“Tourism planning and stakeholders’ engagements: the case of Penang Island”

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Tourism planning and stakeholders' engagement: the case of Penang Island

Abstract

Successful tourism developments are born from careful planning, and involving the government, industry, and community stakeholders. However, actual stakeholder engagement processes are complex and problematic. While considerable research has been conducted in developed tourist markets, this study aims to determine stakeholder engagement in tourism planning in a developing country: the Penang Island in Malaysia. Semi-structured interviews with governmental agencies, industry associations, and community stakeholders were conducted to look at their views on the engagement process with the local authority (LA) and the current barriers to success. The findings revealed that the existing engagement process with the LA is insufficient and ineffective, and the key barrier to improvement is the unclear roles and responsibilities of the multitude of federal, state and local government entities that are involved in tourism planning and development, and also lack of clear tourism strategy at the state and local levels. Hence, there is a clear need to delineate the responsibilities of the parties involved, improve coordination, strengthen collaboration with the stakeholders through improved and effective communication channels, and apply a participatory approach of early and on-going engagement in tourism planning and development.

Keywords: tourism planning, stakeholder engagement, local authority, developing country, Penang.
JEL Classification: L83.

Introduction

The global tourism industry has experienced tremendous growth in the last decade, expanding and diversifying to become one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors. This is also the case in Malaysia as the tourism sector is a significant economic contributor. The country's growth strategy, outlined in the 10th Malaysia's Plan, highlights the importance of tourism sector and targets it to be ranked in the global top 10 destinations in terms of global tourism receipts (EPU, 2010). Achieving this ranking requires Malaysia's tourism administrators to plan and implement initiatives that are attractive, sustainable, in line with the economic and social development objectives, and properly managed, promoted, and monitored (Sharpley, 2008). Success is also dependent on the private sector cooperation and partnerships at the local level (Bramwell & Lane, 1999; Hall, 1994). Existing research confirms that collaboration and participation between local authorities (LAs) and other stakeholders (government agencies, non-government organizations, private sector, and professional and community groups) contribute to better tourism outcomes (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Goymen, 2000; Jamal & Getz, 1995).

Consequently, participation of stakeholders in the tourism planning and development has emerged and was taken into consideration by many countries (Tosun, 2000). Despite the need for stakeholders' involvement, actual engagement in tourism activities is complex, complicated and problematic (Hall, 2007). It is not surprising that the key impediments to tourism development, as cited in the few Malaysian studies on tourism stakeholders' engagement, were the lack of local participation and awareness among the implementers (Hamzah, 2004; Marzuki & Hay, 2013; Marzuki, Hay, & James, 2012). Given the economic importance of the tourism industry to Malaysia, it would benefit from a better understanding of the stakeholders' perspectives of the LAs' engagement on tourism planning. As stakeholders' participation is expected to vary with groups' objectives and expectations (Tosun, 2006), research which examined the views of the stakeholders may identify potential issues of stakeholder and LA collaboration in the formulation and implementation of tourism plans.

As such, the aim of this study is to investigate the level of engagement with the LA from the perspective of tourism stakeholders (Federal and State government agencies, industry associations, and the community) using a case study of Penang Island, a major Malaysian tourist destination. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with major tourism stakeholders in Penang. The issues investigated explore stakeholders' views on the benefits of engagement, their level of engagement, and the factors that contribute to the barriers in the LA stakeholders' engagement in tourism development in Penang Island.

1. Stakeholder engagement in tourism development

Effective stakeholders' involvements are vital for a successful sustainable tourism development (Byrd, 2007; Tosun, 2000; Waligo, Clarke, & Rebecca,

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2013). Empirical studies suggest that stakeholders' engagement is strengthened if they are given the opportunity to participate early in the process (Gunn, 1994), together with information sharing and consultative activities (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999). Several researchers have examined how stakeholders perceive benefits that underpin participation, and have cited better decision making, better allocation of resources and greater improvements of the current tourism practices (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Selin & Beason, 1991; Waddock, 1991). However, the level of stakeholders' involvement may differ; some stakeholders are responsible for formulating policies, others for implementing policies, and some for both formulating and implementing tourism policies (Miller & Twinning, 2005).

