Sport as a tourism attraction in Malaysia: Potential and prospects

Jabil Mapjabil¹, Mazdi Marzuki², Mohd Jirey Kumalah¹, Logeswaran Tangavello¹, Mohammad Kadir Zainal Abidin¹

¹Unit Penyelidikan Etnografi dan Pembangunan, Fakulti Kemanusiaan, Seni dan Warisan, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, ²Jabatan Geografi, Fakulti Sains Kemanusiaan, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris

Correspondence: Jabil Mapjabil (email: jabil@ums.edu.my)

Abstract

Sport tourism has become a popular sub-sector in the tourism industry today. Until the early 1990s, tourism and sports existed as two distinct areas of activities but the success in organizing the World Conference on Sport Tourism in Barcelona, Spain 2001 has resulted in more serious attention being paid to this sector. Before, scholars, decision-makers and governments involved in the field of tourism and sports perceived their respective profits independently of one another; now it is realised that the benefits generated by the synergy of both is far greater. This study examines the development of sport tourism in Malaysia. It was found that the success in organizing the race Le Tour de Langkawi in 1996 was a turning point in the government's focus on the development of the sport tourism sector. Currently, Malaysia is known for organizing several world-class sport events, among them the Royal Langkawi International Regatta (January), Ironman Triathlon (February), Formula 1 Grand Prix Malaysia (March), FEI Showjumping World Cup (May), Petronas Primax 3 Merdeka Millennium Endurance Race (July), Super GT (August), Malaysian Motorcycle Grand Prix (September), A1GP Malaysia (November) and Monsoon Cup (December). All these world-class sporting events bring substantial returns to the society and the economy. The strengths of sports as a tourism attraction include the length of time in which the events take place, extensive publicity coverage through the print and electronic media, sponsorship from various domestic and multinational companies and business opportunities provided to local residents during the event.

Keywords: sport publicity, sport tourism attraction, sport tourism potential, sport tourism prospects, sport tourism, sport tourism synergy