makers and stakeholders is fundamental to enable sustainable development as part and parcel of all development.

To achieve the impossible and to make sustainable tourism a reality requires continuous effort and process that needs monitoring, and the state government, Ipoh City Council and the people to act as a group in unison to check and balance the development. Sustainable development should not be flawed by insensitivities of not taking into account tourist satisfaction.

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