Even though various developed countries have established active participation of stakeholders in tourism planning and development (Tosun, 2000), there are evidences that the engagement practice is tokenistic in nature. Ruhanen's (2012) study on the role of the local government in sustainable tourism development in Queensland provided interesting insights. Public participation is still tokenistic due to the strong role and power of the local government, which acts as a barrier to sustainable tourism development (see also Dredge, 2006). The local government takes the leadership position in facilitating tourism development due to the directive from the state and federal government.

Studies done in developing countries found limited public participation in tourism planning. Tosun (2000) found that there are operational, structural and cultural factors that limit the stakeholders' engagement in tourism planning in many developing countries. Marzuki et al. (2012) examined the public participation in tourism planning in Langkawi in Malaysia and found limited public participation and also limited opportunities for the public to be involved in development and tourism planning. Marzuki et al. (2012) concluded that public participation and stakeholders' engagement are problematic and face structural and operational problems.

There are various barriers which lead to ineffective stakeholders' engagement. Apart from that, mistrust and misperceptions amongst stakeholders due to insufficient communication (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002). Moreover, political practice of a more centralized authority sets barriers to stakeholders' involvement. In addition, insufficient financial resources at the local level, limited expertise, experience, and competence of tourism planning authorities, and limited commitment by some stakeholders were identified as the challenges which set barriers to stakeholders' participation (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002; Tosun, 2006). Unclear lines of authority, confused implementation responsibilities, and lack of communication amongst stakeholders which fuels mistrust and misperceptions (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002) were also identified as challenges to stakeholders' participation. Marzuki et al. (2012) found that the barriers to the participation process in Langkawi are inefficient participation techniques and processes, the community's negative attitudes, and the exclusion of some community stakeholders from the participation process.

Waligo et al. (2013) identified the key factors which could enable stakeholders' engagement such as the quality of leadership, the quality and accessibility of information, and implementation priorities. In addition, they identified stakeholders' mind-sets, involvement capacity, and relationships as the key enabling factors of stakeholders' engagement, which is also influenced by the context and diversity of the stakeholders. Consequently, low levels of awareness, feelings of disempowerment, issues associated with coordination and bureaucracy, fragility of common interests, inability to clarify goals, and unwillingness to make significant changes to current behaviour occurred among stakeholders (e.g. Cooper, Scott, & Baggio, 2009; Dodds & Butler, 2010; Miller, Rathouse, Scarles, Holmes, & Tribe, 2010).

2. Methods

Penang Island was chosen as the case site in this study because it is a major tourist destination in Malaysia. Georgetown, the capital of Penang, is listed in the UNESCO World Heritage list. There are two local authorities in Penang: the Municipal Council of Penang that governs the island, and the Municipal Council of Seberang Perai for the mainland. This study focused on the tourism planning and stakeholders' engagement in Penang Island. It examined the engagement between the LA of the island and other tourism stakeholders from the perspective there of. Stakeholder is defined as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (Freeman, 1984). In this study, the stakeholders identified are the government agencies (Federal and State agencies), industry associations, and the community actors (clan associations) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Interview details – organizations, dates

Interviewees
State Agency for Tourism Promotion
Industry Association 1
Industry Association 2
State Office of Federal Ministry (SFM)
Clan Association 1
Clan Association 2
Developmental officer, Local council

The primary data sources are semi-structured interviews with senior management of the three different categories of the stakeholders. In addition, an officer in charge of the developmental planning at the Penang Municipal Council was also interviewed to gain better understanding of the matters related to tourism planning in Penang since they have legitimate interests in tourism development in Penang. Semi-structured interviews were used to encourage interviewees to share their views on the issues discussed freely and openly. The interviews, about one hour in duration, took place from April 2013 to June 2013. The interviewees received an overview of the topic and questions beforehand to help with their preparation. Except for one, the interview sessions were recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Secondary data were collected from the interviewees' books and websites. The descriptions of the key roles of the stakeholders are as follows:

1. *State Office of the Federal Ministry (SFM).* The state office of the federal agency acts as the representative for the federal government in formulating and implementing policies related to the growth and development of the tourism industry.
2. *State Governmental Agency for Tourism Promotion.* The agency is a state funded entity that is set up as a company to work with key tourism players inside and outside of Penang, to promote Penang to both the domestic and international markets.
3. *Industry Association 1.* The association works as the official network for the hospitality sector of Malaysia. It represents the voices of the industry, works as one body to protect, promote, and advance the interests of its registered members.
4. *Industry Association 2.* This association coordinates and organizes tourism related courses to produce committed and professional human resource in one of the tourism sectors in Malaysia. At the same time, the association looks into the overall interests and welfare of its members.
5. *The community – The Clans Associations.* The interviewed clan associations are one of the prominent ones in the area. To date, they are seen as one of the major stakeholders as they are one of the major property owners in the core heritage zone of George Town.

According to Bramwell and Sharman (1999), there are many potential benefits when the tourism policies are built based on collaboration from groups of stakeholders who are directly or indirectly involved in the tourism industry. An analytical framework has then developed, which incorporates the thoughts from various literature about inter-organizational collaboration, "communicative" approaches to planning and local participation that concern three main sets of issues in the proposed framework: (1) *scope of the collaboration,* (2) *intensity of the collaboration, and* (3) *degree to which consensus emerges*.

This study used the several concepts from the Bramwell and Sharman (1999) that highlighted the specific issues of local participation in tourism planning, such as "the extent to which relevant stakeholders see there are positive benefits to entice their participation under the scope of collaboration" and "when and how often the relevant stakeholders are involved and the extent to which the stakeholder groups receive information and are consulted about the activities of the collaboration under the intensity of collaboration." Therefore, the specific questions the study attempted to answer are:

1. What are the stakeholders' perspectives on the benefits of engagement in tourism planning with the LAs?
2. At which level of engagement are the stakeholders involved in tourism planning?

Previous studies (e.g., Dodds & Butler, 2010; Kimbu & Ngoasang, 2013; Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002; Miller et al., 2010; Timur & Getz, 2009; Tosun, 2006) have highlighted multiple barriers and challenges to the stakeholders' engagement in tourism planning to alert that their engagement through effective communication channels and proper guidance plays a vital role in determining the sustainability and development of tourism planning. As such, this study is also aimed to understand the barriers that cause the breakdowns in the stakeholders' engagement.

3. The findings

This study found that the stakeholders perceive benefits in participating with the LAs in the tourism planning, such as improved funding decisions and coordination between the LA and tourism operators. The level of engagement between the stakeholders and the LA was found to be limited and ad hoc, and mostly focused on building regulations, permits, and operational matters, such as cleanliness and licensing, but not specifically on tourism planning. The interviewees cited a number of barriers to effective engagement with the LA, including lack of focus on tourism planning and development, which is exacerbated by non-existent or inadequate long term plans for tourism development in Penang, and a large number of governmental organizations with unclear or overlapping responsibilities for the tourism planning and development.

3.1. Stakeholders' views on the benefits of participation. In terms of benefits of participation with the LAs, this study found that the stakeholders perceived participation to be vital to successful tourism planning, and to generate benefits for the tourism industry. The view of the state office in the federal ministry is that participation process allows them to understand the LAs' tourism plans and activities better, which results in better funding decisions. As mentioned, the state office is the link between the federal and the state in tourism matters. The Ministry also channelled some funds to the LAs on tourism projects through its state office. Hence, as for SFM, engagement and meetings would provide them with a clearer idea of the types of funding required. Usually, the LAs will use their budget for small activities or projects. However, for those facilities that require larger funding, the request is made through the senior officer from the SFM explained:

For small projects, normally they will fund themselves, but if it involves a large amount, normally they will request from us… If the state requires funding for certain development projects, we will consider, most of the time, we will provide.

Thus, attending meetings provided them with a clearer idea of the types of tourism projects planned by the LAs. Likewise, the industry associations highlighted that participation with the LAs is crucial since their survival and performance rely on the LA's tourism development. However, one group of stakeholders did not share these opinions. Clan association 1 perceived that participation with the LA generated benefits, such as sharing ideas and discussing improvements. Clan association 1 did receive some funding from the federal government for the restoration of their heritage buildings. However, clan association 2 felt that the LA participation was unnecessary, and they did not feel the need for engagement. This could be because the association sustained on its own development and revenues, and did not require any governmental funding, and they did not want government interference in their development. Hence, they did not feel the need to gain any benefits in engagement with the LAs on tourism matters.

3.2. Intensity of collaboration – minimal engagement. The findings indicated limited and irregular engagement of the various stakeholders with the LA. The level of stakeholders' participation in tourism planning with the LA is non-existent, and information is poorly communicated. During the interviews, the respondents claimed that they were not consulted on tourism initiatives or strategic planning by the LA, if there was any. As mentioned by the chairman of the clan association 1, there was no engagement on the issues related to tourism development, either by the LAs or other parties related to tourism:

We are one of the major stakeholders, the major property owners in the core zone of George Town, which we never talk to the local authorities or to the state or even to the statutory bodies like George Town World Heritage or Penang Global Tourism. We don't have any liaison or any communication with them. We are doing all on our own, silently, we are going on our own…

The state tourism promotion agency explained that there is no regular meeting with the LA, and it is unclear which department is responsible for tourism or to be communicated with. Nevertheless, the establishment of tourism department or the unit at the LAs has made it easier for them to communicate with the LAs. Not only were the meetings with the LA infrequent, but the tourism planning matters were not dealt properly. Typical interactions were more of a regulatory in nature, such as the need to obtain renovation permits in the heritage areas, or to lodge complaints about road conditions or signage, which were not directly associated with specific issues on tourism planning. In addition, the engagement deals also were mainly held to obtain information from the LA as the senior manager explained:

We only communicate in terms of information that we want to know, for example, licensing under MPPP. I don't know if you call that communication, but that is us asking them for information,... So I don't know if you call that communication, but I think that is just providing data to us.

The communication channel is one way. Generally, the stakeholders noted that the engagement process was not systematic with meetings scheduled on an ad-hoc basis. Most of the interviewees claimed no knowledge of an LA strategic tourism plan. The other stakeholders, state unit of the federal agency, and the hospitality industry association were aware of the tourism plans and a vision, but felt they lacked clarity, since they were not implemented or enforced. Most of the study interviewees cited poor information sharing and lack of participatory planning process.

Most of the stakeholders' communication deals with operational matters such as issues on buildings, licensing of business, and cleanliness at specific tourism sites or of public facilities or when the LA approaches the stakeholders to inspect the structure of heritage buildings owned by the stakeholders, or to lease a facility owned by the stakeholders for events. Nevertheless, one of the industry players felt

that the LAs were responsive to the operational issues raised, especially those that are directly under their control, as illustrated by the chairperson of Industry Association 1; one problem related to the enforcement of certain activities at the beach received negative press coverage. The complaints either were channelled to the state government or the local government. However, such complaints are not easily resolved since various parties are involved in the enforcement. The chairperson of the Industry Association 1 found that there would be more response if the request was under the preview and sole responsibility of the local government:

If you need a billboard, [the head of tourism unit at the council] he will always supply. If you want to have any event, he is always being very helpful. It's just the beach which involves many parties..

The only stakeholders to indicate ongoing participation with the LA were the Industry Association 1, who has built good rapport with the LA, but engagement is limited to organizing, supporting, and promoting tourism events with the LA. Hence, the level of engagement was low and the issues that were discussed mainly dealt with current issues on maintenance, enforcement, and licensing. The engagement that was undertaken dealt with the developmental plan for the area, in which public views were solicited, as it is stipulated in Act.

3.3. Barriers to engagement. From the interviews, the stakeholders were unclear of the scope of the authority and the duty of the LA. This appears to have created communication barriers as information was not shared between the LA and the stakeholders. There were several reasons cited for the lack of engagement between the stakeholders and the LAs due to unclear responsibility over tourism matters which resulted in lack of focus on tourism activities; and also the overlap of responsibilities among tourism organizations.

3.3.1. Overlapping responsibilities for tourism matters. The LAs in Malaysia are unique, given that the members of the council are politically appointed. There is no election of the councillors or for the mayor/president of the councils in Malaysia. The main responsibilities of the LAs are provision, urban services, and developmental planning. Tourism development is not traditionally the main purview of the local authorities in Malaysia. However, the emphasis of tourism in the country's social economic development has pushed the LAs to play a greater role in sustaining the industry. Furthermore, the demand for better urban governance in an increase of urbanized and educated population has put pressures on the LAs. Tourism policy in Malaysia is centralized under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture. The local government is encouraged to think and act tourism by the Ministry involved. The role of the LA is even more important in Penang, given that Penang is an important tourist destination and Georgetown, the capital of Penang, is listed in the UNESCO world heritage sites. Consequently, many LAs in recent years have established a tourism unit or tourism department in Penang island local council.

Nevertheless, one of the major barriers to the stakeholders' engagement is because of the limited role by the LAs in tourism planning. Tourism planning is the purview of the state government and is not seen by the stakeholders as the role of the LA. The focus of the local council tourism unit is to support the state tourism with the objective of improving the infrastructure and public facilities. The same view is also maintained by the governmental agencies interviewed that the LA is the moderator for tourism, and not the key player. Hence, the long term strategy in tourism should be done by the state and not under the Las.

Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the industry associations argued that the body responsible for tourism is the state rather than the LA, and their engagement and interaction is more with the state government and also the Ministry of Tourism, as the management of Industry Association 2 noted:

Because to you, local authorities mean the city council, to us it means the state tourism… We are not so involved in MPPP. We are under the Ministry of Tourism, and we are under the State. It's only for buildings and cleanliness (issues), we will just bring them up to the MPPP..."

The local council is indirectly involved with tourism matters through its role in developmental planning, approval of buildings, and also in licensing of business and provision of public infrastructure, as the development planning officer illustrated:

We have national park, … hence, we have to control.. we don't allow massive development [in that area].

The tourism unit has roles to ensure public facilities are clean and also to organize events, i.e., related to a certain extent of tourism promotion. Tourism efforts are indirectly undertaken through the developmental planning role of the local council such as the provision of incentive for tourism activities. Thus, it is not surprising that the LA's engagement with the stakeholders is mainly related to issues of cleanliness, buildings, and permits and

public consultation on developmental plans for the area. One of interviewees noted that on meetings for tourism matters, the issue raised by the LA deals with licensing and other operational matters under its responsibility, rather than the issues related to the strategic planning. The issue is further exacerbated, given that there are various parties involved in tourism development in Penang. A consistent theme from the interviewees was that multiple organizations held the same responsibility for tourism planning and development, but their goals and responsibilities were unclear, leading to confusion for the local stakeholders.

3.3.2. The absence of long term tourism strategy. Stakeholders' engagement in tourism development has been argued to require not only leadership and financial resources at par to the LA, but also long term vision and priority setting (Waligo et al., 2013). However, this research found that interviewees agreed that a major barrier to engagement is the absence of a long term strategic planning for tourism development not only by the LAs, but also by other governmental agencies. Tourism policy in Malaysia is centralized and it needs the efforts of the state and local levels to translate the policy. Consequently, one respondent noted on the lack of operationalization of policy in Penang that has impacted tourism development in the state.

Even more, there are views among the stakeholders that there is a lack of strategy planning at the state level. The dialogue at the state level with the private sector deals with pressing issues that have impact on tourism and not on long term strategy plans for tourism development. Therefore, the absence of long term strategy for tourism promotion at the state level would impact the planning at the local level and could lead to failure to operationalize the national tourism policy. The interviewees also noted that lack of focus and commitment to tourism development is exacerbated by the lack of communication of LA programmes and activities to the stakeholders as noted by Industry Association 2:

The materials [for tourism planning] prepared are very good, like books and documentation, but are they relevant?

4. Discussion and recommendations

Given that stakeholders' perspective is crucial in determining effective strategies for stakeholders' involvement (Waligo et al., 2013), the focus of this study was to investigate the stakeholders' views of the benefits of participation, their level of engagement, and the barriers to the engagement with the LA. There are limited stakeholders' engagements with the LAs and their dealings with them are mainly on operational matters or due to activities which need approval from the LA. The findings from this study are similar to the previous studies that examined public participations in tourism sites in Malaysia (see Marzuki et al., 2012). However, most interestingly, the primary barrier that leads to this limited engagement, cited by the stakeholders, is the unclear roles and functions of the LA in tourism planning. Tourism is seen as the main responsibility of the state with the LAs not playing the facilitator role and not taking the leadership role in tourism development.

As opposed to the findings from Ruhanen (2012) who showed that the local government takes the major responsibility of tourism development due to strong directive from the state and federal government, it does not seem to be strong from a top down directive, either from the federal or state government, for the local government takes the leadership role in tourism. Moreover, there is a lack of leadership role, given that the local government is not the elected representative of the community. Thus, the leadership role or legitimacy due to its position of the voice of the community is not strong. It should be noted that the local government is under the control of the state. Consequently, there is a lack of strategic planning for tourism development at the local authority level and there seems to be the view of the stakeholders that strategic direction in tourism planning is also minimal at the state level. On top of that, there are various bodies in charge of tourism in Penang. This is further exacerbated by the different political parties governing the state and federal government. This causes a mixed distribution of power, and conflicting and confusing segregation of duty and authority for tourism.

It could be argued that there are uncoordinated and different points of view showing the linkage between various parties involved. Existing reports have already raised questions on the roles and responsibilities of the different government departments involved in the tourism planning and decision making in Malaysia (KPMG, 2010) and, in particular, Penang, where numerous agencies are responsible for managing tourism in the state. Thus, the issues of distribution of power, in terms of segregation of duty and authority, as commented by Ladkin and Bertramini (2002), lead to the questions on who is qualified to make and implement, and who is responsible for the decisions made in tourism planning is vague.

Some existing studies have suggested that decentralization of tourism development (e.g., from central to local governments and communities) is more effective than centralization in developing

countries (Tosun, 2006; Tosun & Dallen, 2001). As such, the salience of decentralization of tourism policy and development in Malaysia needs to be further examined.

In addition, the stakeholders pointed out the issue of uncoordinated and unclear communication channels, which hamper any attempts of the LA may make to schedule regular meetings on tourism planning or development. To overcome these impediments, the LA must streamline communication channels with every relevant party, and coordinate information sharing throughout the tourism network, using organized meetings, briefings, or by creating online forums. In addition, improvements are needed on the LA website, making it more user-friendly and easier to share information with all the relevant parties, as well as receive feedback from the public. Stakeholders' involvement with tourism planning and information sharing can be implemented more effectively if the LA has communication and reporting guidelines.

This study also highlights barriers that are not unique to Penang, and have been reported in the existing research, such as lack of government support, leadership, and awareness and coordination in tourism planning (Granovetter, 2005; Timur & Getz, 2009). Low levels of awareness and lack of encouragement and coordination disempowered stakeholders. When stakeholders are not given a chance to participate in the tourism planning process, they feel their views are not appreciated, which decreases their interest in collaborating with the LA. Such discouragement has resulted in poor consensus with the LA and stymied tourism development. Stakeholders' support can be improved by setting up committees that involve stakeholder representatives during planning and execution efforts, by creating better communication through regular and structured meetings or forums (online or face-to-face), and by dialogue sessions that disseminate tourism related information to the stakeholders.

Researchers and practitioners argue that the LAs play a major role in ensuring tourism development (Javier & Elazigue, 2011) since they are responsible for the provision of infrastructure, formulation of policy and planning procedures in their area of jurisdiction. One of the components of tourism planning and development, at the local level, is the existence of an effective structure for stakeholders' engagement, not only to set directions, but also to manage and develop tourist experience. So, part of the LAs' responsibility is to provide leadership, knowledge, and resources that pull stakeholders together as a network, saving resources and sharing knowledge. However, the role of the LA is more problematic in Malaysia because its function and power is limited, compared to the other countries. It is not surprising, therefore, that stakeholders are critical of the LAs' lack of strategic planning and the lack of platform for collecting views and communication. Given the situation in Penang, the importance of clearly delineating the responsibilities for developing and implementing a platform for the stakeholders, especially the local community, engagements cannot be understated.

This study was undertaken recognizing that it faces several limitations. One limitation is the small number of the interviews with a limited group of stakeholders. These findings and also future studies can be improved by involving broader representative group of the stakeholders that are involved directly or indirectly with the tourism sector.

Conclusion

This study investigated the extent to which the stakeholders in Penang tourism industry are engaged in tourism planning with the LA. The stakeholders' participation with the LA, and consultation in the engagement process of tourism development in Penang is severely limited. The stakeholders do not receive regular or meaningful communication from the LA, and they are unclear of the LA's tourism plans. Tourism development is not seen as the main responsibility of the LAs. Communication channels and tourism networks are uncoordinated and ineffective. Hence, there is a clear need to delineate the responsibilities of the parties involved, improve coordination, and strengthen collaboration with the stakeholders through improved and effective communication channels, and employ a participatory approach of early and on-going engagements in tourism planning and development.

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